Nottinghamshire County Council

Part II: Hierarchy
Chapter 1: Hierarchy and Well-Connected Streets

Update 31/3/26

1.1 Street Hierarchy

1.1.1 Levels of multimodal movement and place activity will vary throughout a settlement and its surroundings. Higher levels of activity are normally expected near shops, schools, community facilities and along key corridors, whereas lower levels are likely in minor residential streets, rural lanes and less formal areas. The standard of highway infrastructure and the character of the street should reflect this variation, balancing movement and place, and prioritize sustainable modes where practicable and appropriate to context thereby meeting the needs of all users.

1.1.2 The street hierarchy provides a framework for design intent and user expectancy, rather than a rigid set of geometric prescriptions. It shall be used to establish the intended function of each route, the target operating speed, the expected level of frontage and pedestrian activity, and the appropriate balance between movement, access and place. The hierarchy categories describe street function in a movement–place context and do not represent a hierarchy of road users; priority between users is determined by the design principles and policy requirements set out below. Detailed geometric requirements remain subject to the relevant sections of this Guide and to site-specific assessment. In this Guide, ‘hierarchy’ describes street roles within a network (movement–place), not a ranking of road users or a presumption that one route must always ‘trump’ another; decisions remain evidence-led and context-specific.

1.2 Policy context and design principles

1.2.1 Development proposals shall demonstrate a vision-led approach that integrates transport and placemaking from the earliest stage. Design and Access Statements, Transport Assessments, Transport Statements and Travel Plans should demonstrate how the proposed hierarchy and movement network deliver the agreed vision (including accessibility and mode share outcomes), and where proportionate include monitoring and review arrangements to validate delivery and enable remedial action if required. Schemes should:

- **prioritise everyday movement on foot, by wheelchair and by cycle** within the development and to surrounding areas, with the street layout structured to support convenient access to public transport. Route alignment, block structure and stop locations should be arranged to maximise practical catchment and make public transport a realistic and attractive choice for day-to-day trips,
- **provide streets and routes that are inclusive by design**, accommodating people with disabilities and reduced mobility across all modes. This includes step-free routes, legible and well-located crossing points, and sufficient space to enable the comfortable use of mobility aids,
- **shape streets as safe, attractive places**, where the layout, frontage arrangement and public realm reduce the likelihood of conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. Unnecessary clutter should be avoided, and street design should respond positively to local character. Shared pedestrian/cycle

provision should only be considered where movement levels would be low, not suppressed, and interaction can be managed safely through appropriate design. For avoidance of doubt, 'low' in this context should be evidenced through expected pedestrian/cycle flows, conflict risk, visibility, and the ability to provide continuous priority and comfort for vulnerable users,

- **ensure servicing, deliveries and emergency access are accommodated efficiently**, without eroding street quality or compromising the comfort and safety of people walking and cycling,
- **integrate provision for electric vehicle charging in locations that are safe**, convenient and accessible, and designed so that footways, crossings and desire lines remain clear and unobstructed, with appropriate cable management and equipment placement, and footway clear widths demonstrated through plan-based checks to meet the needs of wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and parents with buggies.

Where monitoring is sought, it will be **proportionate**, focused on agreed outcomes (e.g., mode share, trip rates, safety), and time-limited, and may be secured through conditions and/or obligations where necessary. The identification of a street role within the hierarchy does not determine the acceptability of a proposal in isolation and will not be applied mechanistically; it will be considered alongside site-specific evidence and the outcomes sought by this Guide.

Note: For the avoidance of doubt: 'shall' indicates a requirement; 'should' indicates an expectation that may be varied where a robust, site-specific justification is provided.

1.2.2 To support an outcome-focused assessment, submissions should normally include (proportionate to scale and context):

- a movement framework plan showing key destinations, desire lines and the proposed hierarchy,
- a walking, wheeling and cycling directness/priority plan (including crossing strategy and barriers to movement),
- a speed environment narrative explaining how target operating speeds will be achieved by form and geometry,
- a servicing, deliveries, and refuse strategy (including swept-path analysis where necessary) demonstrating that service movements do not compromise pedestrian/cycle comfort and safety,
- an inclusive design statement/audit summarising how the layout meets inclusive design objectives (including legibility and step-free access),
- where bus provision is relevant, a bus routing and stop/catchment plan with a deliverability statement, and
- where EV charging is proposed, a layout plan showing equipment, cable management and footway clear widths at charge points.

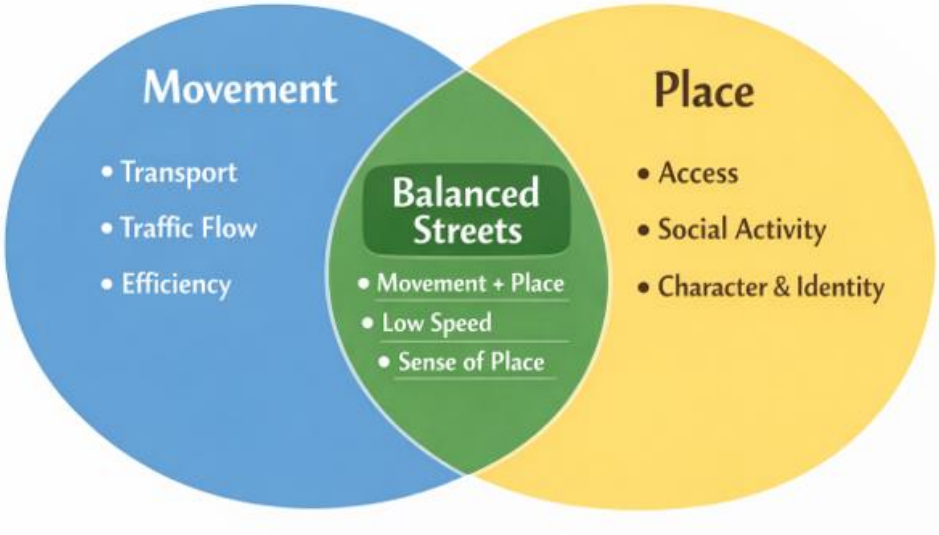
Where an item is not provided, the submission shall explain why it is not proportionate and how the relevant outcomes have otherwise been demonstrated. In assessing proposals, the highway authority will consider whether the proposed hierarchy and layout demonstrably deliver the stated outcomes (safety, accessibility, inclusivity, connectivity, and network function), supported by proportionate evidence.

1.3 Hierarchy categories (movement–place led)

1.3.1 The hierarchy shall be applied in a movement–place context. Streets may perform multiple functions and transitions may occur over short distances, see **Figure 1.1**. Designs shall demonstrate that the street type, layout, priority and appearance are legible and self-explaining to all users, with speed management achieved primarily through street form, geometry, enclosure and user expectancy rather than reliance on signs or

post-design traffic calming features. Designs should be outcome-focused and consistent with the overall vision for the site and area. The application of this hierarchy requires the exercise of professional judgement, informed by proportionate evidence, local context and relevant statutory duties.

Figure 1.1



1.3.2 The following hierarchy categories are provided as a framework to help describe and discuss the typical roles of streets in the design and assessment of development proposals, recognising the influence of local context and professional judgement. The labels are to help describe the typical roles and character of streets within a network. They provide a simple way of illustrating how streets may differ in their emphasis on movement, access and place, and are intended to aid understanding rather than define categories. In practice, individual streets may combine characteristics from more than one label, and the descriptions should be read as indicative rather than definitive. The images illustrate the range of street roles described in the hierarchy, showing how different streets typically balance movement, access and place.

Principal role: movement and network reliability; access is limited and controlled; place function is secondary.

Balanced movement and place role; connect neighbourhoods and key destinations; moderate target speeds achieved through layout; walking, wheeling and cycling movement is integral.

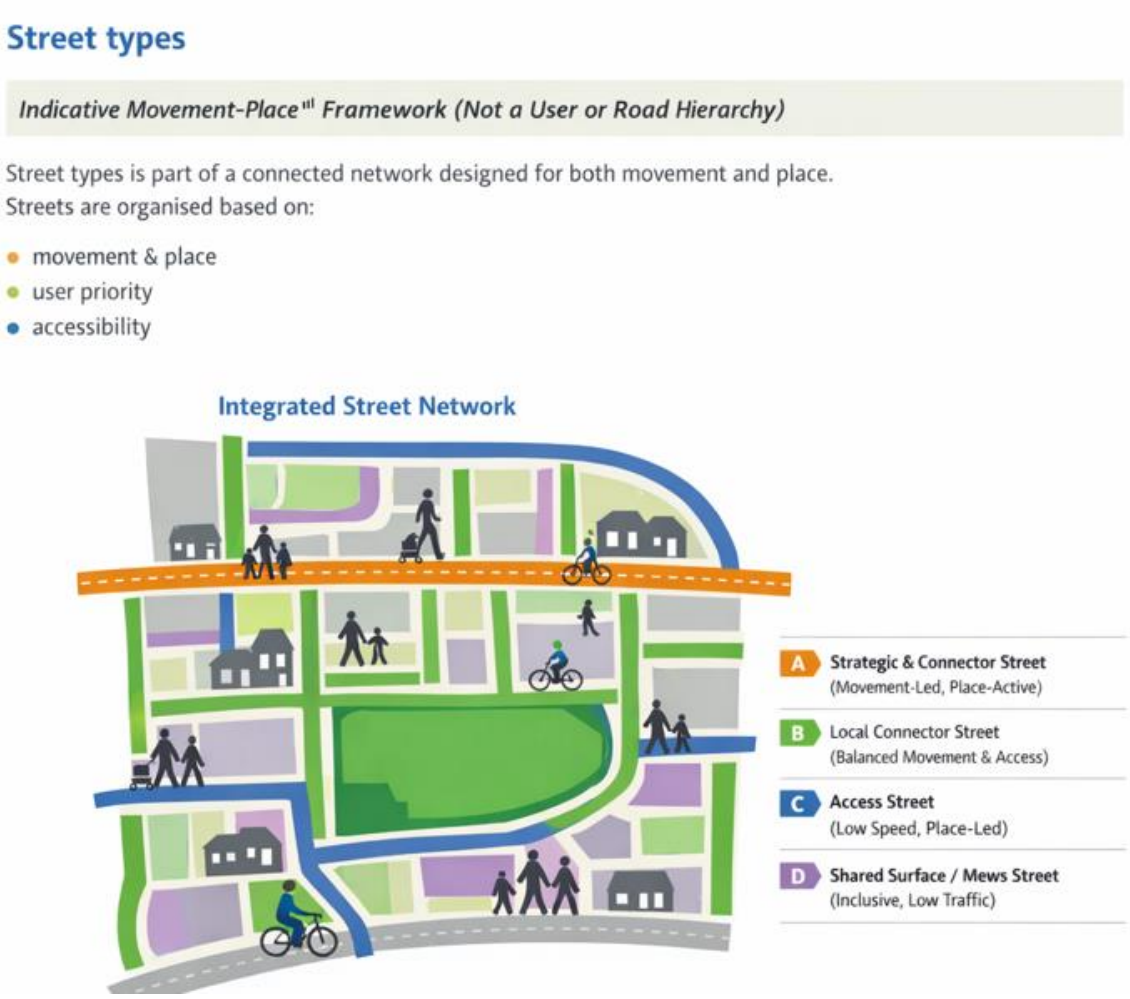
Principal role: access and place; low target speeds; frontage activity may occur; delay and giving-way are acceptable where they support place quality and safety (noting that “giving-way” here describes informal driver behaviour arising from constrained geometry and does not alter legal priority unless supported by appropriate signs/markings). Designs shall avoid creating reliance on discretionary behaviour where vulnerable users may be placed at risk or where driver compliance cannot reasonably be assumed.

Strong place function: drivers are guests; very low speeds achieved by design; informal priority and negotiation may occur. Use of such streets should be compatible with inclusive design and legibility, avoiding ambiguous layouts where pedestrian demand is high. These streets should be used only in exceptional circumstances where pedestrian demand can be safely accommodated, and where an inclusive design audit demonstrates that the layout is legible for blind and partially sighted people and for other disabled users. Where high pedestrian flows, complex movements or significant servicing demands may occur, a more conventional arrangement with clearly defined footways and crossings will normally be required. The inclusive design audit should be informed by recognised inclusive mobility guidance and should identify any residual risks and mitigation.

Historic character-led routes with constrained geometry; informal operation, discretionary giving way and passing places may be integral to function. Single-track lanes and routes reliant on passing places are subject to the additional guidance in Part 3.10.

1.3.3 **Figure 1.2** illustrates the application of the street hierarchy in a movement–place context, showing how different streets within a connected network may vary in their emphasis on movement, access and place. The diagram is indicative and outcome-focused, intended to communicate design intent, user expectancy and network structure rather than prescribe geometric standards or establish a hierarchy of road users. Streets are shown as part of an integrated network that prioritises walking, wheeling and cycling, supports public transport accessibility, and delivers legible, self-explaining environments through street form, enclosure and frontage activity. The labels A–D align with the hierarchy categories described in Section 1.3 and are used to aid understanding of typical street roles; in practice, individual streets may combine characteristics from more than one category, reflecting local context and professional judgement. Figure 1.2 should be read alongside site-specific movement framework plans and does not represent a classification of individual streets for assessment purposes.

Figure 1.2



1.4 Well-connected streets (network permeability)

1.4.1 Connected street networks should provide permeability and connectivity to destinations with a choice of routes. It is particularly important that routes for walking, wheeling and cycling are clear and direct and that bus routes do not become overly protracted. The principle is to ensure that new development enhances the existing movement framework of an area rather than disrupting or severing it. Where appropriate, filtered permeability may be used to provide direct routes for walking and cycling whilst discouraging through-traffic. A movement framework plan shall be provided (proportionate to scale) showing key destinations, desire lines, primary walking/wheeling and cycling routes, public transport corridors and stops, and how permeability (including any filtered permeability) will be achieved without creating severance. Filtered permeability should be designed to maintain necessary access for residents, disabled people, servicing and emergency services, while managing through-traffic and avoiding displacement to unsuitable streets. Where filtered permeability is proposed, the submission shall demonstrate that it does not create unacceptable displacement of traffic onto unsuitable streets and does not introduce barriers for disabled people, including those who rely on vehicle access.

1.4.2 New residential streets should normally be designed to form part of a well-connected street network (block structure). Well-connected networks have advantages including:

- shorter routes to cover a given area,
- reduced need for reversing and manoeuvring associated with dead-ends,

- reduced land-take by avoiding wasteful turning areas at the ends of cul-de-sacs,
- encouraging walking and cycling to local destinations, improving health and reducing motor traffic, energy use and pollution,
- improved personal security and road safety, as more people on streets and active frontages influence driver behaviour and speed choice,
- space and route choice for utilities and servicing, including alternative service routes, and
- resilience for highway and utility maintenance, as traffic can be routed around point closures where a connected network exists.

1.4.3 Developers should aim to provide multiple points of vehicular access onto the wider highway network where land availability and the external road network permit. Access points should be to adoptable standards and available for public use. Where multiple points of access are not provided, the reasons must be robustly justified within the submission, including consideration of network resilience. Robust justification should address land control/third-party constraints, topography, highway safety, deliverability and phasing, and the network resilience and emergency access implications of a single point of access.

1.4.4 Cul-de-sacs may provide the only practical solution for awkward sites (for example where the site is linear, has difficult topography or other constraints) and where through routes are not practical. Wherever possible, vehicular cul-de-sacs should be avoided. Where cul-de-sacs are proposed, opportunities to provide alternative, more direct pedestrian and cycle routes should be explored (including via filtered connections) to form a walkable neighbourhood, typically characterised by having a range of facilities within a 10-minute (up to about 800m) walk. Where cul-de-sacs are used, proposals must demonstrate that walking, wheeling and cycling routes to key destinations remain direct, safe and overlooked, and that turning provision is efficient and does not result in unnecessary land-take.

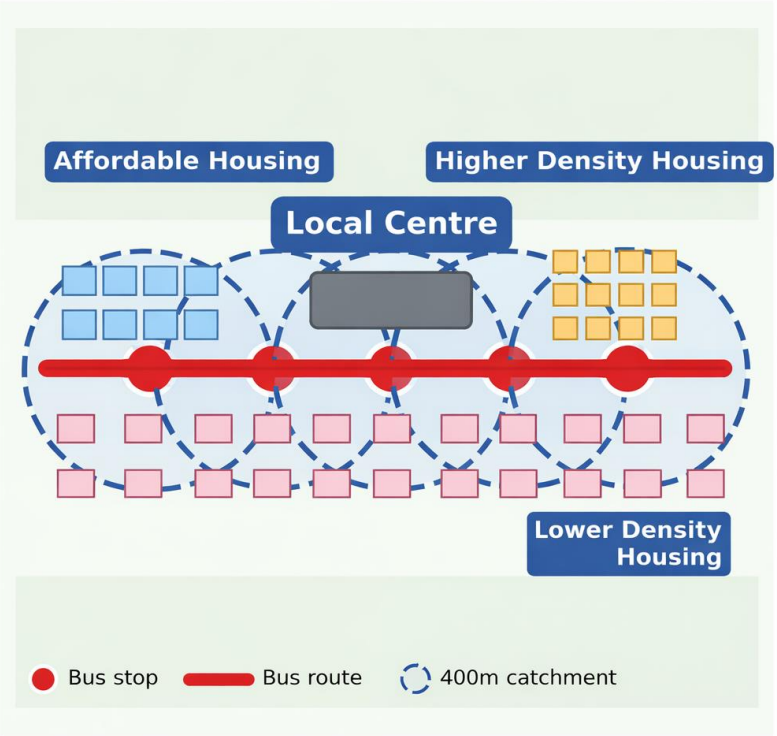
1.4.5 Where there is a likelihood that adjacent land will come forward in the future and can be practically served through the development, suitable ransom-free connections should be provided to maintain and enhance the movement framework. This may be achieved through safeguarded stub roads, controlled links, easements, or reserved corridors for future routes and utilities, as appropriate to context and deliverability.

1.5 Bus routes

1.5.1 Larger developments must make provision for an efficient bus routing strategy as identified through a Transport Assessment and consistent with the agreed vision for the site. The strategy must be considered across all land parcels to ensure a coherent bus route through the development is maintained. A plan indicating bus stop locations and associated notional 300m catchments (equivalent to approximately 400m walking distance) will normally be required, see **Figure 1.3**; however, actual walking distance, route quality, gradient, crossing delay and personal security should be used to validate accessibility. Catchment circles are indicative only and shall not be used as the sole basis for compliance; barriers, crossings, gradients, and personal security shall be assessed. A bus route that serves the great majority of dwellings well (typically more than 80%) is preferred to one that serves all homes poorly with an indirect service. Affordable housing and higher-density residential development should normally be located within 400m walk of a bus stop, and

preferably closer, subject to route quality. Early engagement with the local transport authority and bus operators is encouraged to ensure deliverability. Where these typical benchmarks cannot be met, applicants should demonstrate how equivalent accessibility and bus patronage outcomes will be achieved through alternative measures (for example higher frequency services, enhanced route quality, or revised land-use disposition).

Figure 1.3



1.6 Emergency access

1.6.1 Emergency-only vehicular accesses are generally discouraged and will not normally be supported, given enforcement issues, potential operational difficulties for emergency services, and the risk of creating spaces that are prone to crime and anti-social behaviour. Where applicants propose such links, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate why at least two full public access points cannot be achieved and why the emergency-only solution is necessary and deliverable in the long term.

1.6.2 Where there are valid reasons why at least two points of access cannot be achieved, and where the development proposal is otherwise acceptable, an emergency access may be considered provided that:

- the emergency link is also of strategic benefit for pedestrians and cyclists,
- highway safety is not compromised, and the access is not likely to be a source of crime or anti-social behaviour problems,
- there are appropriate means of controlling its use,
- the emergency services have been fully consulted, and the proposals are acceptable to them,
- the access is designed to accommodate safely all vehicles likely to use it, and
- long-term maintenance responsibilities are clearly defined and secured.

1.6.3 As a guide, an emergency access should achieve a general width of 3.7m (minimum 3.1m at gates), sufficient turning space for a fire appliance, a minimum height clearance of 4.0m, and a weight carrying capacity of at least 12.5 tonnes (and 17 tonnes over structures), having regard to relevant fire safety requirements and consultation with the emergency services.

1.7 Compliance with national documents

1.7.1 This Guide is intended to be applied in a manner consistent with relevant national policy, standards and guidance, alongside any applicable local authority requirements published at the time. Where applicable, designs should demonstrate appropriate compliance.

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