



Part III: Layout

Chapter 6: Shared Surface or Shared Space Streets and Squares

Update 14/4/26

6.1 Foreword

The provision of shared surface streets has been inspired by documents such as 'Manual for Streets' where the emphasis has been on achieving an improved 'place' function. The Highway Authority will adhere to the principle that street design needs to be inclusive to meet the requirements of all users. This may be best achieved by providing safe corridors for pedestrians. For many years this has been successfully achieved by providing footways. This document is not intended to endorse or encourage any other approach.

6.2 Concept

6.2.1 In traditional street layouts, footways and carriageways are separated by a kerb. In a street with a shared surface, this demarcation is absent so pedestrians and vehicles can share the same space. Shared surface schemes work best in calm traffic environments with the following key aims:

- to encourage low vehicle speeds,
- to create an environment in which pedestrians can walk, or stop and chat without feeling intimidated by motor traffic,
- make it easier for people to move around. and
- to promote social interaction.

These objectives must not compromise safety, accessibility or the needs of disabled and vulnerable users.

6.2.2 Department for Transport Local Transport Note 1/11 (currently suspended and not replaced) defines a shared space as:

"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".

6.3 Design principles

6.3.1 Whilst the Highway Authority would consider a shared surface street layout whether a road is to be adopted or not, this is not the same as providing a road but omitting a footway or footways. Should the applicant wish to pursue the principle of a shared surface street, the Highway Authority will require the application to be supported by a Quality Audit as outlined in Manual for Streets, Manual for Streets 2: Wider Application of the Principles, Local Transport Note 1/08 and Traffic Advisory Leaflet 5/11 demonstrating that the requirements of non-motorised users have been considered and satisfactorily addressed. Adoption is not guaranteed purely because a shared surface is proposed or indeed accepted.

6.3.2 Shared surface arrangements must be designed such that they are suitable for blind or partially sighted people because conventional kerbs are commonly used to aid their navigation. The absence of a conventional kerb may pose them problems as this feature is often used to find their way around. It is therefore important that shared surface schemes include an alternative means for visually impaired people to navigate by.

6.3.3 When designing shared surface schemes, careful attention to detail is required to avoid other problems, such as:

- undifferentiated surfaces leading to poor parking behaviour,
- vulnerable road users feeling threatened by having no space protected from vehicles,
- the positioning and quantity of street lighting, street furniture and other features creating visual clutter, and
- the shared surface environment introducing ambiguity regarding pedestrian and vehicle priority, which may disproportionately affect vulnerable users and must be addressed through design and operational controls.

6.3.4 Subject to making suitable provision for disabled people, shared surface streets may be considered: in short lengths, or where they form cul-de-sacs; and

where parking is controlled, or it takes place in designated areas.

6.4 Types of shared surface streets

6.4.1 Shared surface streets may have physically demarcated pedestrian routes or protected zones for pedestrians or a level surface.

Shared surface streets with designated pedestrian routes

6.4.2 Shared surface streets with a designated pedestrian route are those where the separation between carriageway and footway is reduced and the difference between the vehicle track, where vehicles are permitted, and the area set aside for pedestrians only is less physically distinct than a standard footway and carriageway separated by a kerb.

6.4.3 In these streets it will be necessary for part of the street to be kept free of traffic and hence for the sole use of pedestrians. This protected zone can be defined by a range of measures subject to agreement with the Highway Authority. Typical measures include kerbs, textured surface and colour contrast providing a continuous demarcation between the shared zone and the protected zone to aid navigation for people with a visual impairment and helping to control vehicle movements. A range of other features may be considered to supplement and support the function of the protected space. All are likely to be subject to payment of a commuted sum.

6.4.4 The designated pedestrian route should be free from car parking and adequately provide way finding methods which are suitable for the blind and partially sighted.

Shared surface streets without a protected zone

6.4.5 Level Surface Streets are a kind of shared space where there is no vertical differentiation thereby providing a single shared surface. Level surface streets are only appropriate for short stretches in locations with low to very low vehicle flows and speeds which should be self-enforcing through good design.

6.4.6 The needs of different groups of people need to be considered, including disabled people (e.g. mobility impaired, blind / partially sighted, hearing impaired), children, and elderly people. This street type is not suitable to serve developments predominantly housing older or disabled people, e.g. housing for over 55s and supported or sheltered housing.

6.5 Quality Audit

Each application that includes a shared surface street will require supporting by a quality audit (see Part III, Chapter 7: Quality Audit Guidance). The scope of the audit should be agreed with the Highway Authority and potentially the local planning authority should they wish the audit to address planning matters. Depending on the nature of the development, the quality audit is likely to be required to include the following:

- a review of the function of the street,
- a road safety audit including risk assessment (DMRB GG119),
- an access audit including emergency service vehicles, deliveries, and access for maintenance (Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 8 - Traffic Safety Measures and Signs for Road Works and Temporary Situations) including access to and maintenance of utility apparatus,
- walking, cycling and horse-riding assessment and review (DMRB GG142),
- materials audit,
- equality impact assessment,
- parking audit.

The use of DMRB standards does not imply full application of the DMRB to local residential streets but reflects recognised good practice. Reference to national guidance and standards is to inform assessment and does not imply mandatory compliance unless otherwise stated.

6.6 Tactile Paving

Tactile paving is required at crossing points regardless of whether kerbs are dropped or the carriageway is raised to footway level. Other tactile information may be required to compensate for kerb removal elsewhere. Where tactile delineators are used to segregate protected zones, care must be taken to ensure these are detectable by the visually impaired whilst not hindering the movement of the mobility impaired.

6.7 Surface Treatment

Shared surface streets are often constructed from pavements rather than asphalt, which help emphasise their difference from conventional streets. Research cited within MfS has shown that block paving reduces traffic speeds by between 2.5 and 4.5 mph, compared with speeds on asphalt surfaces.

Shared surface streets should differ in colour or texture (preferably both) from that of adjoining streets and must always be entered via a gateway feature.

6.8 Making Provision for Utility Services

See Part V, Chapter 3: Utilities

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