

Local Transport Note 1/11

October 2011



Shared Space



1. Introduction

- This Local Transport Note (LTN) focuses on shared space in high street environments but many of its principles will apply in other settings.
- It places particular emphasis on stakeholder engagement and inclusive design.

- 1.1** Shared space is a design approach that seeks to change the way streets operate by reducing the dominance of motor vehicles, primarily through lower speeds and encouraging drivers to behave more accommodatingly towards pedestrians.
- 1.2** There is no such thing as a definitive shared space design. Each site is different and the way a street performs will depend on its individual characteristics, the features included and how these features work in combination.
- 1.3** On the Continent, shared space is often used to smooth traffic flow and reduce delays at major junctions. In the UK, it is usually applied to links and minor junctions with the aim of allowing pedestrians to move more freely within the space.
- 1.4** This Local Transport Note (LTN) is mainly concerned with the use of shared space on links. While it focuses on High Street environments, many of its principles will apply to other types of shared space. It is intended to assist those designing and preparing street improvement and management schemes. It explains how the scheme development process introduced in LTN 1/08 *Traffic Management and Streetscape* (DfT, 2008a) can be applied to shared space projects, and presents a series of design considerations and recommendations to inform that process.
- 1.5** Particular emphasis is placed on stakeholder engagement and inclusive design, where the needs of a diverse range of people are properly considered at all stages of the development process. It also stresses the importance of sustainable design, where long-term maintenance needs are considered as part of the design process.
- 1.6** In a conventional street, motorist behaviour is largely governed by the highway infrastructure. Although pedestrians and motorists are equally entitled to occupy the carriageway, pedestrians generally exercise little control over vehicular traffic, other than at controlled crossings such as Zebra and Pelican crossings.
- 1.7** In shared space the messages are more subtle – the environment provides less formal indication as to how drivers are expected to behave, thus making their progress within the street increasingly dependent on interpreting the behaviour of pedestrians, cyclists and other motorists.

1.8 Every street represents a balance between **movement** (the capacity to accommodate through traffic) and a sense of **place** (the quality which makes a street somewhere to visit and spend time in, rather than to pass through). Shared space is a way of enhancing a street's sense of place while maintaining its ability to accommodate vehicular movement.

1.9 Some streets operate naturally as shared spaces – they have never been designed as such. However, the purpose of this LTN is to assist those considering new schemes. Within the scope of this LTN, therefore, shared space is defined thus:

Shared space: A street or place designed to improve pedestrian movement and comfort by reducing the dominance of motor vehicles and enabling all users to share the space rather than follow the clearly defined rules implied by more conventional designs.

1.10 Streets that encourage sharing of the space are not new. Many historic streets operate as shared spaces, particularly narrow streets in historic core zones and residential mews. There are many other long-established examples throughout the country, ranging from functional streets such as Chertsey Road in Woking, Surrey (see Figure 1.1) to the more relaxed environment of Seven Dials in Covent Garden, London. Shared space has also been applied to some arterial routes, restoring their traditional place functions. Home Zones and some country lanes, particularly those with a Quiet Lanes designation, tend to operate as shared spaces.



Figure 1.1 Chertsey Road in Woking

1.11 Sharing in the context of this LTN is a measure of how well pedestrians are able to use the space as they wish without having to defer to vehicle users, including cyclists (cycles are vehicles). A key indication of the amount of sharing taking place is how well pedestrians mix with vehicle users in the main body of the street. Sharing may be facilitated by, for example:

- introducing physical and psychological features that encourage lower vehicle speeds;
- removing any implied priority of vehicles over pedestrians in the carriageway;
- reducing demarcation between pedestrians and vehicular traffic; and
- introducing features not necessarily limited to the sides of the street, such as seating, public art and cafes, which encourage pedestrians to use the space.

1.12 Sharing is defined thus:

Sharing: The ability and willingness of pedestrians, facilitated by the sympathetic behaviour of motorists and others, to move freely around the street and use parts of it that, in a more conventional layout, would be considered largely dedicated to vehicular use.

1.13 In general, sharing between vehicle users and pedestrians should take place in the street's carriageway area, not the sides of the street which should mainly be the preserve of pedestrians.

1.14 For the purpose of this LTN, references to drivers or motorists generally include motorcyclists. In addition, references to the carriageway and the footway include the notional carriageways/footways in level surface schemes.

1.15 Tangible indicators of sharing include:

- pedestrians occupying the carriageway;
- increased levels of social interaction and leisure activity;
- people spending longer in the street (evidence of an enhanced sense of place);
- drivers and cyclists giving way to pedestrians;
- pedestrians crossing the street at locations, angles and times of their choosing; and
- drivers and cyclists giving way to one another.