Bollard use
Bollards are primarily used to protect a footway area from access by vehicles. This may be to prevent parking, to guide moving vehicles and protect pedestrians at a tight junction or crossover, or just to highlight an informal pedestrian crossing. They may also be used as part of traffic calming or cycle priority measures.

Bollards are used more out of expediency than design, as pavements tend not to be constructed sufficiently strongly to support over running vehicles. Many towns and cities have wide pavements in areas of parking control, and highway authorities will use bollards to prevent pavement parking either on the pavement itself, or on the forecourts behind them.

Over use of bollards results in visual clutter, and obstruction to the mobility impaired. Classically beautiful streets can have their character degraded and very ordinary streets can start to appear over managed as bollards get used as a cheap and simple solution to a greater problem that may need more time, consultation or resources to resolve.

Figure 1 An incorrect use of multiple bollards - a temporary traffic device that has become permanent

Figure 2 Low budget traffic calming using plastic reflective bollards in an historic area

Bollards should be avoided if possible and, if used, should be part of a coordinated street furniture design, and even then, only in moderation. Where they are used careful design can make their use elegant and characterful. Good design also involves using other street furniture in the line of bollards to prevent replicating their function.

Figure 3 Bollards used to protect pavements and keep vehicles clear of the footway where there is a low or no kerb

Figure 3 Bollards used to protect pavements and keep vehicles clear of the footway where there is a low or no kerb
Figure 4 Bollards used to stop pavement parking even where restricted

Figure 5 Narrow pencil bollards fit a smaller scale street

Figure 6 Bollards should be coordinated with other street furniture so an excess of poles isn’t created - here the traffic signal could have been used to do the job of one bollard

Figure 7 A short kerb can be less intrusive than a bollard - as here in the Netherlands

Figure 8 Classic old bollards add character and are rightfully retained. New ones may not be necessary.

Figure 9 Simple stone cubes can provide informal seats, blend in and look less cluttering in reasonable quantities
Parking on private forecourts is legitimate (though planning powers exist that mean conversion of a garden to hardstanding requires planning permission) however access to such parking space is usually illegally across a footway and prevention of this often involves bollard installation. In London local authorities have powers to prohibit forecourt parking.¹

Bollards are not erected at any regulated or standard distances, though they should be clear of the main carriageway, usually 450mm minimum from the kerb.

**Should they stay or should they go?**

There should be a presumption against installing bollards unless absolutely necessary. Strengthening pavements and improving pavement parking enforcement should be reviewed first. Bollards might be retained where they prevent access to the pavement where there is a high probability of pavement parking or casual over-run that might endanger a pedestrian, particularly those with mobility impairment.

Removing bollards is justifiable where the circumstances of vehicle overrun are substantially reduced to only occasional, and where the likelihood of conflict with pedestrians is or can be made negligible.

**The alternatives**

The first steps for alternatives are to see if the vehicle control can be carried out in another way. This may mean reviewing whether the highway might be altered to accommodate more parking, or improving parking enforcement. Reinforced paving slabs are now available that allow occasional vehicle over-run on the footway, for use where street clutter reduction is a priority².

Other traffic control methods include:
- raising the kerb height to dissuade vehicle over-run
- raising the pavement height using a double kerb
- using cycle racks and lamp posts instead.

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¹ Local Government Act 1972, section 28

² Reinforced paving slabs are available from companies such as RPL Ltd.
Shared surface pedestrian zones are often cluttered with bollards to delineate a vehicle track. There are plenty of pedestrian schemes that do not use bollards that show this is not necessary.

Where bollards are used, alternatives to the standard functional types can add character to the street. Regeneration schemes are excellent opportunities to provide bollards that are locally distinctive and provide an opportunity for public art.

References

LTN1/08 Traffic Management and Streetscape, DfT 2008

PRIAN, www.publicrealm.info

1 Local Authorities Act 1990
2 Camden Footway Details - see RUDI
www.rudi.net/system/files/file/required_file/Camden_Footway_Details.pdf