Ealing Front Gardens Project
www.ealingfrontgardens.org.uk

What happens to front gardens when pavement crossovers (kerb drops) are approved?

Summary of research conducted in 2017

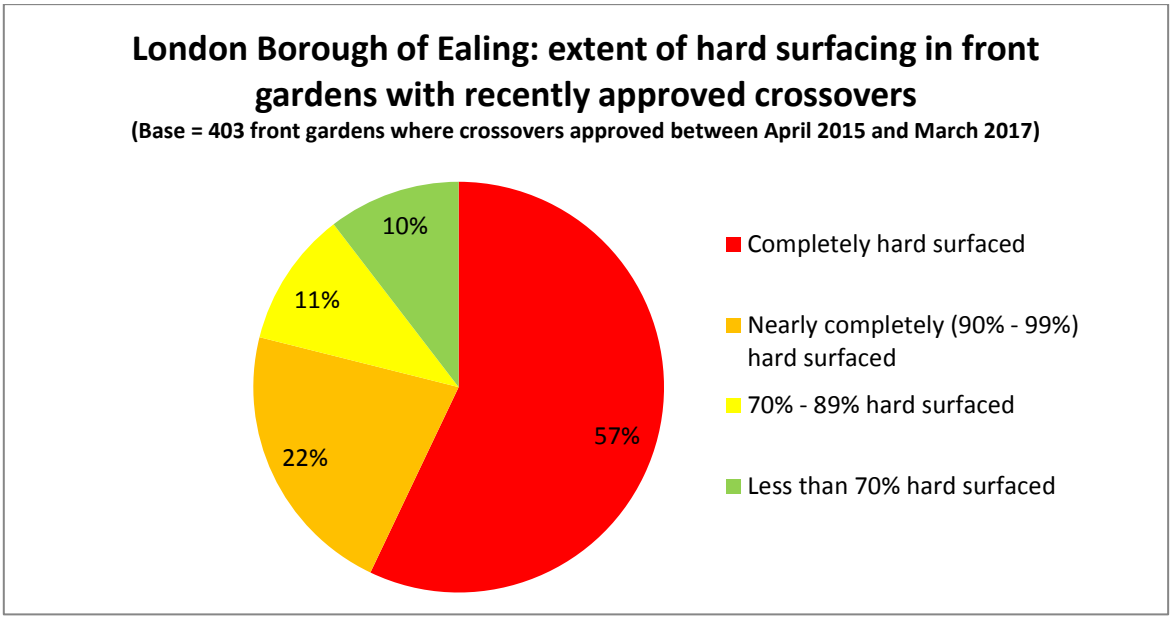
Summary of key findings

- This research shows what happened to the front gardens of just over 400 properties in the London Borough of Ealing when pavement crossovers (kerb drops) were approved between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2017 under permitted development regulations.

- Four in five (79%) of the front gardens where the crossovers had been approved were fully or nearly fully covered with hard surfacing.

- Over half (57%) were totally covered; a further quarter (22%) were nearly totally (90-99%) covered.

- Only ten percent had an area of less than 70% hard surfaced.



- As far as could be ascertained, in at least 77% of the front gardens the hard surfacing was new. We can't know for sure what the front gardens were like before their crossovers were approved, but the newness of the surfacing suggests that most was put down as part of allowing vehicle access.

- This means that, in four in five cases, putting in a pavement crossover to allow parking results in the front garden being more or less completely hard surfaced.

- The most frequently-used hard surfacing material was brick, used in half the front gardens. Stone blocks were used in a fifth (19%); concrete and gravel/loose stones in ten percent each.

- In at least a quarter of the front gardens the legality of the surfacing was questionable. The 2008 regulations state that front garden hard surfacing of more than five square metres must either be of porous material or, if impermeable, must make provision for run-off. Yet we found 28% had no obvious run-off provision despite apparently impermeable surfacing. A further ten percent had

drainage grilles either ineffectively positioned or not running the full length of the hard surfaced area.

- The vast majority (97%) of the new crossovers were for the original property. Only a very small number were for new builds and redevelopments such as conversions to flats (so probably occupied by more people than originally).

- Putting in a crossover and hard surfacing is often accompanied by boundary structures (walls, fences, railing, hedges, gates) disappearing, especially at the front of the garden – so the garden and the pavement become contiguous.

- The boundary structures at the sides of the garden, if present, are usually hard walls or railings rather than green structures. This is probably because the extent of the hard surfacing leaves little room for plants, let alone hedges.

Implications

- Putting in pavement crossovers under permitted development regulations leads to front gardens being extensively covered with hard surfacing for parking.

- Precautions to reduce flood risk are often not being complied with.

- Under a **business-as-usual scenario**, there is not likely to be any let-up in applications for crossovers, due to rising numbers of vehicles per household, slow roll out of controlled parking zones and the Domino Effect reducing on-road parking.

- But a switch to an **electric vehicle(s) + home charging scenario** is likely to make the situation considerably worse. It will cause (a) more applications for crossovers and (b) more extensive hard surfacing per garden, for multiple vehicles to be charged overnight.

- Hard surfacing front gardens causes serious problems, including worsening flood risk, heat island effect, climate change, air pollution, biodiversity and neighbourhood desolation. Only one of these (flood risk) is addressed in any way by current regulations.

- Urban and suburban front gardens are likely to be lost to hard surfacing fairly quickly, and already-widespread problems made much worse, unless there is urgent regulatory change.

- Householders need to be required to maximise green space and minimise hard surfaces when using for parking. Statutory nuisance should be considered.

- Our 2017 demonstration project conducted jointly with the Royal Horticultural Society (reported separately) shows that front garden parking + maximum green space can be achieved cost-effectively

The full report can be found at http://www.ealingfrontgardens.org.uk/crossover-research