EHTF’s Manual for Historic Streets

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Which way now?
Foreword

If it is true that we shape buildings and then they shape us, how much more true is this of streets? Streets structure places, well designed streets are places and destinations in themselves. We know from experience in places like Shrewsbury that the ways streets are designed and managed influence how people use them. ‘Manual for Historic Streets’ builds on the momentum created by ‘Manual for Streets’, makes the case for well designed historic streets and demonstrates how practitioners might go about achieving this aim.

Recognising the range of benefits associated with well designed streets is one part of convincing professionals and politicians to work and vote differently. In this publication, Tom Bolton writes about CABE’s ongoing investigation into the value of good design. ‘Paved with gold’ ... sets out to develop a methodology to measure the economic value of well designed streets. Basing evaluation on the PERs scale this study found that a 1 point increase correlated with a 5.2% increase in local house prices and a 4.9% increase in the rental value of shops. The findings support the experience of Michael Loveday and his Liveable City case study which also begins to develop a dialogue on the community role of well designed streets and public space.

Anna Minton and Les Sparks develop this further by contrasting the economic and community functions of streets and public space. Both identify the current role of private finance in the development of good quality public space networks. Minton highlights the potentially exclusionary practices of financially driven public space management regimes. Sparks echoes this concern underlying the democratic role of streets and public space. I believe that communities need places to commune. Opportunities to play and to watch the world go by are essential elements of public space and must not become the reserve of the economically active.

Resolving competing demands in complex environments is one of the roles of design. In Section 2, Nicola Mathers from CABE Space introduces Spaceshaper, an important new tool for use by community and professionals. Spaceshaper helps develop a shared vision and aspiration for the design of new spaces that reflect professional and community needs.

CABE Space recently brought planning and transportation professionals together at a series of regional street design and placemaking events, focusing on the new street design agenda set out in Manual for Streets. The overwhelming feedback from attendees was the need to work across disciplines and scales but the frustration caused by a lack of design skills. CABE Space Enabling works with interdisciplinary teams across England to develop strategic goals for public space and to deliver projects which support these goals. Our experience corroborates the feedback from attendees - design skills are in short supply and are critical to the delivery of successful streets and public spaces.

I think that Manual for Historic Streets goes some way to addressing this gap by inviting a range of practitioners to make the case for well designed streets and public space and by backing this up with the critical knowledge of how to achieve this.

Sarah Gaventa, Director CABE Space
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Introduction: The importance of historic streets

Ian Poole, EHTF & St Edmundsbury Borough Council

The streets and squares of town and city centres are traditionally outdoor places where a variety of activities take place. They are places in which a certain amount of disorder may contribute to their character. However, frequently, regulation and control takes over, resulting in illogical instructions which there is no hope of understanding!

The historic streetscapes can tell the story of change that has taken place over many hundreds of years. The buildings and structures define the space within which people (generally) have unrestricted access – the public realm. But what is meant by streetscape and public realm? Rob Cowan, in his Dictionary of Urbanism (2005) provides an extensive description of these and other commonly used terms in urban design. However, for the purpose of this publication, these definitions, derived from Cowan, are used:

Streetscape: the hard and soft landscape of a street or urban space, including roadways, pavements, street furniture, signs and public art.

Public realm: the parts of the town or city where people can gain unrestricted access to see, pass through, meet, use and enjoy.

Before continuing, the context needs to be established. In 1999, Paul Dadson wrote an article for the Institute for Historic Building Conservation called ‘Joined-up conservation: the space between buildings’. He wrote:

“The spaces between buildings are fundamental to our perception of what makes places special; the proportion of time and effort given to the consideration of the public realm in comparison to historic buildings is disproportionate”.

The importance of these spaces in providing the context for buildings is recognised by notable others. The Urban Land Institute stated:

“...The public realm serves a critical function as a uniting feature for cities, and must be designed to foster an atmosphere of ‘inclusivity’, of ‘classlessness’ that gives all residents a sense of ownership and a shared stake in their cities.”

While Lord Foster has said “The essence of the city is the connections provided by the public space.”

So, in thinking about the importance of spaces, their function needs to be considered. Many will serve more than one role, perhaps depending on the time of day, the season or the date. But in general streets and squares are places where:

- People walk, drive, cycle, are pushed or carried;
- Walls and floors merge;
- Trading occurs;
- People meet, talk, trade, entertain or are entertained;
- Access is obtained to buildings;
- Utilities run (gas, water, sewers etc);
- Things are stored, especially cars;
- Human interaction and social activity takes place;
- Battles are won and lost;
- Trees, walls, flower planters, traffic signs, railings, steps, water features, cafés and advertising hoardings thrive; and
- The town’s art is shown off.

The ‘2002 Designing Streets for People Report’ published by the Urban Design Alliance provides a good reminder of what streets are for, the diagram is reproduced here.

But some towns and cities have a problem. They are suffering from neglect and thoughtlessness. The mass of traffic signals, barriers, cheap and ill thought out street furniture and general clutter is detracting from the quality of the space and the buildings that surround it.
Manual for Historic Streets

So what makes a space a place? CABE suggests the following are the critical components:

- Character – a place that has its own identity;
- Continuity and enclosure – places where public access and private enclosures are clearly distinguished;
- Ease of movement – where it is easy to get to and move through;
- Legibility – a clear image and something that is easy to understand;
- Ad adaptability – to change easily to meet new demands, whether in the same day or for special occasions; and
- Diversity – to accommodate variety and choice.

However, historic streetscapes have something special to add – years of history, and evidence of change and adaptation. They have learned to cope with people trading in them, with rallies, fairs and celebrations. In the last century they have had to adapt to the intrusion of the car, some more successfully than others. The streets of today reflect the social development of towns and cities over hundreds of years. Many may be in conservation areas, where extra protection is in place to preserve the ‘walls’ of space. However, the fabric of historic streets is showing signs of breaking under an accumulation of pressures. While the walls of the streets might be protected, the floors (the surfaces and everything that takes place on them), on the whole, continue to be a battleground for a myriad of differing demands and pressures. As a result, the very character, that is top of the CABE list, is being eroded and, in some cases, lost.

Perhaps the biggest culprit has been the car, which has become an increasingly dominant force in historic town and city centres. In the 1990’s the English Historic Towns Forum, in partnership with the Civic Trust, English Heritage and government departments, began to address the issues. The 1993 publication ‘Traffic in Historic Towns’ reminded readers that the built environment forms the unique character of an individual town, but pavements, street furniture and signs are the mundane details that provide the setting for that built environment.

In 1994 ‘Traffic in Historic Town Centres’ highlighted the problems that the car, and all the signs and lines that are required to manage it, are creating in historic centres. It stated “Traffic management schemes are too often implemented in conservation areas with little regard for the preservation or enhancement of their historic character.” The document looked to Europe for examples of good practice and concluded that Historic Core Zones should be established which would:

- Be central conservation areas and traffic control zones;
- Make special provision for controlling traffic speeds, parking, servicing and access;
- Give particular consideration for the number and design of signs and all physical traffic calming measures;
- Give priority to enhancing the historic environment; and
- Provide some recognition of the need for pedestrian priority.

The Historic Core Zones Project

With backing from the then Department of Transport, DETR, the Transport Research Laboratory, English Heritage and the Civic Trust, the Forum sought bids from member towns to establish pilot Historic Core Zones. In 1997, these bids resulted in four pilot projects in: Bury St Edmunds, Halifax, Lincoln and Shrewsbury.

Much more is written elsewhere about these schemes, including the Forum’s two publications, ‘The Historic Core Zones Project’ (1999) and the ‘Historic Core Zones Project Review’ (2003). The four towns demonstrated that there are ways - within existing regulations - that streets can be rid of white and yellow road lines as well as many traffic signs and that, where signs are required they do not have to dominate the street scene.

Focus on the public realm

Later in 2003, the Forum turned to the problems of the public realm in historic towns. Its publication, ‘Focus on the Public Realm’ highlighted the problems of so many different organisations and bodies responsible for various parts of the streetscape. The publication proposed an ‘agenda for action’ that recommended that every town had a Public Realm Strategy that would be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance and contain a plan of action. The Forum also proposed that each town should designate one person to co-ordinate all activities impacting on the streets in order to improve their quality.

The problems

Little constructive change on the ground has happened since 2003. The subsequent publications by CABE, English Heritage and others have helped to raise the plight of historic streets, but mistakes continue to be made and the necessary investment is still not forthcoming. Local distinctiveness - through the inappropriate use of street furniture and materials - is being eroded. The use of ‘out of the catalogue’ products, while being functional, does not reflect the character of the street as the historic buildings do. Some of the Forum’s member towns are taking this seriously through the preparation of both strategic and detailed guidance but there is still much to do if the streets and squares are to be distinctive, pleasant places.

The solution?

EHTF welcomed the Department for Transport publication ‘Manual for Streets’ in 2007, which recommended many of the proposals of the last 10+ years, but limited their application to ‘new residential streets’. The Forum, and the organisations associated with it, is calling for similar measures to be applied to high streets, secondary streets, squares and other public places. This publication offers the arguments for this position and practical guidance on how it might be achieved.
Part 1 – Why?

Chapter 1.1 - The historic role of streets and the public realm

Michael Loveday, Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART)

When towns first appeared, they were built as unified entities. Buildings and spaces related to each other and we are led to believe that activity flowed seamlessly between the two. The public domain had a clear purpose and that original purpose even now survives, if only as a background trace element commemorated in the names of the public spaces – Grass Market, Flower Market, the Guild Field, the Meeting Place – although the original purpose has long since disappeared. Spaces were, effectively, the ‘glue’ that bound the city together.

In many cases the original function for public space was as a vehicle for commerce. This represented the very raison d’etre for many towns as people gathered to exchange goods and services and settlements developed around these activities - the ‘great market’, the sheep, horse or beast market, the fish market, the pastry market and, as towns began to specialise, very distinct markets such as pottery, wool, madder dye or imported goods. This made the ‘market place’ the economic driver for the town and the focus for a wider dependent catchment area.

This functional basis of the ‘market space’ went on to create a stimulus for a range of other activity. Visitors meeting for the purpose of ‘exchange’ sought diversion and entertainment so the ‘space’ became the stage for civic pageant, for the ‘grand event’, for the processional, the incidental such as Sienna’s Palio – as well as a vast array of lower key entertainment such as side shows, theatrical performances, performing musicians, pugilists and acrobats. These spaces were the birthplace of the theatre as we know it today. However, spectacle did not stop with conventional civic performance, which morphed into other forms of more gruesome public entertainment including the pillory, floggings and even burnings and hangings. In the same vein, political and religious rallies represented another form of public display, often ending in full-scale riots and pitched battles.

The other key function for the public realm from the earliest times was as the medium for social interaction - the town’s forum, the ‘speakers’ corner’ providing a stage for the politically disaffected or religiously committed to vent their passion, the place to take your guests and show off the very essence of the town – effectively ‘the people’s living room’.

With the industrial, and then the technical revolutions all of this changed. To begin with, the traditional outdoor functions moved indoors – the market became the department store, civic pageant became the theatre, then the cinema and ultimately the home entertainment centre – but particularly after the last war, the functions even moved from city centres to car based shopping and entertainment centres, breaking the historic link between space and function. This move from urban activity as a social event taking place in a close knit group of sociable, multi-functional spaces to the desegregation of activity into functional boxes and ultimately to semi-virtual modes, devoid of the need for social interaction, left a spatial void which was rapidly to be filled by a new urban ‘animateur’ – the highway engineer.

Almost a hundred years of subjugation to vehicles and highway engineering manuals has left once great urban spaces full of fast moving or parked traffic, a jostling cacophony of bus shelters, utility installations, light and sign columns, ‘A’ Boards and planters and the ubiquitous ‘sheep pen.’ Once elegantly paved spaces are now tarmaced, pockmarked with street repairs, slashed with yellow lines, with 2 metre high lettering proclaiming that the space where the big red thing is parked is a BUS STOP and cycle lanes, tastefully picked out in a different coloured tarmac. They are now alien, devoid of meaning and local distinctiveness, inhospitable and threatening to their users. If we abused listed heritage buildings in the same way we institutionally abuse important heritage spaces, we would be in serious trouble with English Heritage and the courts. This de-humanisation of public spaces has alienated people, suppressed historic functions, made spaces meaningless and ultimately led to the depopulation of the public realm.

The people’s living room has become their back yard or in some cases their outdoor toilet.
Chapter 1.2 - The national agenda
Louise Duggan with Sarah Burgess and Faye Tomlinson, CABE Space

The Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 identified four cross-government priorities and 30 cross-government Public Service Agreements, (PSAs) along with a PSA Delivery Agreement for each, setting out specific delivery responsibilities for each Government Department. The priorities are:

• Sustainable Growth and Prosperity which attempts to address transport and regional competitiveness;
• Fairness and Opportunity addressing health and well-being for young and older people;
• Stronger Communities and a Better Quality of Life which addresses housing supply and community building issues;
• A More Secure, Fair and Environmentally Sustainable World - leading the global effort to avoid dangerous climate change.

Setting the local agenda
The Local Government Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities, 2006 and the Sub-national Review of economic development and regeneration, set out significant changes in the powers and responsibilities of local authorities. These changes are designed to empower local communities by devolving decision making powers to the lowest practicable level, and by reducing the burden on local authorities of targets and indicators for measuring their performance.

The Local Strategic Partnership will establish the long term vision for an area in the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). The SCS sets out local priorities and actions which will deliver that vision. The Government intends that spatial planning objectives, as set out in the Local Development Framework (LDF), should be fully aligned with the shared local priorities set out in the SCS. For this reason, if public open space is a priority issue within the local area it should be referred to in the SCS.

Local (or Multi) Area Agreements are set up between Government and local authorities to provide local targets and the practical delivery plan for tackling issues identified in the SCS. Through negotiation with the relevant government office, a selection of the 198 national indicators (in line with LAA priorities) will be identified as the basis for evaluating local authority performance.

Assessing success
While local authorities have been given a clear role as the lead place shaper, the key to their success relies on coordination with other service providers. From April 2009, the Comprehensive Performance Appraisal (CPA) will be replaced by a Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) which will be risk-based and forward focused. CAA will focus on the outcomes for the area as a whole and its people, secured by local authorities working alone or, more often, in partnership taking into account the experiences and views of the citizens in the area. It will comprise:

• A joint risk assessment undertaken by all local services inspectorates
• A scored direction of travel judgment for every local authority
• A scored use of resources judgment for every local public sector body
• Publication of performance and assessment against a reduced national indicator set

Local Development Frameworks and public space
The Local Development Framework (LDF) system, introduced in 2004, is intended to promote a proactive and positive approach to planning and development management, within a flexible and plan-led system. The LDF plays a key role in the delivery of the spatial aspects of the SCS and should outline the council’s strategy for delivering the strategic development needs, such as housing, retail and open space. Local planning authorities should ensure that their LDF makes ‘the most efficient use of land by balancing competing demands within the context of sustainable development’.1

The LDF comprises a ‘portfolio’ of documents which collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for a local planning authority’s area. These documents include:

• Development plan documents;
• Supplementary planning documents;
• Local development scheme;
• Statement of community involvement;
• Annual Monitoring Reports which form a critical part of the LDF by assessing the implementation of the local development scheme and the extent to which the policies within the local development documents are being achieved.

To date, there are very few development plan documents adopted. Anecdotal evidence suggests that local planning authorities are struggling to adapt to the ‘spatial planning’ methodology, with particular issues regarding evidence gathering, providing a realistic and deliverable vision for all areas and the drafting of spatial policies (with many authorities repeating previous land use planning policies).

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1 Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks
Manual for Historic Streets

Government has recognised some of the difficulties facing local authorities and is in the process of amending some of the procedures followed in plan-making but the suite of potential documents making up the Local Development Framework (LDF) remains the same.

The importance of the LDF in the context of public space can be summarised as:

• It is the spatial expression of the SCS
• It contains the spatial vision for an area
• It protects sites from development and allocates new sites where need is proven
• It co-ordinates the provision of infrastructure including public open space with new housing, employment and other development
• It applies standards for open space provision and design
• It provides the basis for negotiating developer contributions
• All planning applications must be determined in line with its policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where should policies and objectives for public space appear within the LDF?

Core strategy – the core strategy contains the spatial vision for the area and therefore the vision and overarching objectives for public open space should appear here.

If a local authority develops local quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards for public open space then they are likely to appear in the more detailed Development Control Policies DPD or a Supplementary Planning Document.

Policies to protect, enhance or create new public open space can be integrated into the LDF in a number of ways; for example, Site Specific Allocations DPD, Area Action Plans DPD, Development Control Policies DPD or Supplementary Planning Documents. The most appropriate document will depend on local circumstances.

Conclusion

Effective spatial planning is dependent on two key processes: the cascade of policy through scales so that it meaningfully and effectively supports design quality and coordination and influence of interdependent issues across these scales.

The new service delivery agenda emphasises this dynamic. Local authorities will need to work closely with their Local Strategic Partnerships to ensure that the SCS is realistic about the constraint and resources available and that the Local Area Agreement sets out a sensible evaluation framework. Critically, local authorities will need to get smarter at working across services to deliver change locally. This means setting out a strong planning policy framework through the LDF process but also coordinating with colleagues from highways, transport, education, health and housing to name a few. Clearly the use of negotiation and influencing skills in new and challenging contexts is a key issue for current public space planning practice.
Chapter 1.3 - The role of streets and the public realm: user priorities

Richard Hebditch, Living Streets

The last ten years have seen a change in many people’s perception of our streets and public spaces. The post-war history of increasing domination by the needs of traffic – whether prioritising traffic movement by removing pedestrians or providing increased levels of parking within town centres – has been challenged by a recognition that streets and public spaces have a range of functions. Those managing the public realm must now seek to identify the hierarchy of functions of a place and ways in which to manage and deliver them.

The recognition of the need for a more balanced approach has resulted in the new guidance contained in the ‘Manual for Streets’. There are three key elements of this document which should allow for a more nuanced approach to the public realm and a move away from regarding streets as mere traffic corridors. These are:

• The recognition of the difference between roads (whose main function is accommodating the movement of motor traffic) and streets (which are lined with buildings and public spaces and where other functions may be more important);

• Following this, the acknowledgement that the design and management of (new residential) streets requires the consideration of the five principal functions of place: - movement, access, parking and drainage, utilities and street lighting; and

• Pedestrians have been placed at the top of the user hierarchy so that their needs are taken into consideration before those of cyclists, public transport users, service vehicles and other motor traffic (and in that order).

However, the ‘Manual for Streets’ recommendations were focused primarily on new lightly trafficked residential streets, but the key elements mentioned above can be applied to historic streets. In particular, the functions of historic streets are more complex than residential streets.

Unpicking those functions requires recognition of the much wider range of groups with a stake in those streets. The primary stake in residential streets is from those who live there. Although the stake in residential streets may be contested, for instance between children and young people who want to play in those streets and others who may not want this, those with a stake in historic streets may include the complex needs of the following, together with a recognition of past and future communities’ interests:

• Residents
• Retailers
• Businesses and office workers
• The wider community for whom the historic street is a source of identity and pride
• Visitors – including shoppers, tourists and others
• Conservation groups
• Public bodies

The functions of historic streets are therefore more complex, moving beyond local distinctiveness, visual quality and “propensity to encourage social activity” that the ‘Manual for Streets’ recognises. In this ‘Manual for Historic Streets’, the aim is to set out a clear guide to managing these historic spaces and balancing these functions and enabling the most important in any space to flourish.

These functions include:

• Streets as civic spaces –historic streets represent links with the past and are a source of local identity and pride. Local landmarks and distinctive features need to be retained and championed;
• Streets as social spaces –historic streets are the places people meet and feel a sense of community through a range of interactions. Public squares, squares and cafés facilitate these interactions and offer the opportunity to pause and enjoy the aesthetic quality of the space;
• Streets as destination spaces –historic streets are destinations, attracting visitors and helping to sustain the visitor and leisure economy. Those managing historic streets need to accommodate the needs of visitors, and the services provided for them, without compromising the quality of the space;
• Streets as retail spaces –historic streets are also places to shop – historically to ‘trade’. Good management of historic streets should allow for a range of shops, particularly smaller independent shops, which contribute to the distinctiveness of the place and attract visitors. Historic streets are frequently the location for traditional markets.
Chapter 1.4  -  What is public space for?

Anna Minton is a writer and journalist. Her book on the privatisation of the city will be published by Penguin in 2008. This article first appeared in Search, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation magazine.

A few years ago the answer to this was so self-evident that the question was never even asked. Public space has long been taken for granted as space for all to enjoy, strolling and lingering in the streets of the city, sitting in cafes or on benches in parks or squares.

Today, however, public space, more often referred to by policy makers as the ‘public realm’ has become a hot topic, while some of the givens associated with the subject – namely that it should be open to all – are increasingly contested as policymakers debate how to ‘reclaim the public realm’.

Is this because the public realm has become a less pleasant environment? In most cases the answer is probably ‘no’. The streets, parks, squares, high streets and markets in our cities still tend to be lively, reasonably diverse and pleasant places to be where all can mingle.

What has changed is today’s approach to regeneration, as new spaces in the city are created in former industrial areas, which function in a very different way. This is part and parcel of what’s called the ‘urban renaissance’, the term coined for the biggest boom in construction since the modernist period of the 1950s and 60s. Then the industrial economy spawned tower blocks and arterial roads while today the new economy of dockside apartments and bars rubs shoulders with high-end shopping and gleaming office developments.

But despite the upbeat rhetoric, as with the post-war modernist boom, doubts are now being voiced about the nature of this renaissance and the public spaces being created.

With the publication of a raft of research projects, commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s Public Spaces Programme, the JRF has stepped firmly into the growing debate, a debate which has been raging in the United States for the last twenty years, with commentators decrying ‘the end of public space’ and the ‘disneyfication’ of the environment.

Speaking at ‘Rethink! New Perspectives on Public Space’, the JRF conference which launched the research, Ken Worple, co-author of ‘The social value of public spaces’ questioned the exclusionary practices that displace people, which go hand-in-hand with so much of the ‘urban renaissance’, often leaving places regenerated yet strangely empty and soulless.

Quoting sociologist Anthony Giddens’ claim that “radical politics is about damage control and the repair of the social fabric, not the endless project of making it new”, Worple said that the problem with much contemporary public space is that “the temptation is always to make it new”, sweeping away existing communities with their wealth of local culture and identity in the process.

A particular irony which emerged during the research is that one of the best examples of public space singled out as adding really significant social value to the community, Newham’s street market in East London, is to be ‘regenerated’ despite massive opposition. The research found that the market enhanced local attachment to the area, created a space for ethnic diversity and provided a therapeutic function in terms of simply making people feel good, buoyed up by the vibrancy of urban life and meeting others.

The research, which focuses on the social value of public space, has approached the subject from a social and anthropological perspective, in contrast to a large body of American research which takes the economic fundamentals of growing private ownership and government of the city as the starting point.

In the UK, the ‘urban renaissance’ is following what is very much an American, rather than continental, model as vast tracts of land shift into the hands of individual private landlords as local authorities sell their assets, combined with compulsory purchase powers which ensure the purchase of the myriad diverse businesses which traditionally made up city centres and high streets.

From Liverpool to Preston, Cardiff to Hove, not to mention Newham’s street market, centres around the country are being bought and importantly, managed, by private landlords. The consequence is a far more controlled environment, invariably policed by private security guards, with a set of behaviours from skateboarding to eating and taking photographs, banned. As for marginal groups such as street drinkers or the homeless they are “moved on”, practices the research criticised for doing more harm than good in the long term.

Interestingly, the research also found that contrary to the thrust of current government policies and programmes to create ‘clean and safe’ environments, there was little evidence that issues of safety deterred people from using public space. In fact, attempts to clean up regenerated areas often had quite the reverse effect, cleaning out the people instead.
In Cardiff’s Callaghan Square, for example, the research found that the newly designed public space with fountains, marble benches and sloping stone floors – and heavy fines for skateboarders – struggled to attract people and had an empty and ‘soulless’ feeling. Katherine Knox, co-author of the report with Worple, points out that what seem like very simple points – such as providing benches with backs on for older people – are often overlooked. “There’s an attempt to beautify without thought for social use,” she says.

Andrew Clark, who worked on a year long research project which used 46 observers to look at how people actually use public spaces in Aylesbury, said the research found that the function of public space to allow people to “do nothing” is “an essential role which shouldn’t be eradicated”, in contrast to the growing micro-management of activities in public places which threatens to design out lingering.

The focus on management is accompanied by a drive to create a “consumer experience” in places, be it a shopping experience or a visitor attraction, which American critics put down to the emphasis on shopping and consumption to the exclusion of all else. This is entirely in tune with the ‘retail-led development’ approach which characterises the ‘urban renaissance’, which looks first and foremost at maximising ‘footfall’ – shoppers in other words.

But for Jan Gehl, the Danish architect and urbanist credited with the transformation of Copenhagen, the ability to “do nothing” and linger is at the heart of life in public spaces, life he describes as “fragile”, which can be snuffed out all too easily.

Speaking recently about Copenhagen’s success he explained, “If you asked people 20 years ago why they went to central Copenhagen, they would have said it was to shop. But if you asked them today, they would say, it was because they wanted to go to town”. The result of this change has been remarkable with four times as many people spending time in the city – strolling the streets and sitting in the cafés and squares – and perhaps shopping on the side.

Of course, the other side of the argument is that many people do use and actively like the newly emerging style of public realm. Deborah Fox, Head of Standards at CABE Space, says, “If the criticism is that designers are producing soulless shopping mall environments, who are we to criticise – we must ask the people who use them”, while a recent report by the think tank Demos argued that cafés in superstores constitute a contemporary form of public realm.

But for Worple “There is a problem defining certain kinds of shopping space as public space because of the strong rules regarding entry, inclusion and exclusion”, a point which provides the most straightforward answer to the question of what public space is for.

Public space is surely for everyone, a reflection of our democratic right to the city. As the research on social interaction states, “public spaces are regarded as democratic because everybody can use them”. If the emerging public realm is no longer a space everybody can use we need to worry, not only about the state of our cities, but also about the state of our democracy.
Chapter 1.5 - Challenging assumptions

Ben Hamilton-Baillie advocates replacing street clutter with social protocol


Allan B Jacobs (asked to summarise his long career), concludes firstly, that improving streetscapes and urban design requires utilising the power of observation and questioning assumptions. Secondly, he advocates fostering interaction between pedestrians and cars in the public realm. He writes: “Planners and designers (should) study what does and does not work in existing streets, and use these observations to better design great public streets – to copy the good examples.

“From (my) research and observation, intersections and streets that allow every type of movement and interaction between pedestrians and drivers work best, serving as attractive, welcoming, and exciting places that help build the local community. When cars are more fully aware of, and integrated into, the pedestrian realm, both pedestrians and drivers are safer.”

Careful, systematic and open-minded observations of actual human behaviour in public space have played an important part in developing urban design principles. It is a change that offers the opportunity for radical new approaches to the design of streets and public spaces to be explored and tested, providing the potential for systematic and comprehensive evidence-based evaluation of many long-standing assumptions.

Shift in thinking

The background research carried out by Phil Jones and others in the drafting of the ‘Manual for Historic Streets’ (DfT 2007) highlighted the lack of evidence to support many long-standing assumptions (as in Design Guidance 32).

This is one landmark in the changing landscape. The work of John Adams and others to explore the counter-intuitive complexities underpinning risk compensation is also beginning to overturn many widely held assumptions about the nature of safety and the importance of risk in the public realm. Hazards are helpful; they help to strengthen our connection to our environment and to adapt our behaviour accordingly. Risk is an essential component of successful public spaces. But as Adams points out, “risk management is not rocket science; it’s much more complicated!”

Urban design has, for much of the past fifty years or more, been limited to the occasional traffic-free precincts or the peripheries of the streetscape. Traffic signals, lamp-columns, road markings, signs, kerbs, crossings, bollards and barriers define our everyday streetscapes – we simply take them for granted as an inconvenient and ugly necessity of modern life. Suppose we discovered that the assumptions behind the installation of all this expensive highway kit were just that – assumptions?

Case studies

Poundbury, Kensington High Street, Seven Dials, Blackett Street in Newcastle and New Road in Brighton represent rare challenges to conventional street design and provide challenging case studies for the counter-intuitive benefits of integrating traffic into human dimension of the public realm. The examples extend beyond Northern Holland, in Denmark, France, Germany Italy, Spain and Sweden.

The UK needs more case studies to build a strong evidential basis for understanding the potential to exploit simple social protocols and civility as an alternative to regulation, barriers and controls in reconciling the needs of people, places and traffic. There are many impressive urban schemes in the pipeline or under construction. The Breaking Boundaries project to remodel the one-way inner ring-road surrounding Ashford in Kent will provide an example on a large scale for a typical town centre. The redevelopment of King’s Cross, the remodelling of the West End Quarter of Oxford, the proposed Bristol University precinct and the regeneration of Ancoats and New Islington in Manchester will extend our vocabulary.

Conclusions

Given the urgent need for case studies and observation, and the widespread doubts about most of the assumptions underpinning conventional street design, Ben Hamilton-Baillie goes on to make some radical proposals, supported by examples which include:

1. A wide ranging review of pedestrian crossing types by the University of Lund suggests that informal crossings are significantly safer than puffins, pelicans, toucans, zebras and all the rest of the complicated and expensive zoological armoury.

2. Seven Dials in Covent Garden demonstrates the redundancy of keep left signs on roundabouts (no reported accidents in 17 years), and the positive effect their absence has on the use of space.

3. If any highway authority is nervous about risk or liability, refer them to the case of Gorringe v Calderdale. It is the duty of drivers to take the road as they find it ......

The importance of the public realm to the economic and social vitality of communities is too important for decisions on street design to be driven by narrow commercial interests.

Poundbury, Kensington High Street and Blackett Street were greeted with considerable scepticism at their inception by those who assumed that conventional safety measures of sight-lines, road markings, signals and guardrails were essential. Subsequent observations suggest that such doubts were ill-founded. Perhaps it is time to .... accept that humans are intelligent, observant and adaptable creatures and promote street designs that foster simple civility.
Chapter 1.6 - Whose space? Private v public space

Anna Minton, Author and Journalist

All across the country in the newly regenerated parts of the city small, but authoritative, stainless steel plaques inform the public that the area is ‘private property’. Below this is a list of behaviours which are not allowed and below that the name of the company which controls the area.

These private places, which are policed by private security and closely monitored by CCTV, were pioneered in the late 1980s by finance districts such as Canary Wharf and the Broadgate Centre in London.

Then, they were the exception to the rule but today this is a standard template for new development, raising serious concerns about the sterility of the environment and threats to civil liberties which arise from restrictions to behaviour.

In Liverpool, developer Grosvenor’s £900 million Paradise Street Development is witnessing the privatisation of 34 streets in the heart of the city. The entire area, including the streets and public places, is now owned by Grosvenor who will police it with ‘quartermasters’ or ‘sherriffs’ in a self-conscious echo of American security. Because the area is private property, the laws which govern the rest of the city regarding streets and public spaces do not apply. Instead ‘traditional rights of way’ have been replaced by ‘public realm arrangements’ which conform to rules chosen by Grosvenor. Rollerskating, skateboarding, begging and political protest are not allowed. In many of the new private places even eating a sandwich or taking a photograph may be forbidden.

Because these changes are limited to newly regenerated areas the result is that in most cities, and in historic towns in particular, large parts of the traditional city fabric remain the same, creating a patchwork of clearly delineated areas.

In London, for example, ‘Paddington Waterside’, a very large private development the size of Soho which lies behind Paddington Station, provides a sharp contrast with the surrounding area. The development is difficult to access from Praed Street, the main thoroughfare, which creates a feeling of disconnection and, although it is maintained to the highest standards of cleanliness, it is largely empty of life. Praed Street, on the other hand, is typical of the diversity and hustle and bustle of central London.

To the east of London Stratford City, which will briefly house the Olympic Village, is set to be a private city within a city while the centres of towns and cities as far afield as Lancaster in the north to Crawley in the south are earmarked for similar change. In the medieval City of Wells in Somerset opposition to proposals for development have led to the creation of the campaign group “Save Wells”.

For their supporters this way of doing things means that high standards of cleanliness and safety are adhered to. But for critics, the high levels of control and security are sucking the diversity and spontaneity out of life in the city and replacing it with sterile ‘malls without walls’.

The consequence is that more and more of our towns and cities are losing their identity and local distinctiveness. In their place the new ‘malls without walls’ are rolling out the same mix of high end chain stores, restaurants and bars which only aim to attract people with shopping in mind.

It is also raising the vital question of who the city and its streets and public places are for. In this new private public realm not only are political protesters and Big Issue sellers excluded, the tendency is also that the young and the old and those with insufficient money to spend are not made to feel welcome.

What this means is that the public spaces of the city are no longer for everyone. A planning lawyer who is strongly in favour of the new private places explained: “These are places where people are allowed as a privilege not as a right. It also has the beneficial effect that behaviours can be controlled.”

Although these developments invariably claim that they provide a higher quality ‘public’ realm they have the power to restrict access and behaviour to the extent that they are not really public at all. With more development under construction or on the drawing board than at any time since the 1950s and 1960s this signals a change which will have enormous consequences for the public life of our cities.
Chapter 1.7 - Private v public open space

Les Sparks, Urban Design Consultant

Where the private sector takes financial responsibility for urban regeneration, the ability to secure a return on investment becomes critical. The conditions for protecting investment and maximising commercial performance extend to the public spaces as much as to the buildings. Spaces need to be safe and inviting to high spending shoppers and smart office workers who appreciate cleanliness, controlled behaviour and an absence of disruptive youths and those on the margins of society. Private funding for maintenance and security staff is money well spent when it comes to sustaining investment value and income from sales and rentals.

On the other hand, local authority management of streets and squares allows access to anyone during day and night and policing is tolerant of all but the extremes of anti-social behaviour. Stretched budgets leading to reduced maintenance often result in dirty pavements, broken street furniture, litter and graffiti. Night-time drinking and day-time skateboarding are intimidating for the elderly, and some public spaces do not feel safe.

It is understandable that many commercial developers now prefer to design, build, manage and maintain the open spaces connected to their developments – rather than entrust their care to under-funded public services. Brindleyplace in Birmingham is a good example of an extensive area of public realm – streets, squares and waterside – created, and now intensively managed by the private sector. Litter and graffiti are absent, and in the multi-storey car park there are no occurrences of theft or damage to vehicles. The fountains, trees, grass and pavings are in immaculate condition. Nor are there any skateboarders or unauthorised street traders.

The redeveloped Bull Ring shopping centre is another privately managed space in the city. To all intents and purposes, its open streets and spaces are a continuation of the pedestrian network in the city centre. The majority of people will appreciate the enhanced cleanliness, and are not troubled by the occasional presence of security staff.

But there are other aspects to the privately managed streets. There are usually plenty of pavement cafés to sit in the sun at the cost of an expensive beverage – but rather fewer public benches to consume one’s own food and drink. These are places where you are welcome to come and buy, but not to loiter without intent to spend.

Then there are the ‘quasi’ public spaces, the covered shopping malls and atria where private management and control is even more intrusive. Modern shopping malls are designed to dissolve the barriers between circulation space and buying space through total heating/air-conditioning and an absence of physical shop-fronts. Escalators, upper level walkways and exotic planting are vulnerable and need protection from the elements and vandals. The doors at the mall entrance are an effective means of excluding people who are not acceptable to security staff, and can be locked when the shops close to provide security and ease of cleaning.

Such malls and arcades can scarcely be regarded as public space, and yet often incorporate former streets and alleyways that were once part of the open network of pedestrian routes. When the mall entrances are closed, the detours involved to circumnavigate these developments are both inconvenient and hostile (because generally shops face inwards to the enclosed malls rather than outwards to surrounding streets).

Whilst this may seem like a modern phenomenon, many historic shopping arcades incorporated gates at either end. The Corridor in Bath, built in 1825, had uniformed staff at each entrance who would deny access to people who were unsuitably attired or ‘the worse for wear’.

This aspect of control and exclusion is perhaps the real reason to be concerned about the private management of public spaces. Our society likes to consider itself generally a tolerant one, and people from all backgrounds mingle freely in our open spaces, streets, parks and markets. Busy and well populated spaces encourage a self-regulating community where anti-social behaviour is moderated. Excluding the over-exuberant or wayward from attractive parts of our cities will concentrate their presence and influence in remaining areas and undermine the social balance that facilitates self-regulation.

Our open spaces should not be controlled and maintained to suit commercial needs and maximise company profits. They should be places where one can let off steam, mount a political demonstration, and dress as one chooses. They are the safety valve of society, and the arena in which people from different social, ethnic and economic backgrounds can mix freely and learn the values of tolerance and respect for one another’s well-being.
Chapter 1.8 - Streetscape strategy: why? and how?
Alastair Leighton, Gillespies

Why a strategy?
A recent city centre scheme designed for a public sector client was typical in requiring consultation with around twenty defined stakeholder groupings, all representing significant, worthy and valuable interests, which together highlight the huge complexity of the modern urban environment. Imagine a scenario in which all these groups have a clear understanding of the strategy which underpins the scheme in question and have pledged their allegiance to achieving the stated aims of both strategy and incremental implementation. Imagine also a leader with authority and with the firm political pledges necessary to direct the activity towards an appropriate conclusion.

Vision
The success of the strategy is dependent on its clear, concise communication. Faulty communication leads to confusion and can cause failure. The key to clear communication at a strategic level lies in the establishment of a rigorous and compelling vision, which makes clear the scale of the ambition and importantly the why and how which will underpin delivery and bring about tangible change.

Framework
The strategy will establish a clear and logical framework for physical enhancement within the specific context provided by the town or city in question. As no two places are the same, it needs to work at a number of levels to address specific parts of the process within the given context.

The framework communicates the:
• Hierarchy of streets, places and spaces and does this in response to function (how is the city used?);
• Physical scale (where is the legible city centre?);
• Heritage and setting (where are the important places?) and
• Investment (where and how money should be spent).

These are related considerations and need to be drawn together with an understanding of the primary objectives and the range of potential opportunities, problems or innovations which need to be addressed. Other investment frameworks to be considered and the authors of parallel strategies need to co-operate to ensure adequate coordination is achieved between strategic intent for (in no particular order) transport, heritage, development, lighting and urban design.

Investment
A snapshot of public realm and streetscape enhancement in a city over a five year period may reveal an aggregated investment of some £25 million. A firm strategic understanding of the city is required to ensure the potential of this investment is realised. Public and private money should not be allocated to schemes based on short-term budgets and political agendas. Accountable investment decisions can be established by a thorough strategy which forms part of the phasing intent described by a strategic layer allows and encourages room for innovation.

Strategic design principles will include the identification of a suitable, limited, hierarchy of materials for use within the particular setting. This needs to establish appropriate benchmarks for quality based generally upon a use of, or response to, existing embedded characteristics, which are to be respected, celebrated and enhanced. A significant heritage setting does not automatically determine that an ‘heritage’ appearance is applicable. Preservation of the integrity of historic environments can often be best achieved using a simple and controlled contemporary language, thereby making clear the distinction between new and old.

It is important to note that for a strategy to be sustained, the palette should not be prohibitive in terms of future cost and the aspirations need to be tested to identify potential financial commitments – for maintenance etc. It is no good designing a bespoke bench for use consistently throughout a city if the cost of each unit means it will not be financially viable.

Strategies are not a short cut to robust and appropriate design proposals. For individual streets and spaces these need to take account of the established strategic principles but it is important that the strategic layer allows and encourages room for innovation.

The strategy, for example, will define that traffic flows within a named street are to be changed to support transformation of an adjacent car park into a new civic square, but the strategy should facilitate a creative design response to that brief at the appropriate time. The strategy must be robust, but equally must be testable and flexible.

The detailed design process will be informed by the approved principles and the adopted palette of materials. The test of any strategy must be the delivery of the shared vision. Regular review is necessary to ensure that the strategy is working and remains a living and vital document within the collaborative evolution of the city.

Behind the strategy lies a complex web of fascinating, ‘characterful’, dynamic and often frustratingly intangible things which are loosely referred to as the ‘city’. The physical environment is one significant component of this. Behind the strategy also lies the core objective of making places that people want to be a part of. These are the special places, set pieces and landmarks which give us a sense of belonging, identity and community.
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Chapter 1.9 - The economic benefits of sustainable public spaces - the Liveable City Case Study

Michael Loveday, Heritage, Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART)

Despite major advances in recent years, the regeneration of urban public spaces is still regarded in many quarters as a cosmetic exercise, a bit of urban beautification but not really a serious device to be used in the toolkit for regenerating cities and certainly not anything to do with the economy.

Until public space regeneration is understood and taken seriously, until it is recognised that there is a connection between whether people feel safe, comfortable, relaxed, entertained and informed and whether they participate in urban life economically, socially and culturally, the cause of walking in urban areas will never be a key political agenda item.

The prognosis is not entirely bleak however. Some cities over the last 20 years have had the courage to enact bold and imaginative schemes which have delivered benefits perhaps even beyond the aspirations of their designers. The Liveable City partners represent such a group of innovator cities. The Liveable City project began life in 2002 and sought, through a process of collaboration and evidence based investigation, to develop a more intelligent approach to public domain regeneration and to develop means of identifying and measuring benefits. The project was guided by a unified approach to the regeneration of public space integrating planning, development, management and maintenance and seeking to address the following objectives:

- Establish convenient, safe, legible, and attractive pedestrian links between key generators and attractors;
- Establish convenient, safe, legible and attractive routes for vehicles without undue delay while ensuring priority for pedestrian safety, health, convenience and amenity;
- Eradicate current conflict points or corridors;
- Equitably redistribute urban space giving priority to the largest volumes of people and taking account of flows and demands over different times of the day;
- Identify opportunities for additional outdoor activity to maximise the beneficial use of large urban spaces;
- Take account of historic urban development, to enhance urban quality of the street scene respond to sensory issues;
- Give priority to orientation and information;
- Ensure local image and identity are reflected in the re-commissioning of public spaces;
- Take account of opportunities to vary the use of public spaces at different times of the day, different days of the week and during different seasons;
- Consider the immediate and long term management and maintenance issues for public space;
- Embrace innovative approaches adopted by some European cities.

The concluding report of the Liveable City Project (Measuring the Benefits of Public Domain Regeneration) provides a detailed account of the economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits of public domain regeneration in the partner cities. It also demonstrates that the motives for public realm interventions are often complex and vary from city to city – the ‘one solution fits all’ scenario is something of a fallacy. The following highlights provide a ‘taster’ of some of the key findings:

- Norwich, Gentleman’s Walk: Retail Stimulant: post pedestrianisation, 300% increase in pedestrian flows at peak times; Norwich moved from 49th to 8th in the Experian retail rankings table; 300% increase in pavement cafés and 10 fold increase in street events;
- Norwich, King Street: Urban Regenerator: increase in rental and freehold values; 20 new business formations; £200m invested in surrounding area;
- Gent: Urban Animator: see Chapter 1.14, page 22;
- Odense: The Connector: higher pedestrian flows between key attractions; significant increase in cycling; greater degree of on-street activity (e.g. cafés) between key attraction hubs;
- Lincoln: Critical Path: 44% increase in pedestrian flows; Lincoln moved from 65th to 39th in the Experian retail rankings; major new hubs of activity developed for education (University/Brayford Pool) and culture (Drill Hall, County Museum & Creative Industries Hub);
- Trondheim: Master Planning Integrator: 3.6% improvement in retail performance; 11.6% increase in guest night stays (hotels); significantly increased street activity.
Chapter 1.10 - Are the streets paved with gold?

Tom Bolton, Research Adviser, CABE Space

Many of those with an interest in streets, from town centre managers to retail developers, understand that poor quality streets can have a major effect on property values, amongst other things. Research published by CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) in 2007 supported this belief with hard facts. ‘Paved with gold: the real value of good street design’ showed that houses and businesses on well-designed high streets are worth significantly more than those in poorly designed areas, regardless of any of the usual contributory factors such as transport, income levels, schools or the range of local shops available.

‘Paved with gold’ analysed ten high streets across London looking at the link between property prices and street quality. The researcher, Colin Buchanan, took a range of factors into account including lighting, standards of maintenance, traffic levels, signage, quality of materials and public spaces. The research found that a well-designed street can add at least 5.2% (or £13,600) to the average price of a residential flat in London and 4.9% (or £25 per square metre) to retail rents. However, this is only a conservative estimate of the value of well-designed streets, based on a modest improvement in quality. Major improvement works, transforming an ordinary street into an attractive, enjoyable place to spend time, could add as much as 15% to market prices. In fact, since the publication of ‘Paved with gold’, the London Borough of Southwark has implemented just such a major improvement programme on part of Walworth Road, which was the lowest scoring case study in the report.

However persuasive they are, market prices are by no means the only measure of value that should be applied to streets. The research also showed that, given the choice, the public would be prepared to pay more for better streets. A survey of pedestrians on and around each of the sample streets showed that, on average, local residents were willing to pay more council tax, public transport users would accept higher fares and people living in rented homes were happy to pay higher rents to improve the quality of their high street. These results demonstrate that not only do well-designed streets bring financial returns but also that they bring significant public value.

‘Paved with gold’ clearly shows that the rewards from investing in design quality can be hugely significant to local authorities, businesses, developers and home owners alike. Local authorities can use the methodologies that are trialled in this project to understand and anticipate the values likely to be created through street improvement work, and to plan for them in advance. Developers will see that there is a significant amount of latent value waiting to be released by investing in streets that are designed to a high level of quality and maintained effectively.

Well-designed streets also have a significant public value – people use them every day and their state affects the quality of our lives. They are also an essential component of successful place-making, and CABE’s ‘Design Better Streets’ campaign encourages investment in the public realm and a more thoughtful, strategic approach to street design.

Sustainable places are those which balance the tangible economic benefits with less tangible, long-term public values, ensuring that design delivers the best results for everyone.

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Chapter 1.11 - The public realm and health

Tony Armstrong, Living Streets

Prioritising health improvement

Health and well-being is at the top of the policy agenda, and the role of the built environment is being increasingly recognised as having an impact on health - both positive and negative. In 2004, the Department of Health suggested that inactivity cost £8.2 billion annually in England (‘At least 5 a week’, Department of Health, April 2004), and the later Foresight report on obesity set out potential obesity related costs of around £50 billion annually by 2050 (Tackling Obesities, Government Office for Science, 2007).

The past few years has seen a major change in the context and environment of public health interventions - local authorities now have a major role to play in health improvement - and crucially they are starting to see improving health and reducing health inequalities as part of their core business. This is clearly demonstrated in the new priorities contained in Local Area Agreements (LAAs), where health indicators now dominate the list of popular priorities for local areas.

The impact of the built environment

Although it is difficult to quantify the impact of the built environment on improving health, because of limited evidence, improving the public realm is seen as vital in delivering against health priorities such as tackling obesity, encouraging physical activity and improving general well-being and social cohesion. This is clearly demonstrated in the Government’s Obesity Strategy, which prioritises action on the built environment. (‘Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: A cross - Government Strategy for England’; HM Government; 2008)

The National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has published guidance on the links between physical activity and the environment, which sets out a number of recommendations for professionals in different sectors. NICE was clear about the importance of the built environment on health:

“Past policy and practice has often - perhaps not intentionally - given priority to sedentary modes of transport and ways of using building. Over recent decades, environmental changes in England have made habitual activity less common. Many components of the environment can be modified to make it easier for more people to be physically active. The design and layout of towns and cities can encourage or discourage travel and access on foot or by bicycle.”

(Promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity, NICE Public Health Guidance 8, January 2008)

Building health

The National Heart Forum, Living Streets and CABE jointly produced the ‘Building Health Report’ in 2007. This sets out to produce practical examples of how the built environment can have a positive impact on activity levels, particularly where there is little or no published evidence (‘Building Health - Creating and enhancing places for health, active lives’, National Heart Forum, Living Streets, CABE; 2007). Examples of the report’s recommendations include:

• the need to embed “walkability” into urban planning and design in order to encourage physical activity, by ensuring “walk routes [are] connected, comfortable, convenient, convivial and conspicuous?” It states that: “The key is to deliver more development that encourages walking and cycling, to identify the benefits of such development to all (including the developers), and to let the story be told. Only then will priority be given to mixed use, higher density and greater walkability and bikability, and will the available planning tools be used more effectively and enthusiastically”.

• Building Health also recognises the importance of good quality public spaces. This needs to be prioritised and recognised by local authorities - there are several examples of areas with a high quality proactive public realm strategy, including Kensington and Chelsea, Southwark and Nottingham City Council.

• Green spaces are also important in promoting good health- acting as a place for leisure and relaxation, a respite from noise, traffic and pollution, and as an important part of improving the general attractiveness of the public realm. “The more attractive parks and urban green spaces become, the more people are likely to use them for physical activity, as well as to be benefit their mental well - being... Investing in parks and green spaces should be seen as an investment in public health.”
Healthy Cities
The World Health Organisation Healthy Cities programme has a wealth of information and guidance on how cities can become health promoting places. An action group on healthy urban planning has developed a number of key questions that should be asked of planning policies and proposals, which provides a useful framework for assessing health impact:

1  Healthy exercise?
2  Social cohesion?
3  Housing quality?
4  Access to employment opportunities?
5  Accessibility to social and market facilities?
6  Local low-impact food production and distribution?
7  Community and road safety?
8  Equity and the reduction of poverty?
9  Good air quality and protection from excessive noise?
10 Good water and sanitation quality?
11 Conservation and decontamination of land?
12 Climate stability?

(Healthy Urban Planning in Practice: Experience of European; Barton Et Al; 2003)

Chapter 1.12 - Measuring the economic benefits of investing in public space
Martina Juvara, Colin Buchanan

A number of helpful tools are emerging which could help Local Authorities and Towns to build up the case for public realm investment. These tools demonstrate, in numbers, that investment in the public realm generates increased property values and rental values, health benefits, social inclusion benefits and that improvement is of real value to the public.

• Pedestrian Environment Review System (PERS) is a software based tool developed by Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) to assess the performance of public spaces according to a variety of criteria. The method could (subject to further research) predict the rise in property and rental values following improvements. This could justify the allocation of regeneration funds to the public realm, support Section 106 negotiations and harness sponsorships/Business Improvement District monies in areas in which new development is limited.

• Design for London has adopted a tool to measure benefits to the users of the public realm, based on a stated preference for improved quality (with input from Colin Buchanan). This is the first part of ‘3-legged stool’ to measure the value of public realm schemes in terms of benefits to users, to property, and to health/social inclusion. This set of tools has the specific purpose of providing detailed numerical justification in applications for public funding for public realm purposes.
Manual for Historic Streets

Chapter 1.13 - What are we scared of? The value of risk in designing public spaces

Polly Turton, Policy and Research Officer, CABE Space

Safely the same

One of the main issues affecting the design and management of public space in recent years has been the drive to minimise risk – providing places of safety and certainty. This can lead to a bland and homogenous urban landscape.

Much of the joy of public spaces comes from their surprising qualities; the unexpected sound of a busking violinist, or the sight of children splashing in a fountain is what makes the city an inspiring place to live. In order to create places of surprise and uncertainty there needs to be positive risk-taking. Therefore there is an essential tension in public space – whether to remove risk, and so erase danger, or to tolerate or even encourage risk, and so enjoy the unexpectedness of our cities.

The drive to minimise risk-taking reflects something more profound. The notion of ‘an accident’ seems to be disappearing from our understanding, together with the positive opportunities of risk-taking. The mood of the times is overrating the worst rather than creating the best possible with guidelines drawn up on ‘worst case scenarios’. Bad luck transmutes into culpable negligence with risk-taking being reinterpreted, with hindsight, into a consequence of carelessness. This is driving a tendency for people to dismiss the fact that accidents will happen and deny responsibility for their own actions.

Of most relevance to local authorities and the design and management of the streets, are personal injury claims and the growing perception of a ‘compensation culture’. While reports note the lack of an actual increase in court action, the perception of greater liability still impacts on practical design and management considerations.

Claiming an impact

The major categories of claim affect our living and working environment in various ways:

- Occupiers’ liability affects the design of buildings and surrounding spaces: for example, what railings, banisters or doorsteps are acceptable to ensure no injuries occur?
- Liability under the Highways Act affects the streetscape: for example, are surface materials slip resistant? Could the design of street furniture cause injury? Are trees growing out of control and causing tripping? Should there be protective barriers so pedestrians do not stray into roads?
- Protecting against road accidents equally affects the look and feel of streets, junctions or inter-changes with a resulting increased clutter of barriers, guard rails and excessive signage and signalling.

The only defence for local authorities is to have ‘a reasonable system of inspection’ in place, with everything hinging on the word ‘reasonable’. The basis of arguments over personal injury claims rests on whether or not it was ‘reasonably foreseeable’ that an accident could occur. The boundaries of both concepts - ‘reasonable’ and ‘foreseeable’ – are continually being tested and stretched.

So, how does this risk averse environment affect professionals working at the local authority level? From chief executives and councillors to planners, engineers, architects, urban designers, project managers, valuers, quantity surveyors, estate agents and property developers, risk moves to the centre of their work and increased resources are spent on risk assessment.

Managing risks

Risk consciousness is a growth industry. It ranges from employing people with legal experience or risk assessment qualifications as part of new management procedures, to the increased costs of insurance cover for professions beyond the level of inflation. Whilst it can sharpen up practices it can also constrain creativity and the capacity to be innovative with the design and management of the built environment. The risk management process tends to focus on monitoring the downside rather than considering potential.

The perceived rise in claims has forced local authorities to enhance their inspection and maintenance regimes. However, approaches differ:

- Some authorities simply forward all such claims to their insurers, and then seek to learn the lessons arising out of how the claims arise by working with the insurers to identify patterns of claims.
- Some authorities self-insure in relation to these matters and therefore deal with them ‘in house’. After having received a personal injury claim, they first identify the relevant department responsible, then work closely with the officers concerned to establish whether there is clear evidence of liability against the authority, with their subsequent approach determined by their findings.
- Where liability is less clear cut, the council will often wait to see the evidence provided by the claimant and will often allow claims to be formally issued in the courts before considering whether to settle. Damages are paid out of the service budget of the department in question and there is an internal pressure to protect resources.

Leeds and Cardiff City Councils are often cited as having good strategies for maintenance guidance and procedures. For example, when claims clusters occur in specific areas, Leeds targets these for special attention. Significantly, this affects the culture of design, management and maintenance so maintenance in particular is now conducted specifically with the avoidance of claims in mind. In authorities with limited resources, it questions whether money can be directed towards maintenance to improve the quality and attractiveness of public space for all users or to just reacting to potential claimants.
Designing solutions
Those in the planning, supervisory and safety auditing roles have a vested interest in a climate of risk as it justifies their existence, as well as predisposing them to reduce risks. In addition the number of intermediaries and multiple sub-contractors tends to further increase risk aversion creating a pass-the-parcel on risk with everyone seeking to export their risk to someone else.

With the spectre of litigation looming the broader goals and long-term perspectives of urban design can get lost. Furthermore, the exclusive focus on safety rather than health, stunts debate on creating urban environments and the development of regulations and incentives that foster healthier lifestyles. This ranges from encouraging public transport, walkable urban settings or cycling friendly environments.

How then might our public spaces be different?
• Space is produced and used by all of us;
• It is not only the activities of shopping, walking, sitting and looking that make up public spaces, but everything we do;
• Different people have different ways of using public space;
• As professionals and citizens risks can vary in the public spaces with different times, attitudes and stages of our lives.

CABE Space supports the premise that the biggest risk is not taking risks at all. To avoid creating boring neighbourhoods and depressing cities, the way forward is for local authorities to create a vision for their public spaces. Developing risk mitigation strategies by keeping close to clients and other contractors in a collaborative process of systematic risk assessment needs to support making high quality public spaces.

Spaces must include otherness and sameness, reassurance and challenge, a degree of surprise and the unusual as we go about our everyday lives. In short, neighbour-hoods and cities which are simultaneously, strange and familiar. This is public space which is unique and stimulating, rather than predictable and sterile. To achieve this requires sometimes taking the risk of not knowing what lies around the corner.

Case study 1: High Street Kensington

Kensington High Street lies at the heart of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and is a vital part of the fabric of the community.

In 2000, work began on a major programme of street improvements led by Councillor Daniel Moylan, Deputy Leader of the Council. The aim was to improve the look and feel of the street whilst making it safer and easier for all road users to navigate and enjoy.

The most difficult issue for the Council to resolve was the removal of guard railing from the central reservations of staggered crossings. Based on existing health and safety guidance, this was not an option Council Highways Officers felt they could recommend to Members. Opposition to the changes claimed that the council was putting aesthetics ahead of safety.

In order to ensure that in departing from safety design norms safety was not compromised, the council took an evidence based approach and, once satisfied with the evidence, proceeded with the removal of 715 metres of guard railing and excessive signage and signalling. Only 60 metres of new guardrails and essential items of street furniture have been introduced, creating a sense of openness which welcomes and empowers all users, particularly pedestrians and wheelchair users.

Kensington High Street offers lessons that can be applied in general terms on a national basis. The new designs have been well received by the local community and, as in similar schemes in Denmark and the Netherlands, have caused no adverse effect on safety to date.

Case study 2: Queen Elizabeth Hall Undercroft, South Bank

The Queen Elizabeth Hall Undercroft on London’s South Bank is a prime example of a public space that has found its purpose in life by accommodating spontaneous and informal appropriation by young people. Its success as an active and vital space is largely dependent on the staff at the Royal Festival Hall, the people who manage it.

While anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) are introduced to break up groups of young people, £20 on-the-spot fines are introduced for skating anywhere in the Square Mile and railings and kerbs all over London discourage skating, the managers of the Undercroft take it all in their stride.

There was some conflict in the early 1990s when, the South Bank administration tried to destroy the sloped banks used by the skaters by building fences along them. But the banks remain. A tacit agreement seems to have been reached, and the skaters – and their admirers – have become an accepted and integral part of the spectacle that is the South Bank.

Lessons can be learned here about ways of managing public space to accommodate young people and their needs, and reaching compromises between users that are acceptable to everyone. Ultimately, these compromises enhance rather than damage the quality of the space and, through increased civility and mutual respect, help to create more active, representative and thriving streets.
Chapter 1.14 - Street activity

**Michael Loveday, Heritage, Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART)**

The very best schemes in the Liveable City programme and beyond have demonstrated that what public works can actually do (beyond pedestrianisation, safety and encouraging walking) is to change not only the very nature of public space as a functional venue but, more critically, the role and perception of the whole town. Whether the improvements provoke more activity in the field of cafés, markets or events, the changes will often be dramatic and create impacts far beyond the limited goals expected from a traffic reduction scheme.

### Case study: Gent

Two decades ago Gent had a sumptuous collection of monuments and museums but the city’s public spaces were occupied by parked and moving cars and the traffic impediments associated with them. While the City boasted an unquestioned range of attractions, recognising them, then actually moving safely and conveniently between them was a hazardous and unpleasant experience. The Council recognised that while the City was potentially a very significant destination it had been eclipsed by its more famous near neighbours, Bruges, Antwerp and Brussels and that it was often overlooked as a visitor destination.

The Council took the bold move of ‘cleaning out’ the key public spaces, transforming them into beautifully designed areas with quality paving, street furniture, landscaping and art. Unlike many cities which often see public domain enhancement as an end in itself, Gent went one stage further. It animated the newly ‘recaptured’ spaces with a year long programme of urban activity – concerts, markets, performance, occasional and more permanent installations - focused on four seasonal events. It also recognised the importance of water in the City and commenced a programme to ‘recover’ previously culverted water courses and to animate the banks of rivers passing through the City. Finally, it recognised the potential role of extending activity out of the normal working day and, through its imaginative Urban Lighting Strategy, transformed the night time townscape and brought activity to it through its festival programme.

The newly regenerated public domain provides a festival surface area of 765,000m², a stage for festival activity hosting a range of performance, concerts, exhibitions, markets and related activity. During the largest of the four seasonal festivals, the Gent Festen in July, 1.5m visitors are attracted over 10 days creating direct expenditure of £36.3m and overall expenditure of £49.5m, as well as increased footfall to formerly peripheral areas and an increase in property values. There is also a high incidence of repeat visits and, from the perspective of local people, an enormously enhanced programme of events and activities, many of which are free. On a more strategic level, Gent has repositioned itself from a relatively anonymous historic Flemish city to an iconic cultural and festival destination in Northern Europe.

### Other Examples

Gent’s evidence of the impact of cultural change in the public realm is dramatic and sustained for the whole year. Other cities have made more limited impacts of varying scales and at varying times:

- **In Norwich** the Council took the opportunity of the main shopping street being closed to introduce a twice a year French market. Impact surveys revealed that 45% of its users would not have visited the City had the French market not been there but that once there, 75% of the sample had spent money in local shops. Equally impressive, arts organisations took advantage of the closure of the historic King Street in Norwich to set up the King Street Festival – a community event of stalls, bands, dance and other cultural activity. On one day, the festival attracted 30,000 visitors to the street and, as with the French Market, a large proportion only came because of the Festival but once there visited other shops and attractions.

The other Liveable City partners have similar stories to tell:

- **Lincoln** has a well established Christmas Market which takes great advantage of the traffic free streets but this has now been augmented by a new waterside festival around the newly renovated public realm of the Brayford Pool. Both events have an enormously positive economic impact on the City.
- **Trondheim** has exploited its improved public realm to increase events by 41%, focused around the hugely successful St Olaf’s festival. These events have had a particularly beneficial impact upon staying visitors and their spend.
- Similarly, **Odense** has used its spaces to facilitate the extremely successful Hans Christian Andersen Christmas Fair with similarly impressive results.

Beyond the Liveable City project there are iconic examples of how public realm improvements have impacted positively on urban activity:

- Two of the most legendary champions of public space, Jan Gehl and Lars Gemzoe, have been gathering evidence for four decades on changes in **Copenhagen**. This demonstrates that as the surface area given over to pedestrians has increased by 600% over 34 years, the number of people spending time in the public realm has increased by 3.5 times and seats and cafés have increased by 60% in just 10 years.
- Another spectacular example of events transforming public realm and the local economy and the character of an area is **Bryant Park** in New York. Here, a run down and misused park, managed by the municipality was taken over by a charitable trust who not only regenerated physically but developed a complex activity base from very small scale activity (eg chess playing) to major concerts and events. The social impact was impressive, reducing the number of annually reported crimes there from 604 to 5 but the economic impact was even more dramatic with massive increases in rentals and property values in the surrounding real estate.

All of these examples demonstrate that recapturing the streets and filling them with activity not only adds a more animated dimension to urban life but, more significantly, generates significant benefits for local economies. Additional to this, the creation of interest, engagement and bustle in public spaces helps to keep them alive and combat anti social behaviour and exclusion. Finally, the provision of markets, cafés, street vendors and festivals ‘on the door step’ may be an important component in engaging people in local activity and therefore abating the need to travel, thus reducing carbon release.
Part 2 – How?

Introduction: The practical approach and delivery mechanisms
Charles Wagner, English Heritage

Much has been written since the early 1990s about the state of the public realm in England; there has been much analysis of what is wrong, and considerable media coverage of the exemplars showing what can be achieved. But there has been very little detailed coverage of the practical “how to”, from procurement to contract completion – the delivery mechanism. This second part of the ‘Manual for Historic Streets’ addresses this.

It is now 15 years since EHTF’s ‘Traffic Measures in Historic Towns: an introduction to good practice’ (with Colin Davis) and English Heritage’s ‘Street Improvements in Historic Areas’, which both looked at the issue of how to achieve better streetscape. It is 10 years since the breakthrough Historic Core Zones Project pilots were constructed and described with the publication of EHTF’s 1999 report and review document of 2003 and also covered in Department for Transport (DfT) Traffic Advisory Notes on each pilot. 2000 saw the publication by English Heritage of the influential ‘Streets for All: A guide to the management of London’s streets’, followed by the publication of a ‘Streets for All’ volume for each of the English Regions in 2005 published with DfT endorsement. These guidance documents all worked on the basis of what was possible within the existing regulations and guidance, applying them thoughtfully.

However, it is only in the last three years that desire and interest in tackling streetscape issues has been such that there is a real demand for knowledge on how to achieve quality public realm. A year ago, after two years in gestation, the ‘Manual for Streets’ was produced by DfT, and though focused on new streets, much of the content can be applied to existing streets, even old streets in historic settlements. Perhaps, the recent publication of Department for Transport Local Transport Note 1/08 ‘Traffic Management and Streetscape signals’ that there is now willingness from the top down to radically change the post-war approach to traffic and streetscape.

Whilst there are a growing number of people in central government, local government, public bodies and agencies and consultancies who have embraced this new approach, it has proved more difficult to reach out to both the top management of local authorities and the junior technical staff.

English Heritage took the view, two years ago, that though each of the ‘Streets for All’ included a series of eight case studies covering issues such as long-term investment in enhancement of an historic town, the use of a streetscape manual to promote good practice, approaches to tackling the skills deficit in traditional street crafts, the historic core zone principles, guardrail and sign removal, and how, at a county level, a series of manuals allowed better solutions to most highways works, we needed to consider providing practical case studies to show how many of these advances were achieved. It is the procurement process that is so hard to put in writing, yet so necessary to pass on to others, to demonstrate ‘how to do it’.

David Orr, of Mouchel Parkman, was commissioned to research and write up innovative solutions to commonly occurring issues where modern highways regulations and guidance comes into conflict with the historic environment. Just launched, both in print and on our websites (www.helm.org.uk) are the summary document and the first ten practical case studies:

1. Fixing signs, lights & CCTV to buildings;
2. Parking restrictions without yellow lines;
3. Guardrails and crossings;
4. Historic surfaces;
5. Traffic calming;
6. Tactile paving;
7. Non standard signs and best use of standards;
8. Reducing sign clutter;
9. Use of white lines;
10. How to do a street audit.

The case study (overleaf), taken from the one of the practical case studies shows ‘how to…’

The articles which follow are similarly offering practical guidance on how to make the change to quality streetscape, from the strategic level of traffic management and spatial planning to the details of signs, public art and lighting. They are all written by those who have taken the forward-looking approach and they can reveal how it is done.

The second part of the ‘Manual of Historic Streets’ is an invaluable “how to…” that will allow every local authority with responsibility for an historic town to recover its streetscape and create a desirable environment for residents and visitors.
Norwich City Council implemented the Norwich Mixed Priority Scheme along Prince of Wales Road, which provides a successful example of removing guardrails at crossings. This scheme included several challenges, ranging from diverse land uses to high levels of crime and accidents. The £1 million scheme was funded by the Department for Transport under the Mixed Priority Routes programme and was completed in 2004.

The main objectives of the scheme were to:

- Reduce the number of accidents in the first year after completion;
- Contribute to the Crime and Disorder Objectives;
- Improve the overall quality of the townscape.

To achieve this, the scheme implemented the following measures to create pedestrian bias:

1. Use of Puffin traffic signals that combine with other measures such as surface treatments and road narrowing, which manage speeds to 20mph. The traffic signals are designed to rest on red for vehicles and pedestrians at off-peak times. This allows for a quick response to be given to pedestrians and helps maintain reduced vehicle speeds between crossings;
2. Removal of the central island and carriageway narrowing;
3. Widening of pavements and crossing points;
4. Designing without guardrail;
5. Paving private forecourt areas to unify the street;
6. A simple palette of materials;
7. New modern street furniture and lighting scheme;
8. New tree planting;
9. Speed management strategy.

Monitoring of the scheme continued for 3 years after completion to establish how successful it has been. Before implementation 69 accidents were recorded over a 3 year period from 1998 - 2001, of these 44 involved pedestrians. From completion of the work in July 2004 up to January 2007, there were just 18 accidents, of these 7 involved pedestrians. Calculating on a pro-rata basis this equates to just 21 accidents over the 3 year period.

Case study: Norwich - Prince of Wales Road

Norwich

Norwich
Chapter 2.1 - Traffic management measures in an historic context

Martina Juvara, Colin Buchanan

Traffic management measures should be appropriate not only for the smooth operation of the transport network, but should also respect local distinctiveness and place. The ‘Manual for Streets’ (DfT 2007) describes the principal functions of streets as:

• place,
• movement,
• access,
• parking and
• provision of utility infrastructure.

It states that, of these, functions the first two are the most important.

“In the past, road design hierarchies have been based almost exclusively on the importance attributed to vehicular movement....This approach has created disjointed patterns of development. ‘Manual for Streets’, DfT 2007, Section 2.4

Streets should no longer be designed by assuming that the movement function is predominant and that ‘place’ is automatically subservient. The Manual proposes a simple methodology to define the relative importance of the two functions and a first step to bring balance between link and place: the Place and Movement matrix, where the importance of the street’s Movement function is graded against that of its Place function. Carrying out this exercise can help inform the identification of traffic management measures, appropriate to the place as well as the link.

Within the historic environment, there is another dimension: streets with similar place/link status (for example two quiet residential streets) could have very different character and history, because they originated in different periods.

For this reason a traffic management strategy for historic towns should adopt the following four steps:

• Step 1: Place/link analysis of the area reflecting the current situation, which should follow the methodology endorsed by the ‘Manual for Streets’. It will identify areas in which the place function is implicit, but not adequately reflected in the road geometry and streetscape design. A typical case is a high street, where inadequate pedestrian widths and infrequent crossings mean that the place functions are suppressed in favour of the movement functions. A set of remedial measures will be identified.

• Step 2: Place/link review of the area in a future situation (for example taking account of future development). Ideally this process should emerge through historic review and stakeholder consultation. The purpose is to redefine the Place or Link roles of certain streets. For example, a square/crossroads may have lost, with time, most of its historic place characteristics and have become a road junction. However, there may be an aspiration to improve its sense of place. This second step will identify planning policy and design actions necessary to redefine the character of some spaces. Steps 1 and 2 will provide a set of traffic management measures which will be required to bring Place and Link in balance.

• Step 3: Identification of the streetscape character by quarter or precinct using character area assessment methodologies and historic analysis, with specific reference to public realm design and detailing. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that the distinctive character of a neighbourhood is recognised, reinforced and enhanced.

• Step 4: Definition of street typology, by layering Place and Link analysis and streetscape character.

• Step 5: Identification of special places, nodes, hubs, views and vistas where place identity and orientation is very important. These are the landmark locations where special treatments are appropriate.

This approach is at the foundation of the ‘Oxford Central Area Streetscape Improvement Guidelines’ (Colin Buchanan, 2008). It ensures that, for instance, shared surfaces in different parts of the central area are not designed the same, but are strictly inspired by local characteristics, even if the management of movement is the same.
Chapter 2.2 - Policy issues: links with community strategies and LDFs

Martina Juvara, Colin Buchanan

Streetscape quality can be promoted through national, regional and local policy. Planning policy enables local authorities to actively drive the public realm agenda:

- At national level, PPS1 (Planning Policy Statement 1) promotes design quality through development and provides the local authority with the power to reject any development that does not positively contribute to the improvement and regeneration of its setting. The onus is on the developer to demonstrate that the proposed development brings improvements to its context, in terms of massing and architecture, but also in terms of public realm.

- At local level, the progressive preparation of Local Development Framework, which is now taking place in most towns, allows for the inclusion of a clear agenda for public spaces. Core Strategy policies, for example, could include the requirements for context analysis and understanding of local context; the principles of enclosure of spaces and creation of attractive frontages, as well as respect for local detailing and materials could be included.

- As a large proportion of the public space, the streets are also one of the key stages of community life. Basic principles of social inclusion, access for all and safety should form part of the definition of design quality for streets and public realm. These principles should be explored in the Community Strategy and included in the LDF Core policies.

- Streetscape should not be left to the site or detail design level. Nor should it remain the domain of the Highway Authority; it should be actively promoted through spatial policy. Area Action Plans for the central areas or for historic centres should clearly identify the locations of streetscape improvement schemes, areas where pedestrians or cyclists should take priority, precincts or special character areas where specific design requirements should apply.

- The Supplementary Planning Document and Design Codes could provide the details of the desired improvements, in order to ensure consistency of approach over time and to raise awareness with the various agencies involved in the public realm of the design principles. Design codes are more appropriate within the context of a regeneration framework and anticipated significant change over a relatively short period of time.

- Streetscape quality should be promoted at Development Control level, through the requirement for a specific public realm section to be included in the Design and Access Statements, against which the quality of improvements can be assessed and proposals rejected.

Road charging may be part of the overall strategy.
Manual for Historic Streets

Chapter 2.3 - Developing a strategy – a local authority perspective

Mark Luck, North Somerset Council

Urban areas are defined by their heritage, geographical location, activity and environment. The town centre is at the forefront of people’s impression of the town, and as such the quality of its streets and spaces play a critical role in establishing identity. This, in turn, is influenced by a number of factors, which include continuity of public space, the quality of design and the use of materials, maintenance standards, the amount of street clutter, accessibility and uses.

A public realm – or streetscape - strategy aims to build consensus, understanding and a shared vision, which will help attract and influence future investment and strengthen the role of the town centre and its qualities. In particular the strategy should aim to:

- co-ordinate quality standards for public space design, and
- improve town centre legibility through mechanisms such as lighting, the use of materials, public art, and pedestrian signage.

The broad objectives of a strategy should be to:

- reinforce the local distinctiveness and provide a positive local identity for the town
- establish quality thresholds that are appropriate, sustainable and maintainable
- promote a town centre that is attractive, inclusive, accessible, and safe for all users.

Key Concepts

Recognising and working with the existing and evolving urban form is essential, and an effective strategy is based on two key concepts:

- Connecting space - improving patterns of movement, which aim to maximise pedestrian use of the town centre both during the day and at night.
- Designing for place - characterising and reinforcing the existing and positive qualities of the town

These incorporate the need to balance achieving a coherent and connected network of streets and spaces, whilst characterising and reinforcing the identity of distinct places in the network. In order to achieve this, a strategy should seek to define existing character areas and establish a hierarchy of streets and spaces, which best facilitate pedestrian movement and access.

Connecting space

Recognising and reinforcing a primary pedestrian network provides a framework for public realm investment and design decisions. In addition there is an increased expectation with regard to the quality of building frontages, new development, signage and advertising, as well as encouraging high standards of both public and private maintenance.

When identifying a primary pedestrian network the aim should be to connect the town centre facilities, attractions and places of interest via a convenient and attractive network of routes, both during the day and at night. The network should be defined with the pedestrian in mind and be accessible, safe and maintained to a good standard. The routes will show the town in its best light. The routes and spaces that make up the network should be legible, and whilst these may be highlighted by pedestrian signage, should not be reliant on these for their identity as a coherent system. A sense of ‘being on the right track’ will be reinforced through quality, townscape, activity and visual interest. The network should not cover all of the streets in the town centre, but will create both hierarchy and the opportunity for exploration.

Decisions regarding the design and specification of the public realm along the primary pedestrian network will balance the need to connect, with the need to express the individual identity of places within the town centre. This distinction will be achieved through different degrees of coordination and control of design elements.

Movement related elements such as pedestrian signage, public information, town maps and public transport facilities will generally be of a consistent design. Connecting streets and spaces will also have a degree of coordination with regard to elements such as public lighting and paving.

In broad terms, the aim should be to achieve an enhanced quality of finishes and standards within public spaces, which will provide a focus. Connecting streets and spaces should be upgraded and identifiable when compared to other routes within the town.

Designing for place

Although any urban centre will have an identity as a whole, it may be made up of a number of distinct sub areas or quarters, where factors such as the historic development of the area, predominant uses, topography and economic factors give each area its own unique characteristics. Reinforcing the identity of these quarters within the town contributes to a sense of place enabling a better understanding of the role of each area, which in turn has benefits for navigation and movement.

It is important that proposals for street and space improvements, as well as new buildings, take account of their immediate context and respond to it. This can generally be achieved through better understanding of the quarters and determining where it is appropriate to replicate or reinforce existing patterns, or whether it is better to adapt or contrast with them.

Factors that can be used to reinforce place include the use of materials, scale and detail. Where schemes are well designed with full regard to their surroundings, issues of style can be less critical in reinforcing identity. Within a town centre area, which is generally characterised by greater variety in the built environment, a contemporary design approach is likely to be less visually intrusive than a poor attempt to copy historical patterns.

The design of key public spaces associated with distinct quarters of the town needs to be led by the concept of place making. Within these areas, decisions regarding paving, street furniture, planting and lighting will be determined by the character and needs of the place, rather than a single design solution or style throughout the town centre.
Chapter 2.4 - Parking management

Kelvin Reynolds, British Parking Association

The demand for parking in most UK towns and cities continues to rise unabated along with the rise in car ownership and access to all forms of transport. With over 30m cars registered for use in the UK, proper and effective management of our streets, and especially parking, is absolutely necessary.

In the latter half of the last century many towns and cities saw significant transformation as prosperity in post-war Britain became synonymous with increases in personal travel and as car ownership levels increased dramatically. Towns and cities were expected to adapt to accommodate this but were originally designed for a more pedestrian lifestyle in mind.

The introduction of standardised signing systems and the need for consistency to aid understanding for users has meant that commonly these adaptations to accommodate or frustrate the intrusion of the motor car have lead to a homogenous set of solutions as the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach has been retrofitted across the country.

However, it is now more widely appreciated that traffic engineering and parking controls can be applied in a manner much more in keeping, and more closely aligned, to the unique characteristics of the locality they are intended to serve and genuinely enhance the surroundings.

Practitioners involved in the design of the ‘public realm’ or delivering the renaissance of our towns and cities must strive to provide traffic and parking controls which balance the needs for accessibility to these places with the requirement to preserve or indeed restore the original characteristics that attracted the journey in the first place! Mobility impaired users must be catered for as well as the many other user groups:- taxis, goods and services deliveries; cyclists as well as pedestrians. Fortunately the art of parking design and management is alive and well in many places and there are some fine examples of best practice in the application of proper and effective parking facilities which support the environment in which they exist or are designed to cater for the particular needs of tourism and visitors and yet preserve the integrity of their surroundings. It should be remembered that every motorist becomes a pedestrian at the end of the vehicle trip!

Chapter 2.5 - Implementing Restricted Zones

Steve Boor, St Edmundsbury Borough Council

Following enhancements to the environment through improved paving and other means, it is not uncommon for the addition of even 50mm primrose lines to spoil the overall effect.

However, it is necessary to indicate where parking is permitted and the answer to this might be to create a restricted zone. This allows parking restrictions without the need for yellow lines.

Experience with restricted zones has shown a number of factors need to be taken into account for the introduction of a zone to be successful:

- A restricted zone needs to be fundamental to the design and not added as an afterthought.
- The most important consideration is that the Highway Authority cannot introduce a restricted zone without specific Department for Transport consent for the necessary signing.
- Early engagement with the traffic engineers who will be arranging the traffic regulation order and signing is therefore essential.
- Consent may take some time and ideally needs to be in place so the scheme can be opened and enforced from the beginning.
- Contact with the enforcement agency is important; either the police or local authority if the area has civil parking enforcement. Agreement must be reached and input can be valuable if they have experience of similar schemes elsewhere.
- Consider the design from the point of view of the motor vehicle users; relaying the footways and using bitmac on the carriageway alone will not lead to a successful restricted zone. The whole appearance of the area needs to change, where possible the driver should be in no doubt where parking and waiting might be permitted without reliance on signing.
- Carriageways should be narrowed to the minimum necessary for the expected movements and if parking, loading, etc are to be permitted it should be in clearly defined bays that are easily identifiable to casual observation. This also avoids the need for bay markings.
- The positioning of the signing is also important. A forest of signs can be avoided if property owners agree to the repeater signs being placed on suitable walls, fences, etc. (sign is variant of 637.2). The signs which permit rather than forbid (eg loading bay) do need to be more prominent and in most case should be placed behind the kerb line and clearly visible to any driver attempting to wait. Without yellow lines it is necessary to use larger entry and exit signs, to the size and dimensions of the Department for Transport’s working drawings for restricted zone signs. This can be obtained from the Traffic Signs Policy Branch.
- If the proposed scheme involves some element of pedestrianisation, during part of the day or week, pedestrian zone signing should be used as an alternative. The Department for Transport may provide special directions permitting the omission of yellow line and/or repeater plates.
Chapter 2.6 - The design of space – engaging the community

Richard Hebditch, Living Streets

Engaging with the community in the design and management of public space can be seen as a luxury add-on to the day-to-day business of managing the public realm within limited budgets. But engaging communities is essential in order to ensure that schemes respond to behaviour in, and ownership of, the public realm, encouraging local responsibility for the maintenance of its quality.

Instead, the opportunity for regular users to feed back their experiences, can lead to ongoing improvements and contribute to longer-term policies. As the National Audit Office points out, “community participation is vital in ensuring value for money in public services. Services designed and delivered without community input risk wasting money … because they will be unused or underused if they are not what people need”. 2

There are many examples of unused elements in our streets. For example, pedestrian subways were a “rational” response to the danger of road traffic but people actually want to cross at street level. To overcome this, additional guard railing would be erected to force pedestrians into subways rather than reconsidering subways as the right solution.

Expensive investment in improving the public realm, without engaging those likely to use them, can create spaces which should be pleasant but are either in the wrong place (e.g. not on a route through which people are likely to walk) or fail to address other issues such as fear of crime or anti-social behaviour.

Streets and public spaces designed and maintained without public engagement may also be overused. Vehicle traffic is more easily modelled and streets more easily designed for its use. Engaging the community in what they want from their public space can help to address this imbalance.

Engaging communities need not be a daunting prospect. There is a range of guidance available which highlights good practice, and organisations like Living Streets deliver training to highways and planning professionals on engagement techniques which can be applied to management of the public realm. However, there are a number of points to consider when engaging the public.

1. **Be clear about what you want involvement on.** If people are to give their time to a process they need to know what the purposes of the engagement are and the limits of their contribution. For instance, the aim may be to work more intensively with the community to create facilities that the community takes some responsibility for. At other times it may be that specific input is needed on small-scale changes, when a representative sample is more important than the involvement of the whole community.

2. **Identifying the purpose of engagement should lead to identifying the communities you want to engage with.** This includes recognising the variety of needs and concerns within the community. Satisfying particular groups within the community may mean that others’ needs are marginalised so consideration of all those affected by a proposal is essential. Recognising the range of needs within a particular user group (avoiding stereotyping) can be complex. One ‘solution’ may not fit all; e.g. older, but active, people or those with a number of disabilities. Explanations for engagement should be clear to those who are consulted and those who are not.

3. **When planning engagement, there must be a co-ordinated approach.** Other partners – internal and external – may be planning consultations; it is vital to know what is planned and with whom, to avoid overload and confusion. The expected time scale and level of commitment should be clear from the outset.

4. **It is also worthwhile to involve community groups when planning engagement, and to consider the best body to engage the community.** If there have been tensions in the past, through poor consultation or other engagement, it may be helpful to work with an organisation which has the skills and experience to deliver the engagement exercises and which can gain the trust and confidence of the community; although bringing in an outside company with no links with the community may not always achieve this.

5. **It is essential to be open and honest about the reasons for the engagement and the expected results.**

6. **The methods used must allow all those you want to input to do so.** When Living Streets organises Community Street Audits, it seeks to ensure that many people can take part. Audits are run from different times of the day so that those who are working or who have other commitments can contribute. The audits are promoted to those who may be least likely to take part in consultations and that they feel confident about making a contribution. The way that audits are run also allows those who may feel less confident about writing submissions or using technical language to engage. Those who are more confident about giving their opinion should not be allowed to dominate the discussion. Encouraging people to think about issues from the perspective of others can also help – whilst still allowing people the opportunity to raise the issues that are important to them.

7. **During and after activities it is important to provide regular feedback about how the community input is being used and what will happen as a result.** The feedback should be honest about what can and cannot be achieved and allow for inaccuracies to be challenged and decisions to be fully understood.

8. **Finally, an evaluation is essential - of the success of the exercise and whether it achieved its objectives, together with an assessment of lessons that can be learnt to inform future engagement with the community.**

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Chapter 2.7 - Inclusive design in practice in an historic setting
Charlotte Lonsdale, Papworth Trust

What is inclusive design and why is it important?

Inclusive design is a term which describes the philosophy behind developing spaces and environments which are accessible to all community users, including disabled people.

A range of legislative changes, starting with the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995, which defined disability for the first time and gave disabled people the legal right to equality of opportunity, has driven a move towards adopting inclusive design practices.

Taking an inclusive design approach to developments of all sizes can help to protect the developer and scheme managers from litigation under the DDA and can also meet other duties:

- Part M of the building regulations and BS8300:2001
- Department for Communities and Local Government Circular 01/2006 requiring access statements for new developments to cover both design and access, allowing applicants to demonstrate an integrated approach that will deliver inclusive design, and address a full range of access requirements throughout the design process.
- Meet the requirements of the Disability Equality Duty requiring public funded bodies to look actively at ways of ensuring that disabled people are treated equally, actively seek participation from disabled people in the planning and delivery of their services and to promote disability positively.

As well as the legal benefits, inclusive design offers the practical benefits of enabling movement to a more cohesive society, where all members can participate fully and have equal access to places of education, employment, leisure, shopping, worship, as well as public open space and housing.

Many public and public funded services are embracing this approach and developing additional local planning policies to ensure that all development is fully accessible.

Inclusive design and streetscapes

The process of inclusive design begins at the master planning stage and is developed through the detailed design stage and post occupation/management phases.

Master planning

- The location of the project needs to be considered – in terms of access to transport etc;
- An inclusive design specialist involved in all schemes;
- Local disabled people consulted;
- The project team supports the principles of inclusive design.

Recommendations:

- An Access Statement developed and reviewed throughout the project;
- The needs of disabled people considered when choosing materials – level surfaces are preferred;
- Street furniture kept to a minimum and located at one or other side of the footway to enable a clear route through for people with mobility impairments and deliveries. A minimum of 2000mm usable, unobstructed width and a minimum of 3500mm where there are shopfronts;
- At least 1800mm clear between any obstacles;
- Tactile paving, used in accordance with Department for Transport guidance;
- Obstacles, such as litter bins and bollards, with a 150mm minimum contrasting band of colour to assist visually impaired people;
- Bins and bollards a minimum of 1000mm high;
- Signing and wayfinding provided in accordance with RNIB Building Site guidance;
- Street lighting and signage mounted on buildings where possible;
- Overhead projections such as canopies and shop signs with a minimum clearance of 2500mm above ground level;
- A change in surface texture immediately around items of street furniture can assist blind and partially sighted people;
- Seating provided at frequent intervals;
- Cycle stands and the surrounding area defined for the benefit of blind and partially sighted people by the use of guard railings or a tactile corduroy pattern paving surface indication.

Features:

- Disabled people involved in planning process;
- Blue badge designated bays with free parking for blue badge holders;
- Shopmobility scheme with designated parking;
- Riven paving removed as part of improvement scheme and replaced with planed York stone;
- Street furniture located to one side of the footway;
- Tree protectors used to identify trees;
- Accessible WCs available;
- Street furniture identified with contrasting colour bands;
- Well maintained environment;
- Lighting good and even;
- Level crossings used which slow traffic as well as improving access;
- Seating areas provided;
- Tactile surfaces used which complement historic environment;
- Easily accessible information about services and facilities;
- Street design guide developed to ensure good practice is replicated in other schemes.

Case study: inclusive street planning in the historic core – Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds
Chapter 2.8 - Case study: Derby - Transforming Squares: Visions of Excellence

Nick Corbett is the Urban Design Manager for Derby Cityscape and author of Revival in the Square (RIBA 2004).

The streets and squares of Derby are full of potential but they need a vision for excellence. In response to this, a new project ‘Transforming Streets and Squares’ is being led by the urban regeneration company Derby Cityscape in partnership with Derby City Council and consultants Savills Urban Design and Alan Baxter Associates.

This project, which is about creating inspiring public spaces in Derby’s city centre, will build upon work done in relation to the Derby City Centre Public Realm Strategy and create up to seven new and improved public spaces. The vision behind the project will honour Derby’s heritage and challenge the status quo in highway design. The objective is for streets and squares to serve as a catalyst for civility and urban renaissance.

Streets and squares provide the setting for development and through this project both are considered in a joined-up way. Commercially tested development briefs will set the vision for the redevelopment of key sites beside the new public spaces.

A key objective of the project is to enhance the attractiveness and economic competitiveness of the historic Cathedral Quarter of Derby. The project will examine how the Cathedral building and surrounding spaces can contribute to the public life of the city and how links can be enhanced to Derby’s World Heritage Site and major new developments including the recently completed Westfield Derby, a £340 million retail scheme.

The project provides an opportunity to explore best practice in street management. This includes the ideas of Hans Modeman, the late Dutch traffic engineer, in relation to people, places, traffic, and ‘shared space.’ The Government’s guidance document ‘Manual for Streets’ (DfT March 2007) is being closely followed.

The aim is to have streets and squares that:

- are not over-engineered as a result of prescriptive regulation,
- which result in attractive places that people want to visit and
- to put the needs of pedestrians above that of motorised traffic.

“We don’t just want to think out of the box in Derby; we want to get rid of the box. We’re ambitious for this city. We’re holding interactive exhibitions and open days for the public to help set the vision. If people want Derby’s streets and squares to compare with the best in the world, we’ll help them turn their dreams into reality.”

says Nick Corbett, the Urban Design Manager for Derby Cityscape and author of ‘Revival in the Square’ (RIBA 2004).

The Derby skyline is precious; a sketch of it is outlined on the City’s ‘Welcome to Derby’ signs. There is increasing pressure from developers for taller buildings in the city centre and so EDAW has been commissioned to produce a tall buildings strategy. In order to manage and shape growth, this will be grounded in the expectations for excellent public realm in the City. There is a tendency for a knee-jerk reaction against taller buildings, often for good reason in historic places like Derby, but it is possible to learn from international best practice. For example, the 14 medieval towers of Tuscany’s Sam Gimignano appear to relate well to the city’s streets and squares, and they strengthen the City’s international profile.

The Derby Cityscape Masterplan includes £2 billion of investment and £1 billion is already underway. Now is the right time to set out the vision for our streets and squares. Engaging with local people will raise confidence levels. It will also help to ensure that new public spaces have a distinctive Derby identity.

With a design-led strategy for streets and squares, and with collaboration between Derby Cityscape, Derby City Council, consultants and local people, Derby’s city centre is becoming a place of unity and prosperity.
Chapter 2.9 - Case study: Stratford-upon-Avon
- Civic Society leads streetscape improvements
  Ian Heggie, Stratford Society

Stratford-upon-Avon is a perfect example of 12th century town planning. Its grid pattern of streets was the result of a deliberate policy of encouraging urban growth and many 14th and 15th century buildings are evidence of its rich architectural history. All this could be endangered by lack of pro-active and sensitive planning.

Ugly shopfronts, intrusive advertising and signage, unsympathetic surfacing materials and street furniture can ruin the inherent character of the town and in 2004 the Stratford Society and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust initiated a project to avoid this.

The Society had already begun to raise awareness of the importance of good shopfront design by setting up an award scheme as part of the District Council’s attempt to halt the decline in the town’s economy. The project with the Birthplace Trust was a natural extension of this and together the two organisations raised grants of £12,000 from the County Council, District Council and the C S Rookes Memorial Trust. The aim was to show how a combination of pedestrian priority measures, improved signage and surface treatments, more sympathetic treatment of the building facades and improved lighting could upgrade the main High Street in Stratford while maintaining its historic character.

Colin Davis Associates were appointed as consultants and a three-stage procedure was devised:
- a draft report was prepared summarising:
  1  the previous history of the street,
  2  national principles guiding streetscape enhancement schemes,
  3  the results of an audit of the current status of the street,
  4  the likely impact of the County Council’s proposed pedestrian priority scheme and
  5  ways in which the streetscape might be improved in future.
- a workshop was arranged for all the owners and tenants of High Street shops to present and discuss the draft report. A summary of the workshop was circulated to all participants and the meeting was publicised in the local press.
- the draft report was revised on the basis of the workshop and the three local authorities were asked to adopt the report.

The first positive result was that the owners of two shops in High Street scheduled for refurbishment sent for copies of the report and followed the guidelines.

The initiative is now being supported by the World Class Stratford project. As part of the project, a significant sum has been earmarked to improve the streetscape and, among other things, it is proposed to use some of the funds to cost-share with shop owners to encourage them to comply with the recommendations of the report. It is hoped that these improved design guidelines will restore High Street as a magnet for residents and visitors alike.

Chapter 2.10 - A toolkit: Spaceshaper
  Nicola Mathers, CABE Space

‘Spaceshaper’, developed by CABE Space, is a practical toolkit for use by both users and professionals to help plan improvements to existing public spaces or to plan new spaces. It aims to be aspirational, challenging participants’ perceptions of what their space can be.

‘Spaceshaper’s’ unique approach is to:
1  bring together a diverse range of both users of the space, and the professionals who influence it, and
2  to capture their individual perceptions of quality, using a shared language.

The toolkit works through a workshop format; the people involved are critical. Variety will ensure the needs of all stakeholders are taken into account; from mothers with pushchairs, the young and the elderly to local shopkeepers, street cleaners, the police, wardens, designers and engineers. To ensure that the views of children and young people are heard, versions of the toolkit for this group have been developed. Intelligence on how the place functions at different times of the day and night and days of the week is essential. Through structured workshops run by trained facilitators these different perceptions of quality are collected, presented and discussed.

The process brings together the knowledge of the people who use the space everyday and that of the professionals responsible for planning, designing and caring for it. The ‘Spaceshaper’ process will draw out the strengths and weaknesses of a place and what is important to people. The toolkit allows differences between groups of people to be drawn out and discussed. Through this debate, ideas for improvements, or a vision for a new space can be formed. ‘Spaceshaper’ can also be used to track changes over time. This can be helpful to provide evidence of the impact of investment over time.
Chapter 2.11 - Case Study: Accessible Stratford

Elizabeth Dixon, Accessible Stratford

Following the demise of South Warwickshire Access a small group of individuals, led by Elizabeth Dixon, a colleague and the Manager of Stratford-upon-Avon Shopmobility, continue to strive to ensure that the town is “accessible to all.” The initiative is supported by Stratford-upon-Avon Town Management Partnership and by the local District and County Councils. The group offers advice, carries out simple audits, checks web sites, reviews planning applications for “inclusion” and, when necessary, visits individual businesses offering guidance.

The Town Management Partnership provides a great deal of information through a range of individual Guides. These cover shopping, eating, dining, Christmas and other special events. However, for residents and visitors to Stratford with disabilities – whether hearing, mobility or visual impairments - there is no guide offering specific information on important matters, for example where to park, find an accessible toilet, which restaurants are accessible, or accessible places to stay.

After discussion with the Town Management Partnership, it was agreed that a survey of the whole town should be undertaken to gather this information. This would then enable a separate guide to be published with the provisional title of "Accessible Stratford."

The Group designed a series of questions and, under supervision, an audit was carried out by the senior students from King Edward VI Grammar School, in Stratford-upon-Avon, to discover what was available to customers with disabilities. The information included: access to the premises; whether they had any loop systems; if an adapted toilet was available; whether large print documentation had been included; and importantly - whether staff had undertaken any disability awareness training.

This information has now been collated and is ready for publication. The Town Management Partnership is actively seeking funding and, once secured, the guide will be published and "Accessible Stratford" will be available to the public through all the usual outlets, including the Town Management Partnership’s web page.

Chapter 2.12 - Case study: simple and safe - Shrewsbury’s courtesy crossings

Rob Surl, Shropshire County Council

When Shropshire County Council began to re-design the High Street in Shropshire’s historic county town, one statistic jumped off the page: the number of people crossing the town’s main street every day far exceeded the number of people driving along it! Despite this, the carriageway space was clearly the domain of the motor vehicle and to cross the road was at best an inconvenience, at worst a hazard.

The High Street enhancement is described in two of the EHTF reports on the Historic Core Zones project, and in the DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet 08/98.

A distinctive feature of the Shrewsbury scheme was the introduction of a large number of informal ‘courtesy crossings’ at regular intervals along the street. These do not offer any formal priority to pedestrians, but simply identify a series of locations where pedestrians and drivers can interact to negotiate a safe and convenient crossing.

Crucially, the main carriageway of the High Street, which carries over 5,000 vehicles per day, including buses, was reduced to just 3.5m. This means that it only takes a few seconds to cross the road, reducing the exposure to traffic. The narrow road, together with the use of alternating stretches of asphalt and granite sett construction in the carriageway, means that traffic speeds are low – often less than 15 mph.

The courtesy crossings are at carriageway level, with dropped kerbs, and are constructed in York stone setts. These provide a colour contrast with the rest of the road surface, and are the only visual clue given to drivers and pedestrians. Traffic speeds are low, enough for drivers and pedestrians in some cases to make eye contact, and drivers tend to slow down, rather than stop, to allow people to cross. Some pedestrians are more assertive than others. Most, but not all pedestrians use the courtesy crossings.

Most of the courtesy crossings are adjacent to one or more of the bays set aside for disabled parking, loading or buses. These bays are generally square ended, to simplify the layout and make best use of the limited space. Where possible the crossings were aligned with the entrances to some of Shrewsbury’s ‘shuts and passages’ or to a prominent building. Tactile paving, specially made in York stone, was ‘designed in’ to the overall paving scheme to avoid awkward cuts as far as possible. Pressure to add white or yellow lines at the kerb edge was resisted, and this does not seem to have led to problems. In the later phases of the scheme, a way was also found to eliminate the awkward diagonal cuts often associated with dropped kerbs, by laying stone flags to a ‘best fit’ and then grading the surface to remove trip hazards.

The name ‘courtesy crossings’ was coined by a local business leader, who was impressed with the way they depended on interaction between pedestrians and drivers. In this, they anticipate the more ambitious ‘shared space’ schemes. Whilst some of the features may be applicable in other areas, it is important to note that the key to their success in Shrewsbury has been their use on a narrow, one-way street, where traffic speeds are already low and drivers are - most of the time - courteous.
**Chapter 2.13 - Historic surfaces – a practical demonstration**

*Colin Davis, CJDA Ltd*

One of the distinguishing services offered by the English Historic Towns Forum is that meetings and seminars take place at selected locations across the country and always include exploration of local projects.

A recent EHTF conference in Oxford concluded with a site visit to examine the work taking place to reinstate the famous cobbled surface that surrounds the elegant Radcliffe Camera building in the centre of Oxford. Though historically important, the surface had over the years, been poorly patched: new cobbles laid in rows rather than randomly, small areas of square setts and more recently areas of tarmac. There were large bare patches.

The design objective was to fully restore the surface to its original appearance. While in engineering terms the surface had to withstand infrequent but heavy vehicles.

The original design, which was accurately recorded, had a mixture of granite setts and smooth York stone and had been devised to allow someone to walk, though not always directly, to every part of the Square without having to walk on the cobbles. There were short cuts, formed with setts, from the Radcliffe Camera across to the Bodleian Library. Outside St Mary’s Church there was a very smart area of black basalt setts, a clean, mud free surface for anyone alighting from a carriage before going to the church! These subtleties are valid today and certainly help people with walking disabilities or people using wheelchairs or buggies.

The intention was to keep the irregular rhythm of the cobbles as much like cobbles on the beach as possible, in contrast to the regularly laid setts. The setts were aligned exactly as they had been, usually in a pattern that precisely respected the alignment of the Camera itself, a point noticed by an observant art director of a recent film crew.

Several sample panels were made to help decide the right pattern and standard of workmanship. The cobbles had to look as the best of the original cobbles had, but larger stones were used to reduce the likelihood of them becoming dislodged. The space between them had to look as small as possible, so that the cobbles were more visually dominant than the spaces between them. This was achieved by fitting the cobbles vertically tight together, rather than horizontally. The surface dressing between the cobbles was in fact the original hoggin, reused.

The specification consisted of seven materials, each contributing to a surface that accurately restores the historic appearance yet at the same time resists the horizontal forces exerted by the power steering of modern heavy vehicles.

Since the project has been finished, it has been praised by local amenity groups and has received a local design award. Being at the centre of one of the internationally known locations in the academic world, it has already featured as a subtle, yet authentic, backdrop to both film and TV historic re-enactments as well as contemporary documentaries.

The project also fulfils an EHTF objective in that it is a scholarly yet practical complement to the adjoining grade one listed buildings in their outstanding conservation area.

**Specification for the laying the cobbles, from base upwards:**

1. Class 6F1 capping, a selected fine grade granular material;
2. 150 mm Type 1 Granular sub-base;
3. 175 mm Cement Bound Material category 3 (CBM3);
4. 70 mm Steintech bedding mortar BM 04;
5. 70 mm x 100 mm river cobbles hammered into bedding mortar to the correct level;
6. 25 mm Steintech joining mortar HD 02, between cobbles;
7. 20 mm locally sourced hoggin, top dressing.

**Credits:**

Engineers, MayerBrown; Mortar, Steintech; Natural stone, CED; Urban design, CJDA Ltd, colinjdavis@aol.com

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**A spokesperson from DfT said:**

Many streets have become victims of street clutter through the accumulation over time of street furniture, traffic signs, advertising, and other, ad hoc signing. Each of these can combine to create a confused and untidy environment. In particular much street signing has been implemented at different times, which responded to the then current needs, without considering which existing signs could be removed as a result.

It is important to avoid unnecessary signing. Highway Authorities should note that the Traffic Signs Regulations & General Directions only set out what is required of a sign if it is to be installed. There is a statutory duty to sign restrictions or prohibitions, but it is for the designer to determine if each sign is necessary to comply with that duty.

In March 2008, the Department for Transport published LTN 1/08 ‘Traffic Management and Streetscape’, a new Local Transport Note aimed at enhancing streetscape appearance by encouraging design teams to minimise the various traffic signs, road markings and street furniture associated with traffic management. This document can be downloaded free from;


On signing in particular, it says;

Consider whether signs, lines and road markings are needed in your schemes, and, if so, whether they can be minimised in terms of number and size (see ‘Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions’ 2002 (TSGRD) for requirements, and ‘Traffic Signs Manual’ Chapters 4 and 5 for advice).

and

Councils should consider the benefits of undertaking an audit of traffic signs and road markings.
Chapter 2.14 - How to reduce the clutter of traffic signs

Colin Davis, CJDA Ltd

A recurring subject for debate in the English Historic Towns Forum is the tricky problem of reducing street clutter. “Clutter” has become the collective name for the many pieces of equipment and signs, usually deemed essential at the time they were installed or erected.

In fact many are not essential and can be removed.

Traffic signs are more difficult to remove because they have a legal purpose. Yet across the country there must be thousands of traffic signs that are not essential and which can be removed, as long as the rules that govern them are adhered to. The key point is that there is a distinction in what are called ‘the rules’ between which signs must, by law, be erected and which signs may, at the local authority’s discretion, be erected, or indeed, be taken away.

The source document regarding what signs should be erected is the ‘Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions’. Here are some examples of what the TSRGD allows:

No entry (Sign 616).

Usually this sign is required to be placed on each side of the road to indicate the point at which the restriction applies. But in certain circumstances the sign need only be placed on one side of the road. Direction 8 (3) (b) (ii) of TSRGD permits this at a junction where the road width is less than 5m and the sign centre is within 2m of the edge of the carriageway.

These conditions are often found in town or village centre conservation areas, where streets are narrow and vehicular speeds are low.

Roundabouts (Sign 606, white arrow on blue background circle)

Turn left signs at roundabouts are not mandatory, though the Highway Authority must satisfy itself that drivers are not being misled. As the Department for Transport put it elegantly to me: “In environmentally sensitive areas, where the direction in which traffic should circulate is so self-evident that no-one is likely to be in any doubt even if no sign 606 (or sign 515, the chevron) is provided, it might be felt that the sign could safely be omitted. That’s lawful.”

The roundabout with the obelisk at Seven Dials, Covent Garden, London is one of many examples where signs have been omitted. It has become, de facto, a shared pedestrian/vehicle space.

Car parking places (Sign 661 series)

These signs explain where drivers can park and other parking restrictions. They need not be fixed to separate grey posts. They can be fixed to adjacent railings, walls or structures.

There are practical considerations about obtaining permission from private owners. In some neighbourhoods this has been organised by local residents or amenity groups. The point that the signs might be hidden by parked cars is no excuse for non-compliance. These signs are not intended to be read by drivers while they are actually driving a vehicle. Drivers are expected to find a safe place to stop find the sign and read it.

Pedestrian zone (Sign 637.2 series)

These signs are usually needed in city centres to indicate pedestrian areas and parking and waiting restrictions. They can be fixed neatly to walls.

Where the walls have obvious architectural elements such as pilasters, columns or buttresses, the signs should be fixed and positioned with the same care that would be given by a solicitor or doctor when he fixes his brass plate. The signs can be fixed so that they appear to be part of the total scene.

A start can be made in conservation and other “sensitive” areas. Although it is really difficult to think of any part of this country which should not be considered sensitive. And so these practices could really be applied more generally. The means are available.
Chapter 2.15 - Pedestrian Signage Systems

Mark Luck, North Somerset Council

A pedestrian signage system needs to reinforce wayfinding and not determine it. It must work alongside the development of a legible townscape and other initiatives such as public space enhancement, public lighting and public art, to reinforce primary routes that logically link the places that people want to access. The over reliance of pedestrian signs, without developing other navigational mechanisms can lead to the overuse of signs, resulting in on-street clutter and a subsequent degrading of townscape.

A comprehensive system should both improve people’s experience and understanding of the place and contribute to its identity. Signage components need to be recognisable, but also sit comfortably in locations which may be of different character. The design should establish a distinctive palette that legitimises the system to its users, and when installing a comprehensive system existing pedestrian signage should be removed.

Signage design should be information lead, providing a legible system that can be used by everyone during the day and at night. A system may need to be modular based, in order to be easily updated and to allow for new attractions to be included (or obsolete ones to be removed).

Signage and information plan

A signage and information plan establishes what should be signed from where, with the aim of giving the information that is needed to find destinations at the right point in the system. It is impractical to sign all attractions from all destinations and the combined use of directional signs, maps and other ways of presenting information, such as detailed directories and on-line information points, should be considered.

Directional signs should be provided only where there is an established need and used to sign and promote the most important destinations and attractions. Other facilities and services can be indicated on town maps, and specific directories at key locations. Where a list of destinations is shown on directional signs the nearest destination should be shown at the top, and, as a guide, no more than five locations should be included in a single direction to avoid visual clutter.

Where a number of attractions are located in a definable area, more distant signage should refer to the area, and not the specific attraction. Marketing of specific uses might benefit from association with area names.

The signage and information plan provides a basis for a comprehensive system, allowing the project to be developed further through the commissioning of a graphic code and specific component designs.

Graphic design

The development of a graphic style will provide a strong identity for the system and enable information to be presented in a clear and legible way. Contrast, point size, case and style can all contribute to legibility. The commissioning of a graphic code manual is essential if a system is to be updated, and the way in which new information is presented needs to be tightly controlled to retain the clarity and legitimacy of the system.

A town map can be a valuable addition to a signage system and is an important communicator of a town’s identity, through its graphic style. The development of a map for the specific purpose of navigation should be considered. The map base needs to be clear and instantly recognisable. Street names and key facilities such as toilets, public transport interchanges and attractions need to be included, but too much information is a common problem, and rules relating to the inclusion of sites need to be rigorously applied.

Component design

Guidance relating to component design follows on from the principles established for the graphic representation of the system. The longevity of the system is dependent on both the quality and adaptability of the component design. Components need to be appropriate for the present day as well as for the longer term and to be responsive to a continually changing environment.

The system should be product-led to allow it to be maintained and updated over its life. Designs can contain a mixture of bespoke and off-the-shelf components, which will give the system a unique identity that contributes to the identity of the town, but will help to balance both the initial costs and future replacements.
Each place has its own character and identity, often derived through its historical raison d'être. Common Ground provides a definition of local distinctiveness as follows: “Local implies neighbourhood or parish. Distinctiveness is about particularity.”

The things that make up the particularity of a place may be its local industry, culture, economy, topography, people, locally available material, architecture, or a combination of all of these.

A sense of place is derived through the differences between places, which carry meanings in their associations and symbolism. The character and lasting quality of places can take time to establish. In historic towns the form of the place was established by the activities and the time in which it developed as a place. Yet today in many places the original industry or activity has long since passed, all that remains are the buildings, forms and grain, but the places are still thriving with new activities and economies. Places therefore change and adapt and what makes the place distinctive is a mix of these rich layers overlaid over time.

We should not be afraid of expressing this mix. The expression of local distinctiveness in historic towns can be much more than the creation of generalised ‘museum pieces’ and making choices for new development which are timid and could be anywhere. Places can be developed as clones of each other, developing a generalised view of the past, such as ‘Victoriana’. In order to attract visitors and inward investment the differences between places need to be celebrated.

In order to understand local distinctiveness it is important to have a sensitive engagement with the place, its history, image and current character. Themes, character areas and quarters need to be established in a rigorous strategy. It is also necessary to balance the issues of distinctiveness and uniqueness for its own sake. Imposed, unrelated, unique elements can quickly become dated and lack meaning.

Choices are made based on ‘differences’ and this can be celebrated. The streets are an opportunity to reinforce this identity through materials, form and colour. One of the key elements of this is the street furniture.

The family of sign structures and street furniture for a particular place provides an opportunity to reinforce the character and identity of an area. It should be seen as an integral part of the public realm. The choice of street furniture can dilute this identity with systems that could be referred to as ‘catalogue heritage’ and which can be found in many places. There is not always a ‘one size fits all’ solution to street furniture. Street furniture needs to be distinctive and to relate to the place, while also being robust, sensitive and practical.

City of London
The City is a locality with a rich history, a thriving economy which has developed over time, and now contains a mixture of new and old architecture squeezed into the existing medieval street grain. The public realm is reinforced to encourage more pedestrian movement and interventions on the street aim to aid this through mapping and yet using material and form which relates to the place. Fossil stone is engraved to reveal the layers of history; the mapping is an edited representation of the City to reinforce the public realm; and style and form is chosen to complement both new and old architecture.

Stratford-upon-Avon
Stratford-upon-Avon is well known for its Shakespeare connections, which attracts many visitors and gives a unique quality to the town. However Stratford-upon-Avon is a living, thriving town, with a distinctive quality, and the aim of the street furniture design was to move beyond the obvious and reinforce the distinctive nature of the place itself through its river, open spaces and townscape.
Chapter 2.17 - Local Distinctiveness – bespoke street furniture
Ian Poole, St Edmundsborough Borough Council

The uniqueness and identity of historic towns is created by the composition of their buildings and spaces. The Shambles in York, the Rows in Chester and the Lanes in Brighton all have a certain character that is unique to those places. But all historic towns and cities face a battle to overcome the clone image created by “designed for anywhere” street furniture.

In Bury St Edmunds it has been recognised that bespoke street furniture can compliment the character of the historic environment and add to the local distinctiveness. As part of the Historic Core Zone project, bollards, traffic signs, tree guards, seats, railings and planters were all designed either in-house or as part of an art commission and manufactured especially for the project. In many cases they have been made locally too. Their designs reflect the local vernacular that can be found in adjacent buildings. While initial costs were slightly higher than standard mass-produced furniture, they were only a small element of the design and construction costs of the overall scheme. In addition, they have been made from materials that are robust and durable and, some eight years after implementation, are in better condition than some of the mass-produced furniture used elsewhere in the town.

Lincoln – a comprehensive approach
As part of a major enhancement project in the centre of Lincoln, the public realm of the Cultural Quarter has undergone major refurbishment. During 2007 works to a number of streets, including part of the High Street, were undertaken that introduced new surfaces, street lighting and street furniture that have introduced a fresh and contemporary finish to the area.

Oxford Area Action Plan
Oxford City Council has included policies in the West End Area Action Plan for the creation and improvement of public spaces in the area. In addition, policies for developer contributions cover funding public realm improvements. As the introduction to the AAP says, it is “both a policy and a delivery tool. It goes beyond traditional land use policy documents by considering issues of funding, timing and delivery. The AAP identifies many key infrastructure projects that will contribute to the West End renaissance, for example investment in the public realm and spaces.”

Brighton & Hove Local Area Agreements
Brighton & Hove City Council has taken a positive approach to managing the cultural quarter of Brighton. The Local Area Agreement includes an outcome to “better support the cultural quarter by continuing to invest in its heritage assets and the quality of the environment.” In this respect, the LAA includes an objective to further improve the public realm throughout the Cultural Quarter to reflect its status, patterns of usage and potential future usage.

Cambridge Conservation Area Appraisal
The Central Area Conservation Area Appraisal highlights good and bad streetscape and the Implementation Policies section includes proposals to remove street clutter and to prepare a Streetscape Manual.

Grainger Town Public Realm Strategy
Grainger Town was established by architect and developer Richard Grainger and is the historic heart of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Gillespies’ initial appointment was to prepare a strategy to address the streets and public spaces - a public realm strategy - as a key component in delivering the regeneration to this once prosperous area.

The strategy addresses the design of key streets such as Grey Street and Grainger Street as well as Bath Lane and Monument. A number of other crucial matters are considered including: how to maximise the contribution of the city’s heritage, historic buildings and unique environment to the economic regeneration to the city centre; and how to prioritise pedestrian spaces and manage the use of traffic in these spaces.

Following the successful adoption of the strategy, Gillespies was retained as design advisor for the design and implementation phase of the project.
Chapter 2.18 - Public art - guidelines for commissioning

Ian Banks, Atoll Ltd

Background
Public art encompasses all the art forms, including the visual arts, performance, music, video and new media. The prime requirement is that projects or events are publicly accessible and site specific - designed for a particular place at a particular time. Projects may be permanently or temporarily sited and locations can include the interiors of buildings, the spaces around them, parks and waterways as well as the rural environment. Increasingly, public art encompasses new technologies and includes the use of light and projected images.

Artists should have as much freedom as possible to respond to sites and possibilities in their own way; briefs should be open, not prescriptive. Their work may mirror and interpret the environment of the place and this can include the exploration of difficult or sensitive issues.

The appointment of an artist should be considered at the outset of projects, preferably pre-feasibility, but certainly pre-planning. Artists should be treated as part of the design team - not as an exotic option, but as a cultural necessity.

Arts in Regeneration
Increasingly public art overlaps with the related disciplines of architecture, urban design, community participation and regeneration. This collaboration does not necessarily have to result in a ‘work of art’. Artists working alongside other professionals and designers can contribute their conceptual and practical skills to the creation of buildings, other structures and public spaces.

Public art can also have a part to play in the regeneration of communities. It can involve a process that encourages skills and knowledge, stimulates new ideas and skills, develop a sense of ownership and to engage in decisions about their locality. This applies in particular with young people and work with schools can be very fruitful. Public art can help to:

- Renew and transform urban and rural areas, both developed and regenerating;
- Restore the environmental deficit through regenerating areas of dereliction and by investing in the highest quality environmental assets;
- Project a positive image, reinforcing strong regional brands and countering negative stereotypes;
- Promote high standards of design, landscaping and architecture by creating or adding to distinctive public spaces, environments and buildings;
- Encourage further investment, tourism and employment;
- Promote civic pride through involvement and ownership.

Funding
Funding for public art can come from a variety of sources. To maximise these funding options, and more importantly to keep abreast of good practice, projects should be aware of precedents, priorities and policy from a number of sources. These should normally include the Arts Council England and UK public art think-tank Ixia as a first port of call. Also important are the relevant guidelines of CABE and the various Regional Development Agencies (Regional Economic Strategy and Cultural Strategy primarily), as well as all relevant sub-regional or local Public Art Strategies and specialist Supplementary Planning Documents - where they exist.

As such, many Urban Regeneration Companies and local authorities now regularly fund public art as a small part of their overall regeneration programmes. In addition, many local authorities also negotiate with private sector developers over their contributions to funding for public art through either Section 106 negotiation or a formally adopted ‘Percent for Art’ strategy.

A wide variety of foundations and trusts also fund public art, each having their own specialist priorities and funding criteria. Increasingly, a number of enlightened developers are also choosing to commission public art, having realised that it can add immense value to projects, in the same way that good design does.

Commissioning Criteria
In order to be considered good quality and to achieve funding support, public art projects should demonstrate that:

- The proposed work is of the highest artistic quality; it may also be innovative, striking, challenging or ambitious in its vision;
- The project is viable, both technically and financially, and the applicant has the ability to develop, manage and sustain the project;
- There is public benefit for the community; for example through improvement to the environment, the image of an area or the attraction of visitors or investors;
- Appropriate arrangements are in place for consultation and/or engagement with the local community and other stakeholders;
- The work is suitably sensitive and appropriate to its location and adds to its Sense of Place - as well as the local community Quality of Life;
- The immediate local environment and infrastructure is able to absorb any additional visitors;
- Public art works are integrated into a broad design strategy which tackles the whole environment of an area and considers all stakeholders.

Delivery
To achieve delivery whilst maintaining good practice, public art clearly needs to be considered from the outset of any development, scheme or project and needs collaboration with highly specialised artists and/or arts consultants. To illustrate this, and by way of conclusion, listed below are some abridged extracts taken directly from the website of Ixia, the UK public art think-tank:

“...Because of the nature of the practice an active dialogue with collaborating professions is essential. Policy makers and professional bodies engaged primarily with other design professions need to be aware and engaged with current debate around public art practice.”
Chapter 2.19 - Public art – the strategic approach

Mark Luck, North Somerset Council

By integrating the work and creative thinking of artists into the design of the public realm, its distinctiveness, variety of uses, history or hidden meaning and the collective values and aspirations of the communities that use them, can be expressed. Public art can also help to foster a strong sense of ownership.

However, experience of public art can be very different from some of the more functional elements of public realm design, and the strong feelings engendered can dissuade potential investors and managers of public space from engaging artists to contribute to the design of public places. The fear of producing poor public art can overwhelm the benefits of successful schemes, leading to a preference for ‘safer’ options. There are many examples of poor public spaces that do not include public art, and this may result from a lack of creativity.

A public art approach which seeks to design for the context is compatible with the best examples of urban and landscape design, and the incorporation of an artist within the process of designing the public realm can be the low risk approach to place making.

A strategic approach

The achievement of successful public art, as with other design aspects of the built environment, should not be left to chance, but should be part of a public art/public realm strategy which can help to steer the different approaches to working with artists.

A public art strategy can determine broad guidelines and principles as well as setting out recommendations for the integration and procurement of public art for specific locations within the town. It might also help to identify funding opportunities.

A strategy recognises the physical contribution that a successfully integrated public art strategy can bring by improving identity through the creation of new landmarks, focusing attention on distinctive views or signalling the different character and function of spaces. Public art can also support both perceived and actual aspects of community safety through improved legibility and the presence of well designed, well maintained and appropriately sited work.

In addition, a strategy highlights other ‘non-physical’ properties that public art has to offer and how this might be used to support the economic, social and cultural development of an area. For example:

- by providing new imagery that will contribute to the broader identity of the town,
- by supporting and enhancing the promotion of inward investment through new development and/or,
- by facilitating community engagement, with schools, local artists or other groups.

Scope and potential

The recommendations and proposals within a strategy should recognise that the role of public art needs to relate to the context and use of an area, although its form may not – eg: Eros!

Areas that attract visitors provide a focus for significant publicly funded commissions to enhance how the place is experienced and the identity of the town. Public art, integrated into high profile areas, needs to be at the heart of the public realm design process and can be sophisticated in its breadth of visual references, and/or responsive to tradition and/or contemporary in style and content. In addition it might need to be physically and conceptually robust, site specific, accessible or a passing reference to an event, person or activity.

Artists can also have a huge impact on the legibility of the streets, and there are opportunities for public art to be used in harmony with other mechanisms at arrival points and along primary pedestrian routes. Strategically located work can encourage exploration, bridge gaps in route connections and assist orientation, and can be used to highlight key buildings, places and resources both during the day and at night.

Within primary business and retail areas there is an opportunity to develop a creative and integrated approach to the design, refurbishment and management of commercial buildings. Regeneration initiatives should acknowledge the role of art and artists as innovators and major contributors to the future success of the town and seek their input at key stages of potential and real change.

Within residential areas an emphasis can be placed on encouraging and expressing community pride. Working with residents and property owners, artists can help to interpret and improve local perceptions of an area, in order to generate and enhance a sense of place.

Guidelines for procurement

The strategy should also outline key recommendations for the promotion and procurement of art.

There is a need to be proactive when identifying and prioritising sites and projects, and specialist advice can be drawn upon to develop the artists’ briefs and to facilitate the procurement processes.

A strategy should establish consistent guidelines for briefing, selecting and engaging artists, and ensure the effective and appropriate project management support, maintenance and, where appropriate, decommissioning.

To support the implementation of a strategy the setting up of a Public Realm Forum can provide accountability and coordination of capital projects, arts commissions and ongoing public realm investment. Planning guidance should also be developed to establish criteria against which major new developments are judged or appraised regarding their contribution to the public art.
Chapter 2.20 - Lighting historic towns
Allan Howard, Mouchel

Introduction
It is not the purpose of this article to specify the full requirements of any lighting installation or plan as many documents already cover this in detail and some of these are given in the references. In particular the documents ‘Lighting the Environment – A guide to good urban lighting’ published by (CIBSE & ILE) and ‘The Outdoor Lighting Guide’ published by the ILE should form the core references to any town lighting strategy.

Good lighting within the public realm has been shown to create an attractive environment within which people feel safe whether working, living or visiting and this in turn promotes and improves the economy of the town.

The need for lighting
Lighting serves many purposes, for example:
• functional lighting for the roads and public spaces providing the required performance levels as given with national standards and technical guidance;
• decorative and effect lighting can be used to light buildings, monuments or for specific events/festivals.

It is important that these work together rather than as is often the case where they compete, having been independently specified, designed and installed. More recently the awareness of poor lighting on the environment, whether through the use of energy, light pollution or lighting as a nuisance, has increased bringing additional pressures on any lighting proposals.

Lighting strategy
It is recommended that local authorities look towards the production of a lighting plan/strategy for their towns and cities in order to produce a coordinated approach, with other public realm strategies, which meets the needs of the town. This may include the identification of key gateways and routes through the town as well as special areas of interest/focus, all of which may require special lighting treatment. The level of lighting provided can also relate to the use of the area through dynamic lighting where lighting levels are reduced say from midnight when pedestrian and vehicle usage falls or perhaps increases at times when clubs and bars close, thus assisting in the dispersal of crowds.

Through good coordination and planning, involving competent lighting designers, heritage organisations, local authority conservation officers, planners and installers and contractors, a balanced lighting scheme can be produced which enhances both the nighttime and the daytime appearance of the town.

Towns and Cities are by their very nature dense and many have very limited highway space for the required infrastructure to be installed and the requirements for access widths for people with disabilities further limit footway space where equipment can be placed. As such it is necessary, at times, to consider mounting lighting and other equipment on buildings thus reducing street clutter. Whilst lighting for public highways is classified as a ‘permitted development’ and therefore planning permission is not required a wayleave agreement will still need to be obtained and if the building is listed then listed building consent is also required. The majority of other lighting will require planning permission; this can take a considerable time to obtain. This may be facilitated by a coordinated approach to ‘whole town’ planning. When considering lighting, both the day and night time visual environment must be considered. The lighting must fulfill its purpose but at the same time the equipment used must suit the environment. In a historic town this does not necessarily mean using heritage luminaires, brackets and columns but seek a style that suits the area, which might be a high quality contemporary design, and although changes in size and dimensions may be necessary, the equipment style can be taken throughout a whole area, from lighting footpaths through to main access routes, using equipment proportions best suited to the immediate area.

The use of discreetly located flood lights on buildings that are ‘hardly’ visible during the day but provide the base lighting levels at night may be suitable, thus reducing street clutter and allowing a number of decorative lighting units to be located within the area as focal points without distraction from the main functional lighting.

Electrical requirements
All lighting requires power and until other sources become more commonly used, electrical cabling on buildings should be run in as discreet a manner alongside drain pipes, under eaves etc and not detract from the daytime appearance of the property.

Summary
The ‘guide to good urban lighting’ best summarises this need for lighting as follows:
“In general, the use of lighting should be sympathetic to the needs of the town and its residents. The environmental quality of the town should be conserved and enhanced by encouraging the appropriate use of integrated lighting wherever possible. The town’s architecture and heritage should be revealed by the controlled lighting of its important or historic buildings. Lighting can increase pedestrian use of the town if people’s needs and aspirations are considered with the same care as those of traffic, winning back public spaces for the community”.
Chapter 2.21 - Lighting: Case Study - Hemel Hempstead Conservation Area

Allan Howard, Mouchel

Hemel Hempstead Old Town is located adjacent to the new town area, comprising a narrow High Street with a significant church with associated car parks, a small town public square and many listed buildings and is adjacent to a large park. Over a period of time the area had suffered from the closure of a number of shops and business premises as well as issues of crime within the church, High Street, public car park area and park. Funded by Dacorum Borough Council, the aim of the lighting scheme was to develop a lighting and CCTV strategy as part of the enhancement and re-development of the area. The narrow width of the highway (both road and footways) and the presence of some cellars meant it was necessary to install new lighting on the buildings.

The main objectives included the following:

• A consistent theme of aesthetically pleasing lighting columns and lanterns;
• Lighting fixed to buildings where reasonably possible;
• Lighting levels that would ensure good coverage and picture quality for any new CCTV with lighting levels in accordance with British standards; and
• A reduction in the overall crime problems.

Discussions with the Dacorum conservation officer, planners and English Heritage took place to establish consensus on design, size and cable routing for the luminaires. The style of equipment finally chosen for the lighting and CCTV suited the area and was available in a range of sizes to suit all areas. Drawings and computer generated images were produced of each location to detail all the components and illustrate the final effect of lighting and CCTV fixed on buildings. Careful attention was given to coordinating the fixed luminaires with CCTV to ensure that camera sight lines were maintained and luminaires did not ‘glare’ out the cameras.

Where columns were required, the same style was used for the lighting and CCTV in order to complement the decorative heritage lighting and listed buildings in the area and this extended to the styling of the lighting and CCTV supply and control pillars.

The overall impact of the implemented scheme has been positive including:

• Improved levels of lighting and clear CCTV coverage;
• Improved street scene;
• The residents’ comments have been favourable following completion;
• A reduction in property vacancies along the High Street with the opening of several new bars and cafés;
• Maintained all existing businesses;
• A reduction in the crime rate in St Mary’s church car park;
• Listed lighting equipment was refurbished and where suitable styles of luminaire existed they were maintained.
Conclusions

This document is concerned with a topic which the Forum has been engaged with since its creation in 1987. I doubt it will be our last on the subject, BUT, we are getting there. Policy makers and organisations nationwide are recognising the value of the public realm and the role of the streets in the vitality of a place. This has particular resonance for Historic Towns for all of the reasons alluded to in the publication.

The fact that this collection of authors has given its support and valuable time to contribute to the document is testament to its importance and the growing consensus about the need to tackle the problems and some of the solutions.

There follows a lengthy, but not definitive, list of references. A growing number of local authorities are also publishing strategies and case studies – far too many to list here. It is worth searching for guidance, examples and asking peers for their experiences, especially when trying to convince budget holders to invest.

All of the authors featured here, and many more besides, have experience and most of them have published more widely and are always pleased to share information. If in doubt – ask for advice, and follow these Principles which the Forum offers from its experience of work in this field.
Principles

The following is a list of Principles which the Forum espouses and would encourage all practitioners to adopt; they are in no particular order (they are numbered only for easy reference) and have no greater or lesser weighting, but should be seen as an aide-memoir for practitioners whose role impacts on the street.

1. Streets and the public realm are at the heart of historic towns and should be treated with as much care and respect as the buildings which surround them.

2. Streets in which the car is not king bring a wide range of activities to a broader spectrum of the community – thus fostering sustainable communities.

3. Fewer signs and less clutter can enhance the streetscape without endangering users.

4. Signs and lines can be reduced within current Highway Authority and Government guidelines.

5. There are economic, social and environmental benefits to investment in high quality streets and spaces.

6. The debate on private v public space continues; practitioners should explore carefully all the pros and cons in order to maximise the benefits to all users.

7. In the historic core, pedestrians should be at the top of the hierarchy of users; cars should be at the bottom.

8. The complex functions of each street and place should be identified and planned for.

9. The complex needs of all users should be recognised and, as far as possible, accommodated.

10. A strategy, which brings together all elements of streets and places, should coordinate with all other strategies, as part of the whole Local Development Framework (LDF).

11. A coordinator should be identified to oversee all activities in streets and the public realm.

12. Risk can be an asset; human interaction and behaviour in the face of risk is more positive than when faced with restrictions.

13. High quality design, at the macro and micro scale, is essential and should be inclusive.

14. The street is part of the character of the place, not merely a conduit through it.

15. There are now tools available to measure all elements of the streets; from Activities to Zones.

16. Case studies are valuable tools to demonstrate to the unbelievers; there are many from Europe, more are becoming available in the UK.

17. Communities own the streets; their input into their development is vital.

18. Public art and lighting are not just utilities; they should be part of the initial planning and will enhance the end product.

19. Parking and car management is still a vital part of the whole strategy, as it is, inevitably, a part of our lives.

20. The surfaces, materials, signs and furniture should reflect the character of the place and add to its distinctiveness.

21. Unnecessary signs (old, out of use, irrelevant) should be removed as soon as possible.

22. Legibility is as much about free exploration through the streets as it is about signage.
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