



South Gloucestershire Council

Living Streets

A guide to the design of informal Home Zones in new developments for South Gloucestershire

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South Gloucestershire Council is pleased to endorse the Living Streets document as a tool to help us to create and manage residential streets that are enjoyable, 'people friendly' spaces. We will encourage the design of residential streets as social spaces, to allow a wider range of activities to take place and to foster a sense of community. This is not just about designing traffic calming, it is about 'place-making' to promote a new way of living.

Cllr Brian Allinson

Introduction

Roads join places together. They represent movement, although too often priority is given to the vehicle as the main user. There are many different scales of 'road' and the design approach needed for a fast moving highway is very different from that needed for an urban street or a residential road.

Residential streets have little traffic passing through them and yet their design is dictated by the access needs of vehicles rather than the enjoyment of the residents. One way of redressing the balance between the pedestrian and the vehicle is to design residential streets using Home Zone principles. The design and operation of a Home Zone deliberately restricts vehicle speeds through a street and allows activities other than the passage of vehicles to take place on the highway.

Home Zones are about sharing highway space. They provide a safer, greener, friendlier and healthier place to live where the needs of the community should outweigh the dominance of vehicles.

The success of Home Zones relies on the design quality of the buildings that enclose the space, the design, engineering and maintenance of the public realm and the ability for local residents to feel at home and feel ownership for this space. Together these things make a place enjoyable to be in and to use. Each Home Zone scheme should be unique, reflecting local circumstances aspirations and priorities.

For these reasons South Gloucestershire Council will promote the use of informal Home Zones in all new residential development.

Scope of the guide

This document serves as an expression of the vision and aspirations of South Gloucestershire Council to deliver high quality, liveable public realm in residential areas. It identifies the issues South Gloucestershire Council will consider when taking decisions to bring forward new development in line with Home Zone principles. It covers the current national and local legislative and policy base for Home Zones and identifies the areas where the council expects design professionals to take a creative and forward thinking approach to public realm design in residential areas.

This document is intended to provide guidance to all those involved in the development, management and maintenance of new residential streets, including:

- consultants and contractors engaged by the local authority
- Local authority members and officers
- developers and their consultants
- suppliers of materials and equipment
- local residents and those with a stake in the future of South Gloucestershire's residential streets

The guidance document is designed for new build projects, however there is no reason why the principles could not be incorporated in a retro fit project should funds be made available or a group wish to enhance an area.

Status of the guide

The 'Living Streets' document is designed to be a guide to developers, council officers, and others designing, implementing and maintaining the spaces between buildings in new residential schemes. Its purpose is to influence potential builders into providing living public spaces that are hospitable, that encourage sustainable, active communities and reflect local distinctiveness.

This document forms part of the council's technical planning guidance and will form part of an integrated suite of documents that are relevant to the creation and management of the public realm (for example the Parking Standards, Residential Design Guide and Play Policy). This document was endorsed by the Planning, Transportation and Strategic Environment Committee in November 2012 for use as a planning guidance document in negotiations with developers during the preparation of and determination of planning applications.

Further information

This document is a working guide and will be reviewed from time to time, in light of experience and changing circumstances. The guide will benefit from regular review to take account of new materials, design and construction techniques and changes in policy and priorities. It may also be developed further in light of the experiences of communities using and developing their Living Streets.

Aims and objectives

The term 'Home Zone' is used to describe any residential area where the street becomes an extension of the local community's living space, vehicles travel at walking pace and pedestrians using the highway have equal status with vehicles. By improving conditions for walkers and cyclists, people may be encouraged to make less use of their cars, particularly for more local journeys. Activities other than 'movement' (for example sitting out, chatting to neighbours, playing, street events) can happen. Home Zones fulfil a number of objectives:

- foster a sense of community, increase social activity, and reduce social isolation
- promote greater use and diversity of activity within public space, with particular benefits to encourage children to play outside and support the elderly and disabled to feel less inhibited and constrained by their environment
- promote personal safety through greater levels of community supervision and self policing
- make the street visually more attractive
- encourage people to walk or cycle within their local area
- encourage residents to look after their street
- improve the quality of the urban environment, increase the attractiveness of urban living and encourage a more sustainable lifestyle
- improve quality of life, health and well being
- improve safety from traffic, by reducing traffic speeds to walking pace.

The majority of these objectives promote a vibrant and strong community. The phrase 'Home Zones' represents a mechanism for striking a balance between all the different users of residential roads, where 'improving and maintaining the quality of life for local residents takes precedence over easing traffic movements'. This means having a wider vision, to see our residential roads as places for play, as social spaces, contributing to environmental quality, as well as a place to park the car. The design of Home Zones is an opportunity to look beyond 'traffic management' and instead to think of 'place making,' concentrating on the physical alterations needed to achieve that equality.

Home Zones are appropriate in all types and densities of residential development. They may be used in urban, suburban or rural locations, with flats, terraces or detached houses. The decision to implement Home Zone principles needs to be assessed on a case by case basis.

Home Zones are about much more than traffic calming and need a partnership approach to their design. They bring a range of social and community benefits ultimately improving local residents' quality of life. It is therefore important to emphasise the importance of linking Home Zones into wider policy agendas such as health and wellbeing, building social capital and addressing sustainable living.



¹ 'Quiet Lanes and Home Zones Regulation's DfT 2006

Design principles

The design of new residential streets should be tailored to suit the context and the aspirations for the community within a new development.

Designing for people

A successful design depends on understanding the way in which people want to use, move through and interact in public spaces. The design of the space should reflect desire lines of movement and also provide areas that may encourage social activity. An understanding of the way different groups of people respond to 'risk' (e.g. people with disabilities, the young and the elderly) should also contribute to the design. The design approach should provide a barrier free public realm, allowing access and free movement for people in all ranges of age and ability.

Integrating activities

Design should encourage minimal separation between the uses of the street, as places for meeting and spending time and also as part of the movement network. An integrated approach to design will help to promote a civilised, safe and accessible environment and benefit most those who live in, rather than pass through, the area. A high proportion of building entrances and windows need to face directly onto the street to give good opportunities for natural surveillance and foster a sense of ownership of the street.



Streets as destinations and networks

Each street forms both a destination and a connection to other places. Home Zones need to be clearly defined as a different space to traditional highways, to ensure all users recognise they are entering into a pedestrian priority area. Design should also promote legibility and permeability in a democratic way for all users, creating a sequence of places and landmarks on a route, as part of a coherent network, but also allowing for each street community to bring a degree of personalisation to the street in the way that they use and look after their space.

Three dimensional design

Streets are three dimensional spaces, with street elements such as kerb lines and level changes, trees and planters, street furniture, signs and lighting all contributing to the quality of place. Three dimensional street elements make a huge impact on the character and quality of place and also on the relationship between street, buildings and activity. Street elements also contribute to the 'democracy' of a space, either by creating or by minimising barriers to movement and use. Minimising the number of street elements and care in location of elements reduces visual clutter and also physical barriers. Design should promote an uncluttered and barrier free public realm. All elements of the street (layout, building design and street elements) will coordinate and contribute to the making of place.



Walking speed environment

Design should promote a low speed environment in which vehicle speeds are reduced to around 10mph or less. A low speed design approach helps inform the dimensions and layout of streets (for example the design of the vehicle track, stopping distance, choice of materials and forward visibility). The combination of physical measures (e.g. placement of buildings and street elements in the layout) and shared space should act together to reinforce the low speed approach. Home Zones should not rely on mandatory restrictions such as speed limits; the overriding consideration is to lower speed through a design that reinforces the creation of place.

Sustainability

Streets are a constant and enduring feature of our environment. Decisions on their location, layout and design will have a long term impact on the quality of a place. The design of the public realm should avoid measures that require replacement in the short term and maximise long term benefits, limit the impact of transport on the environment and contribute to the reduction of emissions and conservation of resources. All components of the street will minimise energy use, promote the use of durable and (wherever possible) local materials. Sustainable designs are those that promote simple robust and adaptable solutions that are easy and cost effective to maintain.

Local distinctiveness

The design of public realm makes the greatest contribution to the physical and social distinctiveness of a place. The design approach will reduce standard design approaches in favour of local solutions based on an understanding of the context, history and values of the local area. Contextual assessment should also take into account matters that do not contribute to a high quality public realm (for example lack of legibility and permeability, incoherent design and use of materials and street elements) and seek to provide a better solution. The council's materials palette will be developed to achieve these objectives.

Community involvement

There are significant differences in the way Home Zones are conceived, designed and delivered in new developments. They are largely planned and designed by developers and there are no opportunities to involve potential residents in their conception. The local authority will establish whether Home Zones in new developments will create safe, attractive and convivial spaces for the new community.

Where possible, it is advisable to involve the existing community in design discussions to ensure integration with local networks. Prospective residents need to be advised of the purpose and benefits of living in a Home Zone when choosing to live there. It is important that new residents have a sense of ownership of and of commitment to Home Zone schemes.

Experience elsewhere suggests that, in order to promote understanding and awareness of Home Zones in new developments, new residents should be made aware of the intention to introduce Home Zones before buying a new home and should be asked to sign up to the idea as part of the process. The council will work with its development partners to establish a 'welcome pack' for residents setting out the key points of the design and management of the new development.

Planning considerations

The council's Core Strategy document will form the basis of the council's planning policy until 2026/7. Many of the policies contained in the document are relevant to the design and delivery of new residential development within the area and should be read, understood and implemented in an integrated way.

The council will promote Home Zone principles in new residential developments in accordance with its intentions to secure sustainable, healthy and inclusive communities. This will be achieved through its Places, Sites and Policies DPD, and the design guidance such as the Design Checklist SPD.

This document is non statutory but will be a material consideration in decision making.

Legal considerations

The council wishes to promote an informal approach to the provision of Home Zones in new developments. However the council may suggest that a formal Home Zone is introduced where the layout and design of a new development will not achieve the principles of a Home Zone informally, or where speed control is essential to secure the beneficial effects of a Home Zone for new residents.

Practical considerations

Disabled users

Evidence from schemes elsewhere suggests that people with disabilities may initially feel vulnerable because they don't have the accepted indicators for safe areas and for movement, however there is no evidence of an increase in accidents. Home Zones (and shared surfaces) must be legible, comfortable and fully accessible to the visually and physically impaired. Home Zones must be designed to be accessible to and used by people with all types of disability. Recent research by the DfT has shown that shared surface streets are not inherently unsafe to people with disabilities, however they can present difficulties for blind and visually impaired people who may rely on kerb lines for orientation and navigation because it is a constant feature. The edge of a pedestrian route must be recognisable by a guide dog or someone using a cane. Hazards such as street furniture or overhanging foliage must be kept clear of this path. Materials with colour and texture can be used to help navigation and legibility, however, care needs to be taken to create a design that isn't confusing, with too many surface types.

Children's play

South Gloucestershire's Play Strategy sets out the priorities for greater access to and improved quality of play, for children and young people. Home Zones have a role in providing an informal environment close to home, in which children can find space to play and to enjoy time without adults in a secure environment.



The kind of play provided in Home Zones is usually thought of as informal, although some Dutch examples of Home Zones include formal play spaces for all ages. The design of the Home Zone should augment other forms of play provision within new developments.

Involving children in consultation processes is a key part of the design of shared spaces such as Home Zones. It helps in identifying their needs and also the potential for conflicts. Examples of conflicts are noisy play that disturbs neighbours, accidental damage to parked vehicles or street furniture and road traffic accidents. Developing respect for others and the potential for social interaction should be a part of the Home Zone concept.

Cycling

Cyclists of all abilities using streets designed with Home Zone principles may benefit from a safer and more pleasant environment and from lower vehicle speeds. Residential street design should encourage cycling by promoting good connections to wider cycling networks and by providing on street cycle parking.

Waste collection

The need to provide for the storage and collection of waste is a major consideration in the design of streets, complicated by the need to allow for separation of waste for recycling, types and times of collection and the kind of vehicles used. Good design of the layout and buildings in new developments can help secure opportunities for sustainable waste management including kerbside collections and local community recycling, without adverse impact on the street scene.

The physical size of waste collection vehicles, their turning circles and their method of collection (sacks, wheelie bins, recycling boxes) are all relevant to the design of street layouts. Reversing and turning movements may also be compromised by design that seeks to calm traffic speeds because of visual and physical obstructions.

Schedule 1 of Part H of the Building Regulations also defines locations for the storage and collection of waste. It sets out the distances for residents to carry waste to the collection point and the distance within which a waste lorry must be able to gain access to a storage area. It also sets out the gradients/levels/steps etc allowed to manoeuvre different sizes of container. British Standard Guidance and recommendations on good practice are also relevant. Design of new developments should not require waste bins and recycling containers to be left on the street as they pose a hazard to movement and to health. However, their location and ease of collection is important in designing the layout of a Home Zone.

Emergency services

The emergency services are required to set out their response targets that include the time taken to arrive to an emergency and the ease of movement within the area of the emergency. Building Regulations also address access issues for emergency vehicles setting out the optimum standards of highway design (for example suggested minimum kerb to kerb width of 3.7m).

The requirements for emergency vehicles are generally dictated by the fire service, because of the size and manoeuvrability of their vehicles. If they can be accommodated then so can police vehicles and ambulances. Ambulance services discourage road humps that may cause patients discomfort or harm whilst in the vehicle.

Site layouts and building design are interlinked when considering response times and the route taken in responding to an emergency. Parked cars can also have a significant effect on response times, so a good Home Zone layout will provide well designed and located parking (even remote parking).

Servicing vehicles

Streets need to be designed to accommodate larger vehicles such as removal lorries and delivery vans. Designs that meet the needs of emergency services and waste collection vehicles tend to be acceptable for other forms of traffic. However, design points to consider include reducing or removing the need to turn or reverse, creating a well connected street network (rather than culs de sac), which also shorten routes through places.

Design quality

The NPPF addresses the delivery of locally distinctive design that addresses meeting the needs of people that is safe, accessible, attractive and functional. The pursuit of integrated design that delivers well-planned and integrated public spaces that bring people together, and that will stand the test of time, is at the heart of national planning policy and guidance. The delivery of design quality is followed through in Core Strategy Policy CS1 and the South Gloucestershire Design Checklist SPD, which refers specifically to Home Zones in the design of the public realm.

Parking

Local authorities should develop residential parking policies for their area taking account of demand and the need to promote good design and to use land efficiently. Residential parking policies are set out in the Local Development Framework and in the forthcoming Parking Standards DPD.

Parking provision and control has a significant visual impact on the street, can obstruct the convenient movement of pedestrians and cyclists and undermine the purposes of Home Zones.

A significant part of delivering good design in Home Zones is the provision and design of parking that meets the needs of residents. The greatest parking demand is for cars, however the provision of cycle and motorcycle parking also needs to be addressed.

The location, amount and security of all types of parking are key influencing factors in the design of the public realm and will affect visual quality, street activity, safety and interaction between residents as people walk to and from their cars. Inappropriate parking will cause obstruction and unsafe conditions for other users of the street and impinge on the other activities taking place within the Home Zone. Opportunities for indiscriminate parking should be designed out of the scheme. Breaking up groups of parked vehicles can limit their visual and physical dominance, as can the use of landscaping. Car ownership and car use will depend on the proximity of convenient public transport, services and alternative travel choices such as car clubs and car share schemes.

The regulation of parking takes place through the making of appropriate traffic regulation orders, together with signage and markings. Limiting the physical and visual intrusion of signs and markings for parking is a design challenge. The creation of a Controlled Parking Zone or Residents Parking Zone as part of the Home Zone will help to control parking within designated bays.

Provision for disabled users should be allowed for in any parking provision, as the need to provide disabled parking bays may arise after the scheme is in place. Providing wider than normal parking bays would accommodate any future needs.



It is also important to consider the manoeuvres necessary to negotiate parking bays, so that safety of pedestrians and the potential to hit street furniture is considered in the design.

Cycle parking should be safe, secure, covered and convenient for new dwellings, or a part of the design of new dwellings, in order to encourage cycle use.

Street elements

Many different kinds of street elements may be appropriate in a Home Zone, such as seats, bollards, signs, cycle racks, bin storage, trees, and public art. A common design style and thoughtful placement will reduce the visual clutter and obstacles to movement. Street elements need either to be robust enough to withstand the occasional knock by vehicles or use as informal play equipment, or to be placed out of harms way.

Street elements can sometimes be the focus of anti social behaviour or vandalism, so needs to be carefully chosen for cost, maintenance, availability, ease of cleaning, have good natural surveillance and good lighting after dark to discourage misuse.

The placement of street furniture needs to be considered to allow for easy management by the responsible body. Therefore it should be located in the areas that will be 'public' highway and easily accessible.



Lighting

Lighting brings a certain ambience to the street and should be appropriate to a residential setting. Consideration needs to be given to the purpose of the lighting, the scale of lighting relative to the users of the street, the width of the street and the height of surrounding buildings. In this way, lighting can do its job, but the visual impact, clutter and light pollution can be reduced.

Levels of lighting need to achieve safety and personal security and should also light obstacles such as road humps or planters and street furniture that have to be negotiated by drivers and pedestrians. It should not cause a nuisance to residents. To remove street clutter, street lights can be mounted on buildings, however, this will require easements from owners. It may be less of an issue in new developments. Even lighting levels make access easier for people with visual impairments. Street lighting poles should be sufficiently robust to take small signs and should not impinge on pedestrian movement within pavement areas.

The colour of lighting also has an important role in both the function and character of a street. Whiter lighting is better for colour perception and discerning street features or 'reading' the faces of other people – an issue of personal security. Light reflects off paving materials, building surfaces and street furniture, so lighting needs to be developed in conjunction with decisions about all street and public realm materials.



Street trees

Street trees and landscape features are important in bringing a number of benefits to the environment, including seasonal colour, visual interest, opportunities for wildlife and urban cooling. However they need particular attention in where they are placed, to ensure lighting is not obstructed, and to prevent root damage to drains and services. Street trees can also suffer from night lighting. The choice of species and their location will help to prevent issues of obstruction, security and maintenance. Funding for initial set up costs, replacement and on-going maintenance may be appropriate.

Utilities and drainage

The traditional pavement with kerb is not expected within the design of a Home Zone. The routes for services through Home Zones will need to take into account the design of the service authority's apparatus and maintenance vehicles, access and space to work. Space is also needed for equipment such as telephone cabinets, sub stations, gas governor kiosks, again with appropriate access.

Service strips need to be off the vehicle track, where possible, to prevent obstruction and disruption to access. This is particularly important in a cul de sac layout where alternative access routes are not possible. A traditional grid street layout is more flexible in this regard. Services also need to be located in 'public' space, to avoid conflict with residents' perceptions of ownership.

Early discussions as to siting and design of water pipes, sewers and drainage should take place with the relevant water company.

Shared surface drainage must drain at falls away from dwellings. Gully or channel gratings must be suitable for all pedestrians, including people with disabilities and cyclists. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems may also be a suitable option, reducing the rate of run-off through the use of permeable paving materials and on site storage.

Public transport

It is unlikely that public transport routes will run through Home Zones, although it is possible that a Home Zone may cover a key route through a development, without introducing minimal speeds and social uses. Routes for public transport need to be identified early in the design process so that bus routes and stops form part of the 'walkable' neighbourhood, design of bus stops and timetable information is in the right place, and any traffic calming measures do not have an adverse effect on passengers. There are also safety considerations such as forward visibility, manoeuvring, and obstacles in the highway to be considered.

Adoption and maintenance considerations

Highway standards, materials and adoption

In shared surface areas such as Home Zones, early consultation is needed between designers, utilities, water companies, developers and local authorities for the routing and maintenance of services, facilities, street furniture and materials. Conveyance documents may be required to incorporate perpetual rights for service providers in a service strip and these areas should be clearly marked so that residents are aware of any restrictions.

The process of adoption and responsibility for on-going maintenance needs consideration. Section 38 of the Highways Act 1980 gives highway authorities the powers to adopt new highways by agreement, for maintenance at the public expense. A developer must construct the streets to an agreed standard, and to maintain them for a set period during which any 'snags' can be sorted out. After this time streets can be designated as public highway and maintained at public expense. The Advance Payment Code covers contributions for ongoing maintenance by a public authority in the absence of a Section 38 Agreement.

The highways authority may not be willing to adopt a complex layout with planting and street furniture which are not considered to relate to highways functions. Equally a developer may wish the street to remain private. In these cases, a Section 106 agreement can ensure streets are built and maintained to a high standard.

It may be reasonable to consider establishing a management company to look after the public realm. If there is no private management company then other public bodies such as parish councils may be willing to take on this role. This will require appropriate financial support. It is possible for a street to remain private but the council will expect a properly constituted body with legally defined duties to be established to maintain the streets in perpetuity for the benefit of the public and to accommodate appropriate access arrangements.

The main considerations for the council are to decide which authority/body is best able to take on day to day maintenance for each element within the street, who will meet the future obligations and liabilities arising from maintaining these elements and the apportionment of financial and other contributions among those who take on the obligations and liabilities of maintenance. Design standards for maintenance or adoption should be clear and should set out the expected palette of materials and street furniture and other street components and their expected application.

Monitoring

It is appropriate that when introducing a new concept that there is time taken to let the idea bed in and also to learn lessons for future projects. New Home Zone areas will be regularly monitored to ensure these spaces are appropriately managed and maintained and that their use is understood.

Monitoring is an integral part of the disability equality duty under the Act and local authorities are expected to set out how their policies and practices are effective in promoting the interests of disabled people and improving disability equality.

Further information

Further information on the design and implementation of Home Zones can be found at the following locations:

Dept for Transport 'Manual for Streets'

Dept for Transport Circular 01/2006 Setting local speed limits

Dept for Transport 02/2006 The Quiet Lanes and Home Zones (England) Regulations

Dept for Transport (2001) Home Zones Planning and Design Traffic Advisory leaflet 10/01

Dept for Transport (2007) Emergency Services traffic calming schemes: a code of practice traffic advisory leaflet 1/07

Dept for Transport (2002) Home Zones – Public Participation Traffic advisory leaflet 8/02

Dept for Transport 2008 Traffic Management and Streetscape – local transport note 1/08

English Partnerships 2006 Car Parking: what works where?

Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2001 Planning and Designing Home Zones

IHIE 2002 Home Zone design guidelines

CABE 2008 Public space lessons: designing and planning for play

South Gloucestershire Council

Play Strategy

Residential Design Guide

Parking Standards

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