



# Part III: Layout

## Chapter 7: Quality Audit

Update 14/4/26

### 7.1 Purpose

7.1.1 A Quality Audit is intended to be a consistent method in reaching agreement on how a proposal complies with the principles of design guidance. Its aim is to allow innovative design without compromising safety.

7.1.2 The audit is a collection of assessments prepared by a professional team appointed by the developer. Specialists will consider a proposal in accordance with relevant guidance relating to their subject area. The grouping of assessments will then make it easier for the team to identify compromises in the design to be considered and rectified as necessary collaboratively. The design should be discussed openly and be agreed with the Highway Authority at pre-application stage, planning submission, and during the section 38/278 technical approval process.

7.1.3 The content of the Quality Audit may vary between projects and the aim of the proposal. This should be made clear in a project brief that sets out the vision of the development. The Quality Audit should not be a tick box exercise but could simply be a sequence of checks to inform the design process depending on the scale of the development. A typical audit must address the following:

- a review of the function of the street,
- a Road Safety Audit,
- an inclusive access audit,
- a walking audit,
- a cycle audit,
- a materials audit,
- a parking audit, and
- maintenance audit.

7.1.4 The scope of the audit should be agreed with the Highway Authority such that the decision-making process delivers a balanced high-quality development to the benefit of all its users. The Quality Audit Report will be used to inform discussions and decision-making during the planning and technical approval process but does not in itself constitute an approval or refusal of any element of the scheme. For smaller or less complex developments, the Quality Audit may be proportionately scoped and may draw together relevant considerations within a single report rather than separate standalone assessments.

7.1.5 The Quality Audit does not replace, supersede, or duplicate the statutory Road Safety Audit process. Where a Road Safety Audit is required, it will be undertaken in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and reported separately. The Quality Audit provides a wider design-led assessment within which safety considerations are balanced alongside place, accessibility, and usability.

### 7.2 Design Stage

7.2.1 A Quality Audit report should be produced to summarise the steps undergone as part of the design process which should be updated through each level of approvals. It should highlight what considerations have been given to all key areas and provide an audit trail of the decision-making process where compromises or departures from normal standards have been made.

7.2.2 For the Quality Audit to be fully understood, it should include the project brief, plans, and particulars that detail the extent of the proposal.

### 7.3 The Report

7.3.1 In preparing a Quality Audit, relevant and current national guidance, standards and good practice should be considered where applicable. The specific documents relied upon will vary depending on the nature, scale, and context of the development and should be clearly identified within the Quality Audit Report.

7.3.2 The Quality Audit Report will be required to sum up under separate headings how the following is achieved:

### **Street Hierarchy:**

- Places pedestrians first and is inclusive,
- Integrates with surrounding networks,
- Contains good connectivity for all modes and users,
- Allows good navigation,
- Configured to allow walkable access to amenities, and
- Is integrated with public transport.

### **Street Layout:**

- How reduced vehicle speed is encouraged,
- How pedestrians are given priority,
- How parking needs have been met flexibly,
- How service and emergency vehicles are accommodated.

### **Detailed design:**

- How SUDS techniques are proposed and how they are to be managed,
- How accommodation is provided for utility services,
- How landscaping features are to be integrated into the proposal,
- How a contextual, distinctive, durable and maintainable palette of materials is to be used,
- How street clutter is to be minimised.

### **Summary of Additional Information as made necessary by the project:**

#### **Transport Assessment (TA)**

Sum up matters in the TA or Travel Plan that have influenced the street design

#### **Road Safety Audit**

Append audit and sum up safety issues

#### **Other Audits**

Append as necessary where they impact on overall quality of street design and summarise findings

#### **Accessibility and Equality**

Provide details of key features that ensure that the scheme will be functional for people with impaired mobility or other disabilities. Demonstrate that the scheme complies with the Equalities Act 2010.

## **7.4 Quality Audit Summary & Conclusion**

7.4.1 Summarise the decision-making process where conflicts have occurred between different areas of the audit and the proposed solution. Append a balanced risk assessment of the most significant risks and their likelihood and severity.

7.4.2 Conclude with a judgement of overall street quality.

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