Public Realm Design Guide

A guide to creating good streets and spaces

Supplementary Planning Document

- **I** Introduction page 3
- 2 What makes good streets and spaces? page 7
- **3 Designing new streets and spaces** page 15
- **4 Existing streets and spaces: Problems** page 39
- 5 Existing streets and spaces: Design principles page 47
- 6 Appendices page 67



Foreword

These documents form the Urban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, which supports the development plan and provides a basis for achieving high standards and good quality design throughout the Borough.

They set out how the Council and our partner agencies can work together to improve the quality of the places that we create. Good design is essential to the future of the Borough. It adds to our quality of life, attracts business investment and reinforces pride in our towns and villages.

The guide is not intended to be prescriptive. We have been very concerned to ensure that the approach that we are taking will enable us to take into account local character. I very much hope that everybody involved in the development process will find it of help in bringing forward new developments, whether they be in urban parts of Oldham or in the rural villages of Saddleworth.

Councillor Hibbert

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

This guide is a great example of how Councils and their partner agencies can work together to ensure that through quality design we can protect and improve our towns and villages. We have listened to what all the stakeholders have said and we have focussed on those areas where design guidance can make a real difference, i.e. the design of new residential development and the public realm. With this guide we aim to bring in a local agenda that protects, enhances and sustains local communities and their distinct characters. The design guidance provides us with a vital tool to help developers and investors deliver what our local communities want and it will allow Planning Officers and Planning Committees to judge applications against the principles set out in this guidance.

Councillor Hobhouse

Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council

This guide was adopted by Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council 1st October 2007 as part of the Urban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.





I Introduction

1 Introduction

The 'public realm' is the collective term for all the spaces between buildings in towns and villages towhich the public has access. This includes streets, squares, greens, parks and footpaths.

The quality of the public realm within our towns and villages can make a positive contribution to the lives of people who live and work in them. Poor public space contributes to crime and reinforces negative perceptions of a place. High quality public space engenders a sense of pride in a place, discourages crime, promotes biodiversity and healthy living, and increases land values. Too often, however, the public realm is simply forgotten as the space 'left over' between buildings.

Good design need not cost more – a creative approach and careful planning at the outset can create good places that are easy to maintain.

This Public Realm Design Guide forms one part of a series of Design Guides provided jointly by Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council, and the Oldham Rochdale Partners In Action Housing Market Renewal.

Its aim is to provide clear guidance to everyone involved in designing and constructing streets and space (including architects, designers, public and private sector developers, house builders and engineers) on the quality of design expected by both Boroughs.

The Guide will also be used by local authority officers to help assess the quality of planning applications.

The Boroughs of Rochdale and Oldham have adopted the series of urban design guides as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). This formal adoption process involved consultation with local stakeholders, and this document has been amended in response to consultation.

A 'Design and Planning Process: A Guide to Good Practice' is also available, which gives advice on good practice for preparing and submitting planning applications.

This Public Realm Design Guide is informed by the Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide, which provides design guidance for all types of development within the two Boroughs.

The Urban Design Guide sets out ten urban design principles, and these are listed opposite.

Chapter Two shows how the first seven principles contribute to good streets and spaces.

Chapter Three sets out the design principles that should inform the design of streets and spaces within new development. The emphasis is on residential development, as this is the most common form of new development within the two Boroughs.

Chapter Four sets out the challenges that need to be addressed in improving existing streets and spaces.

Chapter Five provides design principles for improving existing streets and spaces.

This document is not intended to be a technical guide to highway design. Instead, it sets out the key principles that should underpin the design of streets and spaces. In doing so, the guide aims to help multidisciplinary teams in the complex task of designing, constructing and maintaining the public realm.



Diagram showing how the Design Guides relate to local planning policy.

The principles

- Character: enhancing identity and sense of place
- Safety and inclusion: ensuring places are safe, secure and welcoming for all
- Diversity: providing variety and choice
- Ease of movement: ensuring places that are easy to get to and move through
- Legibility: ensuring places can be easily understood
- Adaptability: anticipating the need for change
- Sustainability: minimise the impact on our environment
- Designing for future maintenance: designing buildings and spaces so that their quality can be maintained over time
- Good streets and spaces: creating places with attractive outdoor spaces
- Well designed buildings: constructing sustainable buildings appropriate to their function and context

2 What makes good streets and spaces?

Good streets and spaces are created not just by a single thing, but by the way buildings, landscape and street come together

- 2.1 Character page 8
- 2.2 Safety and inclusion page 9
- 2.3 Diversity page 10
- 2.4 Ease of movement page 10
- 2.5 Legibility page 11
- 2.6 Adaptability page 12
- 2.7 Sustainability page 13

2.1 Character

Good streets and spaces have a distinctive character and create a 'sense of place' that makes us feel that we are somewhere with its own character. The character of a street is created by the way the buildings, landscape and street come together. Character is not a product of just one of these elements, but is a culmination of these features, as can be seen from the many examples throughout this guide. Parks and open spaces are important contributors to local distinctiveness, offering opportunities to reflect elements of the local landscape, culture and heritage through design concepts, materials, topography and planting. In many situations the greenspaces themselves may identify the place, standing out as proud icons of an area.





A strong character is not just reserved for old places: well designed new places can create positive new characters for streets and spaces.



What gives this street its distinctive character?

- the repetitive design and consistent red brick of the terraced houses;
- the location of the houses right on the pavement, giving the street a very enclosed feel;
- the slope of the street this is a hilly area;
- the strict geometry of the roads: straight lines meeting at right angles; and
- the view out to the chimney this is an urban place.



What gives this space its distinctive character?

- the generous width and substantial buildings, along with materials, lighting, tree planting and street furniture gives a 'civic' character to this town centre high street;
- a restrictive and distinct range of materials tell us about the natural, industrial and geological heritage of the area; and
- public art feature promotes and reflect cultural identity and aspirations of the local community.

2.2 Safety and inclusion

Good streets and spaces are safe and accessible. This means that:

- they are overlooked by the fronts of buildings (which incorporate windows and doors), so that there are 'eyes on the street' and people in the public realm feel safe;
- the rear boundaries of properties do not back onto streets and spaces, where they are vulnerable to criminals as well as creating a negative 'dead' edge to the street;
- there is a mix of uses, so that areas are not completely empty at night – e.g. town centres have flats as well as shops and offices (see also diversity below);
- views along streets and through spaces unfold as pedestrians walk along, so that people can see what lies ahead of them;
- where appropriate, vehicle speeds are kept low to provide a safer place for pedestrians and cyclists;
- streets and spaces are free of clutter that makes access difficult;
- changes in level are carefully designed to provide access for all e.g. steps and ramps integrated with one another; and
- good management and maintenance of green spaces is obvious to users, helping to give a feeling of safety.





Good streets have buildings facing them (far left images), not backing onto them (left images).









Good open spaces clearly 'belong' to the buildings around them (far left) rather than being left over spaces between buildings (left).







Good streets and spaces are accessible, with clutter kept to a minimum (far left and centre).

Good streets and spaces are accessible to all (left).

page 9 | Public Realm Design Guide

2.3 Diversity

A range of different uses along a street or surrounding a space can give it liveliness and vitality. This is especially important in the centres of towns or neighbourhoods, which form the focus for community activity. Large areas of just one use are monotonous and do not give people what they need for their day-to-day lives – e.g. the traditional corner shop provides diversity in an otherwise residential area.

By providing spaces of different sizes, characters and functions, the public realm can provide stimulating environments for a wide range of users. Diversity may be a combination of uses within one space (e.g. sports facilities, play area and quiet garden) or a series of single use spaces along a route.

Diversity of building design and landscape can give a street interest. However, a strong character often comes from a consistency of materials and appearance, and so variety often works best where it has a clear role in the streetscape, for example, creating a landmark on an important street corner.



Variety within the street scene gives visual interest, but needs to be carefully balanced with creating a coherent character. Older places often get this balance right by using just a few materials and buildings of similar scales, with the occasional contrasting building.

2.4 Ease of movement

Good streets and spaces allow people to move around easily by:

- connecting to other streets and spaces, so that people have a choice of convenient routes to get to their destination;
- providing pedestrians with enough space to move around, with pavements of an adequate width and avoiding clutter (such as light columns, litter bins and bollards);
- linking routes with green spaces, so that pedestrians and cyclists can travel along attractive, enjoyable routes;
- accommodating natural desire lines across spaces, connecting destinations together; and
- slowing down vehicles, where appropriate, so that pedestrians feel safe.







Cafe and retail mix brings life to the street. Flats above shops ensure the town centre does not 'die' in the evening (far left and centre).

Clearly marked, integrated and safe routes for travel on foot or by bicycle (left).

2.5 Legibility

Good streets and spaces help people to understand where they are in the town or village. The appearance of the street will let you know whether it is a main route leading to the town centre, a quiet residential street, a major neighbourhood park, or an informal green space for local children. This quality of being easily understood is 'legibility'.

Legible streets and spaces tend to:

- form part of a clear hierarchy of different routes from wide arterial roads connecting to the town centres, to small residential streets, from small-scale pocket parks to open parkland;
- incorporate views to landmarks these may be of town-wide importance (e.g. Rochdale Town Hall) or of local relevance (a place of worship);
- be punctuated by a series of 'events' such as opening up to form a small square; and
- have clear functions that is, they are designed for particular users and uses.





The scale and character of open spaces should relate to their role in the town. This small, local space outside a primary school (far left) is quite different in character to Exchange Square in Manchester (left), and both are appropriate to their relative importance.











Views of landmarks help to make legible places. Landmarks may be of local importance (such as the kiosk, far left) or of town-wide value (Rochdale Town Hall, left).

page 11 | Public Realm Design Guide

2.6 Adaptability

Good streets and spaces are able to accommodate changes in the ways in which we live, work, travel and play – a quality called adaptability. Streets and spaces that are designed to be used in only one way (e.g. ring roads for moving vehicles quickly) are not adaptable, and are difficult to change.

Adaptable streets and spaces tend to:

- include informal places for people to sit. These allow many different things to occur: watching street entertainers, taking a break from work to eat a sandwich, meeting friends or simply resting;
- accommodate a range of users, avoiding completely pedestrianised areas (except for small parts of town and neighbourhood centres) and avoiding areas designed solely for traffic;
- locate services (gas, water, electricity and telecommunications) so that they allow for future flexibility;
- where they are designed to accommodate cars, be designed to look good both with and without cars in them; and
- be linked to other streets and spaces, so creating a network of routes that can be used in different ways over time.





A street designed to give pedestrians priority, but also allowing flexibility of use by providing vehicular access and temporary market stalls (far left).

Good streets and spaces can accommodate a range of users and uses (left).







Places to sit allow a range of activities to take place in streets and spaces.

2.7 Sustainability

Adaptability is one quality that helps to make sustainable places. In addition, sustainable streets and spaces:

- are oriented to maximise access to sunlight and minimise the chilling effects of cold winds;
- use durable materials, sourced from local areas where possible;
- are designed to make maintenance as easy as possible, and budgets are allocated for that maintenance;
- incorporate existing water features to conserve water ranging from porous paving in urban areas to ponds and swales in green spaces;
- incorporate trees and other types of greening that give a place a positive appearance whilst simultaneously promoting local biodiversity, improving air quality, filtering noise, screening roads and cooling adjacent buildings; and
- bring together and balance sustainability objectives. For example, new flood control measures can also be designed to create attractive environments that support local habitats.





Living in harmony with the local ecology (far left).

Preserving and enhancing the local environment, utilising sustainable energy (left).









Sustainable drainage systems (far left).

Greening streets with permeable paving (centre and left).

Integrated water management – sustainable environments as play opportunities.



3 Designing new streets and spaces

Pedestrian-friendly streets and spaces helps to create places where people want to live, work and relax

- 3.1 Introduction page 16
- 3.2 Creating pedestrian friendly streets and spaces page 17
- 3.3 Creating a distinctive character page 20
- 3.4 Sensitively integrating car parking page 26
- 3.5 Green spaces and biodiversity page 34

3.1 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 integrating car parking; and
- incorporating successful green spaces that promote biodiversity.

Streets and spaces with character



Sensitively integrating car parking





Successful green spaces promoting biodiversity





3.2 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 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 (far left), fit streets between buildings (left).



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





These streets are not pedestrian-friendly as they have been designed for the car, not for people.

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, whilst maintaining access for public transport and emergency vehicles. 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; and
- 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.



This traffic island works well, as it not only makes cars change direction but it also provides pedestrians with an attractive crossing point to an open space.



This is a successful chicane, as the change of direction is tightly enclosed by buildings so limiting drivers' views forwards.





Some older places in Rochdale and Oldham are good examples of how traffic calming can be 'built in' to a place. The narrow 'pinch points' and forward views tightly enclosed by buildings help to slow cars down.

page 18 | Public Realm Design Guide

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.

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.

page 19 | Public Realm Design Guide



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

Design to minimise clutter – unlike this development.

3.3 Creating 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 are:

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

Create 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 streets 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).





page 21 | Public Realm Design Guide

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. Typical widths for residential roads may be as follows:

- A 5.5m carriageway allows for all vehicles to pass one 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 lorry (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 large lorry 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.

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 the height of the proposed buildings, 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?

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. The Manual for Streets provides detailed guidance on street design, and designers should consult this in addition to this Design Guide.

High Street



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.

Principal Street



Street



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.











This street in Greenhithe Kent has good continuity, as buildings and accesses to rear parking have been designed together to create a strong frontage to the street.

page 24 | Public Realm Design Guide

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.

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'
 I 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.





The varied approach to setback distances and boundary treatments give a different character to all of these streets.





page 25 | Public Realm Design Guide

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.



Buildings at the back edge of the footway (far left) enclose the street more tightly than buildings set back from the pavement (left).

3.4 Sensitively integrating 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:

- 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; and
- 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. 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.



Parking in front of houses should be avoided where possible.

Parking accessible from the street should be designed to minimise the visual impact of the car.





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.



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





Parking in front of dwellings must be very carefully designed if it is to be successful (far left). At Didsbury the landscape and recessed garage doors combine to reduce the visual impact of cars (left).





These garages have been designed to appear as workshops or outbuildings, and contribute positively to the street (far left). Too many garage doors, unrelieved by windows and doors result in a hostile environment (left).

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;
- parked cars are organised 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.



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



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



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 mews, flats above garages 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 mews flat above a garage, a mature tree) rather than something that suggests an uncared for place (a sub-station, parked cars)



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

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:

- 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 below; 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.



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 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.



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. Design principles should include:

- 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.



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 (far left).

A pedestrian only zone adjacent to the buildings helps reduce the impact of parked cars (left).

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';

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.

- 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 wellcared for appearance can be maintained.



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

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, 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.







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 (far left).

Car park in Birmingham, where screen planting will eventually soften its visual impact on the street scene (left above).

Flats wrap around this car park in Canterbury, so that it does not dominate the street scene. (left below).

Green spaces

There are policy requirements for minimum areas of open space within new residential development (see H/6 in Rochdale's UDP, and RI in Oldham's UDP). However, this guide's aim is not to repeat these requirements but instead to 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;
- fit into a wider greenspace strategy;
- provide an area with a sense of identity and community;
- are usually located at the heart of the development, rather than being a left over space on the edge;
- make the most of existing landscape features and assets; and
- take into consideration long-term funding and maintenance.

The principles that help to create successful open spaces are:

- design open space 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.







A more informal space providing a link at Cambourne, Cambridgeshire (left).





Greenscape needs to be positively designed in to residential development. This 'left over' space has very little value (far left).

A positive shared greenspace designed as an integral part of the development at Greenwich Millennium Village (left).
Biodiversity

In designing green spaces into development, the opportunity should be taken to maintain and enhance the ecological value and biodiversity of the area by employing the following principles:

- retaining existing vegetation and water features where possible;
- using native plants and trees;
- designing new open space to link with existing pen spaces, so providing continuous green corridors;
- protecting existing and 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 of biodiversity value where possible; and
- the landscape and open space strategy for the site aims to enhance the biodiversity of the site.

The example overleaf shows how to design new greenspaces into development that relate well to the wider context.





This layout is a good example of creating connections to the surrounding area and extending existing spaces through the site (far left).

Developers should carry out an assessment of the site's existing landscape and ecological value, and include this in the analysis of the site's constraints and opportunities (left).





Designing greenspace to relate positively to the wider area

This is a large site on the edge of a small town that is currently used for low-grade storage uses. The owner wishes to bring it forward for residential-led mixed-use development. There is an opportunity to transform the site from one that ignores its wider landscape context to one that creates new green spaces that relate positively to what is around it. Key issues and opportunities include:



- I the site is cut off from the existing town by an elevated railway line: the main opportunity for creating a connection is in the south-west corner;
- 2 there is a footpath just outside the site's southern and eastern boundaries – at present this feels unsafe as it is cut off from the site;
- 3 there are areas of woodland to the north and south that form an attractive backdrop to the site; and
- 4 there are extensive views over the nature reserve to the east of the site – however, it is sensitive and public access must be discouraged.



The developer's first layout failed to make the most of the opportunities to relate new green space to its wider context:

- A houses backing on to the footpath maintain the same negative situation as at present: no overlooking of the footpath, and secure fences creating a narrow, uninviting route;
- B backing development onto the surrounding area means that the existing stark boundary between the built development of the site and the soft landscape around it is maintained; and
- C locating the main new open space in the centre of the site makes it accessible only to occupiers of the new development.



- The developer revised the layout to respond much more positively to the wider context:
- A a linear open space along the site's eastern boundary enables the footpath to be integrated into the wider open area, so making it less constrained and more inviting;
- B new houses overlook the linear open space and footpath, so creating a safer route;
- C locating the open space next to the link under the railway line makes it accessible to both residents of the existing town and occupiers of the new development, so helping to integrate the new development into the old; and
- D the location of the new open spaces enable some of the woodland character to the south and east of the site to be extended into the site, thus avoiding a 'hard' boundary to the new development.



The southern boundary of the site is next to a dense area of woodland.

A public footpath, above, runs along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site. The site turns its back on this path, below.

There are attractive views to nature reserve to the east of the site. However, public access must be discouraged.

4 Existing streets and spaces: Problems

Similar types of street tend to share the same problems. To devise solutions, we need to understand those problems

- **4.1 Introduction** page 40
- 4.2 Arterial roads page 41
- 4.3 Local distributor roads page 42
- 4.4 Residential streets and spaces page 43
- 4.5 Civic spaces and city centre streets page 44
- 4.6 Green spaces page 45

4.1 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 (far left). Local distributor (left).





Green spaces (far left). Civic spaces and town centres (left).

4.2 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 makesthese areas often hostile, unwelcoming places forthose 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 by providing quality public transport waiting facilities.; and
- at the same time, they need to maintain their role as major traffic routes.



Buildings are very small scale compared to width of street, resulting in a very 'open' feel to the street – more of a motorway than an urban street.

- 1 Older buildings front onto the street, providing overlooking.
- 2 Newer buildings present blank edges to the street.
- 3 Narrow pavements make pedestrians feel vulnerable and dominated by traffic.



- I No entrances or windows onto the street.
- 2 Buildings separated from the street by planting designed to keep people away from the buildings rather than enhance the quality of the street.
- 3 Entrance and windows onto street help make pedestrians feel safer even though the quality of the building is poor.
- 4 A strip of grass is not capable of softening an urban street as car-dominated as this. More meaningful landscape is needed to change the quality of the street.

4.3 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 give local neighbourhoods a strong identity, and therefore have a significant role in creating a positive character.

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; and
- thigh 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.

4.4 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.

4.5 Civic spaces and city centre streets

Civic spaces are at the heart of our towns. 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 represent the identity of the town, forming local landmarks and reinforcing legibility by providing memorable settings for key monuments and buildings.

Town 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; and
- these streets offer opportunities to draw out the character of the town 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 (far left).

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 (right).

However, there are problems: close to these successful spaces

unattractive 'backs' onto them or blank edges masked by

are streets that have









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.

4.6 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





A bland landscape designed for minimal maintenance rather than providing an enriching environment (far left).

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 (left).

5 Existing streets and spaces: Design principles

Making improvements to existing streets and spaces is complex: this chapter sets out the key principles that should inform design and decision-making

- **5.1 Improving existing streets** page 48
- 5.2 Improving the pedestrian experience page 52
- 5.3 Reducing clutter page 54
- 5.4 Improving spaces page 56
- 5.5 Improving green spaces page 58
- 5.6 Home Zone design principles page 59
- 5.7 Working with people page 64

This section sets out general design principles for improving streets and spaces in the Boroughs. The principles aim to achieve the following objectives:

- improving existing streets;
- improving the pedestrian experience;
- reducing clutter;
- improving spaces;
- creating appropriate home zones; and
- working with local people.

Applying the design guidance will vary according to the nature of the street or space. For example:

- reducing clutter is a major issue for arterial roads and local distributor roads (where there are many signs, traffic lights, bus stops and so on) but a less significant challenge for residential streets; and
- creating a pedestrian-friendly environment by slowing down cars is a major issue for residential streets, but priorities are different for arterial routes where maintaining traffic flows is a key concern.

All road improvements must be safety audited by the Highway Authority at three stages: at outline design; at detailed design and after construction.

5.1 Improving existing streets

Making improvements to roads, particularly busy arterial and local distributor roads is complex, as the land along them is owned by many different organisations and there are the practicalities of carrying large amounts of traffic. Changes that result in the loss of road capacity (such as widening pavements) may not be possible. There are two broad strategies for improving these routes:

- encouraging developers of individual sites to design schemes to enhance the street; and
- public body led schemes for the improvement of entire road corridors through traffic calming, landscape and streetscape improvement schemes.

Individual development sites

Where individual sites come forward for development, the Local Planning and Highway Authorities will discuss the proposals with the applicant and encourage development that embodies the following principles:

- new buildings should be designed to front onto the route, so that windows and doors provide overlooking and improve the safety of the street;
- the scale of development should be appropriate to the scale of the street, so that it provides a reasonable sense of enclosure;
- car parking should be located away from the road frontage, so as to minimise the visual impact of parked cars on the street;
- strong landscaping may be designed into the frontage of the development, to provide some separation from the noise of traffic and to provide welcome greenery. This is particularly appropriate for

residential development on busy streets. However, it must give the street a positive character and not be designed solely as a means of keeping passers-by away from the building;

- where appropriate, buildings should contain a mix of uses (e.g. retail on the ground floor with residential above) to bring life to the street throughout the day and evening; and
- where rear or side boundaries are located onto the road, they should be designed to be robust (e.g. walls, railings, rather than timber fences) and high quality.

Before



- I Blank building facade used as unsightly advertising space.
- 2 Fences and hoardings create low-value appearances and create an unattractive and intimidating streetscape.
- 3 New development fronts onto and overlooks street.

Before



- A Existing building presents a negative blank facade onto the streets.
- B Existing buildings are low in relation to the width of the street, contributing to the perception of dominance of traffic.
- C Narrow pavements and lack of designated crossing points make pedestrians feel vulnerable and dominated by traffic.

After



- 4 New canopies help to tie together variety of existing retail units, creating a more coherent appearance.
- 5 Use of climbing plants softens blank facades and provides seasonal interest.
- 6 Widened pavement relates to new development, creating car-free frontage and opportunity for activities to spill outside.

After



- D New development fronts onto the street, providing overlooking and a welcoming facade.
- E Small setback allows pavement width to be increased along new building frontage, improving the pedestrian experience and providing space for tree planting.

Improving entire corridors and gateways

Gateways are the main entrance points into the Borough's towns and are usually related to road or rail. Corridors are the main transport or green corridors which provide existing or potential movement routes connecting communities and connecting towns and countryside. Gateways and corridors therefore have a role to play in assisting regeneration and urban renewal. Critically, the appearance of gateways and corridors affects the perception and image of the Borough. A comprehensive approach to regeneration and improvement is therefore needed and Gateway sites should be a focus for landmark developments, major landscaping improvements and public art projects. Unattractive gateways should be a target for intervention and detailed guidance. Corridors will be the focus for development and regeneration opportunities. As the main movement corridors, they are also visible and suffer from environmental problems. It will therefore be important that development and detailed guidance for development aims for high quality design and the incorporation of environmental improvement within schemes.

Street scene investment should be planned alongside highway investment in an integrated way. Such an approach is required in designing gateways and corridors proposals, particularly in town centres along Quality Bus Corridors. The design of interchanges also provides an excellent opportunity to improve the public realm. Opportunities should be taken to make new interchanges, including Metrolink stops, examples of excellence in architecture that will add to the enjoyment of using public transport and help raise the quality of design overall.

Encouraging the owners of individual sites along road corridors to enhance or redevelop their sites can have a significant effect on the perceived quality of the street. However, any such strategy can – due to fragmented land ownership – lead only to piecemeal improvements. To secure meaningful improvements, Public Bodies need to also develop and implement strategies for improving whole road corridors. Such strategies will require a clear understanding of the technical constraints and opportunities affecting each road corridor. These are likely to include:

- traffic capacity;
- public transport requirements;
- location of utilities;
- location of uses such as schools that attract particular types of movement;
- land ownership;
- lighting requirements;
- safety considerations; and
- adoption issues, particularly regarding materials, street furniture and maintenance.

Thus, in order to develop a feasible strategy, a multidisciplinary team of engineers, landscape architects and others will be required. The overall aim of any strategy should be to transform the character of the street from a negative to a positive.

The team will therefore need to undertake an analysis of the existing character of the street, define its problems and clearly set out the character that the team is aiming to create.

In improving the character of the street, the two principles will be key: that is improving the pedestrian experience and reducing clutter.

Whilst the aim of improvements should be to improve significant lengths of the street in a consistent way, there is also an opportunity to make more focused interventions at key points along the road corridors – e.g. where there is a transition (or gateway) between different areas; an intersection with another major road; or the opportunity to enhance a space.

Before

After





Before

After





- I Simple repetition of planting and lighting creates distinctive 'boulevard' character.
- 2 Barriers removed and vehicular traffic and footway divided by low planting strips, offering both safety and security.
- 3 Improved materials to footway / cycleway.
- 4 Conveniently located pedestrian crossings create direct routes between destinations.
- 5 New boundary treatment better defines public and private space.

5.2 Improving the pedestrian experience

Arterial and local distributor roads need to carry large amounts of traffic. However, this does not mean that the needs of pedestrians should beforgotten as improving the pedestrian experience of arterial roads can significantly enhance their image. Town centre streets, although less busy than arterial roads, similarly need to cater for the needs of the pedestrian, particularly by providing convenient and accessible crossings. In developing improvement schemes, designers should carefully consider how pedestrians behave – they tend to prefer short, direct routes and will resist attempts to make them go where they don't want to. The key principles are set out below.



Typical pedestrian crossing of a busy road, where the crossing is designed so that pedestrians can only cross one half of the carriageway at a time, and have to wait on an island in the middle of the road. This is often appropriate for busy arterial roads, but may not be necessary for streets within town and neighbourhood centres, for example.

Where possible, design crossings to create a good pedestrian experience. Direct routes with no barriers reduce the feeling of being 'trapped'. Key design principles:

- design streets so that pedestrians do not feel like 'second class citizens' in relation to vehicles: ensure pavements are of a generous width, create convenient crossing points, design bus stops and shelters to be pleasant places to wait;
- improve accessibility, as it helps everyone make crossings on main roads and side streets easy for those pushing buggies, walking with a stick, carrying heavy shopping, and in a wheelchair; and
- think carefully about barriers are they really necessary?







Wide roads in Sheffield carry high numbers of vehicles, but pedestrian crossings are direct (far left).

This road carries four lanes of traffic, yet its pedestrian crossing is simple and uncluttered – making people on foot feel that they, too, are important (left).

Raised crossings for pedestrians where side roads meet the arterial road make it easier for people to walk along the major road. These 'entry treatments' also help to define changes in character from the main street to the side streets.



With imagination, even the most unpromising pedestrian routes can be improved as shown here in Birmingham City Centre.

5.3 Reducing clutter

Unnecessary clutter of streets signs, bollards, benches, railings, litter bins, and light columns in a street can significantly detract from its appearance. In addition, street clutter can obstruct pedestrian movement, especially for the partially sighted. This clutter arises because there is a lack of coordination between the different organisations responsible for the signs and street furniture. Reducing clutter requires a coordinated effort, especially along major corridors, and must organise streetscape elements more efficiently by:

- removing obsolete signs and street furniture;
- maximising the clear pavement area for pedestrians by locating street furniture in a single strip;
- avoiding excessive 'fencing in' of pedestrians with guard rails;
- where possible, combining signs and street furniture (e.g. fixing signs to lighting columns);
- coordinating types, styles and colours of street furniture for the length of the street and the wider area as appropriate; and
- using a limited palette of paving and other materials to keep the street visually simple.





The large number of traffic signs, bollards and other items creates a poor street scene that is visually cluttered and difficult to navigate through.





Street clutter obstructs views along the street and makes walking along the pavement difficult (far left).

Combining signs and locating street furniture into a defined strip along the pavement creates a calmer, more accessible environment (left).



Where there is sufficient width, keep street furniture in a defined zone so that there is a clear area for pedestrians.



Street furniture zone may be at the front or the back of the footway. Its location will depend on the nature of the street. A zone at the rear edge of the footway is preferred.



5.4 Improving spaces

Whether they are small neighbourhood spaces serving a local area or civic spaces of town-wide importance, good quality spaces can give towns and village a clear sense of identity as well as providing local people with attractive places to be. Improving spaces (or creating new ones) should form part of an area-wide strategy that seeks to locate spaces where they are most useful and will have most impact.

Design principles should include:

- ensuring that spaces have a clearly defined function and character;
- providing a range of different spaces within a neighbourhood, so that different requirements are catered for;
- at the same time, designing spaces to be flexible and adaptive so that a range of activities can take place;
- using spaces to reinforce areas of local importance (such as schools, shops, community centres);
- ensuring that spaces are safe and secure overlooked by buildings, and well lit;
- integrating public art from the outset; and
- using robust, sustainable materials to ensure longevity.



- I Active frontages onto square increase informal surveillance and encourage better use of space.
- 2 Considered closure of roads can allow creation of public spaces at community focus points such as schools, shops.
- 3 Well maintained street trees of suitable species create seasonal interest and help define boundaries to spaces and streets.
- 4 Creation of car-free spaces offers increased potential for outdoor activities.

Before



After



- I Street clutter impedes movement and creates, untidy, uncoordinated environment.
- 2 Traffic to all sides creates unfriendly and car dominated spaces. Surrounding buildings lack any connection to the space, making it feel more like a traffic island than a space to stop and remain.
- 3 Existing, poorly maintained street planting adds little to the space and obstructs movement across the space. Views to routes are hidden and obstructed by raised planting beds
- 4 Views to existing attractive building frontages are hidden by planting and separated from the space by traffic.

- 5 Remove traffic from minor route to create continuous space across to building frontages, thus physically connecting buildings to the space.
- 6 Reunite frontages to square. Create new ground floor uses that complement open space.
- 7 Encourage exploration of town centre by opening up views to routes and landmarks.
- 8 Quality materials in consistent palette unite building frontages.
- 9 New tree planting and hard landscape create focal space for rest, recreation and passing through.
- 10 Rationalise street furniture and signage to provide simple, uncluttered environment that is easy to maintain.

5.5 Improving green spaces

"A successful park or green space can be the making of a place. An unsuccessful one can help ruin it. Major programmes of development and regeneration are now providing greater opportunities than ever to improve the spaces we already have and to create inspiring new ones." CABE 'Start with the Park'

Improving green spaces must be done in the context of a wider greenspace strategy. Areas experiencing growth should have sound green space strategies in place to ensure that green assets such as parks and canals are protected and enhanced as development occurs. If developed sensitively with both people and nature in mind, these existing landscape assets can become a selling point of the development and enhance the image of the area.

Key design principles

Improvements to greenspaces should:

- form part of a wider network of open space with safe, attractive routes between them to encourage sustainable methods of transport;
- form a key part of an overall development / regeneration strategy, being thoughtfully integrated into the design at the earliest stages; and
- form part of a hierarchy of different spaces, of diverse type and scale in order to cater for a range of users and uses make the most of existing landscape features and assets (e.g. should maintain and enhance existing areas of biodiversity).

In addition to these strategic considerations, greenspaces should be designed to:

- be safe by design, being located along secure, overlooked routes with passive surveillance encouraged wherever possible;
- have well defined gateways, entrances and thresholds;
- integrate public art at the outset;
- where appropriate, provide facilities such as cafes and toilets that encourage people to spend longer in the space;
- improve the biodiversity and ecological value of greenspaces, so creating a richer environment for everyone;
- explore opportunities to implement sustainable drainage and water management; and
- take into consideration long-term funding and be easy to maintain.



Waterhead Park was transformed from uninspiring areas of flat grass to a rich environment that caters for a wide range of users and improves the biodiversity of the area.

page 58 | Public Realm Design Guide

Alexandra Park.







Mile End Park (far left).

An open space strategy for the King's Cross Estate led to the improvement of a network of different types of space, and a reduction in anti-social behaviour and crime (left).

5.6 Home Zone design principles

Improving residential streets can range from small interventions, such as creating better crossing points for pedestrians, to major changes, such as creating Home Zones. Home Zones are sometimes confused with other measures to reduce the speed of cars (such as introducing traffic calming bumps), but they are more than this. A Home Zone is a way of:

- turning a street into a public space;
- fostering a sense of community;
- transforming the appearance of existing residential areas;
- increasing opportunities for children's play; and
- encouraging walking and cycling within the local area.

In existing streets, it is essential that local people are involved in the planning and design of the Home Zone. Extensive consultation is required to ensure that Home Zones not only meet local needs, but are also valued as a place once complete. Many streets in Oldham and Rochdale may be suitable for remodelling as Home Zones. However, it is important to target effort so that Home Zones are created where they can have the most positive impact on the area. The essential requirements when identifying streets that may have the potential to become Home Zones are:

- home zones in relation to other streets;
- uses;
- size; and
- traffic flow

Home zones in relation to other streets

Home Zones should not be considered in isolation: they must form part of an integrated approach to traffic in an area. This is important if low vehicular speeds are to be achieved – it is no good moving immediately from a 30mph street to a 10mph Home Zone. A better approach is to create a more gradual change – for example, traffic calming streets to form 20mph zone, and then defining key streets within this zone as Home Zones.

Uses

Home zones are usually created in residential areas, and are suitable for all types of location from inner city to rural areas, and all types of housing, from high rise flats, terraces to semi-detached homes. However, they can also be created in areas with other uses (such as shops, offices and cafes) so long as there are enough people living in the street to form a viable community.

A high proportion of dwellings in Home Zones should have 'active fronts' (living room windows and front doors) onto the streets. This helps create a sense of ownership of the street.

Size

If Home Zones are too large, drivers can become frustrated and try to drive faster, so undermining the aim of achieving low traffic speeds. The Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers recommend that vehicles should not have to travel more than about 400m along Home Zone streets. This distance should be measured from any point within the Home Zone to the nearest point on a conventional street.

Traffic flow

Home Zone Streets should have traffic flows of no more than about 100 vehicles in the afternoon peak hour. This is usually the time of day when there is the most conflict between vehicles and people, including children playing (*source IHIE).



Residential streets

There are no set 'rules' for creating Home Zones, as hey must be designed in response to the specific requirements of each individual neighbourhood. However, there are some principles that can help inform individual designs and these are illustrated over the next few pages.

Before



- I Straight roads encourage traffic to move fast along the streets.
- 2 Wide entrances to residential streets from fast roads encourage higher vehicular speeds.
- 3 Parking on both sides of the street dominates the public realm and makes pedestrian movement difficult.
- 4 Doorways directly onto the street give residents no 'private' space.
- 5 Narrow alleyways are unlit and not overlooked, attract anti-social behaviour and litter. They are unsafe and unsightly places.

After



- I Narrowed carriageway and entry treatments enhance the entrance to residential street.
- 2 Tree planting softens and enhances 'hard' street environment.
- 3 Public art helps to foster a sense of community and provides informal play opportunities.
- 4 Removal of some existing housing allows the creation of a new route through housing blocks. The series of open spaces creates opportunities for play, relaxation and community gathering.
- 5 New gates to alleyways secure backs of properties.
- 6 New dwellings front onto the new route, providing overlooking and hence -safety.
- 7 New housing blocks offer opportunities for a mix of housing types, larger family homes and smaller apartments.
- 8 Parking for apartments is integrated into public square.
- 9 Echelon parking slow traffic whilst providing parking for residents.

Before



- ¹ Straight roads encourage traffic to move fast along the streets.
- 2 Wide entrances to residential streets from fast roads encourage higher vehicular speeds.
- 3 Parking on both sides of the street dominates the public realm and makes pedestrian movement difficult.
- 4 Tarmac is the dominant material, giving a 'highway' character to all the roads.



- I Narrowed carriageway and entry treatments enhance the entrance to residential street.
- 2 Tree planting softens and enhances 'hard' street environment.
- 3 Use of materials such as paving help to reduce the amount of tarmac, and give the streets a 'friendlier' feel.
- 4 Parking reorganised so that it does not dominate both sides of the street.





Photos illustrating how the area might be changed.

After







and new open routes through

the area.









5.7 Working with people

Remodeling an existing street or space, particularly in residential areas or local neighbourhood centres, can only be successful if the people living and working there want it to change and are involved in the process of planning, design, implementation and – ultimately – maintenance of the scheme. Effective engagement between professionals and local people is essential from the outset of the project. The consultation and engagement process must be tailored to the specific needs of the area and the project, but might include:

- developing an understanding of what the issues are in the local area that the scheme should address. These will vary from project to project, but will typically include issues of car parking;
- safety and security, desired uses and users, etc. initial explanation of what the proposals are and the benefits they could bring. This may be done through exhibitions, visits to other successful schemes and so on;
- identifying and balancing priorities for example, only a small amount of greening may be possible if car parking spaces are increased;
- developing an understanding of the different options that may be possible – mock-ups and models can be a good way of showing people how proposals may be arranged, what paving materials look like, where planting may be located and so on. Other approaches that can be easily understood by local people include photomontages and sketches of 'before' and 'after';
- agreeing on the final design;
- keeping people informed of implementation through regular updates; and
- involving people in the future maintenance of the proposals.

It is recommended that the following people should be involved in the consultation process:

- residents, including children, teenagers, older people and people from ethnic minorities who are often under represented in consultation events;
- local businesses within or near the proposals;
- local authorities, especially the highway and planning authorities;
- operators responsible for street cleaning, refuse collection and highway maintenance;
- police and emergency services; and
- utility companies.

It is unlikely that everyone will support the proposals or the comments that others make. There may also be conflict between different groups. The key to addressing these problems is to acknowledge that they exist, raise awareness of how they might be addressed, and be transparent in the decision making.

The design team should be multi-disciplinary and include at least:

- a landscape architect;
- a highway engineer; and
- those involved in future maintenance.







6 Appendix

- 6.1 Appendix A: Planning Policy Sources page 68
- 6.2 Appendix B: Glossary page 71
- 6.3 Appendix C: References page 75

Character

Oldham UDP 2001–2016

- Design of New Development: Policy D1, para 3.12 (Introduction)
- Design of New Development: para 3.5, point e
- General Design Criteria: Policy DI.I, point a
- Conservation of the Historic Environment: Policy C1
- Development Within or Affecting the Setting of Conservation Areas: Policy ${\tt CI.I}$
- Design of New Development: para 3.5, point e
- Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building: Policy C1.9
- Protection of Trees on Development Sites: Policy D1.5
- Retention of Distinctive Local Features or Structures in Conservation Areas: Policy C1.3
- The Protection of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest: Policy CI.I3

Rochdale UDP 2001–2016

- Design Quality: Policy G/BE/1
- Design Criteria for New Development: Policy BE/2
- Landscaping in New Development: Policy BE/8
- Conservation of the Built Heritage: Policy G/BE/9
- New Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building:Policy BE/15
- New Development Affecting Conservation Areas: Policy BE/
- Landscape Protection and Enhancement: Policy NE/6

Safety and Inclusion

Oldham UDP Review 2001–2016

- Design of New Development: para 3.5, point a
- General Design Criteria: Policy D1.1, point f
- Inclusive Access: Policy D1.3
- Designing for safety and security: Policy D1.7

Rochdale UDP Review 2001–2016

- Design Quality: Policy G/BE/1
- Design Criteria for New Development: Policy BE/2
- New Development Access for Pedestrians and Disabled People:
- Policy A/3

Diversity

Oldham UDP Review 2001–2016

- Design of New Development: para 3.5, points c and g
- General Design Criteria: Policy DI.I, point e
- Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities para 10.7 points a and c
- Local Shopping and Leisure Facilities: Policy S2
- Diversity and Vitality (Oldham Town Centre): Policy TC1.6
- The Accessibility of New Development: Policy T2
- Town and District Centre Shopping ands Leisure Facilities: Policy S1
- Housing: para 6.5, point g (Introduction)
- Housing Choice and Diversity: Policy H1.5
- Meeting the Need for Affordable Housing: Policy H2
- Requirement for New and Improved Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities and Residential Developments: Policy R2.1
- General Criteria Relating to New, or Improved Open Space, Outdoor and Indoor Sport and Recreation Facilities: Policy R2.2

Rochdale UDP Review 2001–2016

• Design Criteria for New Development: Policy BE/2 points b and c

Ease of Movement

Oldham UDP Review 2001–2016

- Design of New Development: para 3.5, point c (Introduction)
- Design of New Development: para 3.5, point d (Introduction)
- Design of New Development: para 3.6 (Introduction)
- General Design Criteria: Policy D1.1, points d f
- General Design Criteria: Policy D1.1, point k
- Accessibility of New Development: Policy T2
- Public Transport Accessibility: Policy T2.1
- Access to Developments: Policy T_{3.1}
- Transport and Developments: Policy T₃
- Pedestrian Permeability and the Public Realm (Oldham Town Centre): Policy TC1.5

Rochdale UDP Review 2001–2016

- Design Criteria for New Development: Policy BE/2
- Street Furniture and the Public Realm BE/7
- New Development Access for Pedestrians and Disabled People: Policy $\mathsf{A}/_3$
- New Development Access for Cyclists: Policy A/4
- Regeneration of Centres: Policy G/S/2
- Accessibility: Policy G/A/1

Legibility

Oldham UDP Review 2001–2016

- General Design Criteria: Policy D1.1, points d and h
- Inclusive Access: Policy D1.3

Rochdale UDP Review 2001–2016

• Design Criteria for New Development: Policy BE/2

Adaptability

Oldham UDP Review 2001–2016

- Design of New Development: para 3.5, point f (Introduction)
- Design of New Development: para 3.6 (Introduction)
- General Design Criteria: Policy D1.1, point f
- Conservation of the Historic Environment: Policy CI
- Requirement for new and Improved Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities and Residential Developments: Policy R2.1

Rochdale UDP Review 2001–2016

• Accessibility: Policy G/A/1

Sustainability

Oldham UDP Review 2001–2016

- Design of New Development: para 3.5, points b and h
- Design of New Development: para 3.6
- General Design Criteria: Policy DI.I, point b, g and I
- Designing for Energy Efficiency: Policy D1.2
- Landscape Design and Tree Planting: Policy D1.6
- Renewable Energy in Major New Developments: Policy NR3.3
- Water Resources and Infrastructure: Policy NR2
- Flooding and Flood Protection: Policy NR2.2
- Surface Water Run-Off and Sustainability: Policy NR2.4
- Habitat and Wildlife on Development Sites: Policy D1.4

Rochdale UDP Review 2001–2016

- Accessibility: Policy G/A/1
- Landscaping in New Development: Policy BE/8
6.2 Appendix B: Glossary

Active frontages

Active frontages are building elevations that have frequent doors and windows, with few blank walls, internal uses visible from the outside, or spilling onto the street.

Adaptability

The capacity of a building or space to be changed so as to respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions. (By Design).

Building line

The line formed by the frontages of buildings along a street. The building line can be shown on a plan or section. (By Design).

Bulk

The combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings. Also called massing. (By Design).

Context

The area surrounding a development site. This may be the immediate local area (the site context), or a much wider town-wide context (the strategic context).

Cul-de-sac

A street that does not connect to others; a dead-end.

Curtilage

The private area belonging to a building. Typically, the garden areas and driveway for a house.

Definition of streets

Enclosing the edges of streets with buildings and, sometimes, landscape so that they are clearly defined spaces.

Desire Lines

An imaginary line linking facilities or places, which would form a convenient and direct route for pedestrians and cyclists

Diversity

The range of different activities, uses and building types in an area.

Embodied energy

The energy consumed in the extraction, manufacture, transport and assembly on site of building materials.

Footfall

A way of describing the number of pedestrians using a route. For example, busy shopping streets will have a high footfall, whereas a residential cul-de-sac will have a low footfall.

Habitable rooms

Rooms that are used for day-to-day living (such as living rooms and bedrooms) rather than for intermittent use (e.g. bathrooms).

Home Zones

Residential streets in which the road space is shared between drivers of motor vehicles and other road users, designed with the wider needs of the residents in mind.

Human Scale

The use within development of elements which relate well in size to an individual human being, and their assembly in a way that makes people feel comfortable rather than overwhelmed. (By Design).

In-curtilage parking

Parking within a building's site boundary, rather than on a public street or space. (By Design).

Landmark

A building or structure that stands out from its background by virtue of height, size or some other aspect of design. (By Design).

Large floor-plate

A building type which covers a very large ground floor area. A supermarket is a typical example.

Legibility

The degree to which a place can be easily understood.

Local distinctiveness

The positive features of a place and its communities which contribute to its special character and distinguish it from other places.

Massing

The combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings. Also called bulk. (By Design).

Mechanical cooling

The use of fans or air conditioning to cool buildings.

Micro-climate

The specific climatic characteristics of a site, which may differ from other places in the locality by virtue of, for example, a position exposed to prevailing winds; landscape that shades it from the sun.

Mixed uses

A mix of different uses (for example, retail and residential) within a building, on a site or within a particular area.

Natural ventilation

Ventilation provided by non-mechanical means, such as openeable windows.

Passive solar gain

Solar heat that passes through material and is captured naturally, not by mechanical means. For example, heat from the sun may pass through glazing and be absorbed by the internal brick wall of the building.

Perimeter Block

An arrangement of buildings where public fronts look outwards onto the street and private backs look inwards onto other private space, so that the buildings themselves act as a barrier between public and private space.

Permeability

The characteristic of a well-connected network of streets, spaces and other routes.

Public Realm

Those parts of towns and villages that are available for use by everyone free of charge, and include streets, squares, lanes and open spaces.

Range of tenures

A mix of different types of residential property, including (but not restricted to) privately owned, affordable housing, and shared ownership.

Renewable sources

Renewable sources of materials can be replenished naturally in a short period of time. Renewable energy sources capture their energy from on-going natural processes such as sunshine, wind and flowing water.

Scale

The impression of a building when seen in relation to its surroundings, or the size of parts of a building or its details, particularly as experienced in relation to the size of a person. Sometimes it is the total dimensions of a building which give it its sense of scale; at other times it is the size of the individual building elements and the way in which they are combined. The concept is a difficult and ambiguous one: often the word is simply used as a synonym for 'size'. (By Design).

Street furniture

Structure in a street or space. For example, bus shelters, light columns, signs, seating and litter bins.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Supplementary Planning Documents provide additional detail to Local Development Framework Policies, providing guidance to developers and their designers on what is expected of them. If applications for planning do not conform with the SPD they may be refused.

Sustainable Development

Development that simultaneously meets environmental, economic and community needs without comprising the needs of future generations.

Sustainable Urban Drainage

Surface water drainage methods that take account of quantity, quality and amenity issues are collectively referred to as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).

Traffic calming

Traffic management measures designed to reduce the speed of vehicles along routes, particularly in residential areas.

UDP

A Unitary Development Plan (UDP) must be produced by every local authority in England and Wales. It provides the statutory planning framework for the local authority, setting out objectives, policies and proposals for the use of land and buildings in the area for the next 10 years.

Urban Design

The art of making places. Urban design involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, and the establishment of frameworks and processes which facilitate successful development. (By Design).

Urban grain

The pattern of buildings and their plots and how they combine to form blocks within a settlement. Urban grain may be 'fine', comprising small blocks and frequent street junctions, or it may be 'coarse', comprising large blocks and infrequent street junctions.

6.3 Appendix C: References

CABE & DETR (2000)

By Design – Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice Thomas Telford Publishing

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Landscape Projects (2005)

Rochdale Borough Gateways and Corridors Strategy Rochdale Development Agency, Rochdale MBC &Oldham Rochdale Partners in Action

Biddulph, Mike (2001)

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WSP et al (2002)

Home Zone Design Guidelines Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers

Rochdale (2006)

Rochdale Borough Public Realm Handbook Rochdale Development Agency & Rochdale MBC

North West Regional Assembly (2006)

North West Best Practice Design Guide

If you would like to receive this information in another format, such as large print, Braille, audio or alternative languages, please call Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council on 0161 770 4151, 1672 or 1670, or Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council on 01706 924369.







