



Fence Replacement and Maintenance

for Heritage Items and Heritage Conservation Areas

A fence is important in the presentation of your house and should complement the style and era of your property. This fact sheet provides guidance on suitable fences for a property which is listed as a heritage item or located within a Heritage Conservation Area.

Consent requirements

There are different requirements for fencing of Heritage listed property, and non-listed properties within Heritage Conservation Areas. You can check with Council if your property is listed as heritage item or in a Conservation Area.

Fences forward of the building line, for all properties in a Heritage Conservation Area require prior consent, regardless of date of construction.

All boundary fences around a heritage item require consent. This affects the boundary of any non-listed property adjoining a heritage item.

Works that require consent

Works fall into three main categories:

- Exempt Development - No Consent Needed
- Minor Works - Approval by letter required (no fee)
- Development Consent - Development Application Required

Exempt development

Fences rear of the building line for non-listed properties within a Heritage Conservation Area which do not adjoin a heritage item, are Exempt Development providing that they meet the maximum 1.8m height, and other criteria that apply. Refer to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008 (known as the Codes SEPP).

Minor works and maintenance application

Fences forward of the building line, for all properties in a Heritage Conservation Area require prior consent. All the boundary fences for a heritage item require consent (front and rear).

These proposals can generally be handled under the through a 'no fee' written application for advice.

Development applications

New fences which involve masonry over specified heights require formal approval. Any proposal to demolish or alter a significant original fence, is also likely to require a Development Application. A statement of heritage impact is required to accompany your application in this situation.

Choosing the right fence for your property

If an original fence still exists, it is recommended that you retain and conserve it. The aim is to conserve as much of the original fence material as possible and replace only what is necessary.

Where the original fence no longer exists, consider carrying out some research before choosing a fence style. Historic photos are an excellent source for finding the original details. Enquire at your local historical society. Previous owners or their relatives may have early photos. Similar buildings in the locality may also retain early fences which give some clues.

Victorian 1860-1900

Example	Description
	<p>The timber picket fence was the main style of fence and complements the traditional timber and iron buildings which characterise the north coast region.</p> <p>Picket fences with 'acorn' tops and scalloped lines are typical of this period. Posts were often painted in a contrast colour.</p>
	<p>Timber fences were typically used for dwellings and public buildings such as post offices, churches, schools and court houses.</p> <p>Detailing for the grander buildings was often more elaborate with larger chamfered posts with decorative moulding and routed details.</p>
 <small>www.alamy.com - G3X306</small>	<p>Cast iron palisade fencing, as seen on Victorian terraces in the city, is not common to this region. Such fences should only be used if there is historic evidence.</p>

Federation 1901 - 1920

Example	Description
	<p>The picket fence continued through the Federation era particularly in a rural region with an abundance of timber. Victorian fashions often overlapped into the early part of the 20th century in areas outside the cities. Simpler styles of square and rounded tops gradually replaced the acorn profile.</p>
	<p>Alternating height pickets featured on some fences and double rails were sometimes used to match the balustrade detail on the house.</p>
	<p>Picket fences continued to be used for court houses, police stations, churches and schools.</p>
	<p>The Federation era also saw the use of fences of brick piers with woven wire or timber picket inserts. Brick making was not commonplace to many areas and transportation was still limited in the early part of the 20th century.</p>

Interwar 1920 - 1940

Example	Description
	<p>Ornamental woven wire and wrought-iron gates and fencing was a distinctive element of the 1920s and 1930s. The Cyclone Woven Wire Fence Company was established in Melbourne in 1898. By the 1920s, the company had manufacturing works in Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and Perth. Many examples of woven wire fences are found on the north coast region during this period</p>

Example	Description
	<p>The popular Californian Bungalow often had a fence of brick base and piers with a metal rail or mesh.</p>
	<p>Timber post and rail fences with metal mesh were popular for domestic dwellings</p>
	<p>Picket fences were also still used in this period.</p>

Post war 1940 - 1970

Example	Description
	<p>The low brick fence was a distinctive style of the post war era.</p>
	<p>The popular Californian Bungalow often had a fence of brick base and piers with a metal rail or mesh.</p>
	<p>Brick piers with a metal railing or metal infill panels were often used. Matching low decorative gates marked the pedestrian and driveway entries.</p>

Example	Description
	<p>Original fences should be retained and maintained or repaired.</p> <p>If more privacy is required, a hedge could be planted inside the fence.</p>

Side and rear fences

Example	Description
  	<p>Unless there is other historic evidence, timber paling fences are typical for side and rear boundaries of historic dwellings and buildings.</p> <p>The timber can be oiled or left to weather to silver grey. Landscaping and hedging can be used to soften fence lines.</p> <p>Sheet metal panel fences are not appropriate in the setting of a heritage item and are not likely to be supported.</p>

Rural fences

Examples	Description
	<p>Timber fences are appropriate for rural areas. Early farmhouses sometimes had the picket fence directly attached to the verandah to keep out stock.</p> <p>Post and rail fences are appropriate to broader rural settings and historic homesteads. Maintain early fences wherever possible.</p>

Examples	Description
	

Further reading

- Evans, Ian, 1940- & New South Wales. Department of Planning 1989, Getting the details right: restoring Australian houses 1890s-1920s, Flannel Flower Press, Yeronga, Qld
- Cuffley, Peter 2007, Australian houses of the twenties & thirties, Rev. ed, Five Mile Press, Rowville, Vic
- Cuffley, Peter 2007, Australian houses of the forties & fifties, Rev. ed, Five Mile Press, Rowville, Vic

Advice

You can seek general advice through our website [Development Advice Services](#) page or contact the Development Support Officers on 02 6626 7025..

Heritage advisory service

For more specific questions, heritage advice is available using the [Heritage Advisory Service](#) online form.

#E2017/19980 November 2022