

Setbacks from roads and articulation zones

This information sheet explains the requirements for setbacks and articulation zones for houses under complying development.

Important note

This information sheet is for guidance only and may not contain all the information relevant to every property in NSW. Applicants should refer to the [relevant planning controls](#)¹ before beginning work, or seek professional advice on how the planning controls apply to their property.

The majority of the development that can be done as exempt or complying development in NSW is identified in the State wide exempt and complying development policy (the policy). View the policy at the [Exempt and Complying Development Policy website](#)².

Exempt development is minor building work that does not need planning or building approval. [Information sheet 1.1](#)³ provides more information about exempt development.

Complying development is a joint planning and construction approval that can be granted by council or a private certifier. [Information sheet 1.2](#)⁴ provides more information about complying development.

Note: As identified in Information Sheets 1.1 and 1.2 exempt and complying development cannot be carried out on certain land.

Setbacks and articulation zone requirements in the General Housing Code and Rural Housing Code

Single and two storey dwelling houses are considered complying development under the policy.

Dwelling houses are private residences and referred to here as houses.

Before planning begins, you need to determine whether the land is within the appropriate residential or rural zone and that a house is permitted with consent in that zone. The lot must be:

- at least 200m² in area, and
- at least 6m wide, measured at the front alignment of the proposed dwelling.

The policy also includes a number of exclusions and specific requirements to be met in relation to the development of certain land. Information sheet 1.4 has additional detail on exclusions and requirements that apply to different types of land.

What are road setbacks and articulation zones and why are they needed?

A road setback is the distance of a dwelling house from the road. The policy specifies setback distances to ensure the street maintains a consistent appearance.

The articulation zone is a 1.5m wide portion of the setback area between the house and the road.

¹ <https://maps.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/Terms>

² www.planning.nsw.gov.au/exemptandcomplying

³ www.planning.nsw.gov.au/exemptandcomplyingoverview

⁴ www.planning.nsw.gov.au/exemptandcomplyingoverview

Generally, you are not able to build in this zone, but there are allowances for small items such as an awning or a porch.

What are the road setback requirements?

The requirements apply to houses that will be built on lots that have a boundary with a road. Different roads have different setback requirements.

A primary road is the road which the front of the house faces or is proposed to face. Most properties only have a primary road frontage.

Secondary roads occur on corner lots and are the road frontages that are not the primary road. **Corner lots** are sites which have more than one boundary with a road and the angle between those boundaries is less than 135 degrees.

A parallel road is the road frontage located to the rear of a lot when there are two road frontages, but it is not the primary road and must be of 7m or more in width.

A lane is a public road and like a parallel road is located to the rear of a lot, but a lane is greater than 3m but less than 7m in width.

A Classified road – busy roads, motorways and highways that have been classified by Roads and Maritime Services (RMS). A schedule of classified roads can be found on the RMS website.

How are the setbacks calculated?

Primary road setbacks

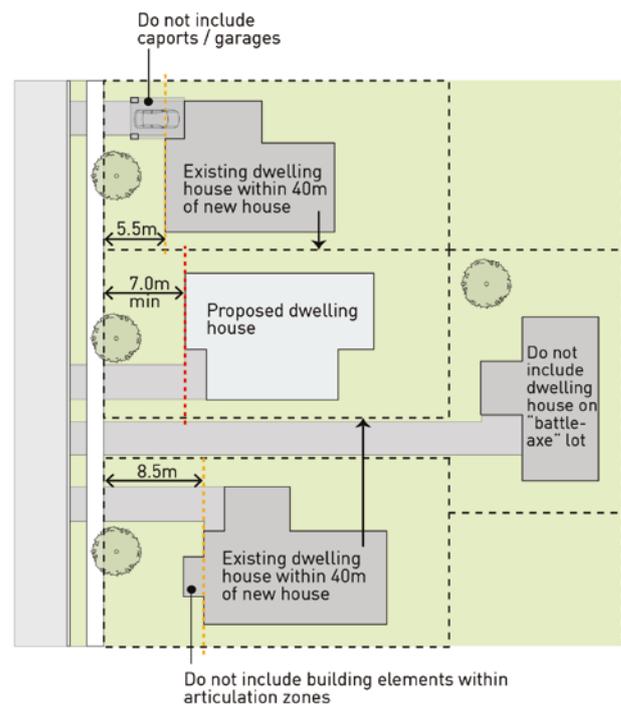
As shown in **Figure 1**, primary road setbacks are calculated using an average of the two nearest houses on lots within 40m of the site being developed

In order to determine the front setback:

- The two nearest houses must be on the same side of the same primary road, but do not need to be immediately adjoining the development site,

- The measurement should not take account of any ancillary development or development within an articulation zone on an adjacent lot,
- Houses on battle-axe lots are not included, and
- If there are not two houses within 40m, for example where there are vacant sites and where adjoining development is not a house, the policy specifies the minimum setback based on lot size.

Figure 1: How to calculate the minimum required front setbacks for dwelling houses



Secondary and parallel road setbacks

The minimum required setback from a secondary road is based on lot size and will be either 2m, 3m or 5m.

Setbacks from parallel roads for a house are at least 3m, but outbuildings such as garages may be built within this setback area to provide access to the parallel road.

Houses are not typically built to a rear lane boundary. Outbuildings are however allowed on lots with a rear lane may be built on the lane boundary for a maximum of 50% of the length of that boundary.

How are articulation zones measured?

Primary road articulation

Articulation zones are provided at the front of a house and provide an allowance for an entry and other design features to be positioned within the setback area.

An articulation zone is only available to the primary road frontage and is measured 1.5m into the minimum required setback from this road.

Any house with a frontage to a primary and/or parallel road must have a window and door facing that road and any house with a frontage to a secondary road must have a window that is at least 1m² in area that faces and is visible from the secondary road.

As shown in **Figure 2**, an applicant can choose to set back a house:

- to the minimum required setback and then have an articulation element project 1.5m in depth into the minimum required setback, or

- further than the minimum requirement and include an articulation element that extends to 1.5m into the minimum required setback.

Articulation elements may only be a maximum of 25% of the area of the zone and can include a bay window, portico, verandah or other entry feature. An example of an articulation zone on a primary road is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 2: Dwelling house articulation zones within the setback from a road

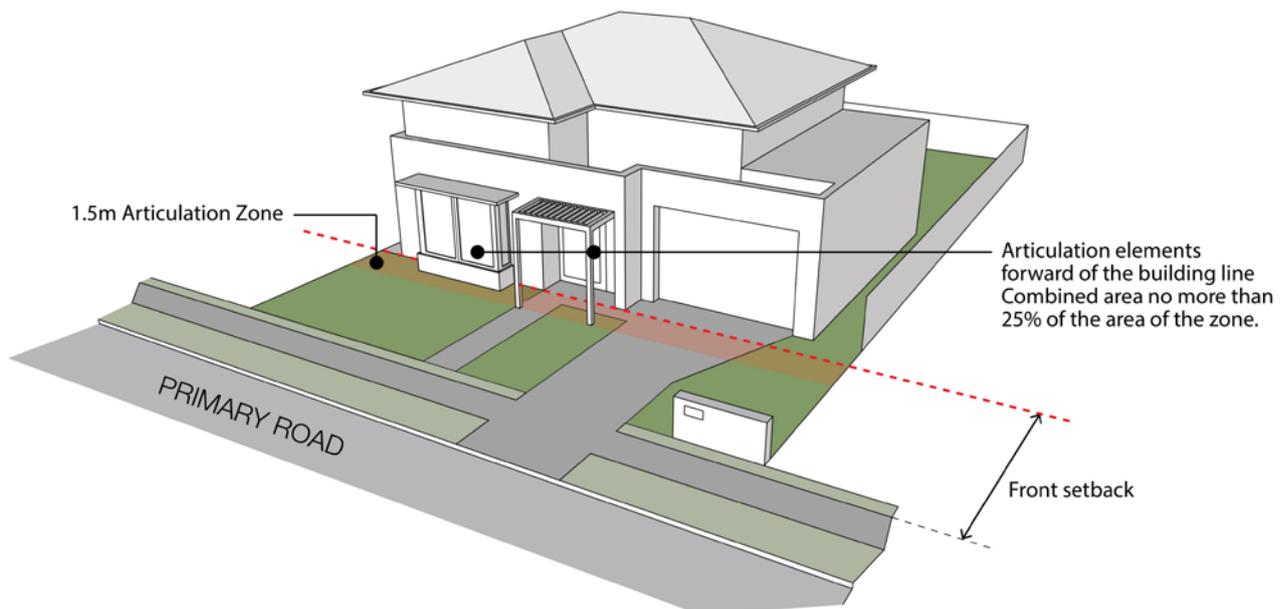
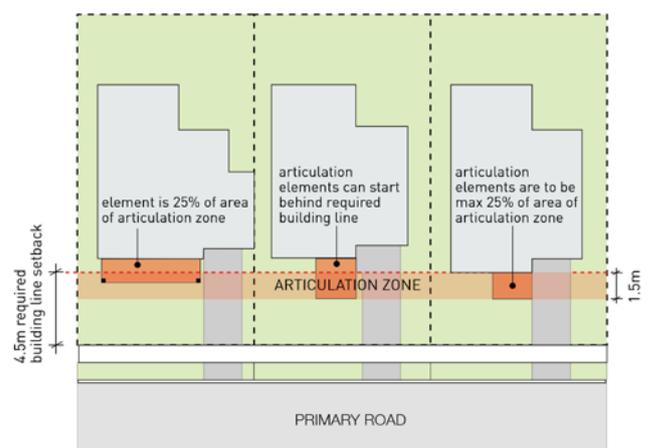


Figure 3 Shows an axonometric drawing of a dwellings front elevation and indicates where the articulation zone area is located in the setback from the road.

Secondary road articulation

On secondary road frontages, articulation elements are required for walls that face and are less than 4.5m from the secondary road boundary. This ensures that a wall is not blank and has design elements that improve the streetscape and presentation of a house on a corner lot.

The requirement can be achieved for these walls in two ways:

- Providing building elements similar to those allowed within an articulation zone on a primary road, that project not more than 1m for a minimum of 20% of the length of the walls that face the secondary road boundary, or

- Providing a step of at least 600mm in depth for least 20% of the length of the walls

Additionally, where a dwelling house has a pitched or gabled roof that overhangs these walls, eaves that are at least 450mm (but not more than 1m) must be provided for the length of those walls.

Site layout examples

Figure 4 provides examples of a number of typical residential sites and identifies the location and requirements for dwelling setbacks from roads, and how a corner lot is identified. This specifically relates to whether the bend in the road is less or greater than 135 degrees.



Figure 4 indicates dwelling front setbacks from a primary road and indicates when a bend in a road becomes a corner lot.

What else do I need to consider?

If you propose to remove or prune any existing trees or vegetation, you should contact your council first to make sure you don't need approval for this.

Any structures that would be located on public land, or on or over a public road (including temporary structures), require separate approval from the relevant council, or Roads and Maritime Services under the *Roads Act 1993* and the *Local Government Act 1993*.

If your proposal doesn't meet the required standards for either exempt or complying development, you may still be able to do the work, but you must get development approval first. In this case, you should contact your local council to discuss your options.

Further Information

For more information visit the [Exempt and Complying Development Policy website](#)⁵ or contact the Department's Exempt and Complying Development Team on 1300 305 695 or by [email](#)⁶.

Electronic Housing Code

The Electronic Housing Code website helps applicants determine whether the proposed development qualifies as exempt or complying development and the standards that must be met.

Applications for complying development can also be lodged and tracked online for those council areas which are using the Electronic Housing Code. Visit the [Electronic Housing Code website](#)⁷ to find out if it is used by your local council or for more details.

⁵ www.planning.nsw.gov.au/exemptandcomplying

⁶ codes@planning.nsw.gov.au

⁷ www.electronichousingcode.com.au/