

3 Designing new streets and spaces



Introduction

This section provides principles for the design of new streets and spaces. The focus is primarily on residential development, as this is likely to form the majority of new development in the next ten to twenty years. The design of the public realm should achieve the following objectives:

- creating pedestrian friendly streets and spaces;
- creating a public realm with a distinctive character;
- sensitively integrated car parking; and
- incorporating successful green spaces that promote biodiversity.

Streets and spaces with character



Sensitively integrating car parking



Successful green spaces promoting biodiversity





Creating pedestrian friendly streets and spaces

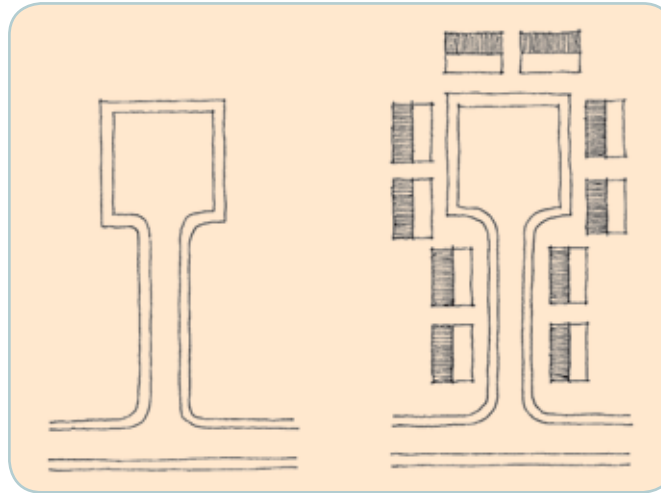
Residential streets must be designed as attractive places to be in their own right, not just as a means of getting from one place to another or a place to park cars. That is, they should be designed as places for people not places for predominantly for cars.

The principles for achieving pedestrian friendly streets are:

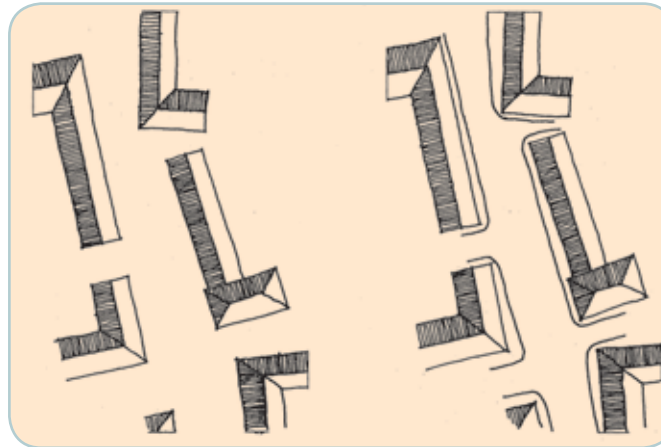
- start by thinking about the place rather than the car;
- design streets so that pedestrians and cyclists feel safe;
- design to minimise clutter; and
- design for easy maintenance.

Start by thinking about the place rather than the car

In far too many new residential developments, the roads are designed following a technical highways guide that places the emphasis on the geometries on junctions and turning heads. Once this layout has been set, houses are fitted in around the streets. The result is a bland development designed for the car. If we are to achieve the aim of creating places of character, then streets need to be thought about from the point of view of creating good places rather than the technical demands of vehicles.



Rather than fitting buildings around streets...



...fit streets between buildings.



The streets in these housing developments have been designed for the car, not for people.



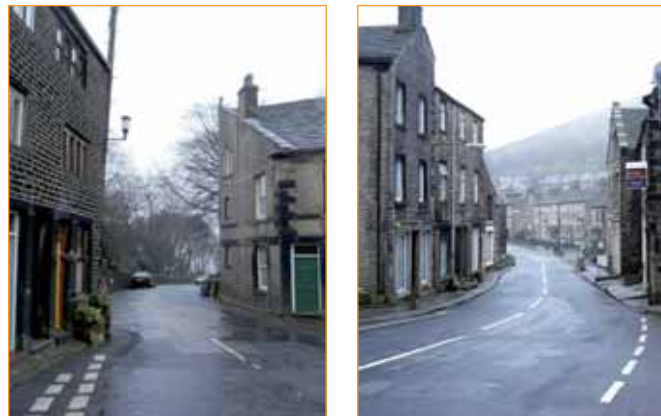
This housing development in Didsbury creates attractive streets that are not just for cars.

Design to reduce vehicle speeds

There is no need for vehicles to exceed 20mph within residential developments, and this is the maximum speed that will be permitted. Streets should be designed to keep speeds to 20mph or less by making exceeding these speeds difficult for the driver. Layout principles that can help reduce speed include:

- creating an intricate network of streets, so that distances between junctions are short so requiring drivers to stop and look frequently;
- ensuring that views along streets are contained by buildings and landscape so that, although a safe forward visibility distance is provided, drivers do not have long, open views along roads. Curving streets can help to contain forward views;
- locating buildings close to or at the back edge of the footway, so that streets feel enclosed rather than open.

Additional traffic calming may also be required to slow vehicles down. The emphasis should be on designing calming features as a 'natural' part of the street scene rather than something that has been added into a street. 'Horizontal' traffic calming (such as narrowings at key gateway locations, and chicanes) tends to be more sympathetic to the street scene than 'vertical' traffic calming (road humps and speed tables). For this reason, horizontal traffic calming is the preferred approach.



Some older places within Rochdale and Oldham have built-in traffic calming, with pinch points and streets tightly enclosed by buildings.



This traffic island makes cars change direction, as well as defining an important pedestrian link to an open space.



To be successful, chicanes must be enclosed and defined by the buildings on the street.

Design streets so that pedestrians and cyclists feel safe by:

- ensuring that the fronts of buildings overlook streets and other spaces;
- minimising blank walls, especially in corner locations;
- provide good lighting;
- designing landscape to allow views through;
- avoiding barriers and other street furniture designed to 'protect' pedestrians from cars, and instead ensure that cars travel slowly; and
- ensuring that streets and spaces are accessible to all. So that people do not feel excluded and can move around easily.

Design to minimise clutter:

- consider the position of signs and other street furniture - can they be combined to reduce clutter?
- make the most of opportunities for locating lighting on buildings and other structures, so removing light columns from footways; and
- minimise the use of bollards to control the car.

Design for easy maintenance:

- involve those who will maintain the streets and spaces early in the design process so that technical requirements can be accommodated without compromising the design approach;
- ensure that materials and street furniture have a long life and, when necessary, can be replaced easily; and
- keep designs simple, so that they are easy to clean.



Neither of these places feels safe for the pedestrian: blank walls and rear garden boundaries means that there is no overlooking of the routes.



The landscape in both of these streets introduces greening, but still maintains views along the street for pedestrians.



Many of the traditional terraces in Rochdale and Oldham have blank gable ends onto the street. A better environment is created if buildings are designed to turn the corner.



Design to minimise clutter - unlike this development.



Create a distinctive character

Designing streets and spaces so that they have a distinctive character helps to create a memorable place that people can easily find their way around. The principles that help to create character in the public realm area:

- creating a hierarchy of different street types;
- designed buildings and streets to work together positively; and
- using changes in materials and landscape to support distinctive characters.

Creating a hierarchy of different street types

Traditional highway authority technical design guides often specify a hierarchy of different road types, and these might typically include:

- a collector road, with a maximum speed of 30 mph;
- a traditional estate road;
- an access road;
- a shared surface road; and
- a mews court.

The principle of creating a hierarchy of different road types is a good one, as it helps to create distinctive places. However, the traditional highway approach to street hierarchy is based on design speeds, road widths, and the number of units that may be served off each road type. It does not consider the character of the streets that are being created.

Developers will be expected to create a hierarchy of different street types for residential development that works with the overall design approach to character. Each development is different, so this guide cannot set out prescriptive details of how a hierarchy of streets should be designed.

The hierarchy may be very simple for a small site – for example, a main street and a series of small mews courts. For larger developments, a more complex hierarchy of five or six street types will give the scope needed to create a richly varied environment. These may typically include:

- a main street that runs through the heart of the development, connecting it all together;
- secondary streets that connect to the main street, and also feed other streets and spaces;
- mews courts; and
- courtyards.



At New Hall, Harlow the different street types give the place a varied character. The main street with its trees in grass verges and 3-4 storey buildings contrasts with the more intimate scale of the more simply designed streets and mews (below).



Design buildings and streets to work together

The character of a place is influenced not only by what buildings look like, but also the way in which buildings and spaces work together to create townscape. The relationship of buildings to streets and spaces is therefore critical to quality, and the following must be carefully considered:

- building height and street width;
- continuity of frontage; and
- front boundary treatments.

Building height and street width

Varying the width of streets helps to define where they stand in the overall hierarchy. Design Bulletin 32 gives guidance on widths of residential roads:

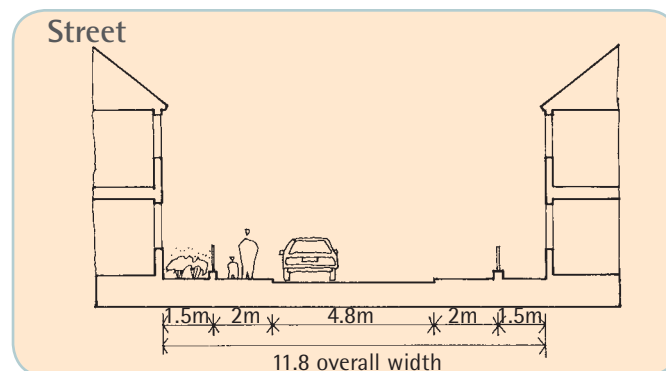
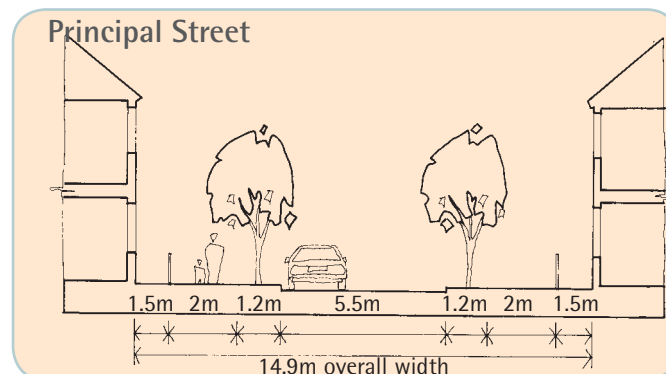
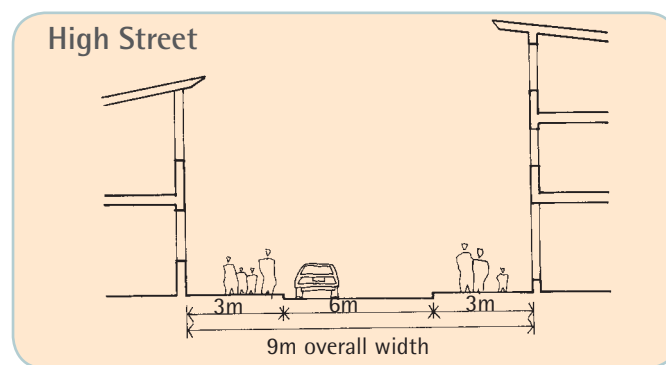
- A 5.5m carriageway allows for all vehicles to pass on another. This will normally be the maximum width needed for a residential road.
- A 4.8m carriageway allows a car to pass a large service vehicle (such as a pantechnicon), but will not allow two large vehicles to pass one another. However, traffic is still considered to be in free flow.
- At 4.1m two large cars can pass one another. However a pantechnicon cannot pass a car. This is the minimum width for a two-way residential street.
- Widths of less than 4m are realistically only for one-way traffic as cars can only pass one another at very low speeds.

The draft Manual for Streets will replace Design Bulletin 32 in 2007, and gives more detailed guidance on road widths. Once the Manual for Streets has been published, its guidance should take precedence over that set out above.

However, it is not only the technical requirements of vehicles that should determine the width of a street. Other considerations should include:

- what is an appropriate distance between the fronts of houses to provide adequate daylight and sunlight to internal spaces? This will vary according to the orientation of the street, and so needs to be considered specifically in relation to the site and not in the abstract sense of a 'pattern book' of street hierarchies.
- what is an appropriate distance for providing residents with privacy whilst inside the house?
- is landscape to be included within the street?
- is on-street car parking to be provided? DB 32 recommends a carriageway width of 5.5m for on-street parking.

Most importantly, the height of the buildings in relation to the width of the street has a significant impact on the character. Two storey dwellings enclosing a narrow mews street will create a very different character from the same buildings along a wide tree-lined boulevard.



Above: Street hierarchy for Lightmoor in Telford which aims to create: an enclosed urban character to the High Street, distinctive principal streets with boulevard tree planting connecting to the village centre: and simple streets that in turn connect to mews and courtyards.

Continuity of frontage

Continuous building frontages (such as terraced houses) result in a stronger sense of enclosure to a street than discontinuous frontages (such as detached houses). More continuous building frontages tend to be associated with higher density more urban places, whereas less continuous frontages tend to reflect a more suburban or rural character. However, this is rather an oversimplification: for example, the hearts of Dobcross or Littleborough will have a very high degree of enclosure provided by continuous frontages. It must be stressed that a design approach must relate to place – what is appropriate in the town centres will not necessarily be appropriate on the rural fringe.

Continuity (or lack of it) should be a conscious part of the design process to create streets with a distinctive character. Designers considerations should include:

- house types: the greater the number of detached dwellings, the less the continuity and sense of enclosure; the greater the number of terraced dwellings, the greater the continuity and sense of enclosure;
- how garden walls, garages and outbuildings are used to add to continuity;

- the use of specific house types in corner locations; and
- the use of landscape to reinforce continuity.

Front boundary treatments

The character of the street will be affected by the distance buildings are set back from the footway, and the treatment of front gardens.

- buildings right at the back edge of the footway with no front garden result in a very strong sense of enclosure and an 'urban' feel to the street; whereas
- buildings set back behind large, green front gardens will enclose the street less strongly and have a quite different, more suburban character.



At Brindleplace, buildings define and enclose central spaces.



Above: Different levels of enclosure and different characters can be created even with buildings of a similar scale. It all depends on the relationship to the street (setback, front gardens, landscape in the street) and the degree of continuity of the buildings (continuous terraces, semi-detached houses with gaps in between). The designer must make choices appropriate to his or her specific scheme.

In addition to the setback distance, the boundary treatment itself will affect character. Fences, walls, hedges, railings or – alternatively – no boundary, all have a significant effect on character and should be designed in as part of the overall scheme.

Issues designers should also consider include:

- providing privacy from passers-by for residents with a change in level or small setback from the street;
- designing in locations for plants and other forms of 'personalisation' – 1 to 2 m is often sufficient;
- providing a place to pause before entering or leaving the dwelling, and preventing children running directly into the road; and
- designing in bin stores (see Avoiding detail compromising quality on page 37).

Landscape and materials

Landscape, materials and street furniture should be used to support the distinctive character of streets, and should be carefully considered in the development of the hierarchy of street types. For example:

- materials may change from bitmac for streets at the top of the hierarchy to brick pavers for courtyards and setts and bound gravel for mews streets;
- formal 'boulevard' tree planting along streets at the top of the hierarchy may change to informal, soft planting in a mews; and
- lamp columns may be free standing in wider streets, whereas lights may be attached to buildings in a mews.

It is important that arbitrary changes in materials, landscape and street furniture are avoided.

It is important also that hard and soft landscaping is designed and implemented with the issue of future maintenance in mind. Ease of maintenance should be addressed in the choice of materials and design statements and the agencies responsible for maintenance should be consulted at an early stage. However, solutions that compromise the ability of schemes to meet the Design Principles in this guidance as supported by UDP policies will not be permitted.



Above: buildings at the back edge of the footway enclose the street more tightly than buildings set back from the pavement (below).



Below: Setback distances and boundary treatments give a different character to all of these streets.





Sensitively integrated car parking

Designing good car parking into residential developments is a major challenge for designers, and a strategy for car parking should be developed early in the design process. There are two often conflicting principles with which designers must contend:

- On the one hand, cars parked on the street and in front of dwellings can seriously detract from the quality and character of a place. Reducing the visual impact of parked cars is a key principle in creating good residential environments.
- On the other hand, residents should be provided with safe and convenient access to their cars. Hiding them away in poorly designed courtyards can lead to problems of crime and lack of personal security. Residents normally like to be able to see their parked car from within their house.

There are several approaches to car parking:

- parking within the dwelling itself (i.e. an integral garage) or in the private area owned by the house (the 'curtilage' of the dwelling) - referred to as 'in-curtilage parking;

- parking in communal areas, which may be either to the front or the rear of the dwellings; and
- on-street parking

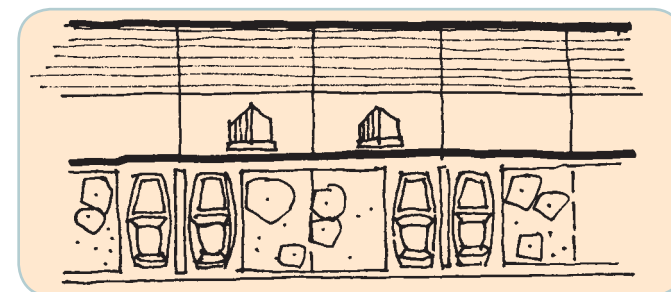
Good layouts tend to use a combination of these different approaches, rather than using just one solution to parking.

The principles that help to sensitively integrate car parking are:

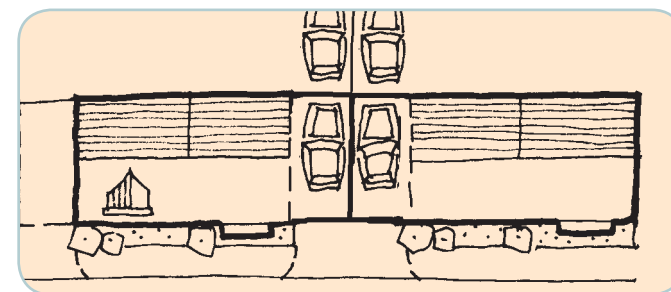
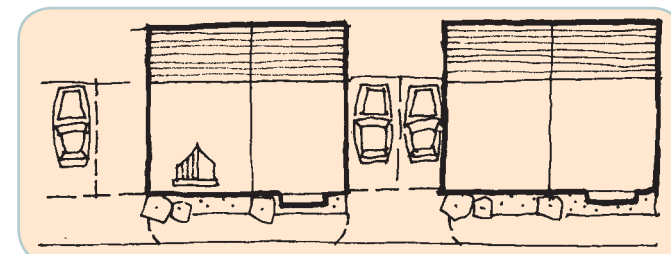
- minimise the visual impact of cars parked within the curtilage of a dwelling;
- integrate garages into the townscape;
- create high-quality, safe communal parking areas; and
- design on-street parking into the layout.

Minimising visual impact

Cars parked in front of houses tends to result in cars dominating the view along the street. This approach needs very careful landscape treatment to soften the visual impact of parked cars. For this reason, parking in front of dwellings should be avoided where possible.



Above: Parking in front of houses is discouraged. Below: Parking accessed from the street should be designed to minimise the visual impact of the car.



If parking is to be accessible from the street, its visual impact can be reduced by locating it between buildings or taking it through to garages or parking spaces in the rear garden. Wide frontage, shallow depth dwellings can be an effective and attractive way of taking cars under buildings and into the rear area.

Integrating garages

Where garages are an integral part of the dwelling (most commonly in a 'town house'), a garage door will front onto the street. It is important that these are sensitively designed into the facade of the building, with windows and doors to other rooms providing an 'active' frontage to the street. Long rows (i.e. more than three) garage doors unrelieved by doors or windows to other rooms will not be permitted.

There is an opportunity for stand-alone garages to contribute positively to the street scene by designing them as 'outbuildings' to the dwelling they serve.



Integral garage doors, windows and front doors combine to create an attractive, lively edge to the street.



Too many garage doors, unrelieved by windows and doors result in a hostile environment.



These garages have been designed to appear as workshops or outbuildings, and contribute positively to the street.



Far left: Parking in front of dwellings must be very carefully designed if it is to be successful. Left: at Didsbury the landscape and recessed garage doors combine to reduce the visual impact of cars.



Mews flats over garages can help create attractive, safe environments.

Creating high quality, safe communal areas

At the higher residential densities now expected, some car parking will need to be accommodated in communal areas, of which there are two types:

- 'public' areas to the fronts of buildings; and
- 'private' areas to the rear.

Communal parking in public areas provides an opportunity to create squares and other urban 'set pieces' that - if well designed - can create a focal point within a development, that has the flexibility to accommodate other uses when not occupied by cars.

For this type of parking to work well, it should be designed so that:

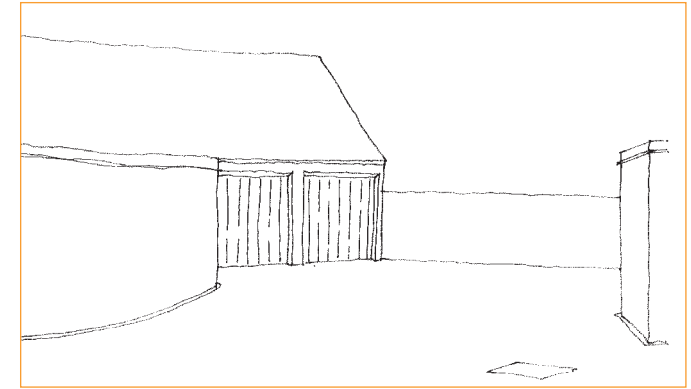
- the space is overlooked and defined by the fronts of dwellings;
- good quality materials are used, avoiding wall-to-wall tarmac;
- landscape is used to soften the visual impact of cars and to structure the spaces - e.g. trees forming a grid, rather than shrubs being planted in 'left over' corners;
- organising parked cars in small groups (e.g. five in a row as a maximum) and large areas of parking are avoided; and
- the space is designed to look good both with and without cars parked in it.



Ballard Close in Littleborough has been designed so that the communal parking areas are attractive spaces, and not just places to park cars.



The entrance to this rear parking court is well overlooked by houses, which helps give it a feeling of security.



How not to design a rear parking court: blank walls, no overlooking, low quality surfacing, no landscape.



With a little more care, the courtyard could be an attractive and safe place. A mews flat above the garage provides overlooking of the courtyard, and landscape has been thoughtfully located on the view into the courtyard.

Parking in private courtyards to the rear of dwellings can help to create an urban character to the streetscape (as it helps to push buildings forward to enclose streets) as well as providing residents with convenient car parking. However, private courtyards must be carefully designed if they are to be safe, secure and attractive. The key principles are:

- design private courtyards as attractive places to be in their own right, not just as places to park cars. Incorporate good quality materials and landscape;
- design entrances to give a feeling of entering private space – e.g. ensure that buildings at the entrances to courtyards are designed to 'turn the corner' and so providing overlooking; continue buildings above the entrance;
- where courtyards are sufficiently large, locate dwellings within them to provide activity and overlooking. Special dwelling types such as flats over garages (FOGS) can be very effective;
- design robust boundaries to rear gardens constructed of brick, stone or other durable material; and
- consider views into the courtyard from the public street, and terminate them with something positive (the front of a dwelling, the entrance to a FOG, a mature tree) rather than something that suggests an uncared for place (a sub-station, parked cars)

On-street parking

Whilst a key principle of designing car parking is to reduce the visual impact of cars, some on-street parking can be positive as it:

- brings activity to the street;
- can act as traffic calming, slowing down vehicles; and
- is also useful for visitors, as it is usually conveniently located near front doors.

On-street parking should be designed into the layout at the outset. There are broadly two approaches:

- designing parking bays into a street, as shown opposite; or
- designing streets as 'home zones'.

Home Zones are residential streets in which the road space is shared between drivers of motor vehicles and other road users, with the wider needs of residents in mind. This is achieved by adopting approaches to street design, landscape and highway design that control how vehicles move without restricting the number of vehicular movements. Home Zones are more than just a way of reducing traffic speeds.

'Home Zones: A Planning and Design Handbook' (2002) produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation provides comprehensive guidance on the design of home zones, based on principles including:

- design for maximum vehicle speeds of 10mph;
- ensure there is a clear entrance to the home zone;
- use shared surfacing;
- keep the character of the street unified; and
- integrate on-street parking.



At Ingress Park in Kent, a variety of on-street parking has been carefully designed into the scheme: from parallel parking on street (below) to shared-surface home zones, courtyards and mews (above).



Car parking in commercial developments

Some uses require large areas of car parking, for example: supermarkets; edge of town business developments; and retail parks. There are two key design issues to consider when designing such car parks: although there are many cars, there is also a considerable amount of pedestrian movement as people make their way to and from parked cars; and the sheer size of the car park needs to be softened and visually broken down. Design principles to be considered should therefore include:

- locate building frontages and entrances so that they are easily accessible from the car park. Avoid entrances around corners or accessed off narrow routes that are not overlooked. Do not locate service areas onto the customer car park;
- consider pedestrian desire lines across the car park to the various buildings it serves, and design safe and attractive routes for people on foot using high quality materials;
- include a pedestrian only zone adjacent to the building frontages, so that there is some 'breathing space' from parked cars;
- break up the mass of car parking through a well-considered structure of vertical elements such as trees, attractive light columns, public art and high quality structures such as trolley shelters; and
- ensure that security measures such as CCTV are carefully designed into the layout from the outset.

Right: Large commercial uses generate a considerable amount of pedestrian movement between the building and parked cars. Designing in appropriate, high quality pedestrian routes through the car park is important to achieving good quality design.

Far right: A pedestrian only zone adjacent to the buildings helps reduce the impact of parked cars.



Above: The planting has not yet become established in this scheme. However, the trees help to identify the pedestrian and cycle routes that have been thoughtfully integrated into the layout.



Car parking in city centres

Car parking in city centres needs to provide for large numbers of users whilst minimising the visual impact on character and identity.

- make car parks feel more like spaces and squares through the use of quality materials, planting and lighting;
- use innovative layouts and surfacing to create interesting streetscape environments that are appealing both with and without cars;
- design for adaptability: there may be opportunities to use car parks for markets and civic events;
- use landscaping to reduce visual impact of cars. This should be substantial and well integrated, not insignificant and superfluous (e.g. a grid of trees rather than low shrub planting); and
- explore opportunities to implement sustainable practices (e.g. permeable paving, drainage swales, etc).

Multi-storey car parks often form part of town centre developments, and – if poorly designed – can have a very negative impact. There are two key design issues to consider when designing multi-storey car parks: ensuring that users and cars are safe and secure; and minimising the apparent bulk of the building so ensuring that it has, as far as possible, a human rather than monolithic scale.

Safety and security

Multi-storey car parks should be designed so that they feel safe by:

- creating a clear layout, so that it is easy to find pedestrian entrances and exits;

- ensuring that pedestrian circulation, especially lifts and stairs, is well designed with views out from the building, good lighting, and avoidance of 'hiding places';
- good lighting levels are provided to all areas, with daylight maximised where possible;
- CCTV is built-in to all areas; and
- ensuring that materials are durable and easy to clean, so a well-cared for appearance can be maintained.

Minimising bulk

Multi-storey car parks are large and bulky buildings, and require careful design if they are to form a positive part of the wider townscape. In particular,

Below: Multi-storey car park in Dundee where the facade is broken down into 'human scale' elements and the stair tower responds to the corner location.



Right: Multi-storey car park combined with retail at ground floor and restaurant on top floor.

Below right: Flats wrap around this car park in Canterbury, so that it does not dominate the street scene.

Below: Car park in Birmingham, where screen planting will eventually soften its visual impact on the street scene.



their bulk needs to be broken down to a more human scale than the 'standard' concrete multi-storey car park of the 1960s and 1970s. Design principles should include:

- wrapping uses such as residential or retail around the edges of the car park, so that the building presents an active edge to the streets and spaces around it;
- distinguishing between different elements of the building, especially where stair towers can add verticality to an otherwise horizontally-proportioned building;
- using high quality facade materials (i.e. not just concrete) that are broken down into human-scaled elements; and
- softening the appearance of the car park by introducing greening.





Green spaces and biodiversity

Green spaces

There are policy requirements for minimum areas of open space within new residential development (see UG/2 in Rochdale's UDP, and RI in Oldham's UDP). However, this guide's aim is not to repeat these requirements but instead focus on the quality of open space that should be provided.

High quality open space brings many benefits to residential environments. Good spaces:

- function well for their intended use, which may include play, exercise and/or relaxation;
- provide an area with a sense of identity and community; and
- are usually located at the heart of the development, rather than being a left over space on the edge.

The principles that help create successful open spaces are:

- design open spaces into the development at the earliest stage: Space Left Over After Planning (SLOAP) must be avoided;
- ensure that fronts of buildings overlook the space;

- provide safe, accessible pedestrian and cycle links to and across them; and
- design the space to reflect the character of the development – formal spaces for more urban environments; and softer spaces for more informal environments, for example.



Above: a formal linear open space at Greenhithe, Kent provides an attractive setting for both existing and new buildings, and an important pedestrian link to the waterfront.

Below: A more informal space providing a link at Cambourne, Cambridgeshire.



Above: greenscape needs to be positively designed in to residential development. This 'left over' space has very little value.

Below: a shared greenspace designed as an integral part of the development at Greenwich Millennium Village.



Biodiversity

In designing green spaces into new development, there is a positive opportunity to maintain and enhance the ecological value and biodiversity of the area by:

- retaining existing vegetation where possible;
- designing new open space to link with existing open spaces, so providing continuous green corridors;
- creating new habitats for wildlife;
- integrating features such as sustainable urban drainage ponds and swales into open spaces; and
- **designing to reduce maintenance requirements, and ensuring that a robust management plan has been developed.**

Developers will be expected to demonstrate that:

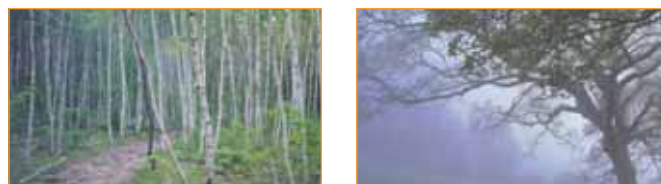
- they have carried out an assessment of the site's existing landscape and ecological value to an appropriate level of detail;
- the proposed development accommodates existing features where possible;
- the landscape and open space strategy for the site aims to enhance the biodiversity of the site.



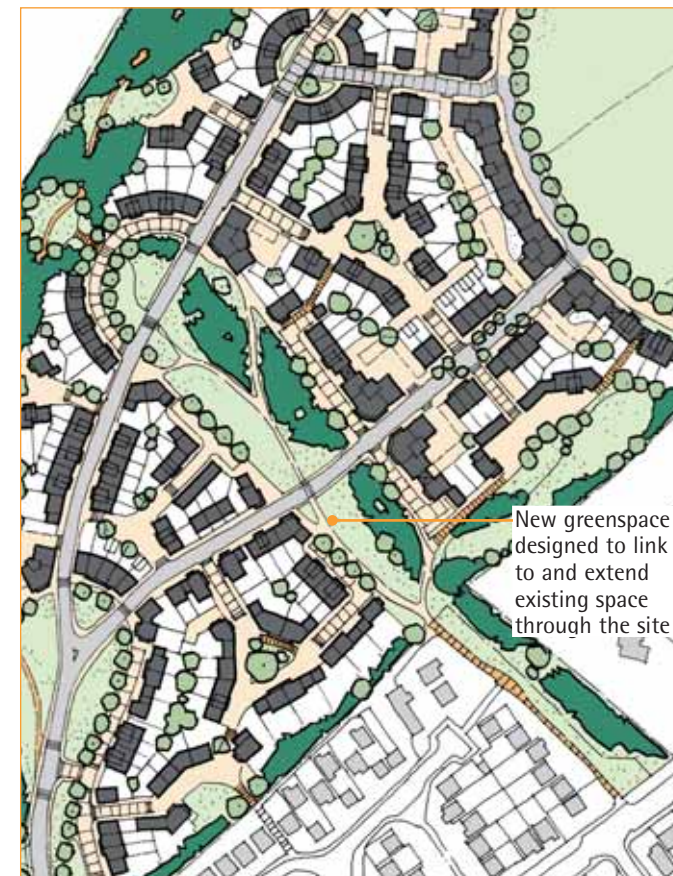
Water features can not only be attractive, they can also form part of a sustainable drainage system and provide habitats for wildlife.



This analysis of a site's constraints and opportunities (above) included an assessment on how linkages to existing areas of green open space could be made. This informed the design of the masterplan (right) which creates connections to surrounding area and extends existing space through the site.



Developers should carry out an assessment of the site's existing landscape and ecological value, and develop a strategy for retaining and enhancing existing features.



Open space should be integrated into the movement network for pedestrians and cyclists, and clear, direct routes provided to conveniently connect places together.

4 Existing streets and spaces: Problems



Introduction

The quality of existing streets and spaces within Oldham and Rochdale has a major impact on how the boroughs are perceived. There are many types and characters of streets and spaces within the two boroughs. However, there are a number of street and space types that share similar problems, and these may be grouped as follows:

- major arterial routes;
- local distributor roads;
- residential streets and spaces;
- civic spaces and town centre streets; and
- green spaces.

This chapter provides a summary of the key problems and design challenges that need to be addressed in each of these types of street and space. Chapter Five goes on to set out design principles as to how these problems may be resolved.



Arterial routes.



Local distributor.



Residential streets.



Civic spaces & town centres.



Green spaces.



Arterial roads

Arterial roads carry significant amounts of traffic compared to other roads in the network, as they act as major connectors tying different parts of the two Boroughs together and to the wider region. They are used by traffic making local journeys and through traffic. As these routes often slice through local centres and edges of residential neighbourhoods there is a conflict between pedestrian requirements to cross and the free flow of traffic and this makes these areas often hostile, unwelcoming places for those on foot. Arterial roads also form the first impression of Oldham and Rochdale for visitors which at present is often of a car-dominated, low quality environment.

The design issues for arterial roads are:

- they are important 'gateways' to the towns, and their environmental quality needs to be improved. Upgrading of entire road corridors through holistic, integrated strategies;
- they need to become places that are more welcoming for pedestrians – for example, by providing defined, safe crossing points at locations convenient for those on foot; and
- at the same time, they need to maintain their role as major traffic routes.





Local distributor roads

Local distributor roads link residential districts together, and to town centres. Many of them run through local neighbourhood centres, and have facilities such as schools, shops and bus stops located along them. They are the focus for public transport and predominantly carry local traffic. The combination of large traffic volumes and high pedestrian footfall often results in tensions between the needs of pedestrians and vehicles. These roads also have the potential to provide the identity to many local neighbourhoods and therefore have a significant role in creating the character of urban areas.

Key design issues for local distributor routes:

- As they often run through local neighbourhood centres, it is important that the distinct characters of these areas punctuate the route so that there is a sense of arrival and departure when travelling through these neighbourhoods.
- High pedestrian footfall and large amounts of traffic make clear crossing points, traffic calming and the removal of street clutter key priorities.



Street clutter as a result of many signs, bollards, telephone boxes, advertising, and lighting can create an environment that is difficult for pedestrians to access.



These are two views of the same road at different points in Oldham. Their widths are similar, yet their characters and qualities are very different.



Residential streets and spaces

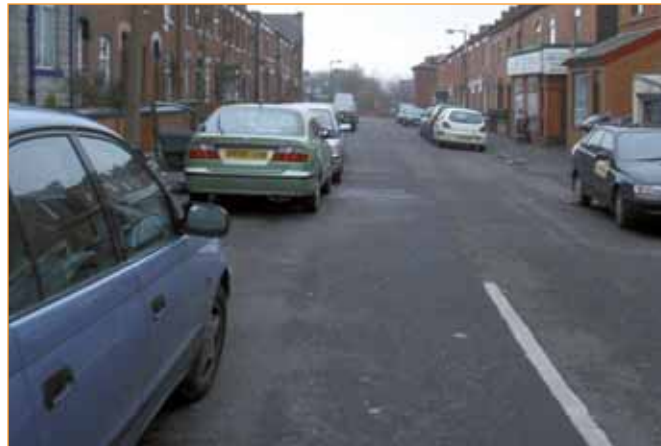
Residential streets provide the greatest opportunity for addressing the pedestrian/vehicle balance and creating pedestrian-friendly places. Many residential streets in the borough suffer from high volumes of commuter traffic and speeding vehicles and there is a distinct lack of safe pedestrian environments, open space and character. There are a number of ways in which these issues can be addressed:

- traffic management – e.g. improved signage and road closures;
- traffic calming and 20mph zones – e.g. echelon parking, kerb build outs, speed tables, and so on; and
- the creation of home zones – remodeling streets as spaces and giving the pedestrian priority.

Each of these options provides opportunities to alter the character of residential streets, reprioritise roads as pedestrian environments and develop integrated open space networks.

Key design issues for spaces within residential areas include:

- involving local people in decision-making, so encouraging a sense of ownership of the space;
- reinforcing areas of local importance, such as a community centre or school;
- using improvements to help with traffic management – for example, by creating small squares at closed-off junctions; and
- considering not just the quantity but also the quality of open spaces. Bold decisions to *reduce* the amount of open space can be appropriate in the right area, such as Radburn-style estates which tend to have a large amount of poor quality open space.



A typical inner-urban residential street, where parking tends to dominate the area and the straight carriageway tends to encourage drivers to drive too fast.



Not all open space is good open space. Any strategy for improvement should consider the open space in the context of the wider area and ensure it has a clear role.



Civic spaces and city centre streets

Civic spaces are at the heart of our towns and cities. These squares, plazas and promenades have busy functions as focuses for pedestrian activity and public events. Often formal in character, their scale, quality and strong sense of place represents the identity of the city, forming local landmarks and reinforcing legibility by providing settings to key monuments and buildings.

City centre streets are often less busy than other key routes, as traffic has often been restricted to enhance the pedestrian experience and safety of the town centre. Vehicular use of such streets is primarily by public transport and servicing vehicles.

Key design issues for town centre streets:

- Pedestrians are generally given priority in these areas and therefore the removal of street clutter and provision of convenient, adequate crossing points and enhanced accessibility are key concerns.
- These streets offer opportunities to draw out the character of the city centre through high quality materials and sensitive road layouts.



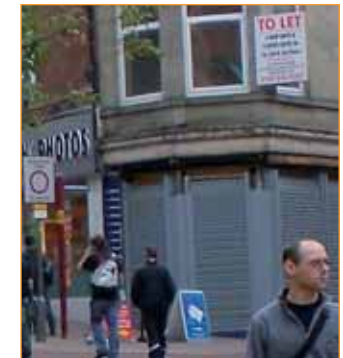
Rochdale: good example of civic space, with simple, high quality materials, a lack of clutter and active building frontages onto the square.



Oldham: Good example of town centre street, where paving materials relate to the character of the local area, and pedestrians are provided with safe and convenient access to buses.



However, there are problems: close to these successful spaces are streets that have unattractive 'backs' onto them or blank edges masked by advertising hoardings. The character becomes negative and the place feels as if it 'could be anywhere'.



Poor quality and poorly maintained paving materials along with boarded up shops give a down-at-heel image.



Green spaces

Green spaces are the 'green lungs' of towns and villages, and contribute to improving people's physical and mental health by providing places for informal recreation and relaxation. They bring the countryside into our towns and villages and help to make neighbourhoods attractive places where people want to live and work.

The quantity, quality, character, distribution and accessibility of greenspace vary across the two boroughs. These diverse greenspaces form the green fabric of the urban areas and include those that are publicly or privately owned and managed, and sites that may or may not be accessible for public recreation. Green spaces range from local neighbourhood pocket parks to outdoor sports areas, traditional public gardens and semi-natural habitats.

The boroughs of Rochdale and Oldham have significantly improved the quality of some of the areas' greenspaces in recent years. However, there is still work to be done in addressing the problems of poor quality greenspace, which include:

- lack of facilities such as cafes and toilets (for larger greenspaces) and facilities such as play equipment and seating areas being in poor condition;
- concerns about safety and security, including poor lighting, lack of overlooking from adjacent buildings, and anti-social behaviour;

- bland landscapes designed for minimal maintenance rather than an enriching environment; and
- problems such as litter, vandalism and dog mess.



This dark and overgrown route appears unsafe, and so people feel discouraged from using it. Cutting back the overhanging greenery and providing good lighting would help change the perceptions of safety.



A bland landscape designed for minimal maintenance rather than providing an enriching environment.