



A busy road is addressed positively in Poundbury, Dorset, with boulevard planting and a strong building frontage



Garages should be recessed behind the main building line

5.1.2 BUILDING LINES AND SET-BACKS

Be direct

A common building line creates continuity of frontage and provides definition and enclosure to the public realm. It can also help ensure new development is properly integrated into an existing street. Minimising set-back distances increases the ability of a building to interact with the public realm. Where buildings are permitted to step back from the building line, care needs to be taken to ensure resulting spaces are useable and attractive.

Table 5.1 provides rules-of-thumb for building line set-back distances, indicating how these vary according to locational setting. A note of caution: garages or parking provision which is in front of the building line will undermine the relationship between building and street. In suburban situations garages should be to the side of principal buildings, recessed behind the main building line.

Location	Set-back	Purpose
Core commercial areas	Adjacent to pavement edge	Direct commercial frontage
Inner urban areas	1.5 m to 3m semi-private strip between residential or commercial building fronts and public pavement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amenity space for a small garden, bicycle stand or seating Functional space for residential rubbish-collection or meter-reading 'Spill-out area' for pavement cafes or shops
Outer urban areas	'Tolerance zone' of about 5m	Adjacent to busier arterials, providing a more substantial buffer for houses. Avoid car hard-standings, which create a divisive barrier between building and street

Face up

Streets, parks and waterways which are not overlooked can sometimes feel unsafe, especially at night. Park fences can also create a negative visual impact. These public spaces are intrinsic assets to be enjoyed, yet often neighbouring buildings ignore this. Buildings facing onto public open spaces create an identity and a sense of ownership and care. Facing the park or water also tends to command higher values, which off-sets the cost of creating single-loaded streets (with buildings on only one side). Thus buildings should front the public realm, running accessways or footpaths along boundaries so that this face is used as the front door.



Mews 1:1 ratio

Generally effective 1:3 ratio



Maximum squares (+very wide streets) 1:6 ratio



Spatial definition by tree canopy



Spatial definition by building height

Spatial definition by recess line

5.1.3 ENCLOSURE

Create enclosure and definition

It is the three dimensional mass of each building which defines the public realm. Building elevations and the cross-sections of public spaces should therefore be scaled to foster a sense of urbanism so that streets, squares and parks are defined by appropriately scaled buildings and/or trees fronting onto them. The following height to width enclosure ratios serve as a guide, and need to be checked to ensure that they enable sufficient daylight (see 3.4.1):

	Maximum	Minimum
Mews	1:1.5	1:1
Streets	1:3	1:1.5
Squares	1:5	1:4