



The importance of residential areas

Most of us live in a residential area. It is here where most of our wealth is tied and where we spend most of our income. The value of a typically residential street is considerable. An average street of about 50 houses is a part public, part private asset with a value of about £5 million. It is in these streets that we will spend the greater part of our lives. Yet we do not give the streets the recognition they deserve.



Residential development in Britain is an indivisible part of the history of the UK. But many homes were built for a very different lifestyle to the one we seek to follow now. Much has changed over the last 100 years, including technology, wealth and society itself. Change has brought a decline in the attractiveness and quality of life in many of our streets at a time when we are demanding ever-higher standards over the type and quality of home and neighbourhood. The problems that are being encountered demand solutions. This report aims to help residents, professionals and councillors make all residential streets attractive and pleasant places in which to live.

This century we have seen major changes in individual lifestyles and attitudes

Changes include:

- ▲ *general increases in the standard of living, making it easier for people to turn aspirations into expectations, and expectations into reality*
- ▲ *expectations for a better lifestyle brought about by the influence of media and advertising*
- ▲ *greater ownership and use of cars, bringing greater mobility along with damage to the environment of towns and danger to the street in particular*
- ▲ *changes in attitudes towards towns and cities.*

More than half of the urban population would like to move out into the countryside

Factors which are known to influence people's attitude to urban areas include:

- ▲ *fear of crime*
- ▲ *danger from traffic*
- ▲ *air pollution, noise, dirt*
- ▲ *stress*
- ▲ *so called "urban problems" – drugs, crime, vandalism, drinking, vagrancy*
- ▲ *poor educational opportunities*
- ▲ *ugly environment.*

This is a shame, because urban areas can offer the very best in lifestyles and sustainability

Towns can offer:

- ▲ *less time spent travelling – more time for leisure and work*
- ▲ *more active lifestyles*
- ▲ *greater access to jobs and amenities*
- ▲ *great potential for journeys by foot, reducing demand for private car transport and promoting low energy consumption and low emissions of carbon dioxide*
- ▲ *an alternative to development in the countryside*
- ▲ *greater choice of modes of transport, such as bus or train*

Our towns and cities could be made much more attractive than they are now.

This report shows how residents can improve the streets in which they live.

Turn your street into the place in which you would like to live above anywhere else.

200 years of housing trends

1840-80

Industrial revolution • Terraced housing

The industrial revolution caused a massive increase in urban employment. Most people walked to work. Housing was built to high densities within walking distance of factories and offices. Much of the development consisted of utilitarian terraced housing built on a rectangular grid.



1880s-1914

Urban expansion • Birth of the suburbs

Faster, cheaper public transport, coupled with increased wealth meant that people could travel further to work. Suburbs were becoming more spacious. Victorian towns and cities expanded. Distinct styles of housing emerged.



1920-1939

The age of the suburb

The continued expansion of bus and railway services – the Underground railway in London – and the steady rise of car ownership brought the development of low-density semi-detached housing and ribbon development along main roads. The growth in housing was paralleled by expansion of suburban industry.



200 YEARS OF HOUSING TRENDS



1950s & 1960s

Expansion of council housing

Large numbers of new dwellings were built for the less well off. Outlying estates provided welcome houses and gardens but were often bleak and distant from town centres. In the inner cities, high-rise estates brought crime and disaffection.



1970s

1970s to the present • private housing on the move

Ever increasing expansion of private housebuilding saw the flight of the better off to country towns and villages, often on new estates of indifferent design. Mass car ownership encouraged low density development. Some of them, however, moved back to inner London to gentrify the 19th century town houses.



200 YEARS OF HOUSING TRENDS

Now and the future

Terraced streets



Terraces can be highly desirable.

Many are bleak and unattractive.



The suburb – then...



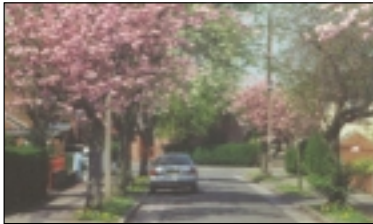
And now



Streets used to be places for people.

Today they are through routes and places for cars. The children have vanished.

Trees and shrubs



Tarmac and tyres

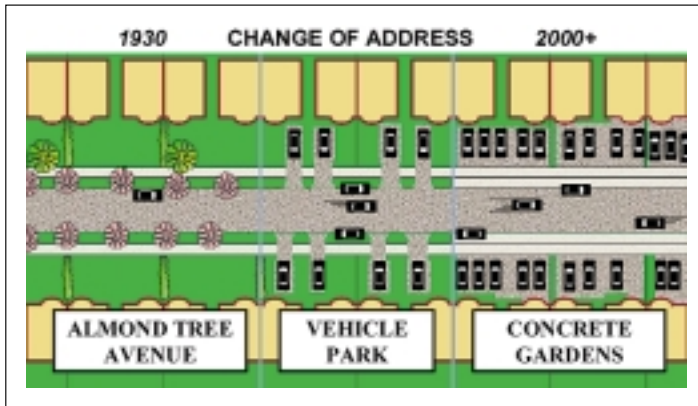


An average housing estate can look spectacular – if it is looked after and change is managed.

But often the attractiveness is destroyed by lack of thought. It need not be like this.

NOW AND THE FUTURE

If trends continue



Over two thirds of our houses were built before the age of mass car ownership. Lifestyles are changing all the time and most of our residential streets are suffering under these new pressures. Looking to the future, car ownership is forecast to rise by nearly 40 percent over the next 30 years, and multiple car households will become more commonplace. There are demographic changes: the population is increasing and households are getting smaller as people marry later and divorce sooner. Homeworking is increasing; teleshopping and e-commerce are growth areas, bringing the possibility of increased van traffic – making deliveries in the street. The changes in society that we can anticipate in future years are likely to intensify the pressures our streets are under today.

Many problems – many solutions

Problems occur not by deliberate act, but by inaction. The problems creep up over a long period. No one notices until the problems are well advanced, and even then no one thinks they have the power or influence to do anything about them.

But there are solutions.

- ▲ *Loss of front gardens?*
- ▲ *Damage to verges?*
- ▲ *Loss of street trees?*
- ▲ *Pavement parking?*
- ▲ *Fast traffic?*
- ▲ *Competition for parking?*
- ▲ *Unattractive street?*
- ▲ *Falling property prices?*

Your street could be much better – more attractive, safer, more functional.

Don't be satisfied with what is there at the moment.

The way to do it is by residents working in partnership with the local authority, professionals and others.

What do we need from a street?



Residential streets have to meet a wide range of different needs. What individuals want out of a street can vary a great deal. Parents may want a place where their children will be safe and somewhere for them to play; car owners will want somewhere to park their car or cars; delivery drivers will want to make their delivery quickly and move on; some people will want tranquillity and others vibrancy.

There are many different and complex individual needs to be balanced and met to varying degrees. But the goals are simple:

Residential streets are for people:

- ▲ *they need to look good*
- ▲ *they need to be functional*
- ▲ *people need to feel safe.*

A residential street can only provide a collective answer to collective needs. Therefore the people who use the street need to form a partnership to discuss the problems, agree priorities and make improvements to the street.

Where there is no partnership and individuals or groups try to solve their own problems independently, without thinking about others, then problems arise.



WHAT DO WE NEED FROM A STREET?

Single interest solutions can make problems for everyone

1. Solutions for car storage – problems with appearance and for pedestrians

In the example below, residents have tried to provide more parking space, but have achieved only a modest increase, at considerable expense and at the loss of the attractiveness and safety of the street – something that will probably affect the value of their homes.



EASY SOLUTIONS?

<p>1. Resident has difficulty in finding a parking place</p> <p>Sometimes the residents will have to park far from their homes.</p> <p>Arguments arise with neighbours. Having visitors or guests over who are travelling by car be impossible. Resident feels providing off-street parking is important selling point.</p> <p>On street parking</p> <p>1.3 cars per house</p>	<p>2. Resident parks car in garden</p> <p>Highway authority puts in dropped kerb at resident's expense</p> <p>Result The on street parking place is lost.</p> <p>Net increase in parking places: 0.2 per house, comprising 1 off street and 0.5 on street.</p> <p>Cost Significant private expense</p>	<p>3. Car ownership continues to rise.</p> <p>Old problems return. Residents surface over yet more of their front gardens</p> <p>Result All on-street parking is eliminated Net increase in parking places: 0.7 per house, comprising 2 off street</p> <p>Cost Major private expense Greenspace in street largely eliminated Loss in street property prices as attractiveness of estate falls Faster through traffic - on street parking eliminated - road clear of parked cars Danger for pedestrians and children</p>
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Parking provision is something that needs to be considered collectively.

2. Solutions for refuse collection – problems with appearance

Refuse storage and collection systems require space. In some housing, housebuilders have not provided the space needed. In other housing the refuse collection service has not taken into account the space available in the houses. The result can be bins left on the street which reduce the attractiveness of the neighbourhood.

The collection system needs to be efficient and attractive.

The options are to:

- ▲ *change the collection system – using bags instead of bins for example*
- ▲ *make proper provision within the street for the bins*
- ▲ *improve the appearance of the bins so that they can be left on the street without being unsightly.*



3. Solutions for motorists – problems for pedestrians

This residential area has been designed to accommodate the largest vehicles ever likely to enter it. The wide road leads to fast traffic. In terms of vehicles it is a success, but to others such as pedestrians and children it is bleak, unattractive and dangerous.

The majority of through traffic originates on local streets. Drivers should think about the impact they have on other streets and the people who live within them. Human error is a cause of 95 percent of accidents, and the severity of the injury is largely caused by the speed of the vehicles.



SPEED AND DANGER - The consequence of crashes

20 mph	5 percent of children are killed
30 mph	50 percent of children are killed
40 mph	90 percent of children are killed

4. Security solved

Residents in this street think they have improved their security by building high walls and fences.

The actual effect is to:

- ▲ *make the street less attractive, either to pedestrians or prospective home owners*
- ▲ *increase people's concern about being mugged as the walls block surveillance by residents*
- ▲ *increase the likelihood of their homes being burgled – because the walls block surveillance by neighbours and passing pedestrians and provide concealment for burglars.*

Residents should look to their neighbours and the wider community to protect their property, rather than try to isolate themselves from social problems.



The importance of a shared vision and shared solutions

The above examples have all been where a single individual or organisation has tried to solve a single problem without taking the needs and problems of others into account. In some instances they could have saved money by seeking the help of others.

It makes good sense to develop a shared vision as to how the street could be improved, and reach an agreement as to how the street should be used.

The following pages show how it can be done.

EASY SOLUTIONS?



Quality streets

Follow these steps to improve your street

People need to take responsibility for changing the street into a place where the residents would like to live above anywhere else. They could be residents, a councillor, or a council official – in fact anyone who has a concern about people's quality of life.



Form a partnership – Quality Street Partnership

To change the way a street works needs consensus, expert advice, funds and possibly legal support. The best way of doing this is to form a partnership between the residents, the local authority and any others who may have an interest, such as local businesses and utility companies. Professionals and politicians can empower residents to turn their streets into truly attractive places.

Involve the people and parties affected

For an improvement scheme to work, people will need to support fully the proposals because much will depend on voluntary action and cooperation. If involvement is thorough not only is there a better chance of obtaining that support, but also of obtaining a wider range of ideas and extra funding for improvements. The aim is to get agreement on how the whole streetspace is to be used, improved and maintained. The consent of the residents is vital, especially if they are going to fund any of the improvements.

Involvement can be at different levels:

Area / neighbourhood involvement

Area based involvement is important in tackling problems and opportunities that arise outside the street. Examples include re-routing traffic, getting agreements with utility companies, liaising with the police. Area based partnerships are also useful where there are several streets with similar problems. In many residential areas there will be no community groups, and possibly no clear local community. The strongest geographical ties will be the local school and local facilities such as shops and pubs - involvement can be developed from these. However it is important to remember the importance of involvement on a street-by-street basis.

Individual street involvement

A neighbourhood can be a vague concept, but there is no uncertainty about the extent of a street. This is where the problems arise and where most of the solutions will be applied. The people who live there will play the main role and it is essential that they help prepare and are committed to the proposals for change and the aftercare of the street.

Solutions that come from the residents have a far higher chance of success and are likely to be more varied and distinctive. This variety can make a valuable contribution to the character of the neighbourhood. But it is important to remember that the street is not isolated from the rest of the world:- the effect on adjoining streets needs to be considered.

Get the council on board

Local authorities are required to operate under the system of Best Value. It means thinking about things in the round, not just in terms of the cost of the service, and its delivery, but the effect it has on other aspects of life. Under Best Value, community focus and involvement is vital. It is important to work out a plan to improve a residential area that is based on needs. The best way of finding out what the residents want is to ask them and involve them.

SOURCE OF HELP

• **The UDAL Placechecks system can help you identify the groups that should be involved in a partnership. See www.placecheck.com for information.**

The Best Value process can be focussed on residential streets, for example:

- Challenge** – is the street really performing a function that people want it to perform?
- Compare** – how does the street compare with other areas, what is good about it, what is bad – where do people want to live?
- Consult** – what do the residents and the other users of the street want?
- Compete** – turn the street into something that is attractive, and where people will want to live.

The companion report *Designing Streets for People* shows how local authorities can use the Best Value process to improve streets, for further details see www.icenet.org.uk/streets/.

Councils recognise that what is superficially the cheapest solution for a particular problem may not be the best one for the community unless it addresses the wider community needs and the community itself is committed to it.

SOURCE OF HELP

• **The UDAL Placechecks system provides a set of well researched questions which you can tailor to your street. It will help you assess the street and identify ways of improving it.**



QUALITY STREETS

Why the local authority and residents should work together

- ▲ *It is a duty under Best Value.*
- ▲ *Only the residents know how they want a place to look and to be used.*
- ▲ *Problems caused by residents can be solved by residents.*
- ▲ *Most of the money spent in a street is the money spent by residents on the improvement of their own homes. They may be able to club together and help fund the improvement of the street.*
- ▲ *Residents may agree to their private land being used to increase the land available to deal with problems.*
- ▲ *Involvement helps create a community, bringing other benefits such as better security.*
- ▲ *Involvement ensures that people take ownership of the problems and the solutions.*

Assess the street – street audit

People with an interest in the street should audit the street, to find out what they like about it, what they dislike, what problems there are and what they would most like to change. To be complete, the street audit should also look at how the street relates to the surrounding area, including the ease of access to local facilities, the safety of routes to the shops or the local school and so on. The aim is to obtain a balanced picture of the street and its surrounds, and the direction in which it needs to be changed.

What is good about the street, – What is bad?

- ▲ *Is the street attractive?*
- ▲ *Is it functional – can people do the things they want to do in the street?*

How is the street used? – How should it be used?

- ▲ *Think about the resident's direct needs – such as parking, playing, personal security etc.*
- ▲ *Think about every living thing: including women, youths, children, wildlife, plant life; etc.*
- ▲ *Think about the indirect needs – such as deliveries, services, pipes; etc.*
- ▲ *Think about the needs of outsiders – such as through-traffic, including pedestrian and cyclists as well as vehicles.*

The 'do nothing' test

- ▲ *What will happen to the street if nothing is done? For example: what if traffic levels and car ownership increase as forecast? what if maintenance levels in the street are unchanged? what will happen if the street trees decline and die?*



Use the partnership to explore the options

How could the street be changed?

- ▲ *Can the street be made more functional or attractive?*
- ▲ *Is the space in the street used in the best possible way? - Think about the whole streetscene.*
- ▲ *Can space be reallocated? - Find ways of freeing up streetspace, obtaining additional space outside the street, and ways of using space in more than one way.*

Can any of the competing needs be changed?

- ▲ *Does through-traffic have to come through the street? Can it be reduced or diverted?*
- ▲ *Can the size of vehicles coming down the street be limited?*
- ▲ *Can the number of cars in the street be reduced? – e.g encouraging cycling and walking by providing safe routes, better public transport, using taxis, improving local facilities, or introducing car sharing or car club schemes.*
- ▲ *Can the speed of through-traffic be reduced? 20mph or below – substantially improves the safety of pedestrians. At these speeds pedestrians hit by a car will survive 19 times out of 20. 8mph or below – this allows pedestrians to share the road with drivers.*

Decide what you want – form a vision

- ▲ *How would people like the street to be now?*
- ▲ *How would they like the street to be in the future?*

A quality residential area depends on meeting a wide range of different and sometimes conflicting needs.

- ▲ *Make sure the vision is shared by all the people and organisations involved and affected. One person's solution can be somebody else's problem.*
- ▲ *Make sure solutions contribute to the street as a whole.*

Investigate funding sources

Finding funds is essential for success, but so too is the right mix of funding. The best approach is multi-funding, that is seeking a range of sources for each scheme. This is an extension of the principle of collaborative working with many agencies. It is a mistake to limit funding sources to the local authority highway department for improvements to the highway and to the housing departments for improvements to housing and so on. Smaller agencies may be more willing to contribute if they feel that they will not be bearing all of the costs.

The common practice in local authorities of getting the next highest tier of government to pay all of the costs is understandable when money is tight but it is counter-productive. With traffic calming schemes, for example, the essential features needed for safety and speed reduction will normally be paid for by unitary and county councils supported by central government grants. These authorities can top this up from their general funds to provide paving, planting and other aspects of environmental enhancement.

In these circumstances, local businesses, community groups and parish councils may be more willing to provide items such as trees, flowers, and street furniture. If the road is within a social housing area, housing funding may be available and should be used as a supplement to other sources. As simple a matter as ensuring that the improvements are phased in with routine road repairs can result in important cost savings.

Checklist of potential funding sources

- ✓ *central government: transport grants for major projects and safety*
- ✓ *unitary and county council funds*
- ✓ *district council funds*
- ✓ *property developer contributions*
- ✓ *housing funds*
- ✓ *European and central government regeneration funds*
- ✓ *parish council and community groups*
- ✓ *local businesses*
- ✓ *householders*
- ✓ *other groups that use the street, people who park cars for example.*

Form a street agreement

Once a proposal for the future of the street has been developed it needs to be transformed into action. The partnership between residents, other parties and the local authority should aim to produce an agreement setting out how the street should be changed and how it should be maintained and managed in future years. It is an opportunity to address not just the physical side of the street, but the community as well.

The agreement can include:

- ▲ *commitment on how the street should appear and be used – a balanced view reflecting the residents' interests, the practicalities of resources and regulations, and the needs of outside groups*
- ▲ *agreement over the actions that need to be taken by residents, the local authority and others*
- ▲ *agreement over the residents' responsibilities on how they use the street.*

Levels of agreement

The street agreement can range from an informal understanding between residents to a formal contract involving exchange of land and money. The street agreement can form the basis for other things such as support for a neighbourhood watch scheme, and wider social support such as lifts to doctors, car commuter schemes, or car pooling.

Why should the residents adopt a street agreement? They stand to gain a better looking street, a happier neighbourhood, a better quality of life. And if all this attracts people to live in the street, then residents stand to gain an increase in the value of their homes.

Informal agreement between all the residents in a street

An informal agreement might include relatively slight changes in behaviour and use of the street such as commitment by residents to:

- ▲ *park only in agreed spaces and not on verges or pavements*
- ▲ *keep front gardens in good condition*
- ▲ *leave some parking spaces for visitors.*



Legal street agreement between all residents in a street, local authority and others

Major changes to the street may require a legal agreement to be drawn up.

Commitments by residents might include:

- ▲ *to take responsibility for some of the maintenance of the street*
- ▲ *to contribute to the funding of the improvement and maintenance of the street*
- ▲ *to accept some restrictions on personal freedom in return for enjoying a far more attractive and functional street and better support.*



Commitment by the local authority – might include:

- ▲ *to use its powers and resources to support the street in an agreed way, e.g. remodelling the street, providing traffic calming, providing gateways, or other features*
- ▲ *to provide financial incentives in response to additional responsibilities and duties being undertaken by residents*
- ▲ *to devolve resources and responsibilities to appropriate groups, for example empowering residents to take over responsibility for maintenance.*

For further information on the legal aspects of quality street agreements please see the companion report *Designing streets for people*.

Maintain the partnership

Streets are permanent features, and the street partnership needs to be permanent. Keep contact going between the parties.

Options include:

Street leaders – some authorities recruit an individual from the street to maintain contact with the authority.

Contact officer – can be appointed by the local council to be the central point of contact for residents about any problems they have, or changes they would like to make.

Formal group – establish a group of residents to meet on a regular basis to review and manage what is happening in the street.

Options for improvement

- a more detailed look

The task of improving a street is unique. This final section shows how different a street can be, if the residents and others who have a controlling interest are flexible and open minded. It does not attempt to provide design solutions – these need to be tailored to each individual street by professionals working with residents and other partners.

Most important of all is the way the street is looked after and maintained; including policing, litter control, control of traffic, maintenance of the surfaces and buildings, and the general impression of care.

Maintaining improvements

Maintenance and management of the public and private parts of a street needs to be ongoing and to a high standard. This is the key to an attractive and functional street, and should be resolved before any changes are made to the street itself. Needs and opportunities change. Streets need to be managed on an ongoing basis so that they change in the interests of the community as a whole, rather than change to the advantage of one and the disadvantage of many.



OPTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Options for managing...	By mutual self interest By persuasion	By law and enforcement – by the local authority, police and others
Car storage	<p>Encouraging residents to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ avoid getting a second or third car ▲ get a smaller car ▲ save money by joining a car club, walking using public transport, or cycling ▲ landscape the car storage area ▲ only park on the highway or marked parking bays ▲ avoid parking on the footway or damaging verges ▲ get together to police parking in the street as a community 	<p>There are powers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ stop people blocking footways with their cars ▲ stop people blocking the road with their cars, for example hindering emergency access ▲ stop driving off the road onto verges ▲ stop driving off the road into their front gardens where there is no dropped kerb ▲ stop front gardens being used for parking ▲ establish controlled parking zones, residents parking zones, and other restrictions
Speed, volume and weight of traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ encouraging people to walk, cycle, share cars, use public transport, or not make a journey ▲ encouraging drivers to keep to main roads, and not drive through residential areas 	<p>Local authorities have powers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ change the layout of the street to reconcile the need to park cars with other uses ▲ purchase areas of land to provide car parking
Personal Security	<p>NB - these are recommendations for the wider community. People living in a single street clearly will not have much impact on the overall levels of traffic.</p>	<p>There are powers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ restrict or ban traffic travelling along a street, according to vehicle type and time of day ▲ introduce 20mph speed limits ▲ introduce traffic calming ▲ introduce traffic management schemes to encourage traffic to travel by other routes ▲ close the street
Litter and Refuse	<p>Neighbourhood Watch Where there are front gardens, encouraging residents to keep them in a way that maintains surveillance</p> <p>Litter picking days Making residents aware of the impact that rubbish kept in front gardens has on the rest of the street</p>	<p>Community safety plans</p> <p>Code of practice on litter and refuse Litter abatement notices Untidy land orders</p>
Maintenance of public parts of street	<p>Contacting the local councillor and asking them to take an interest. Persuading the council to reallocate funds where residents agree to take more active responsibility for maintenance</p>	<p>The local authority is obliged to keep the highway safe, however, the appearance of the street is not covered by legislation, and is a matter of democratic pressure on councillors</p>
Maintenance of private parts of street	<p>Discuss the topic among residents, share ideas, be encouraging</p>	<p>Untidy Land Orders</p>

Options for everyone

Use the goodwill and enthusiasm of residents and the expertise of professionals to turn the street into something that is both attractive and functional. There are many different elements, such as;

Surfaces, buildings and structures, features, barriers and boundaries, people.



Can the appearance of the street be improved?

It is difficult to say what makes a street unattractive or attractive. The biggest difference can actually be the impression that people care about the street and are looking after it.

What can be achieved by good maintenance? Major improvements to a street can be made simply by good maintenance. Litter, household waste and other discarded property can be easily removed. Verges and street trees can be better looked after. Unnecessary signage and clutter such as posts can be thinned down over a longer period of time. Other eyesores such as rotting sheds, broken down fences, or rusting cars are easy to tackle physically, but require the involvement of the land owner, or intervention by the local authority.

Can surfaces be improved? A road surface that has been patched several times looks ugly. All roads do not have to be black, there are alternatives. There are similar opportunities with the pavement: cracked and uneven paving slabs look ugly and can cause pedestrians to trip. Measures can be taken to stop the cause of damage – vehicles driving onto the pavement. There are alternatives to slab paving, or black bitumen–macadam surfaces.

Can hard or soft landscaping be introduced? Landscaping can bring the street to life. It can create a stronger identity for the street, and individual residents can personalise parts of it. Plants can bring colour, life and seasonal variety into a street. Climbing plants can be used where there is little space available and can have a stunning effect. Ornaments and other features can be introduced, provided there are no major problems with theft or vandalism. Low hedges can be used to screen cars.

There are many different elements which could be, but rarely are used. Trees and trellises can be used to block off unsightly views. Gateways, or other features at the entry of a street can be used to create a special identity.

Match vehicles to the street

The volume and speed of traffic have a strong effect on the way people use the street. The weight and size of traffic places restrictions on how the street can be laid out. It makes sense to see if there is any scope to change:

Vehicle size If the size of vehicles can be reduced, the road space can be re-allocated and the street remodelled. Narrower roads and tighter corners reduce the speed of traffic and reduce the danger.

Vehicle weight If the weight of vehicles can be reduced then it becomes easier to use high-quality surfacing materials more economically.

Volume of through-traffic Through traffic introduces noise, air pollution and danger into the street and makes crossing the street more difficult. However some people like a moderate amount of through traffic for personal security reasons. Options range from using area wide traffic management schemes to route traffic away from residential areas; creating one way systems to release space required in the street for other uses, through to the complete closure of the road. Specific types of traffic can be excluded.

Vehicle speeds There are many different techniques for reducing the speed of traffic, including narrower road widths, tighter corners at junctions, humps, chicanes, and carefully arranged on-street parking.

Can the space in the street be used in a better way?

Look at all the different uses and activities that could go on in the street, decide which are the most important, and which need what space. Consider both the public and private space in the street, including the road, the pavement, the verge, front gardens, rear access, and the possibility of land away from the street. If you were starting with a blank sheet how would you share out the space available in front of the houses?

Can the spaces be used for several different purposes to get the maximum value? Effective traffic calming can allow the road to be turned into a shared surface where vehicles travel so slowly it is safe for pedestrians to use the road space. There can be other examples such as using reinforced grass to provide a crossing of a grass verge, rather than making one out of concrete or tarmac: the result is a functional crossing of the verge, and the preservation of the attractiveness of the street. Watch out for changes in the street that prevent the efficient use of space. Front garden parking that neutralises the road space in front of the house might be an example.

Can the space be reallocated? It may be possible to release the space used for moving vehicles for use for other purposes, such as wider pavements, or tree planting for example. Other spaces within the street can be considered for reallocation. For example in some streets it might make sense to reduce the size of front gardens to provide an efficient parking scheme. In other streets it may be possible to create private space, by allowing residents exclusive use of parts of the pavement for planters.

Is there space outside the street? There may be land nearby that could be used to meet some of the residents needs, for example land for parking, or recreation, or greenspace.

Can parking be improved?

Can the need for parking spaces be changed? If the residents are prepared to own fewer or smaller cars then it may be possible to solve problems without the need for any physical change to the street. Alternatively it may give flexibility to produce a more attractive street layout, with more space for pavements and pedestrians or for planting.

Can management systems be introduced? Residents parking permit schemes are one option. Some local authorities have taken over the enforcement of parking from the police, and this can mean that greater resources are devoted to ensuring people park where they are supposed to.

Can different parking arrangements make more effective use of space? Different parking arrangements such as chevron and end-on parking can make more effective use of space if the road is of sufficient width. It may be possible to re-allocate the space used by road, verge, pavements and front gardens to produce a better, more attractive solution.



OPTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL ...

Make sure all the other needs you have identified can be met

The options listed in this section are very much focussed on coping with vehicles. But there will be many other different needs. These might include improving the ease of movement for wheelchair users, or finding better facilities for children, or improving personal security for women. Use professional advice and the flair and flexibility of residents to come up with a way forward.

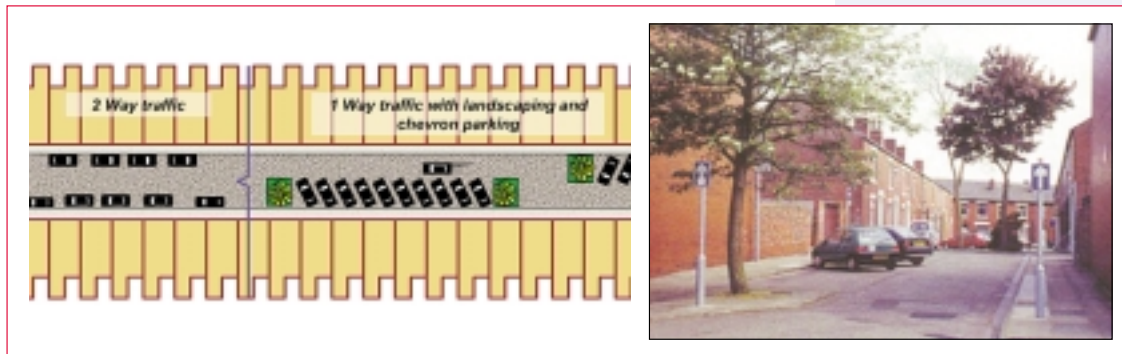
Options for narrower streets

Moderate change options

Representing schemes which will normally involve some capital expenditure and some change in the way residents use the street.

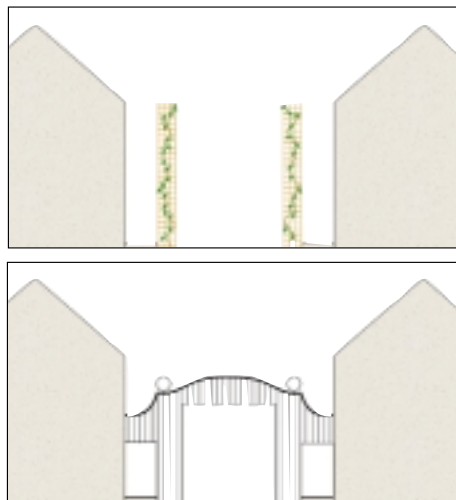


OPTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT



Introducing a one-way system frees up the carriageway for other uses. In this example, additional parking spaces have been created, and planting and "kerb build-outs" have been added to soften the appearance of the street, and reduce the speed of traffic. The message is that the car is a "guest" in this street.

The example above achieves more space for car parking, but as an alternative to more car parking spaces the arrangement could be used to provide more space for other uses, for example creating seating areas, or possibly a small play area for children. Some parents might be horrified at the thought of putting a play area in the street, but effective traffic calming can help to ensure their children's safety.



Gateways and entrances made from materials such as iron, steel or timber can serve a range of purposes including restricting traffic, emphasising the street as a place rather than as a through-route, creating a special identity, or providing an attractive feature at the end of the streets that looks better than a view of a distant block of flats or a gasometer. The cost need not be great, and there is a wide range of climbing plants which can be grown up the framing if that is what the residents would like.

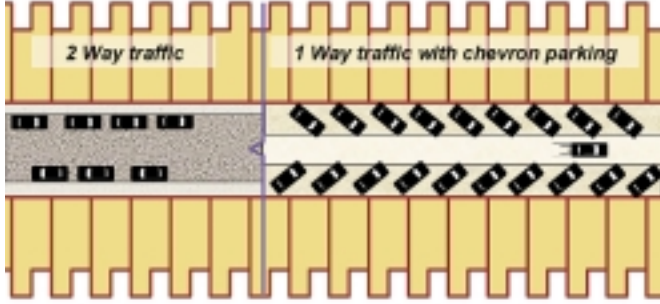
Radical change options

Solutions which may involve significant changes to the street, and to the way people use it, or where the costs are significant.

Examples might include a major re-allocation of roadspace, creation of new public areas, exchange of land, or even demolition of buildings or new development.

Shared surface

Where space is scarce it makes sense to use it for several different purposes. Shared surfaces is the term used to describe a road where traffic and pedestrians mingle. Traffic calming may be used to keep the speed of traffic to a safe level, and ideally there should be measures to reduce the amount of through-traffic.




2 Way traffic

1 Way traffic with chevron parking

Although at first glance this does not seem so, this is a radical new way of thinking about street ownership. The carriageway has been turned into a "shared surface". The area for the parked cars can also be used as a shared zone not wholly public, not wholly private. This option allows one car parking place per house at the loss of both footways, but residents could use the spaces as an extended garden, with planters, trellises, ornaments, and so on, to personalise the space in front of their homes.

Close the street

If there are alternative routes for traffic, and sufficient access for deliveries, refuse collection vehicles emergency services etc, then one option can be to close the street to through-traffic. This arrangement brings the advantage of quiet and safety to the disadvantage of through-traffic.



This example clears the street of cars, while providing off-street parking through the demolition of houses at either end. The street can be closed off to all traffic, or access limited to services such as removal vehicles or emergencies.

If the through traffic can be dispensed with, and cars can be limited in number or parked somewhere else, then why not remove the road altogether?

These examples are here to assist with your thinking. The final scheme should be one thought up and agreed by the residents, the local authority, the professional advisers and other concerned parties.



OPTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Options for wider suburban streets

There is plenty of space to play with in a suburban street, and there are many different options. But what can be done in practice depends on what is there at the moment and the willingness of the parties involved to accept change and compromise.

If there is very little front garden parking, then preserving front gardens will be an easy option. However if most of the front gardens have been surfaced over for car parking, then restoring them to lawns and flower beds will involve radical change.



OPTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Providing parking

Existing situation



Some suburban streets already have high levels of car ownership.

As the number of cars owned by the residents increases, more and more of the street will be devoted to parked cars.

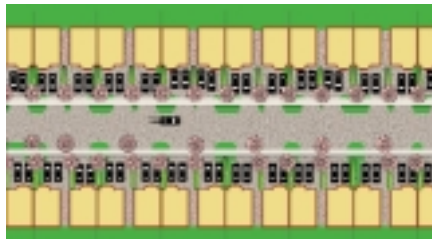
Providing parking – Minor change



Controlling the way the front gardens are used can help to improve the look of the street by ensuring front gardens are looked after and screen planting is used to conceal parked cars. This particular example lacks any form of measure to reduce the speed of traffic.

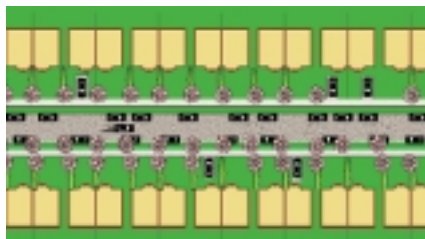
Protecting front gardens

Existing situation



In other suburban streets with lower levels of car ownership, the majority of the gardens will still be unaffected.

Protecting front gardens – Minor change



Preserving the front gardens as gardens may be the best route for the future of the street. If the residents agree that front gardens are an important part of the attractiveness of the street then controls can be introduced to protect them. If parking is a problem, then perhaps a more radical change is needed.

These examples involve making slight changes in the way the space in the street is used.

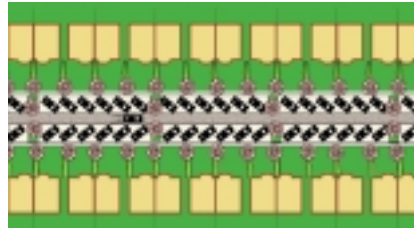
**Providing parking
– Moderate change**



If the residents are willing to cooperate on how to introduce parking into their front gardens then the range of options extends.

Combined entrances to adjoining properties reduces wasted space, and allows on-street parking to continue.

**Protecting front gardens
– Moderate change**



This example provides additional parking spaces without the loss of front gardens by careful reallocation of the available space. A one way system has been introduced to allow the road to be narrowed, both verges have been removed and chevron parking introduced.

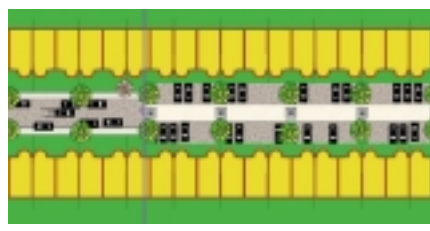
These final examples involve re-planning the whole street, including swapping parts of private gardens for public space or for hard standing for parked cars.

**Providing parking
– Radical change**



This is a relatively hard landscaped example which is ideally suited to streets where most gardens have been surfaced over. If residents are prepared to cooperate, an attractive and functional scheme can be developed, which uses quality materials yet may involve less expense than the residents are currently facing by going it alone.

**Protecting front gardens
– Radical change**



Severe pressure for parking in a narrower suburban street has been accommodated in this example by taking some space off the front gardens, narrowing the road and turning it into a shared surface. Residents lose part of their gardens but gain one or more parking spaces in front of their houses, and a much safer street.



OPTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Annex

Legal tools

Public areas are already reasonably well regulated through various highway, planning and environmental legislation. Controls are needed against a minority of people those who would spoil their "communities" in their own self interest. Much of this legislation is relatively old and circumstances often change more quickly than the legislation.

The legislation available includes:

- ▲ *Highways Act 1980*
- ▲ *Town and Country Planning Act 1990*
- ▲ *Control of Pollution Act 1974*
- ▲ *Public Health Act 1936*
- ▲ *Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978*
- ▲ *The environment acts.*

Duty of highways authority to assert and protect the rights of the public as a whole

Under the Highways Act 1980 the highway authority has a duty to maintain the highway, for the benefit of the community at large, not just motorists. It is the duty of any council (whether highway authority or other) to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway in their area.

Problems with parked cars

There is no right to park on a highway, just a right to pass and re-pass. It is possible to design a traffic regulation order to combat most parking related problems. These are normally more effective in special parking areas where the local authority undertakes parking enforcement.

For example, it is possible to specifically prohibit parking on the footways but allow parking on the carriageway. This is particularly helpful for pedestrians when motorists park with two wheels on narrow footways to preserve their door mirrors.

Local authorities should lay general traffic regulation orders to prohibit the parking of cars of footways, and permit it only by exception.

Improving and protecting verges

The Highways Act gives the highway authority the power to plant trees and shrubs and lay out grass verges. Regrettably the powers to prevent drivers churning up grass verges are far from ideal but with the right will, offenders can be prosecuted. In many areas there is local legislation which gives powers, for example to exclude motor vehicles from designated verges and authorities have successfully prosecuted drivers for parking on these verges. Where there is no such act, the local authority should consider the need for its own Act or bylaws.

Councils should work in close collaboration with the police to limit the problems but it serves no purpose for each to keep referring items to the other knowing full well that they do not have the resources to tackle the issue. Partnerships with the community are essential but it must be recognised that it is the police and the local authority who have the powers to take action against offenders. For example, caravans, boats, trailers are often viewed as an obstruction but it is open to a highway authority to remove the problem if it causes a hazard or sue those responsible for obstructing the highway. However, the legislation is cumbersome to use and absorbs an unfair share of limited resources.

Stopping damage to front gardens

The local planning authority may establish an Article 4 direction taking away a resident's normal permitted development rights. This can be used to stop people concreting over their front gardens. Excepting conservation areas, the direction must be confirmed by the Secretary of State.

Improving front gardens and untidy land

Sometimes privately owned land or buildings can blight the attractiveness of a street. Local authorities have powers to serve a notice on land owners or occupiers requiring them to take specific steps within a specified period where the amenity of any area is adversely affected by the condition of the land. The power covers all land and buildings, including gardens, and vacant or open land. If the landowner does not undertake the work themselves, the local authority may enter the land, remedy the adverse effect and place a charge on the property.

Local authorities also have powers to impose an annual levy on owners of derelict land in urban areas.

Tackling problems before they start

When awarding planning permission, the local authority should place conditions on what changes can be made to the front garden.

Verges

A well kept grass verge is a very attractive feature in a street. One that is churned by the wheels of vehicles is quite the reverse. If residents want an attractive looking street then the grass verges need to be looked after, and not used for parking. The highway is the proper place for the car – not the grass verge.

What to do?

It is important to understand why people are parking on the verges and to manage the problem.

Options include:

- ▲ *Persuade them that they have no need to park on the verge. In fact parking half on the road and half off can actually increase the chances of a car being hit as motorists try to squeeze past. Parking cars full on the highway is an effective way of slowing down traffic and reducing the danger to pedestrians.*
- ▲ *Formalise the on-street parking with marked-out parking spaces on the highway surface to encourage proper parking.*
- ▲ *Provide alternative parking so that people do not have to park on the verges.*



Options for protecting the verge

Protect the verge by agreement

Often it is just one or two people who are causing the problem. A streetwide discussion on improvements may make them realise the damage they are causing and the effect it is having on the street. They may well change their parking arrangements.



Enforcement

Make parking on the verge illegal and enforce rigorously.

Reinforce the grass

There are a number of proprietary products that are marketed with the aim of allowing cars to be driven over grass surfaces, including products made from plastic and concrete. The artificial materials bear the weight of the car, and prevent damage to the grass and the roots. The products are relatively expensive and require careful maintenance to keep the grass in good condition, and the surface of the soil at the right level in relation to the reinforcement. Reinforced grass can be suitable for areas of light occasional use and areas of heavier use provided high quality maintenance can be guaranteed. Without quality maintenance the grass dies. Reinforced grass is not the answer if cars are going to be parked upon it, day in, day out. However it can be ideal for providing crossings of grass verges as an alternative to a hard surfacing material.

Remove the grass verge and replace with a hard surface

Concreting grass verges tends to look unattractive. It is better to go for a redesign of the street, with a reallocation of space.

Physically prevent vehicles from getting on the verges by using:

- ▲ *bollards – wooden posts – chains, etc*
- ▲ *barrier kerbs – 150–225 mm (6–9 inch) kerbs will block the majority of cars.*

Parking in front gardens

Many homeowners have already converted part or all of their front garden to make room for their cars or may have plans to do so. But as discussed above, careful thought is needed. Only consider introducing off-street parking if it is going to bring a substantial improvement to the street.

Retain hedges and trees to prevent the street looking like a car park





Alternatives to front garden parking

The cost of creating a hard standing will normally be over £1000. The cost of putting in a dropped kerb and forming a crossover will on their own be £400–£500 or more. The cost of surfacing the front garden comes in addition and unless it is done well, will reduce the value of the house. If the local authority had £1000 for each house to spend on improvements to the street, what might that fund?

- ▲ *Traffic calming? – road hump costs about the same as two crossovers.*
- ▲ *Better street lighting? – a new street light costs about the same as two or three crossovers.*
- ▲ *Better parking arrangements?*
- ▲ *A traffic management scheme to reduce the amount of through traffic?*

Neighbours working together with the local authority may be able to save money and end up with a far better solution.

When to use front garden parking

- ▲ *Where there is an agreed scheme for the street.*
- ▲ *Where clearing the street of parked cars will not encourage more through traffic, and higher vehicle speeds.*
- ▲ *Where there is plenty of space in the front gardens.*
- ▲ *Where it is impracticable to use any other solution.*
- ▲ *Where there is money and time to do a good job.*
- ▲ *Where it will not adversely affect the appearance of the street and result in the loss of trees and hedges.*
- ▲ *Where it will not unwittingly reduce the number of parking spaces available to residents and visitors.*
- ▲ *Where crossovers can be built without causing severe changes in the level and slope of the footway that would cause discomfort to pedestrians, pram pushers and wheelchair users.*

How to introduce front garden parking

Check with the local authority for permission and the necessary highways works.

Use:

- ▲ *high-quality hard landscaping – with attractive materials and thoughtful design which will look attractive and wear well*
- ▲ *soft landscaping, include trees and shrubs to create interest in the street and to help screen the vehicles.*

Consider drainage carefully: either use a permeable surface such as crushed stone or gravel which will allow rain to seep through, or ensure the new surface drains into a soakaway. Few people realise the effect development has on local streams and rivers. Hard surfaces shed water far more quickly than grass or soil. The consequence can be that small local streams have to be lined with concrete to cope with the increased flow. Hard standing areas which drain onto the highway can add to the pollution of local streams and contribute to local flooding.

Urban watercourses can add greatly to a neighbourhood, and there is now a campaign to encourage their appreciation and restoration. For further information see the UDAL website www.udal.org.uk.



ANNEX