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Going to town: Improving town centre access

A companion guide to PPG6

THE NATIONAL RETAIL PLANNING FORUM

DTLR

Going to town

Improving town centre access

A companion guide to PPG6

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THE NATIONAL RETAIL PLANNING FORUM

DTLR
TRANSPORT
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REGIONS

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Going to Town: Foreword

"Memory of travel is the stuff of our fairest dreams. Splendid cities, plazas, monuments, and landscapes thus pass before our eyes, and we enjoy again the charming and impressive spectacles that we have formally experienced. If we could but stop again at those places where beauty never satiates, we could bear many dreary hours with a light heart and pursue life's long struggle with new energies."
Camillo Sitte, The Art of Building Cities, 1889

Whatever way we arrive in the town centre we all become pedestrians. The first experience of walking from the station, bus stop or car park will remain our first impression and may become for us the enduring image of that town centre. It may influence whether we make a repeat visit.

Too often our first impressions are of a poor, unwelcoming pedestrian environment. We are faced with barriers, subways, narrow and cluttered pavements, poor signage and, too often, graffiti. It would appear as if no one has or wants to take responsibility for fixing the problems and welcoming the visitor. Here we are highlighting the problems of the neglected "missing link" in people's trips to the town centre, whatever means they have used for the rest of the trip.

This good practice guide, which is a companion guide to *PPG6: Town Centres and Retail Developments*, highlights what can be done through a concerted effort to improve the key routes from the arrival points to the main attractions. It provides examples of what putting the customer first really means - giving priority to pedestrians, reallocating the space and clearing the clutter. We need places that people like to stop in and enjoy, rather than just pass through.

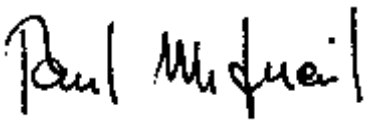
This guide seeks to focus attention and resources on making the right impression, making visitors, regular users and residents feel that the town centre is a good place to shop and do business, but above all a good place just to be in.

We hope that this guide will inspire another look at the welcome town centres present to the visitor. It shows what can be done to create the right impression by paying attention to detail, quality and creating the right experience. We would urge you to see what you could do to change your town centre's image.

Lord Falconer of Thoroton QC

Paul McQuail

Minister for Housing, Planning and Regeneration
Department of Transport, Local Government
and the Regions



Chairman
National Retail Planning Forum

The National Retail Planning Forum

The National Retail Forum (NRPF) was formed in 1995 and is a registered charity. The Forum aims to act as a bridge between the different interests involved in retail planning and combines a focus for improving understanding between private and public sectors on planning and its impact on retailing, together with a strong research programme.

The research programme covers issues of interest for retailers, investors, developers and planners. Studies are intended to further research and generate debate between the NRPF membership and help develop retail planning policy at the national level.

This town centre access good practice guide comes at a critical time for the implementation of the Government's urban renaissance agenda and complements the revision of PPG6. It is hoped the guide will act as a catalyst to the development of innovative solutions for town centre access, excellence in urban design and contribute to successful town centre retailing.

Funding for this guide was gratefully received from BCSC Education Trust, Rees Jeffreys Road Fund and DTLR.

Current members of the NRPF are:

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or visit our website at: www.nrpf.org

01

The need for improved access

- Purpose of the guide
- Who should read the guide
- Typical experience of 'going to town'
- Objectives of better links
- Policy context
- Using the guide

Lisbon Expo Station, Portugal

1.1 Purpose of this guide

Town and city centres are now the focus of most retail investment. They are also seen as the key to the urban renaissance agenda being promoted by central and local government and others. This is a major turn around from a decade ago.

This guide is intended to assist everyone who is involved with making town and city centres more attractive and enjoyable places to visit. The arrival points in a town, whether car parks, stations or bus stops, and the routes people take between these and the various town centre attractions, are important to the overall impression and attractiveness of the centre. This in turn affects vitality and viability and the extent of social and economic exchange. We refer in this guide to town centre links and, because they are often neglected and of poor quality, we describe them also as the 'missing links'.

The guide describes how these links can be assessed and shows how problems can be overcome. It includes design examples and advice on planning and implementation. It is a guide to better practice, not a pattern book or prescription. The guide aims to prompt greater attention to the principles of good design and to encourage careful resolution of design issues.

Our towns and cities deserve town centre links of the highest quality. A step-change in quality is required if we are to break the mould of mediocrity that has characterised much edge-of-centre development. Our benchmark is best practice in the UK, in Europe, and further afield, from which many lessons can be drawn.

Cergy-Pontoise (France): good direct access from the station

1.2 Who should read the guide?

The guide is aimed at all those involved in the planning, design and development process. Local authorities and developers will be the main target groups. They are responsible for the public realm through which most links pass. Local authorities may also have other responsibilities that relate to the creation of better links, for example planning and conservation, car park management, public transport co-ordination or procurement, landscape and parks design and maintenance, street cleaning and waste collection.

Lisbon Expo Interchange (Portugal): a celebration of arrival

There are many other people who will be interested, either as beneficiaries of any improvements which increase the number of visitors, such as retailers and other town centre businesses, public transport and car park operators, and of course everyone who visits town centres, whether for shopping, leisure, work or other business.

A number of different bodies represent the interests of these people, both locally and more widely. These will all have an interest in the content of this guide, especially if they get involved in projects and improvement schemes. Examples are retailer groups, town centre managers, regeneration agencies, public transport and car park providers, and lobby groups for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and public transport users.

This guide can help produce better-designed linkages and access to town centres. But designing attractive, sustainable and inclusive town and city centres, depends on excellent design practice. This requires a culture of investing in and ownership of design. And it means designing for a particular place and for the needs of future users. The aim is that the practice highlighted here will act as a spur for further innovation and result in better access to our town and city centres.

1.3 Typical experience of 'going to town'

Town centre accessibility, for the purpose of this guide, is defined as being:

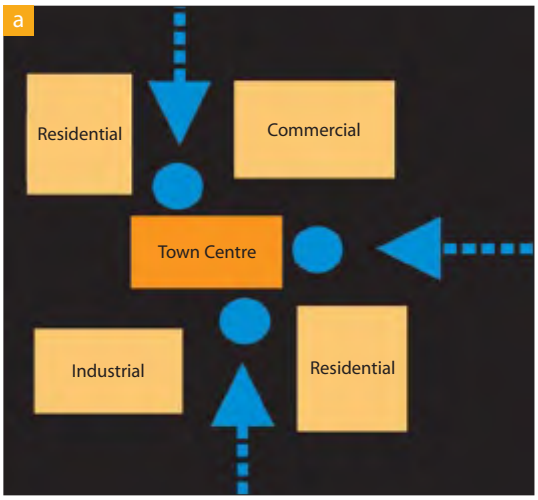
"The ease and convenience of movement, usually on foot, from the arrival point to key attractions in the town centre. Arrival points will include car parks, stations, bus stations and, where appropriate, park-and-ride schemes".

It is at the arrival points that visitors to the town centre are joined by those who have made the journey on foot from their home.

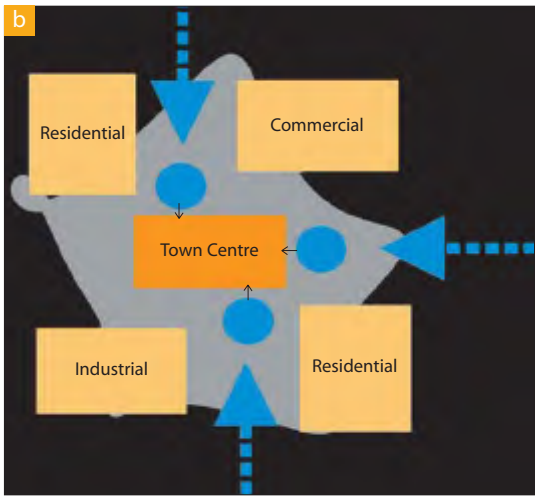
The Missing Link

Movement between the arrival points and the town centre is an essential component of a successful centre. There has been much research concerned with the journey to arrival points, and with the design of the centre itself. But little guidance has been produced with regard to the journey between them.

Studies usually focus on town or city centres, residential, industrial or commercial areas. These can be likened to the 'paving slabs' of the settlement (see diagram a). The emphasis of this guide is the areas in between; the 'cement' binding the paving slabs together (see diagram b).



Usual focus of studies



The emphasis of this study

" It takes real work to create a lousy place"

William H. Whyte, City: Rediscovering the Centre (1998)

Experiences of going to town vary greatly. Two contrasting journeys are shown below. They are shown in the form of 'serial visions': a walk from an access point through to the town centre, providing a sequence of revelations. The first experience is from an English town.

a

The station entrance

b

The view across to the town centre -major road severance

c

Pedestrians are routed through the subway - an unpleasant experience

d

Pedestrians in fear of crime and attack

e

The gateway to town

f

And finally, to the shopping centre

"To affect the quality of the day, that is the height of art"

Henry David Thoreau Walden (1854)

The second experience is from Italy. The coastal town of Portofino, where bus passengers are routed through the town centre and main shopping street, towards the harbour frontage.

a

The bus stop at the top of the hill

b

Walking towards the town

c

Everyone is routed through the main shopping street

d

The view through to the harbour

e

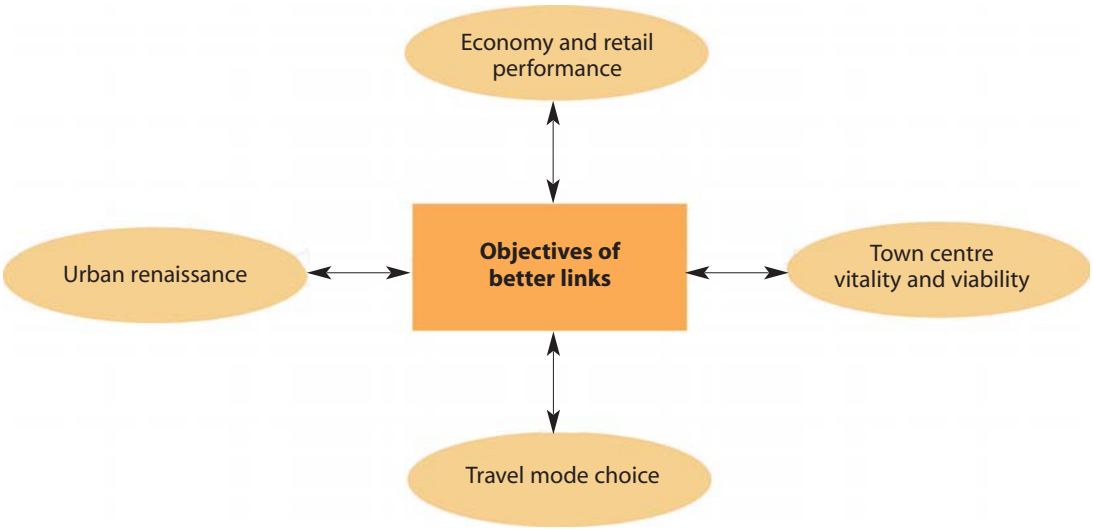
Public life in public spaces; eating out in the town square

f

The harbour; a key attraction

1.4 Objectives of better links

It is expected that better access to the town centre will improve its economic and retail performance. This will, in turn, have a positive impact on town centre vitality and viability and contribute to urban renewal.



Providing better town centre access links involves a design-led approach, the objectives of which are described in the guide "By Design"[1] (see below).

The objectives of good urban design

Character: *a place with its own identity*

- To promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture.

Continuity and enclosure: *a place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished*

- To promote the continuity of street frontages and the enclosure of space by development which clearly defines private and public areas.

Quality of the public realm: *a place with attractive and successful outdoor areas*

- To promote public spaces and routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including disabled and elderly people.

Ease of movement: *a place that is easy to get to and move through*

- To promote accessibility and local permeability by making places that connect with each other and are easy to move through, putting people before traffic and integrating land uses and transport.

Legibility: *a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand*

- To promote legibility through development that provides recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks to help people find their way around.

Adaptability: *a place that can change easily*

- To promote adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.

Diversity: *a place with variety and choice*

- To promote diversity and choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs.

By Design

Foot notes:

1 From DETR (2000) *By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System, Towards Better Practice*

"Too often, town centres have been sacrificed to busy roads: the New Deal for Transport will give priority to people over traffic."

DETR (1998) A New Deal for Transport

1.5 Policy Context

The Urban White Paper[2] and the report of the Urban Task Force[3] sets out a vision for our towns and cities which seeks to develop the unique qualities of urban living: accessibility, sociability, community, security and opportunity.

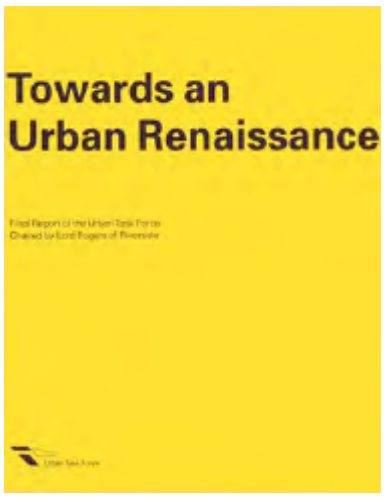
Many of the recommendations and proposals focus on the re-use of urban land and the promotion of the centres of towns and cities as places where all types of activities will choose to locate. These ambitions build directly on planning policy established at national level through Planning Policy Guidance, primarily PPG6 (Town Centres and Retail Developments)[4] and PPG13 (Transport)[5]. Both guidance notes aim to promote development in accessible locations, which can be reached by all, and by a range of means of travel.

PPG6 promotes new development in town centres, and seeks to:

- Improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of town centres
- Develop an overall strategy for the centre to manage access
- Maintain and improve the quality and convenience of access routes to the town centre
- Introduce measures to improve the pedestrian environment including wider footways, more direct, convenient and safer pedestrian routes and crossings
- Meet the needs of both visitors and residents
- Meet the access and mobility needs of disabled people

The Transport White Paper[6] developed these themes, bringing forward a new framework in the form of Local Transport Plans, in which more integrated transport policies and programmes can be developed. It encourages more sustainable travel choices, in the form of walking, cycling and public transport, integrated land-use and transport planning, and partnership working.

This good practice guide builds on this guidance, focusing on the streets, spaces and paths that link town and city centres to their arrival and departure points. The experience of arrival and departure is an important component of a visit to the centre, and should be the subject of specific planning and design initiatives. Which modes of arrival should be promoted or given priority? This guide takes a neutral stance. The aim is to show how the arrival experience can be enhanced for all visitors.



The Urban Task Force: Towards an Urban Renaissance (1999)

Urban White Paper (2000)

Foot notes:

2 DETR (2000) *Our Towns and Cities: the Future. Delivering an Urban Renaissance*
3 Urban Task Force (1999) *Towards an Urban Renaissance*
4 DETR (1996) *PPG6: Town Centres and Retail Developments*
5 DETR (2000) *PPG13: Transport*
6 DETR (1998) *A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone*

1.6 Using the guide

The good practice and design examples featured in this guide provide many important, and often straightforward, lessons that are relevant to improved access to town and city centres across the UK. The examples used in this guide have been chosen to represent a wide variety of circumstances. They are not intended to be a statement of the best and worst practice in the country, nor are they intended to heap praise or criticism on specific authorities. It is hoped that readers will approach the issues raised in a constructive way. Examples of good practice should not be treated as model templates to be copied regardless of context.

The guide should be used to promote better practice at the local level. Its aim is to stimulate awareness of the access problem and to show how improvements can be made. It explains the analysis required as a precursor to improving access to town and city centres, and addresses the issues of ownership, funding and organisation.

The guide comprises six further sections:

Section 2
explores in more detail the various types of missing link.

Section 3
presents an analysis of why the quality of town centre access so often falls short of reasonable expectations.

Section 4
outlines the principles of good design practice in relation to improving access to town centres.

Section 5
contains design examples, translating principles into practice.

Section 6
provides an 'action pack' for implementation and includes discussion of responsibilities, project management, funding and monitoring.

Annex
the guide concludes with acknowledgements, references, further reading, and contacts. It also includes further information on route audits

Water feature adding interest to Cathedral Square, Manchester


HIGHLAND MUSIC CENTRE
TOURIST INFORMATION
MUSEUM & ART GALLERY
CASTLE & TOILETS &
ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL
EDEN COURT THEATRE

02

Understanding the missing links

- Types of problem
- Poor arrival facility
- Poor connections and link quality
- Poor safety and security
- No sense of place
- Other factors

"Nearly all journeys involve a walk... But all too often the things that make walking a more pleasant experience have not been given proper attention, as can be seen in the way road space and priority is so often biased against pedestrians. Too often pedestrians are treated like trespassers in their own towns. We want streets that are decent and attractive to walk in."

DETR (1998) Transport White Paper, 'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone: P.37

2.1 Types of problem

Journeys to town centres are made by a variety of means. The majority of these are made entirely on foot or by car, except in the larger towns and cities where buses and rail transport play a bigger part (see section 2.7). These mechanised modes cannot take people all the way to their destinations. The last part of the journey to the shops, offices, leisure and cultural attractions therefore is invariably made on foot.

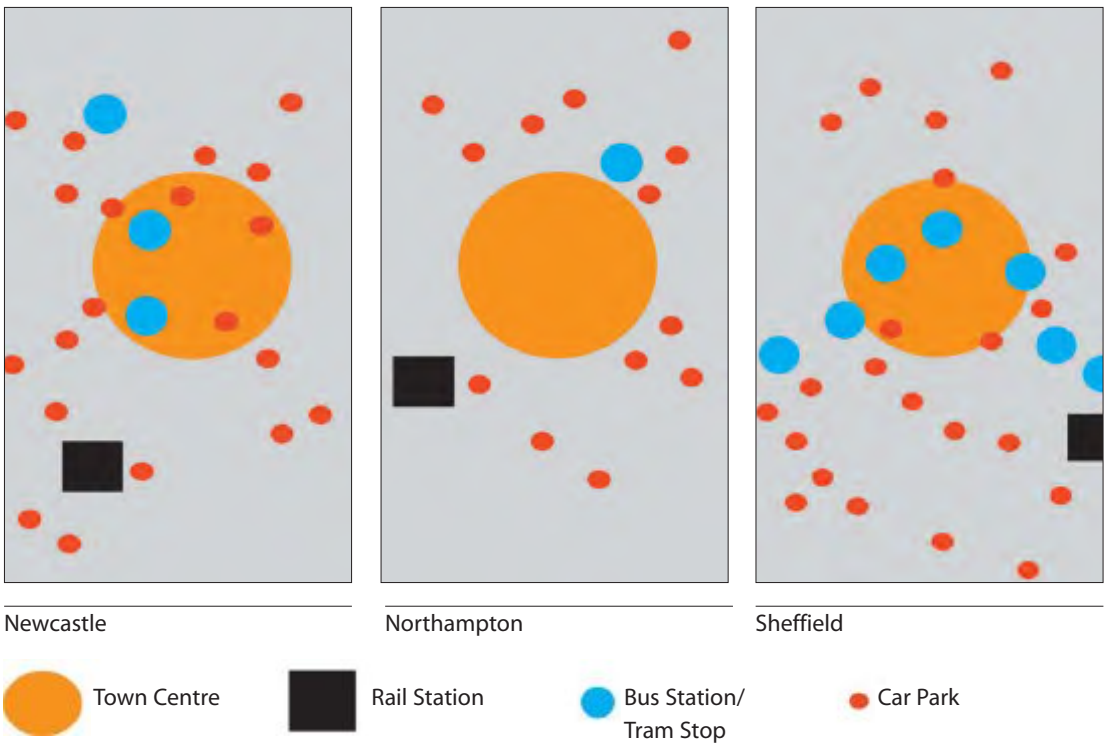
This guide is concerned with the routes that people take between the vehicle arrival points (car parks, bus stops, rail stations) and their destinations within the town centre. These routes mostly consist of footways (alongside carriageways), and footpaths through open spaces. They often involve crossing roads, sometimes very busy roads. They may involve negotiating steps or ramps. Sometimes the most direct routes pass through car parking areas, or through privately-owned spaces, such as shopping malls.

The detailed configuration and quality of these links is as varied as the towns and cities in which they are found, but problems can be grouped together for convenience of analysis, as shown later in this section.

Other than in the smallest towns, arrival points can be numerous, as shown in the diagram below. This arises particularly because of the distribution of bus stops serving different parts of the centre, and the existence of on-street parking, or numerous off-street parking opportunities.

Where arrival by car consists of parking opportunistically on the street (usually as close to one's destination as possible), there may be no 'access link' that can be distinguished from the general network of streets and footways. In this case, the issue is one of planning to improve walking conditions generally. This guide therefore focuses on more distinctive links from significant arrival points, such as bus and rail stations and off-street car parks.

Improving access links is about more than just enhancing the public realm. Improved routes can contribute to the regeneration of the local and wider area.



The complexity of improving town centre access: multiple access points

2.2 Poor arrival facility

Access routes to town can be spoilt by a poor quality arrival facility. This often takes the form of unattractive bus and train stations, poor car park environments and/or inadequate cycle parking. If the arrival facility is not welcoming, people may choose to go elsewhere. Out-of-town retailing often has good car parking facilities, and when compared to poor parking facilities in town, often means people choose to shop out of town instead of in town.

The whole journey needs to be designed. From the moment people step out of the bus or train, or out of their car, the environment should be welcoming and attractive as well as functional. Humanising the interior of bus stations and multi storey car parks is a challenge but it can be done.

An unwelcoming entrance to the town

Poor quality bus facilities

Cycle parking provision is often inadequate and facilities such as these do nothing to deter cycle theft

Welcome to the town: an unattractive station, and poor interface with the street

Dingy and threatening car park: a not uncommon experience

Pedestrian desire lines are not always catered for, but people still try to leave by the most direct route

2.3 Remote arrival facility

Arrival facilities may simply be too remote from the town centre. This may have a historical context, for example where railways were not clearly related to town development. Or more recently a car park may have become 'stranded' on the wrong side of a town centre ring road.

A remote arrival facility may also result in an unpleasant route into town. Lübeck (Germany) is such an example, where a good bus and rail interchange and pleasant town centre are spoilt by a long and congested route into town.

The problem of remoteness of the arrival point from the town centre may be further exacerbated by a lack of signage. Unclear routes into town can create confusion for visitors. Information about any alternative means of access (such as a bus link into town) is particularly important at remote arrival facilities.

.

a

Lübeck: route from station to town centre

b

Lübeck: Good interchange between bus and rail

c

An unpleasant route into town

d

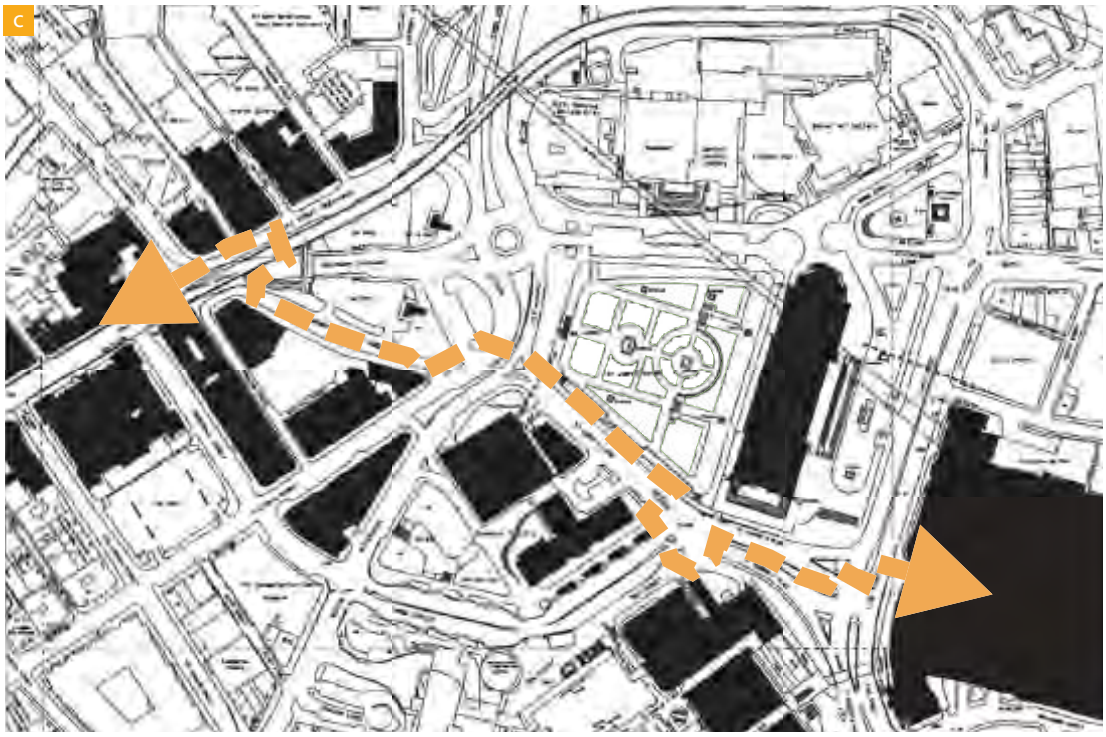
Fine views into town spoilt by traffic

2.4 Poor connections and link quality

Access routes are often of poor quality. Topography may create inevitable difficulties (see photo a), but more commonly the problems are due to poor maintenance (see photo b) or poor design (see plan c). In some towns links are closed at night. This is especially common where links are directed through private space, such as shopping centres.

Poor maintenance

Steep and unkempt route



An indirect and tortuous route

This sub section discusses different aspects of route quality, beginning with the concept of the '5 Cs' (see next page).

The 'Five Cs' of route quality

It is useful when assessing the town centre access routes to consider the 'five c' principles as recommended in Government Advice[7]

The Five Cs are:

Connected: good pedestrian routes which link the places where people want to go, and form a network

Convenient: direct routes following desire lines, with easy-to-use crossings

Comfortable: good quality footways, with adequate widths and without obstructions

Convivial: attractive well lit and safe, and with variety along the route

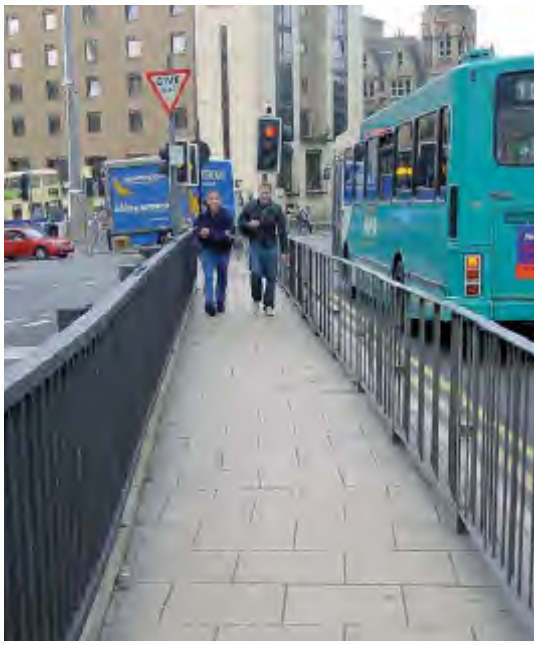
Conspicuous: legible routes easy to find and follow, with surface treatments and signs to guide pedestrians

Below, we see a number of examples of routes where the 'five Cs' principles have not been adhered to.

Unconnected:
Routes do not connect the places where people want to go: the national cycle route stops in the town centre

Inconvenient:
Changes of level are experienced when crossing the road

Uncomfortable:
An unpleasant and draughty passageway



Not convivial:
The route is not pleasant to use

Inconspicuous:
The way ahead is neither obvious nor signed: this is a station entrance!

Foot notes:

7 DETR (2000) *Encouraging Walking*

"Some of our towns and cities have been ruined by major roads, putting people in second place to the car. Increased traffic and speed have spoilt streets"

DETR (1998) Transport White Paper, 'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone: P.27

Severance, links that are ruptured by barriers

Severance is a key difficulty experienced in many town and city centres. Inner ring roads or by-passes often sever arrival points from the town centre.

A dual-carriageway, in places five lanes in each direction, separates the city centre from the tourist attractions and car parking

A serial vision of photographs is again useful to highlight the severance issue, as shown in pictures a – d, taken in a small British town.

a

From the station the town centre is visible, but the direct route is barred by a dual carriageway road

b

Pedestrians must follow the signs (which in this example are clear) and use a subway under the road

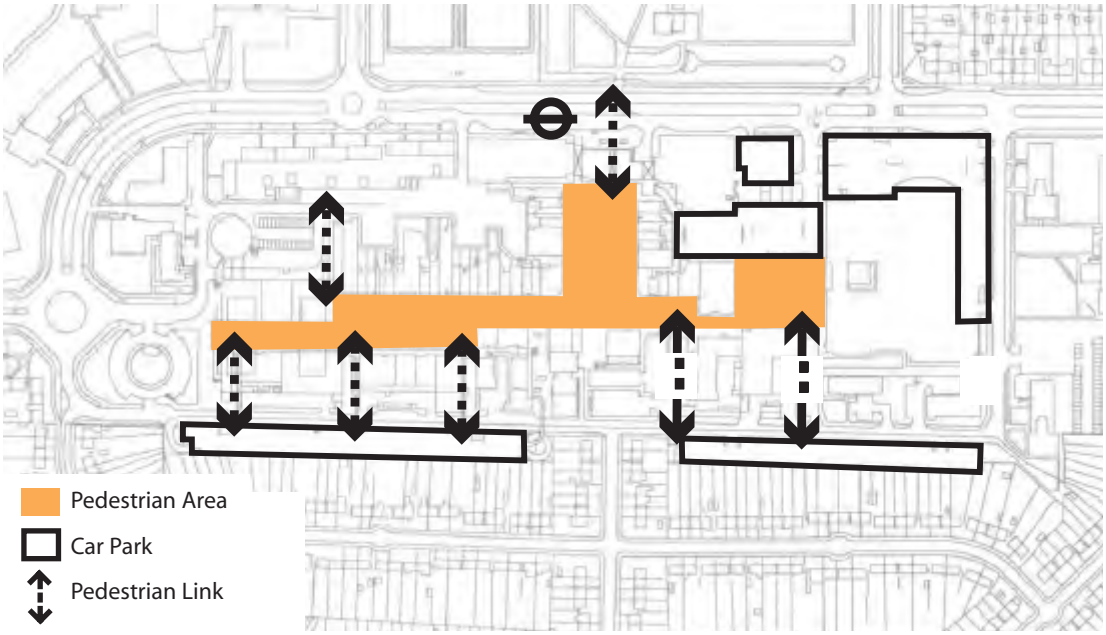
c

The subway is poorly illuminated, dark and narrow

d

Steps and a ramp link the subway to the town centre

A further difficulty may result from diffuse arrival points, such as multiple bus stops and/or parking areas. The example here shows the attempt to link linear car parks to a linear town centre using bridges. Diffuse start and finish points makes it more difficult to create quality routes.



Linear car parks and linear centre create need for multiple links

Bridge access from upper level parking

Linear car parking - the need for multiple links

"Safety - particularly for women and children - comes from 'eyes on the street'... A sense of personal belonging and social cohesiveness comes from well-defined neighbourhoods and narrow, crowded, multi-use streets"...

Jane Jacobs, The Death & Life of Great American Cities, 1961

2.5 Poor safety and security

The quality of access routes can have a direct impact on pedestrian safety and security. There is strong evidence that a lack of street life can be linked to people being worried about crime. These concerns are strongest among women, and elderly and young people.

The *British Crime Survey*[8] reports that over 20% of all women feel very unsafe when walking in the streets after dark. This increases to nearly a third for elderly women (those aged 60 and above).

A lengthy walk from the station, under the railway lines, into town. Blank walls and no surveillance

This car park exit has hidden corners and a poor layout

This passage beneath the rail tracks in Bremen has no surveillance or interest along the way

2.6 No sense of place

As with any urban location, there are a range of further good urban design principles that can be brought to bear on improving the quality and perception of the access links. These include such concepts as enclosure, focal point, landmarks, punctuation, anticipation, and so on. There are a number of guides that address these concepts such as DETR (2000) *By Design* and Llewelyn-Davies and English Partnership (2000) *Urban Design Compendium*. Further reading can be found in Annex 6.

Arrival at the main station is poorly related to the city centre. Public space outside the building is poorly designed and dominated by vehicles.

An unimpressive walk into town: poor use of space and poorly maintained

Foot notes:

7 Home Office (1998) *The British Crime Survey: England and Wales*

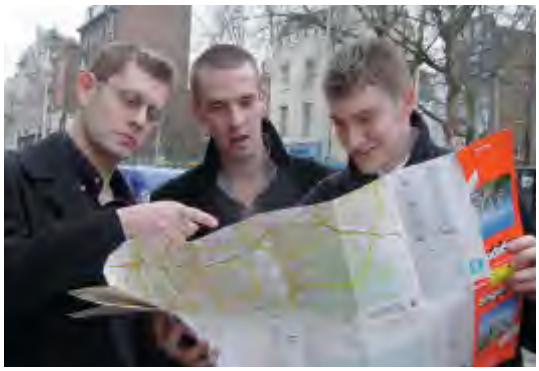
2.7 Other factors

A number of other factors may influence the quality of access links or the need for their improvement, or the manner in which they should be improved.

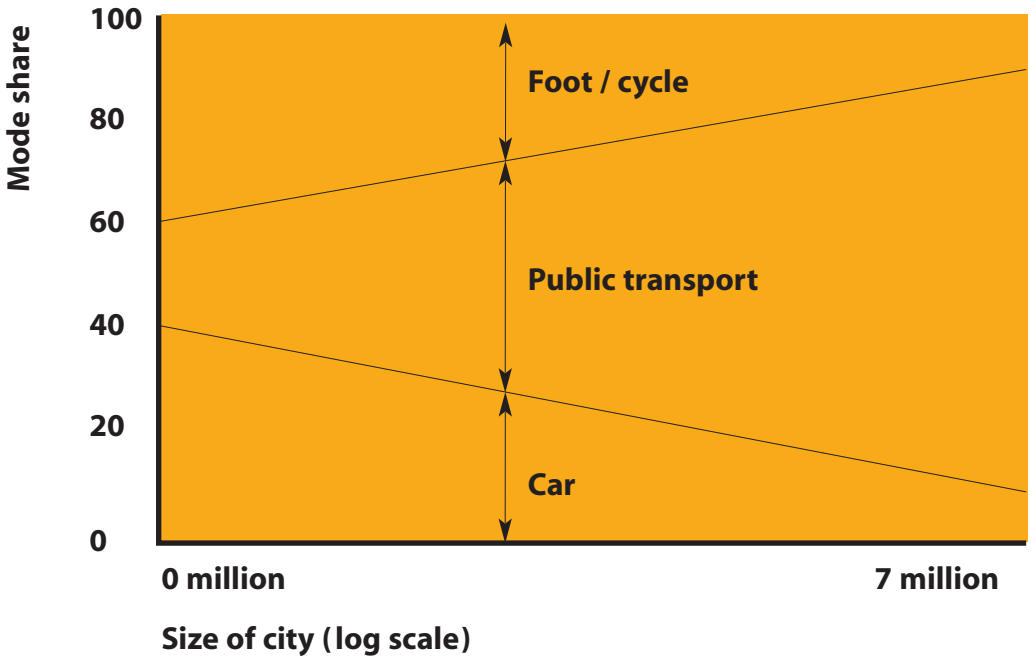
The effect of city size on mode of travel to the centre is shown below. The greater the population size, the greater the use of public transport to access the centre.

The character of the town and its economy have an important influence on how access links are provided. For example:

- Good signage is always important, but especially so in towns attracting tourists. Poor signage reduces the quality of the visitor experience and can cause confusion;
- Towns with a strong evening economy, or hoping to develop one, must ensure that access links are secure and available 24 hours a day;
- Topography and climate can have an important influence. For example, mechanised alternatives may be important in hilly towns (see section 4.3) and weather protection can become a major design factor, as in Bologna (see section 4.7).



Towns attracting tourists especially need good signing



The effect of city size on travel to the centre in the UK

HIGHLAND MUSIC CENTRE
TOURIST INFORMATION
MUSEUM & ART GALLERY
CASTLE & TOILETS
ST ANDREWS CATHEDRAL


REACH FOR A BETTER STANDARD
Evening Standard
Evening Standard
ENTERTAINMENT
THEATRES AND
WHAT'S ON IN LONDON
CINEMAS
THEATRES
RESTAURANTS
EXHIBITIONS
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE
Evening Standard
Evening Standard
REACH FOR A BETTER STANDARD

03

The source of the problem

- Historic accident or design
- Divided responsibilities
- Compartmentalised thinking and acting
- Private control of 'public' space
- Poor design
- Poor equipment
- Priority to traffic not people
- Poor maintenance, operation & supervision
- No 'ownership' of access routes

Bishopsgate, London

3.1 Historic accident or design?

The problem of poor town centre access can be the result of historic accident or simply poor design. New towns such as Almere in the Netherlands were planned with the town centre orientated towards the means of access (see 4.11). Most towns, however, have grown up over time, with transport infrastructure competing for land with the activities it serves, and with incremental changes to both occurring without the benefit of an overall design.

The following sections discuss some of the organisational and planning obstacles that have to be overcome. Here we reflect on some examples of historical accident.

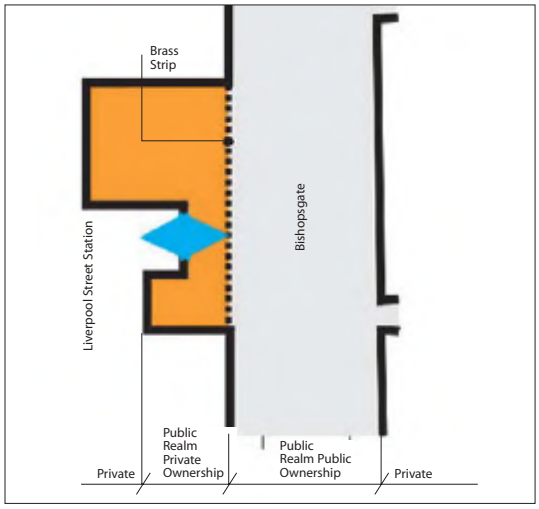
Many British rail and bus stations occupy sites that are physically constrained, and there is no 'breathing space' outside the station entrance. Paddington, Kings Cross, Newcastle Central and Victoria Coach Station are examples. Better provision with station squares or forecourts is found for example at Brighton and Marylebone (both with a covered square), while spaces have been recovered (Stoke on Trent) or newly created through redevelopment (Cardiff and Liverpool Street).

A feature of many smaller towns is that the railway station lies at a distance from the centre. Some nineteenth century landowners had sufficient power and influence to prevent the building of railways through their town. In addition, rural railways were built mostly for agricultural freight and proximity to the town often had low priority.

More recent history has delivered inward-facing shopping centres, with unattractive service yards and access roads at the interface with the rest of the town (see 4.6). The centres of smaller towns have often developed their retail and other functions in properties that formerly were houses with gardens. As populations moved out, the gardens became the 'backlands' now occupied by car parking and service yards. This creates the need to break through the building block to link these areas with the High Street.

3.2 Divided responsibilities

In many cases responsibilities for the different parts of the links are divided. Public transport and car park providers have not always taken into consideration the interface with the public street and footpath network, nor the quality of the network itself. The providers of that network (usually the local highway authority) similarly may not pay sufficient attention to the particular requirement to link the town centre with arrival points.



Liverpool Street Station

Liverpool Street Station in the City of London has been rebuilt to a high standard, providing a quality 'private realm'

By contrast, the public realm in Bishopsgate, London, immediately outside the station, provides public realm that is poorly designed and badly managed. (The above photographs were taken from the same standpoint)

"We do not manage the street as a whole, but look after the various different components and activities as if they had nothing to do with each other."

UDAL & ICE (2000) 'Designing Streets for People'

3.3 Compartmentalisation

There are different responsibilities within local authorities that impact on the links in various ways, and these are usually handled by separate departments, which may not always be sufficiently coordinated.

The missing links are in essence no different from other parts of the public access network of streets, footpaths, cycle paths and so on. But co-ordination of the different activities can be assisted if access links are tackled on a project basis. Organisation structures need to bring together, for example, lighting, security, footway maintenance, traffic and highway design, trees and landscape, waste collection, street cleaning, information and street furniture.

3.4 Private control of 'public' space

A feature of some town centre developments is the creation of 'ways through' large shopping or other developments. These usually link between public streets, but often have no public right of way. Such links are open at the discretion of the owners or occupiers of the development, which often results in them being closed to public access outside certain hours (usually shopping hours). With 7 day opening of shops in most places, this is less of a restriction than it used to be, but even so can result in inconvenient access in the evenings and at night.

For example, some access routes from the main car park in Horsham town centre are closed off outside shopping hours, resulting in confusion and considerable extra walking distance for visitors.

In Dudley, similar closures after shopping hours block the most convenient route for pedestrians from one of the main car parks (see 5.5).

A similar situation exists in Chelmsford (see a, b & c).

a

The town may be permeable during the day...

b

But less so at night when the shopping centre and some pedestrian routes are closed

c

The route from the bus station to the shopping centre

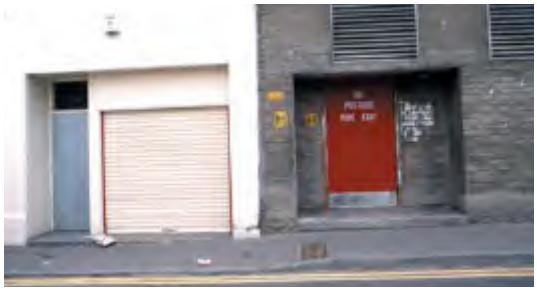
"During the height of automania, a zoologist observed that in animal herds excessive mobility was a sure sign of distress and asked whether this might not be true of his fellow human beings."

Percival Goodman, Communitas, 1960

3.5 Poor design

Even where the links to the centre are direct and otherwise convenient, they may be poorly designed, offering little pleasure to the visitor.

Rotterdam (Holland): conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians; clutter results in poor legibility



Abandoned streets: no overlooking uses or frontage activity

3.6 Poor equipment

The arrival and departure experience can be greatly enhanced by the provision of equipment and facilities along the way: a small park or square in which to pause and orientate oneself or consult a map, or to rest in after an intensive shopping effort; seating at regular intervals; a place to have coffee to make a plan for the visit; a telephone booth to make arrangements with a friend, or even somewhere quiet and pleasant to stand to make a mobile phone call; a public toilet that is clean and safe; a shop to buy a cold drink and a newspaper; somewhere to shelter if it rains. Too often the links are not designed or managed with the comfort and convenience of visitors in mind.

A poorly designed and under-used space

3.7 Priority to traffic not people

One of the most fundamental problems identified is the priority afforded to traffic rather than people on foot. This often results in street crossings that are inconvenient or dangerous or both. People making their way between their arrival point and the town centre are often forced to walk along narrow footways, close to heavy or fast moving traffic.

Traffic takes the lion's share of the public realm, and barriers confine people to a narrow footway

An unpleasant walk to the town centre with pedestrians fenced in

A similar experience for pedestrians in Florence, Italy.

3.8 Poor maintenance, operation and supervision

Dirt, litter, overgrown shrubs, dog mess, broken or uneven footway surfaces all create an unpleasant experience and signal to users that the local authority, local retailers and businesses do not care about the quality of their town. Visitors and even residents of the town may react to this by travelling to out-of-town facilities or to other competing towns within reach.

A route into town, but not one to remember

Poor frontage: with vandalism adding to a feeling of unhappy and unloved surroundings (in this case also the loss of public toilet facilities)

Another problem frequently found is the use of footways and paths for the storage of rubbish. This may require design attention, but is often found to result from careless or thoughtless management practices.

Parking on the footway is a major problem in some areas. While there is legislation banning footway parking in London, this is not matched elsewhere in the UK. The problem can be tackled through design (by providing parking spaces that do not compromise the quality of the footway), but the issue is usually one of enforcement.

In this street, pedestrians are forced out by both waste storage and footway parking

Advertising boards are often poorly organised and add to on-street clutter

3.9 No 'ownership' of access routes

Many of the above problems can be boiled down to the fact that there is no 'ownership' of the links as an entity of special importance to town centre users. In order to achieve the necessary co-ordinated action, local authorities will need to identify and take responsibility for their town centre access links. This is discussed in section 6.

The rest of this page shows how a well-designed town centre attraction is let down by the walk from a nearby car park, and illustrates some of the problems discussed in this chapter.

The route from car park to retail attraction

The pedestrian access to and from the multi-storey car park is not clear, and is dissected with car access ways and kerbs

A private forecourt with vehicle access crossover creates an ill-defined route with unattractive walking environment

Although part of the main pedestrian access route to the town centre, no thought has been given to creating an interesting frontage

The 'way in' to the shopping centre is through a potentially attractive alley with some good frontage buildings, but the experience is spoilt by use of the space for storage of waste bins

The shopping centre itself is well designed and is well related to good quality bus stops

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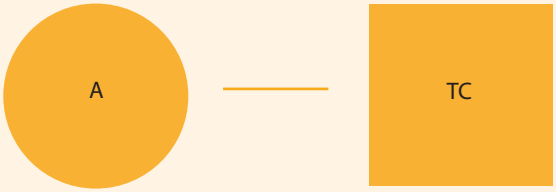
IN LONDON
CINEMAS
THEATRES
RESTAURANTS
EXHIBITIONS
Evening
Standard
REACH
FOR A
BETTER
STANDARD

04

Fixing the links - theory and practice

- Moving the arrival point
- Moving or extending the centre
- Providing a shuttle
- Removing or reducing road barriers
- Overcoming other barriers
- Renewing the shatter zone
- Improving the link quality
- Connecting the link to the wider network
- Reinforcing the link with other modes
- Improving the quality of the arrival facility
- Improving the interface
- Improving the quality of the town centre network
- Improving information
- Arrivals and departures: equal provision

Each sub-section has its own diagram based on the following concept



4.1 Moving the arrival point

Perhaps the most effective way of improving a link is to reduce it or remove it altogether by moving the arrival point closer to key attractions.

There are many ways in which this can be done:

- Move bus stops to locations within key shopping streets, or adjacent to attractions such as major retail centres. There may however be a trade-off between the convenience of bus users and the environmental impact of buses within a town centre;
- Extend rail system to provide stops (or stations) within the centre (an example being the conversion of suburban rail lines to light rail operation, with street running in the city centres, as in Manchester and Croydon);
- Relocate car parking closer to main attractions. This can sometimes be achieved by providing multi-storey parking to replace surface parking. Surface car parking makes poor use of centrally-located land and is often therefore provided in more remote locations. An example of where parking has been brought closer to town centre retail attractions in this way is Banbury, Oxfordshire. Car parking may be provided underground, as in many cities in continental Europe;
- Configuring entrances and exits of stations and car parks to minimise the distance to the town centre attractions (for example, Bristol Temple Meads, where a new exit and bridge provide a new link to a new office development). The provision of access at both ends of the station platforms could assist in some places, though new entrances may require additional staff or ticket barriers.

Manchester: Metrolink has provided direct access to the city centre from Bury and Altrincham avoiding the need to walk from edge of centre rail stations

Stuttgart (Germany) has also brought direct rail access to the pedestrianised shopping centre, with underground stations for suburban trains and trams

Car park provision under the city square in Rotterdam (Netherlands)

Rotterdam (Netherlands) public use of the square above the car park. A setting for concerts and other activities, day and night

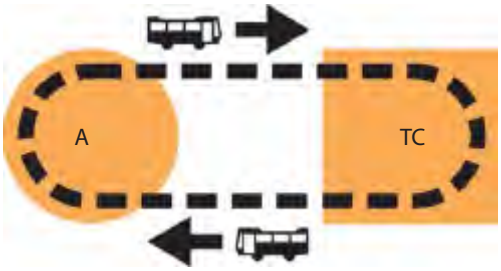
4.2 Moving or extending the centre

Often there is little opportunity to move arrival points towards the town centre. Railways are generally fixed, and moving them is usually prohibitively expensive and disruptive. Bus stations often are best sited near to distribution roads in order to keep buses out of town centre streets. In these cases, fairly long walking distances to the town centre can result. One answer is to use redevelopment opportunities to create more activities on sites that lie between the arrival point and the established town centre attractions.

An example is Gloucester Green, Oxford, where a new public square with shops, restaurants and flats has been created between the (rebuilt) bus station and the main centre. In Reading, by contrast, the 'centre of gravity' of retail activity has been shifting away from the railway station, and buses continue to penetrate the central area streets. There are now plans to intensify development on sites around the station and improve pedestrian conditions on the route to the primary shopping areas (see section 4.6).

The pedestrian square at Gloucester Green, Oxford

4.3 Providing a shuttle



Where the link cannot be shortened, and where there are significant obstacles, a mechanised link can be useful.

In Lincoln, the main retail and other town centre activities lie at the foot of the hill, while the cathedral and historic part of the town are about a kilometre away at the top of the hill. This means that people visiting the cathedral can only visit the shops if they are fit and have plenty of time. Likewise, shoppers cannot easily include a visit to the cathedral area. To overcome this, a shuttle bus was provided on a trial basis in the summer of 2001, and this could become a permanent feature.

The shuttle bus in Lincoln

Lincoln: the walk and ride sign

In Birkenhead an electric shuttle bus links the ferry terminal, new railway station, bus station and the main shopping areas.

The centre of Guildford, as in Lincoln, is linear in form and is built on a fairly steep hill. A regular and frequent shuttle bus is provided which links the centre with the rail and bus stations. This enables people arriving by bus or train to ride in comfort to the 'top of the town', and then make their way past the shops down the hill towards the stations for their return journey.

The Guildford shuttle route display at the railway station

In large centres, distances between different shops and other attractions can be considerable, and shuttles are provided in many cities to provide additional access, especially for people whose mobility is limited for some reason (including bags of shopping, push chairs, trolleys etc.). Often such services are provided free of charge, an acknowledgement of the importance of convenient access to the success of the local economy. Examples are Reading, Leeds, and Wokingham (where the bus is a joint initiative between the District Council, a local supermarket and bus operator). In Solihull the free shuttle bus varies its route between peak and off-peak hours, reflecting the different demands of commuters and other town centre visitors. In Perth, Western Australia, free shuttle buses are funded by a levy on privately owned parking spaces.

This street tram operates in Shanghai's Nanjing Road - the longest pedestrian shopping street in the city

Fixed mechanical aids

Sometimes barriers to pedestrian movement can be reduced or overcome by the introduction of fixed mechanical links. These can take a number of forms. Seaside towns with steep cliffs often installed lifts (Bournemouth, Folkestone, Hastings, for example). Monorails may have a role to play, as in Sydney (see picture), and proposed for Portsmouth.

In many German cities, escalators are provided to assist (and encourage) the use of subways under major roads (Freiburg, Cologne) or bridges over main roads (Hamburg). Such external use of escalators has never found favour in British cities, but if adequate maintenance could be guaranteed this provides another option, and may be justified where the traffic importance is simply too great to allow downgrading of the road. An extreme example can be found in Hong Kong, where a series of escalators take shoppers more than one kilometre back to their homes on the steep hillside.

The monorail in Sydney: linking Darling Harbour to the city centre

Sometimes dramatic changes of level call for dramatic solutions: a public lift in Lisbon, Portugal

Park-and-Ride

A substantial number of medium and larger-sized towns and cities now provide park-and-ride services between car parks near the edge of the built-up area and the centre. This can provide excellent access for car users, usually with drop-off and pick-up stops close to the main shopping and other central destinations. The need for high-quality vehicles and facilities and a frequent service is emphasised in guidance, for example TAS Partnership (2000) *Park-and-Ride in Great Britain*. Schemes need to be justified within a wider transport planning framework, but the potential of park-and-ride to create good town centre links should be considered.

The park-and-ride in Oxford

4.4 Removing or reducing road barriers

The presence of a large-scale ring road severely affected the quality of the access routes in about a fifth of the cases surveyed for this report. Typically, this occurs where the arrival point lies the 'wrong' side of an inner ring road or other major road, that can only be crossed using inconvenient or unpleasant subways, bridges or 'cattle pen' surface crossings[9].

In recent years there has been a move to change the design of such roads where they separate a town centre from its hinterland, and to introduce convenient surface crossings. The downgrading of the Birmingham Inner Ring Road is perhaps the boldest and best known example in Britain. But there are numerous smaller-scale examples. Illustrated below is Perth (Western Australia).

Where topography allows, an alternative approach is to raise or lower the road, enabling free pedestrian access below or above. Bournemouth has created a major pedestrian space between the town centre and the seafront by raising the intervening road onto a bridge.

Perth, Western Australia. A broad pedestrian crossing links the rail station to the main shopping area

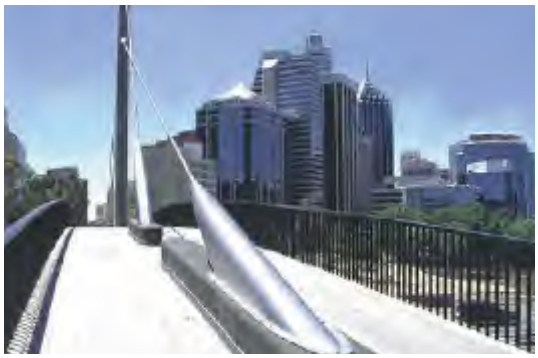
Foot notes:

7 " Cattle Pen" is the unflattering term used to describe inconvenient crossings. These require pedestrians to cross in more than one stage and usually to apply for permission and to wait for a signal to cross. The cattle pen name derives from the addition to such crossing places of guard railings, whose purpose is to prevent pedestrians crossing in less safe (but by definition more convenient) locations.

4.5 Overcoming other barriers

Sometimes other features hinder movement between a centre and its hinterland, including man-made barriers such as canals and railways, or natural barriers such as steep slopes or rivers.

Rotterdam (Netherlands): a bridge over the canal provides a more direct link into town



Spectacular, pedestrian bridge across an inner freeway in Perth (Australia)

In Groningen (Netherlands) a new bridge links the central station and town centre

In Groningen (Netherlands) a spectacular solution was chosen. A new pedestrian and cycle bridge was built over the canal which separated the main railway and bus stations from the city centre. It is not just an ordinary bridge, however. It links both canal banks to an island, on which has been built a museum of modern art. The bridge solves a practical access problem, but at the same time has contributed a new cultural facility to the town.

a

A direct walk to and from the station

b

The bridge leads directly to the centre

c

The art gallery, opened in 1994, provides a strong point of interest on the link

4.6 Renewing the 'shatter zone'

Many towns have areas adjacent to or surrounding the central core which offer substantial redevelopment opportunities. These commonly were industrial or service areas such as docks and wharfs, railways depots, and distribution depots for milk, groceries or other items. Many of these former uses have since contracted, relocated or disappeared altogether, leaving behind areas that do not have the potential to attract prime town centre activities, but also offer a poor environment for residential activity without substantial investment. In these circumstances, such areas have often been taken over by roads and car parking, or low-value 'shed' type retail and warehouses uses. The resulting fractured townscape and indeterminate character has led to the description of such areas as the 'shatter zone' between the centre and main residential hinterland.

The shatter zone

The shatter zone is an area of opportunity, but also one of complex problems. It is an important location in the context of the sequential test set out in PPG6, being an area where new retail development should be sought in preference to outer suburban areas.

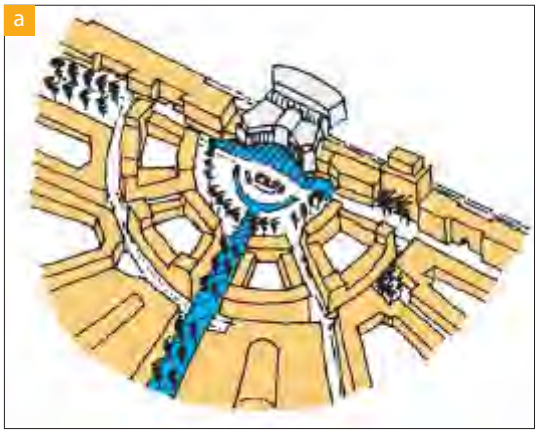
Very often the links between arrival points and the town centre pass through or are affected by these shatter zones, making for an unpleasant arrival experience.

Many of these areas are now the subject of regeneration schemes, often involving a major master planning exercise and implementation strategy. These offer a major opportunity to 'fix' the missing links, by including this as a key objective of the proposals.

In the shorter term, improvements can be made for people having to pass through the shatter zone as part of their 'total trip' into the town centre. This may assist with the regeneration of the wider area.

Examples of both the problem and the cure can be found in Birmingham, while Bristol, Lincoln, Peterborough, Reading and Sheffield are all drawing up plans that should incorporate better links as part of a regeneration strategy.

a



Public transport orientated development: the principles (from Calthorpe, 1993)

b

Proposed new development

Public transport orientated development in practice: Reading, a former industrial area with major redevelopment plans centred around the transport interchange

4.7 Improving the link quality

The 'action pack'(section 6) and annex at the end of this guide suggest a number of procedures for assessing or auditing the quality of pedestrian links. These draw on the 'Five Cs' categories that are defined in section 2.4.

Examples of how improvements to one or more of these 'five c' attributes can be made are provided in the drawn case study examples in section 5.

Here we illustrate some good practice examples.

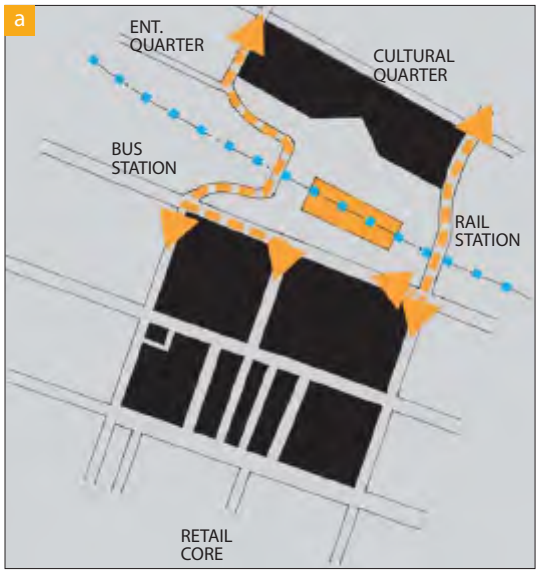
Connected

A number of projects have dramatically improved town centre connections. These include the Groningen example in section 4.5 above, where a new connection has been created between the rail and bus stations and the town centre.

In Freiburg (Germany) a dedicated tram, pedestrian and cycle bridge has been built over the railway to provide a direct link between the city centre and the residential areas on the other side of the tracks. The bridge also provides direct access to the station platforms.

Freiburg (Germany): pedestrian, cyclist and tram bridge giving access to station platforms

In Perth (Australia), a new upper level walkway, of generous design and proportions, and with retail and other activities along its length, links the main city retail area, the cultural quarter on the other side of the railway, and the railway station platforms. The before and after plans (a and b) show how direct connections have been created across and link with the bus and rail stations. The cross-section (c) shows how a change in levels has been used to bridge the road and railway without pedestrians having to change level.



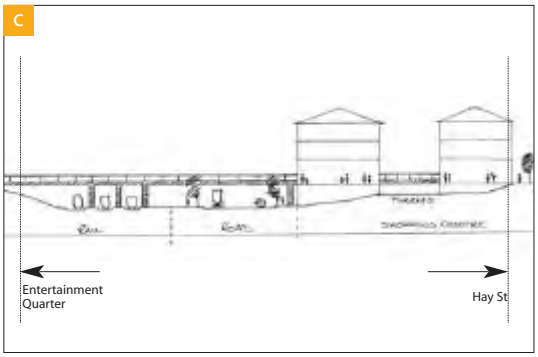
Perth: access before

Perth: improved access routes after

"City walking is a key to urban quality, vitality and pleasure. The basis and the beginning for everything, Vadare necesse est - walking is essential"

Jan Gehl and Lars Gemzoe, 'New City Spaces' (2001) p.257

c



The route to the transport bus terminal

d

Perth: second pedestrian footbridge linking the retail core and entertainment area (top left of plan)

e

Upper level footway through retail mall

f

Direct access to station platforms

In Horsham a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the ring road has created a more direct link between the railway station and the town centre.

a

Horsham: the new pedestrian and cycle link between station and town centre

b

The view down to the dual carriageway: previously a severance problem. The bridge includes a substantial office building

c

Generous dimensions where the link meets the town centre

d

Pedestrianised town centre at the end of the route

"The pedestrian network links the town together in a viable pattern: it links place to place by steps, bridge and distinctive floor pattern, or by any means possible so long as continuity and access are maintained."

Gordon Cullen,
Townscape 1961

Convenient

Manly (Australia): a broad light-controlled crossing providing a direct link into the town centre

In Reading: a link from a new multi-storey car park to the town centre, through the Oracle shopping centre. This route incorporates an attractive riverside square, though part of it is closed after shopping hours

Montpellier(France): the tram stops directly outside the shopping centre

A pleasant and direct route through the park in Hexham

Comfortable

In The Hague (Netherlands), a new pedestrian route between the central station and the main shopping area passes through a major office development that bridges over part of the walkway, providing weather protection

Bologna (Italy): the use of arcading provides shelter from the rain, shading from the sun and a pleasant walk into town

Ballerup (Denmark): central stairwell allows cycles, prams and wheelchairs up and down the level change

"Walking must feel attractive and safe at all times, and this means more than an isolated pedestrian precinct. Many towns could do much more to improve their gateways, such as bus stations, and the linkages between car parks and the shops."

DOE (1994) 'Vital and Viable Town Centres: Meeting the Challenge'

Convivial

The new route in The Hague (see above) has generous dimensions, which together with the absence of traffic have encouraged outdoor cafés and spaces for informal gathering and street performers.

Good design provides interest for those on foot

Opportunities to sit and chat enliven the route

Water always proves popular with young children

Conspicuous

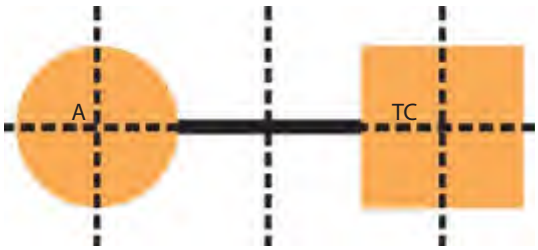
Good quality signage can help improve legibility and aid the pedestrian in moving around the town. Examples of good signage are shown below.

Bourges (France): a local area map with historical information

Bristol: award-winning signage in the city centre

Southbank (London): informative, yet lively and interesting, a contemporary and sleek style

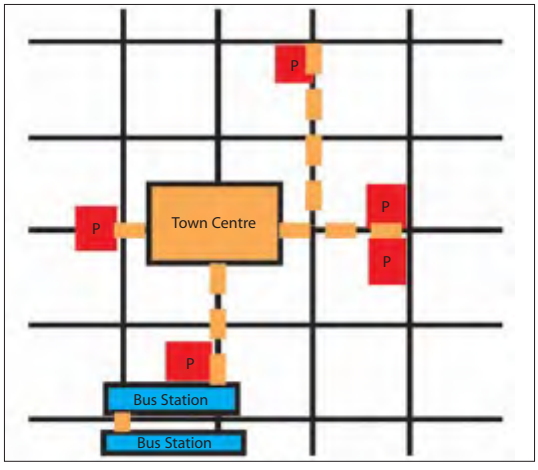
4.8 Connecting the link to the wider network



In some cases the link from an arrival point to the town centre is a 'stub end' which is unconnected (or poorly connected) with the rest of the walking network. There may be benefits in extending the link to generate greater connectivity. While the benefits may be primarily for other parts of the town, the extra foot traffic will assist in achieving 24-hour security through use, and improving the vitality of the link throughout the day. It may also help to justify investment expenditure for improvements to the link itself, especially if combined with a development opportunity bringing developer funding contributions.

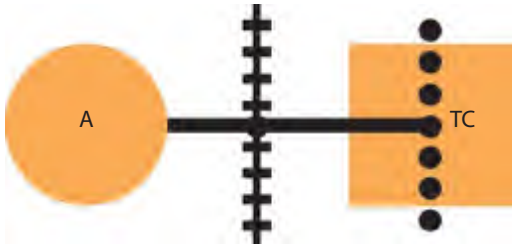
Bremen (Germany) airport tram stop linking to the city centre and main station

The plan below highlights how access routes to the town centre may form part of the wider pedestrian network.



Plan showing key access links within a network

4.9 Reinforcing the link with other modes

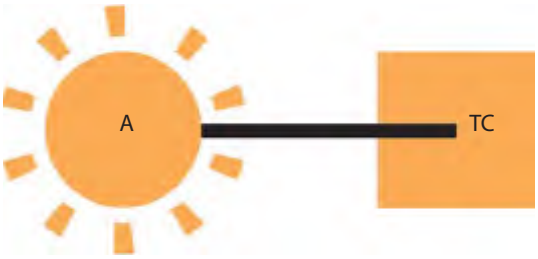


Basingstoke has a clear link between the railway station and the main shopping mall. Bus stops (serving both centre and station) and major car parking facilities also gain access from the same area. This is very clearly a principal interchange and access point for the town centre. Efforts are now being made, through urban re-design, to integrate the inward-looking shopping mall more effectively with its hinterland.

Basingstoke: a direct route from the station to the shopping centre, with access to bus stops

Lisbon Expo bus-rail interchange (Portugal): a spectacular design

4.10 Improving the quality of the arrival facility



Sometimes the link itself is of good quality, but the overall experience is let down by the poor quality of the arrival/departure facility itself. An example of major improvement is Liverpool Street station in London which was redeveloped to incorporate both new office and retail activities, and conservation of the historic station structure. Examples of quality arrival points are shown below

Liverpool Lime Street railway station with contemporary treatment inside

Bercy (Paris, France): lift down to the Metro

A well-planned car park at Bankside, London

4.11 Improving the interface

Arrival facilities should relate well to their surrounding environment and provide a clear interface with the onward link into the centre. The station square, for example, can be attractive and functional, offering space and opportunity to "gather oneself" after a journey.

Lisbon Expo shopping centre (Portugal): through the glass wall, the interchange station can be seen

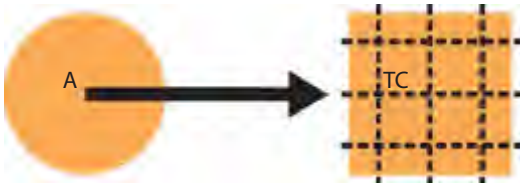
Amsterdam (Netherlands): trams wait for passengers immediately outside the central station

Almere (Netherlands): a square links the station to the town centre

"Think of a city and what comes to mind? Its streets. If a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting ; if they look dull, the city looks dull"

Jane Jacobs, The Death & Life of Great American Cities, 1961

4.12 Improving the quality of the town centre network



The links into the centre should be of a high quality, but the network of streets and footpaths within the centre itself should also be of a high quality. In the many towns reviewed in this study, the main central area shopping streets were mostly of good or excellent quality. They are typically pedestrianised (in whole or in part), are well paved and lit, and are provided with landscaping and street furniture, and often have street activities and public art. Mostly, too, they are well maintained and free of litter and graffiti. This depends, not surprisingly, on the general economic health of the centre, but the problems usually start once you leave the comfort and care provided for the main shopping frontages.

Other guides provide more information on good public realm treatment, see for example, Llewelyn-Davies and English Partnerships (2000) *The Urban Design Compendium* and English Heritage (2000) *Streets For All*. Here we show a few examples of public art in city centres.

Brisbane (Australia): an open air public art gallery

Seattle (USA): detail on the footway

London: murals can add interest to an otherwise blank wall

Kangaroos as public art in Brisbane (Australia)

"People should be able to understand their city (or other people's cities), its basic layout, public functions, and institutions; they should be aware of its opportunities. An authentic city is one where the origins of things and places are clear".

Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard, Towards an Urban Design Manifest, American Planning Association Journal (1987)

4.13 Improving information

Information about route options can make a big difference to the perceived quality of a place, and it needs to be well planned and maintained, both on and off site.

Some points to bear in mind are:

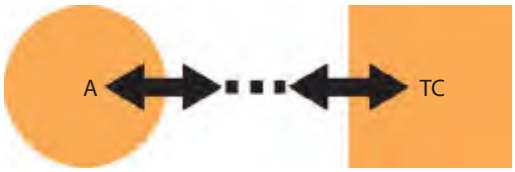
- Information is particularly important for one-off or infrequent visitors (not just tourists, but business visitors, people passing through the area people looking for places to live, work or shop).
- Even for regular visitors, information can be useful in updating their knowledge of the town's facilities, and for promoting special events. Residents of the town may be encouraged to spend more time (and money) in their centre if they are fully aware of all the different attractions on offer.
- At access points (stations, car parks, bus stops etc) information should be clear for both arrivals and departures. For those arriving, information is needed on the range of facilities and activities available in the centre, and the various options for getting to them. For those departing, information is needed on the destinations served by public transport, together with timetables, ticket information and real-time service information. At car parks, information is needed on routes out of the car park to various destinations and other routes or areas. Information on payment methods also needs to be very clear, while the payment systems themselves should be as convenient to use as possible. Pre-payment for a specific amount of time, for example, is inappropriate for town centre car parks because it places a constraint on people's length of stay.
- Routes between access points and town centre attractions also need to be comprehensively signed. Where options are available, the relative merits should be indicated.
- Information on public transport services has traditionally been confined to the stations and stops from which services operate. Real-time information technology now allows information to be displayed anywhere, and screens showing service departures are increasingly being installed in shopping centres, hospitals, colleges, and other places where people gather.

Münster (Germany): local bus information within the rail station

Sign at Guildford railway station indicating town centre route

Stockholm (Sweden) bus station: ticket machines, and clear route maps and real-time service information

4.14 Arrivals and departures: equal provision



It is vital that arrival and departure points are clear to users, and are either the same (as with a railway station entrance) or are within clear sight of each other (as with bus stops on opposite sides of the street). Arrival and departure points for the car are of course always the same - the parking space. But exits and entrances to car parks are often different for the driver than for the pedestrian. Where the pedestrian access routes are unclear, or are inconvenient or unpleasant, it is common to find car users walking on ramps and other areas intended only for vehicles. This is dangerous, and is a sign of poor design.

In larger car parks, finding one's car on return has become a topic for stand-up comedians to exploit! Many coding schemes have been devised (colours, zones, icons etc.) but this is an area where improvements could be made. Park-and-Ride bus services should arrive and depart from the same bus stops in the city centre.

Oxford: colour coding in action, but not integral to the car park design

Oxford: cycle parking at the station provides a further option for the link to the centre

About the drawn examples

This section presents six drawn examples which translate the principles of good town centre access into indicative urban design improvements.

The towns and cities were selected to provide a range of design contexts (population size, economic strength, location in the UK), as summarised on the next page.

The design work does not represent actual projects on the ground, but illustrates the potential for masterplan projects. Further work would be required to translate the ideas into workable projects, including consultation with the public, and other stakeholders. In some cases the local authority is already undertaking design work for the area concerned. There is no intention here of competing with such projects.

In addition, the examples are not presented as templates to be copied elsewhere. Rather, as with the rest of the good practice examples in the guide, they are intended to stimulate thinking about better practice. The aim of this guide is to help best practice in town centre access to become common practice.

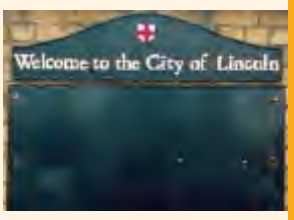
"We shall not attain to cities…that are beautiful until we learn artistically to plan them."

Charles Mulford Robinson, *The Improvement of Towns and Cities, 1907*

05

Design examples

- **Lincoln**
  Medium-size regional centre



- **Brixham**
  Devon fishing port

- **Liverpool (Lime St)**
  Major Northern City

- **Luton**
  Medium-size industrial town

- **Dudley**
  Traditional centre within wider conurbation

- **Ealing**
  Metropolitan suburban centre

5.1 Lincoln

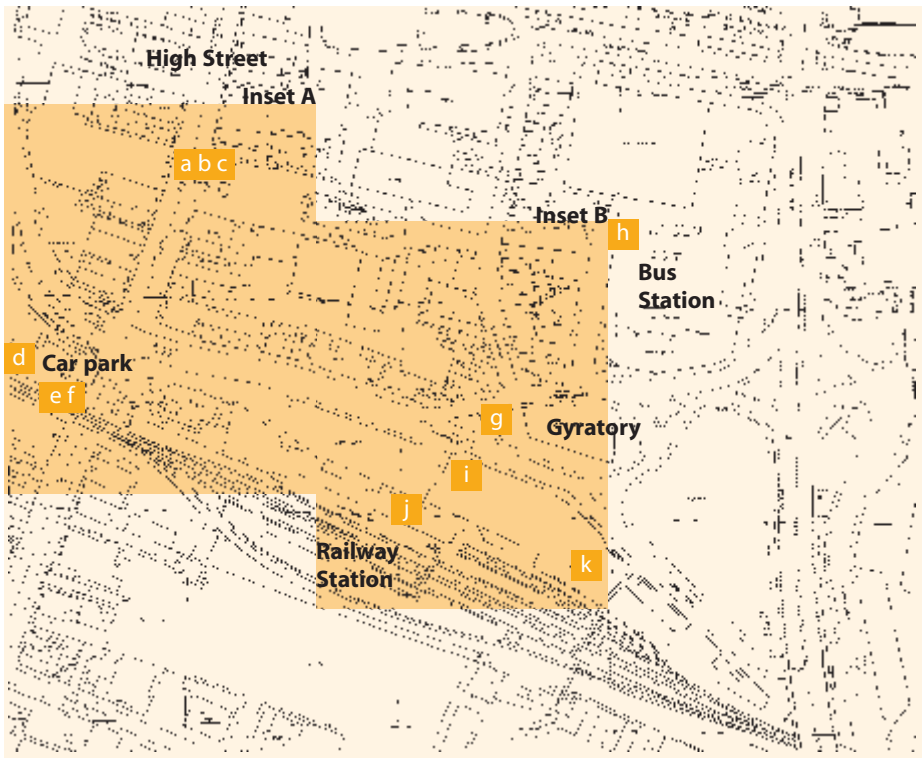
Existing Conditions

The High Street is justifiably popular, but access routes for pedestrians need improvement

Famous pedestrianised High Street climbs towards Lincoln cathedral

Lincoln is an historic regional centre and attracts many visitors to its cathedral, shops and other attractions. The traditional High Street is complemented by new well-integrated shopping developments providing a good pedestrian environment. Much has already been achieved to improve access, including provision of a shuttle bus (see 4.3), and more is planned. This case study focuses on access to the centre from the south, including a major car park, and bus and rail stations, where there is scope for major enhancement.

Exit from multi-storey car park towards ringroad underpass (St Mary's St)



Brutal and inadequate pedestrian underpass under St Mary's Street

Poor conditions for pedestrians: busy two-stage surface pedestrian crossing east of station towards city centre

Narrow but busy footway alongside the station

Tourist information just beyond the station entrance!

Pedestrian access to Lincoln's undercroft bus station is unfriendly and unsafe

Station forecourt given over to parking

Proposals

1 Wigford Way. Progressive traffic-calming measures on approach to new pedestrian crossing

2 New single-phase pedestrian crossing. Maximum width, ideally on centreline of possible pedestrianisation of south leg of High Street.

3 Existing underpass closed and filled in. Ramps removed and filled area returned to footway space

4 Public car park. Internal refurbishment and better visitor information within

Inset A

High Street / St Mary's Street Pedestrian crossing

5 Lincoln bus station (not shown): total internal refurbishment required to improve passenger environment. New waiting areas, passenger information and enhancement of public realm on approaches from town centre.

6 Possible widening of footway on approach from St Mary's Street

7 Gyratory restructured to ease pedestrian routes across St Mary's Street

8 Footways widened on both sides of St Mary's Street

9 Station forecourt. Parking removed in favour of drop-off alone. New station plaza including planting as 'gateway' to the city

10 Interactive tourist information outside station entrance

Inset B

Station / forecourt 'gateway'

Note:

All proposals shown are tentative and illustrative. They do not take account of proposed initiatives on the part of the local authorities and other relevant agencies.

5.2 Brixham

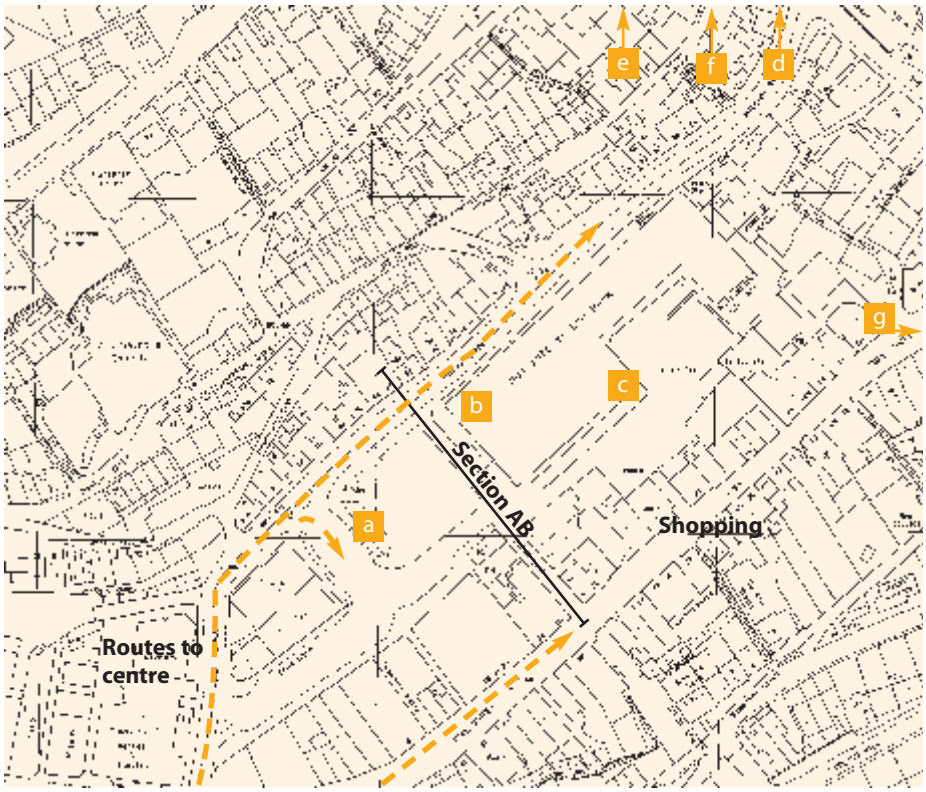
Existing Conditions

Bus drop off in the centre of town

But this is the view - welcome to the English Riveria!

Brixham in Devon is an attractive and busy fishing port with potential to revive its visitor trade. A regeneration master plan is under consideration. There are major opportunities to enhance the central area near the harbour and to integrate it with the rest of the town.

The town centre car park is an unsightly and unsound structure



Informal and illegal car parking around the harbour

Freshwater car park, a little remote from the town centre, and hence underused

The pedestrian route from Freshwater car park

The new marina development improves pedestrian access to waterfront

Proposals

Section AB through new mixed-use buildings

Residential and office space over shopping at street level

Section AB showing new square

New town square over parking,
a possible site for the relocated war memorial?

Level changes by ramps and stairs, including entrances to parking levels

Plan of new town square and car park

1 New car park (300-400 spaces) on two levels below new town square. Some natural ventilation through light slots and flanks

2 Pedestrian link between old and new parts of the centre

Note:

All proposals shown are tentative and illustrative. They do not take account of any ongoing or proposed initiatives on the part of the local authorities and other relevant agencies.

5.3 Liverpool Lime Street

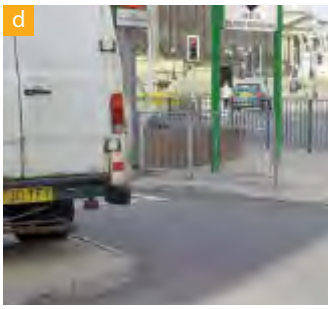
Existing Conditions

Poor pedestrian environment alongside city centre flyover

Lime Street creates a severance problem for pedestrians

This major city example examines the potential for improving a principal route between the city's main station and the retail core of the city centre. The route (see section 2.4) currently attains a low score on the "5 Cs" criteria described in this guide. The issues are being addressed as part of a comprehensive Lime Street Gateway project commissioned by Merseytravel, Liverpool Vision and Liverpool City Council and led by Steer Davies Gleave. The project also incorporates the Merseytram project.

Traffic has priority over pedestrians

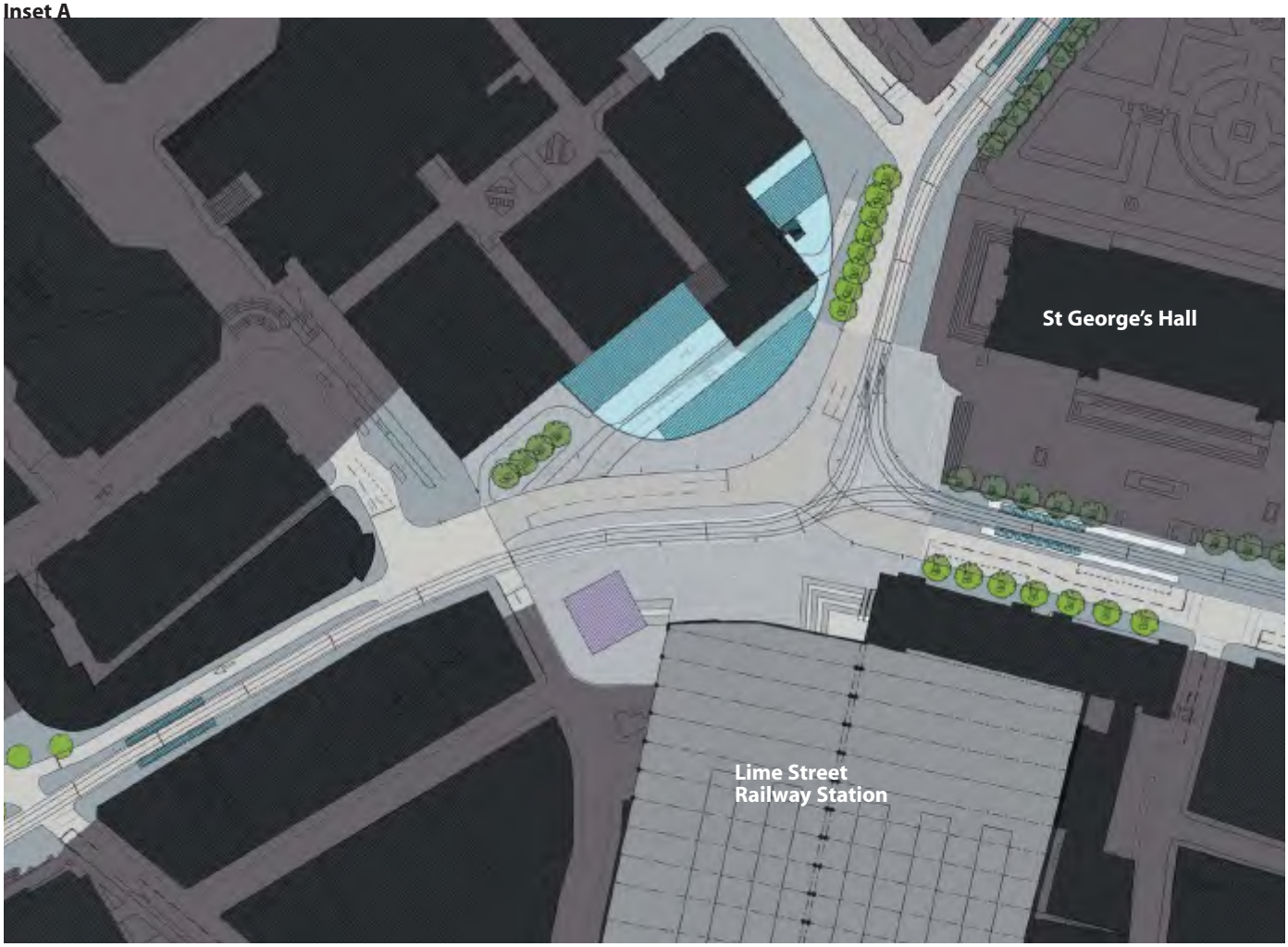


'Cattle pen' crossings deter free pedestrian movement

Lime Street station: but how to reach it on foot?

Pedestrians to and from the station are faced with steep level changes

Inset A



Improved public realm outside Lime Street Station

Photo montage of the proposed tram system outside Lime Street Station

Note:

All proposals shown are tentative and for illustrative purposes only.

5.4 Luton

Existing conditions

Luton is a medium sized town in the south east with a strong manufacturing tradition. It provides an example of where arrival points are well located in relation to the town centre core, but where the arrival experience could be enhanced by comprehensive improvement of the access route for pedestrians.

a

Important bridge link over tracks from station, but outworn and unpleasant

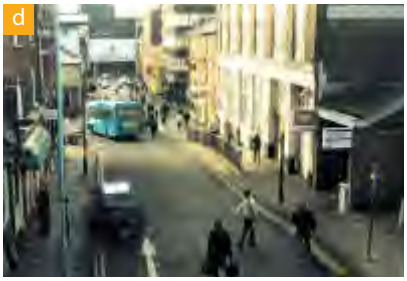
b

Well located, but user unfriendly multi-storey car park beside station

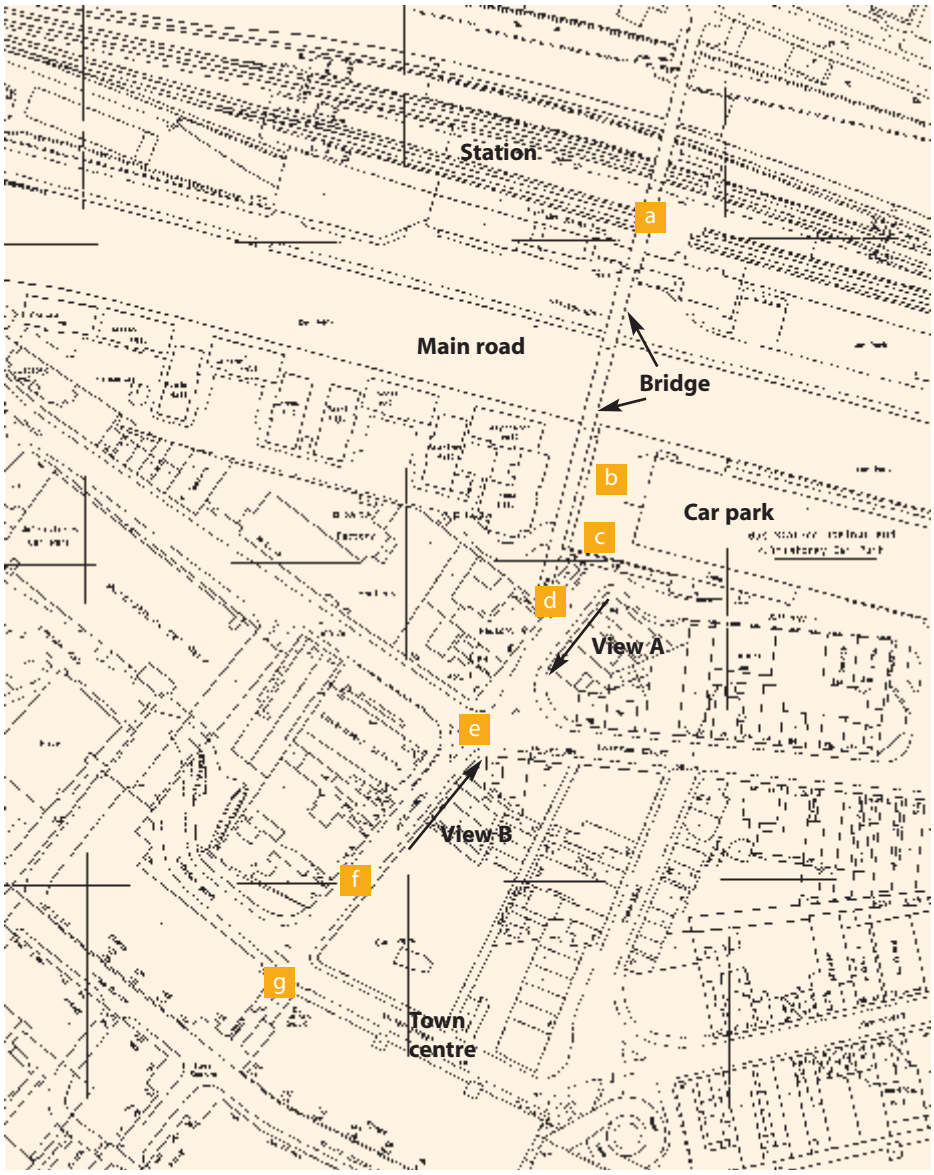
c

Hardly a user-friendly tourist information centre or bus station

d



Tiny station exit on right, main shopping straight ahead



e

Main pedestrian route from station to shops severed by hard to cross road

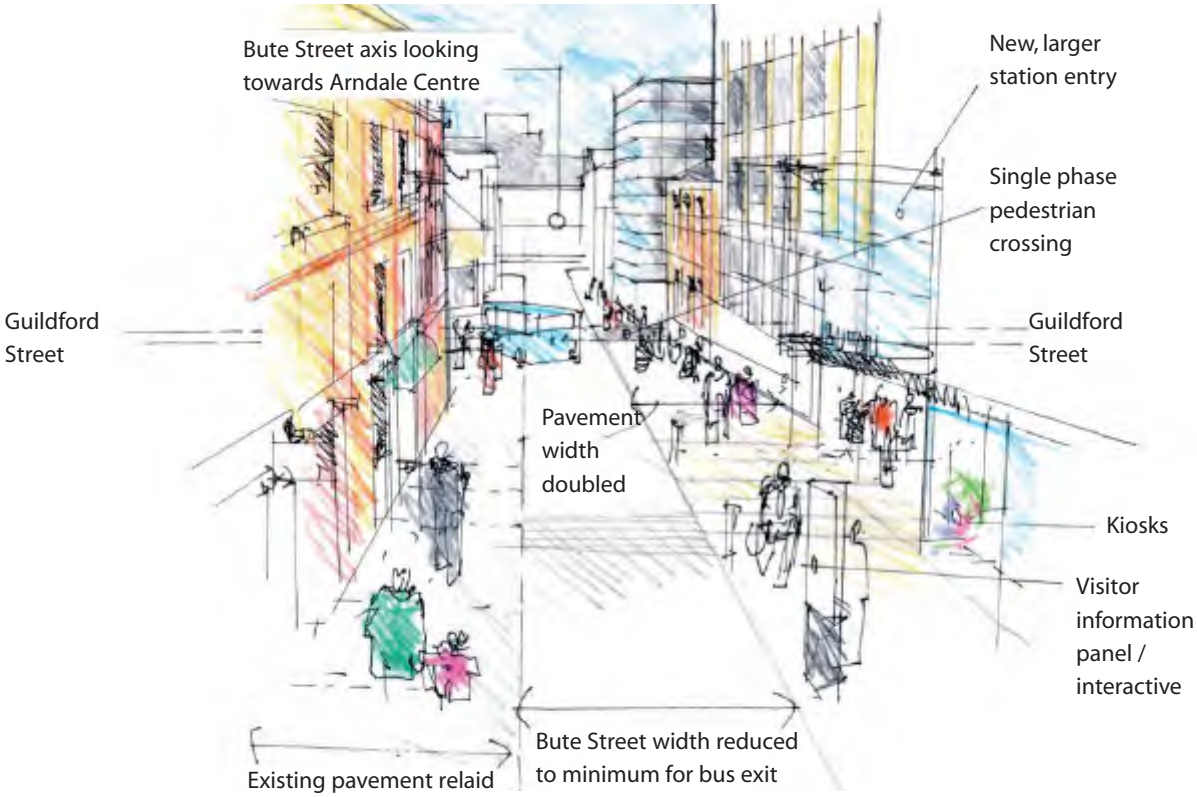
f

Main pedestrian route is cramped by traffic and railings

g

Walk from station from main shopping is only 150 metres, but poor quality

Proposals



Bute Street Improvements: View A

Bute Street axis looking back towards Luton Station / Bus Station: View B

Note:

All proposals shown are tentative and illustrative. They do not take account of any ongoing or proposed initiatives on the part of the local authorities and other relevant agencies

5.5 Dudley

Existing conditions

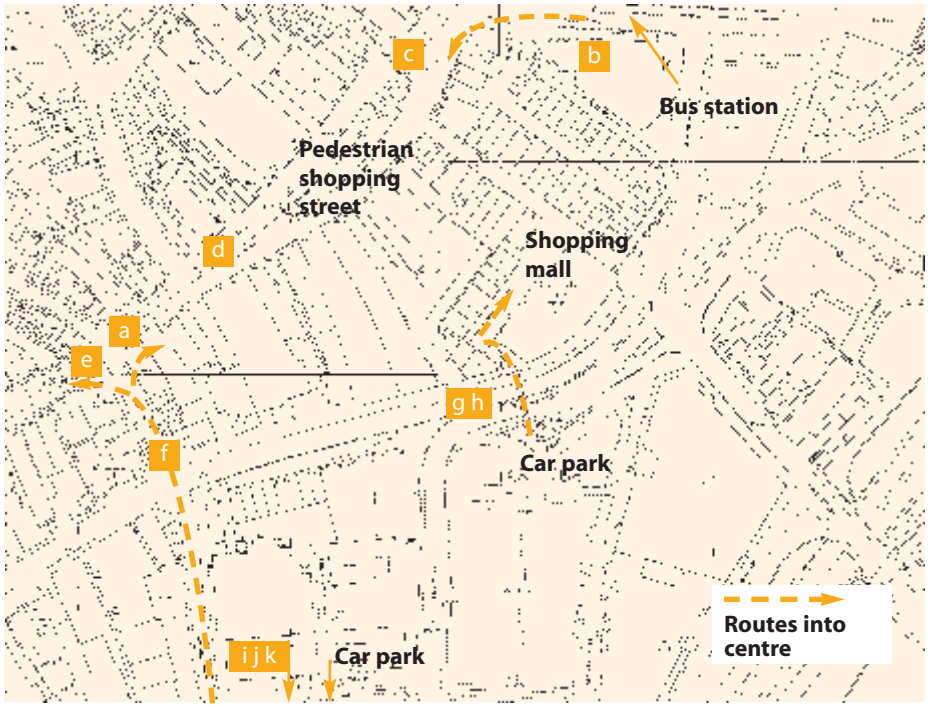
Tight, narrow pavements hinder pedestrian movement

Bus station ripe for renovation.

Buses penetrate close to pedestrian shopping area

Bland, uniform landscape treatment to pedestrianised link

Pavements cluttered with unnecessary street furniture



Union Street. Route from car park along narrow pavements half blocked by parked cars

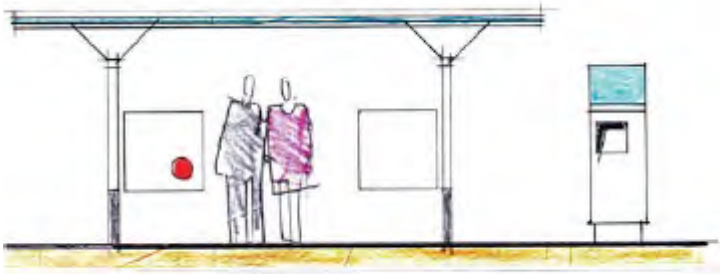
Indirect routes for those on foot

Bridge access to shopping mall (privately owned)

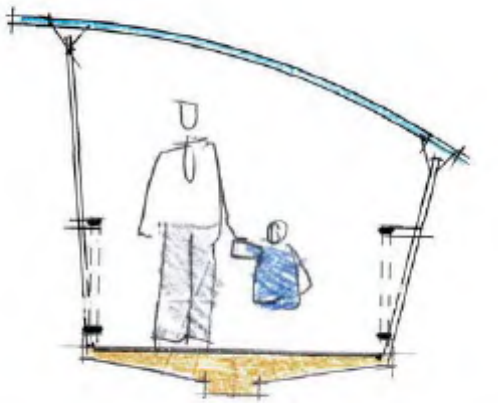
Car Park. Unattractive public realm in poor condition. Public car park creates disappointing impression for visitors and other town centre users. Lack of visitor orientation or waymarking from car parks

Proposals:

Dudley is a large settlement forming part of the West Midlands conurbation. Its centre faces strong competition from out-of-town facilities, especially the Merry Hill regional shopping mall. Dudley's traditional centre is partly pedestrianised, but there is scope for both detailed and structural improvements to the access routes.



Shelter for car park users, plus town centre information point



Existing footbridge given lightweight weather protection or the bridge could be replaced with a light – protected pedestrian crossing

Widening pavements. New Mill Street and Union Street

Simple, good value physical improvements to the 'link'

Note:

All proposals shown are tentative and illustrative. They do not take account of any ongoing or proposed initiatives on the part of the local authorities and other relevant agencies

5.6 Ealing

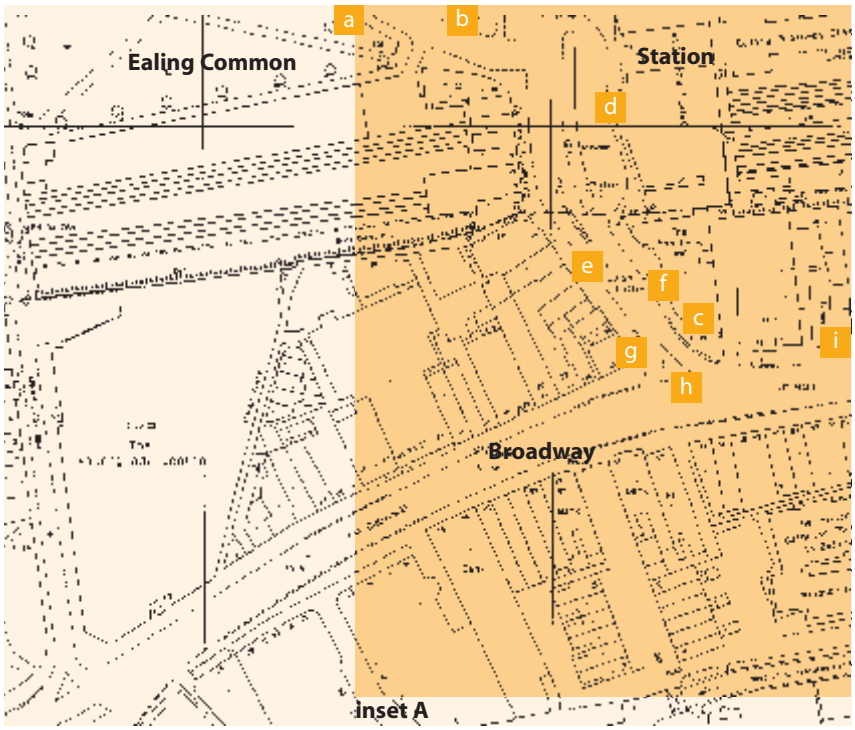
Existing Conditions

Bus layover stances diminish quality of Haven Green

Elegant cycle storage, but some distance from the station

Bus queues conflict with passengers entering the station

Station forecourt a mess of private parking and drop-off



A flower shop adds conviviality

Tight pavements and heavy pedestrian flows

Junction crossing facilities bypassed by pedestrians

Refuse mixed with pedestrians

Heavy traffic to Ealing Broadway

Proposals

Ealing is a suburb of outer west London whose "Broadway" centre is served by an important Underground interchange. Despite scarcity of space, there is scope to re-plan the station area and the link to the Broadway for the benefit of pedestrians and bus users.

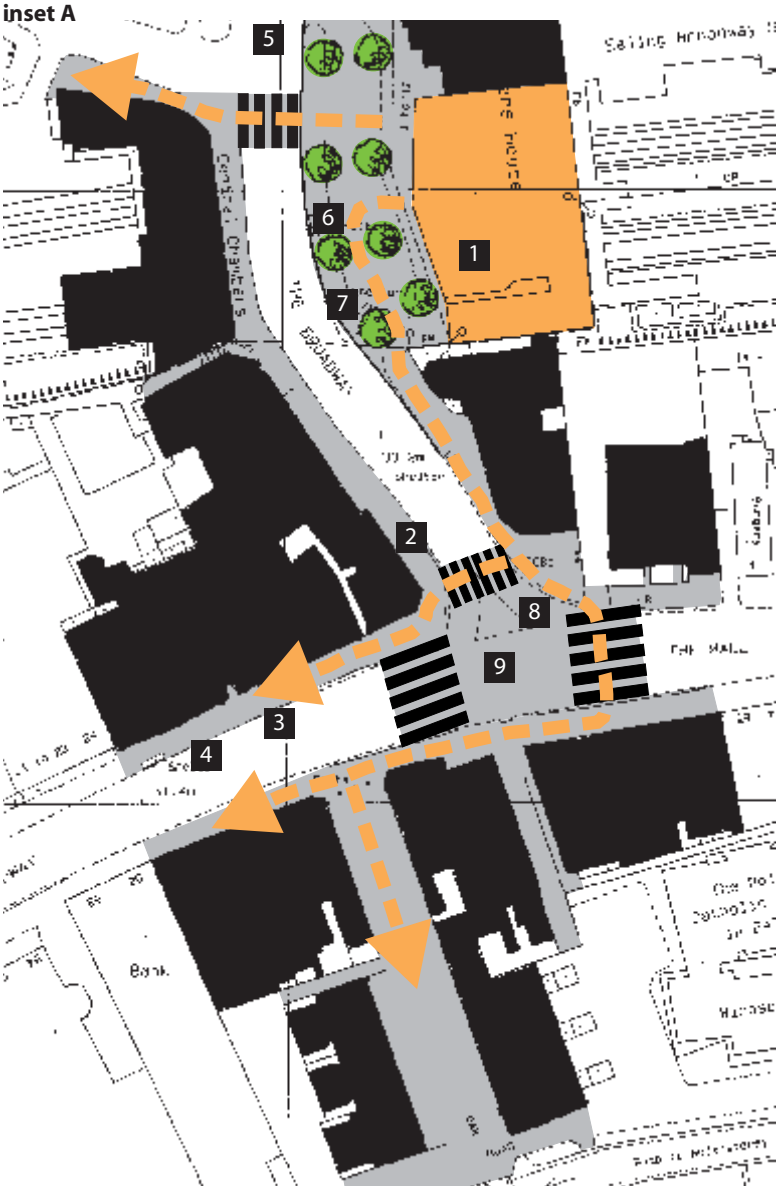
1 Possible secure enclosed bicycle storage unit

2 Pedestrian guardrails removed or minimised and all pavements relaid in quality materials

3 New suite of street furniture for 'the Broadway'

4 Roadside clutter and refuse removed to maximise footway width available

inset A



5 New high specification bus shelter with pavement refurbishment

6 Re-structured station square with parking removed, simple drop-off space unified by new hardscape and as a single level swept towards existing footway. Interactive information point and vertical landmark feature marking Ealing Broadway interchange

7 Relighting of new 'Place de la Gare' with feature luminaires at pedestrian scale

8 Footway widening wherever possible from new kerb layout

9 Junction re-structured to provide single-phase pedestrian crossing

Ealing Broadway improvements

Note:

All proposals shown are tentative and illustrative. They do not take account of any ongoing or proposed initiatives on the part of the local authorities and other relevant agencies.


MINERALS
TRANSPORT

06

Action Pack

- Key Principles
- Initiation
- Audit and design
- Public and stakeholder involvement
- Implementation
- Maintenance and review
- A model process

Consultation in Hatfield

6.1 Key Principles

This final section discusses ways in which projects can be brought forward and implemented. Projects to improve the links between arrival points and town centre attractions may be no different in character from the type of projects already familiar to many local authorities.

What is new is the identification of town centre links as a distinct aspect of the town deserving focused attention, and the bringing together of a number of different techniques and projects. Examples of familiar types of action that can be brought together for this purpose are:

- Public realm improvement strategies
- Town centre masterplans
- Regeneration projects
- Landscape and "greenway" projects
- Pedestrian improvements
- Safety and security plans, including designing out crime
- Information and signing projects, including town trails
- Pedestrianisation and pedestrian priority schemes
- Roadspace reallocation projects
- Town centre management strategies or improvement schemes
- Maintenance and waste disposal projects

Our review of town centre access case studies made a number of key lessons clear:

Stakeholder involvement:

is critical and needs to be widely-based and with a consistent commitment to a quality product. Likely stakeholders include: local authorities, retailers, land owners, developers, funding agencies, the public, and the professional planning and design team.

A clear management structure:

is required to provide a common mechanism by which all the issues raised can be addressed. An example would be a project team with staff seconded from various departments reporting to a steering group with sufficient executive power to make key decisions.

Ownership:

Most projects will affect or require the involvement of a number of different interest groups or authorities.The need for a project, and its eventual design, implementation, and maintenance, should be "owned" by all the parties, as far as possible. This will help to minimise conflicts or disagreements over priorities, funding and other matters.

Project champions:

A single body is required to take responsibility for the project. While the project may be carried forward by some form of partnership between different bodies (e.g. a county highway authority and a district council), there still needs to be a single body that will take overall responsibility for the success of the project, and that will push to resolve any difficulties that arise. Without this leadership there is likely to be insufficient impetus to overcome vested interests, conflicts or sheer apathy amongst those who will be affected. Successful schemes invariably are driven by an individual with the vision and commitment to see them through.

Project phases

A number of key phases can be distinguished in the life of a project:

1. Initiation
2. Audit and design
3. Public and stakeholder involvement
4. Implementation and funding
5. Maintenance and review

The remainder of this chapter highlights issues and examples relating to each of these phases.

6.2 Initiation

Given the overall responsibility for the quality of the public realm and the success of the town centre, it will be mostly for local authorities to identify the need for and initiate a project. This means either a unitary authority or, in two-tier areas, a district council. However, within the local authority framework, there are a number of possible individuals or departments, including those that operate at 'arm's length', that could take the lead. The choice should take into account the particular focus of the project, and the need to dovetail with other initiatives.

Possibilities include:

- the department responsible for planning, or planning and highways;
- the economic development or regeneration department;
- the environmental department (with responsibilities such as cleansing and maintenance);
- an existing partnership with a remit either for street improvement or town centre enhancement;
- the town centre manager.

A project may arise as part of or spin-off from another project. It is open to bodies other than the local authority to initiate projects, though they will probably need to gain the support from the local authority to enable the project to go ahead. This arises primarily because projects invariably will involve works to do with the highway, foot or cycle paths, or other areas under the responsibility of the local authority such as parks and car parks. Developers may also initiate projects where they will enhance the overall value of a development scheme. In Lewes, the local authority is setting up a town centre partnership with retailers and local developers, which will look at improving access links. This type of partnership offers a good practice way forward for other parts of the UK.

Projects could be initiated by bodies without pecuniary or statutory interests, such as local civic societies, and groups representing pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities. In this case they will need to persuade the local authority to take the project forward, though they could remain involved in the design and implementation stages as well.

6.3 Audit and design

Having identified the need for and organisation of a project, it is necessary to determine the scale and extent of the problems that need to be tackled or, alternatively, the opportunities that can be exploited. Projects themselves could vary greatly, from the adoption of a set of cleaning and maintenance protocols on a particular link to the town centre, to a comprehensive re-planning of all access links for an entire town or city centre.

Whatever the nature of the project, it will be necessary to undertake an audit of the route or routes, to determine existing qualities, including positive features that need to be retained and enhanced, as well as problems that need to be overcome. Staff who carry out the audits will need to be sufficiently trained. Ideally the audits should be carried out alongside actual users of the links, including if possible a range of people representing different kinds of user (such as people with a disability, people encumbered with children, a pushchair or bags of shopping). This can often reveal problems much more comprehensively than by using a single auditor (see next section on involvement).

A number of further audit methods can be used. Pedestrian audit techniques include: 'Five Cs' analysis, community route audits, 'space syntax' (which covers issues of permeability, visibility, orientation and public/private realm distinctions), frontage surveys, 'place checks', footfall monitoring, and safety perception surveys.

The methods used for sample audits undertaken as part of the research leading to this guide are described in the annex. These were undertaken with the involvement of local representatives of pedestrians interests.

6.4 Public and stakeholder involvement

The importance of ownership of the project and commitment to its successful outcome means that as many as possible of those people and bodies that will be affected should be involved during the project development. There are advantages to involving people at the outset, so that they are able to influence, or at least will see the purpose of, the project plan of action. If, however, awareness of the issue is low, it may be easier to involve potential stakeholders and interest groups once the project has been defined, audits have been undertaken, and the initial stages of project formulation have been carried out. Much will depend on the nature and importance of the link in question.

At whatever stage public and stakeholder involvement occurs, there may be existing forums or community mechanisms which can be used for the purpose.

There is likely to be greater focus on involving the local community, especially through the community strategy process. The Government is keen to promote effective community engagement and empowerment, and town centre access projects are a good example of where such involvement can be valuable. These projects by their nature will embrace a number of different interests - including town centre commercial interests, streetscape and public realm interests, and the interests of different transport users including people on foot.

Unlike many neighbourhood projects, the users of access links will usually include many people who live or have their businesses outside the area of the project itself, i.e. people who are passing through. Involvement will ideally include these users, though identifying representatives of them will be less easy than for projects in residential neighbourhoods or the town centre core.

A wide variety of participatory techniques are readily available, and are summarised in publications such as Wates (2000) *The Community Planning Handbook*. The more popular variants are summarised below:

Action planning event -
a carefully structured collaborative event at which all sections of the local community work closely with independent specialists from relevant disciplines to produce proposals for action.

Participatory action planning

Briefing workshop -
working participatory sessions held at an early stage of a project to establish a project agenda or brief.

Choices method -
a visioning process based on four steps:

1. Meetings throughout the community to brainstorm ideas for making life better
2. Consolidation of ideas into goals and vision statements
3. A 'vision fair' where people vote on which visions they would like to pursue and make personal commitment pledges
4. Setting up of action groups to carry out chosen ideas

Citizen's jury -
informal inquiry method where a group of around 16 people, selected to be representative of the community, spend a few days examining an issue, listening to witnesses and producing a report.

Design charrette -
intensive design session, often held in the evening. Term originated at the Paris Ecole des Beaux-Arts at the turn of the century. Student projects were collected at designated times on a cart (a charrette). Term now widely used in the USA to describe any intensive, group brainstorming effort.

Enquiry by design -
intensive action planning workshop process involving urban designers and local stakeholders. Devised for developing plans for new urban villages.

Enquiry by design

Future search conference -
highly structured two and a half day process allowing a community or organisation to create a shared vision for its future. Ideally 64 people take part, with eight tables of eight.

Participatory appraisal -
an approach to gaining a rapid in-depth understanding of a community or issue, based on the participation of the community and a range of visual techniques. Allows people to share and record aspects of their own situation, conditions of life, knowledge, perceptions, aspirations, preferences and develop plans for action.

Planning for real® -
This is the registered brand name for a method of community involvement in planning and development focusing on the construction and use of flexible cardboard or wooden models.

Community involvement, contributing to decision-making

6.5 Proposals and implementation

Proposals for improving access routes will gradually come more sharply into focus through the initial participatory events. For the project and client teams to evaluate the best way forward, it will be necessary to agree assessment criteria. Typically, this will combine the design principles with community aspirations, economic viability and engineering feasibility. A number of options may be generated, depending on the complexity of the access problem.

Evaluation of the option(s) will establish the preferred approach. This should be presented by the project team to the local community and interested stakeholders. Proposals can then be worked up with community feedback and ongoing involvement.

Implementation involves:

- identification of measures requiring action in the short, medium and long term
- identification of sources of funding (see below)
- establishing a development or design framework against which planning applications can be judged
- definition of maintenance and on-going management protocols for the access link(s)
- setting up a means of monitoring progress and (ideally) outcomes and public reaction

6.6 Funding, maintenance and review

In preparing this guide, consultation with local authorities and others has emphasised the distinction between physical enhancement projects and improved maintenance. In the context of British cities it is often easier to devise, fund and implement a project involving expensive capital works to improve an area than it is to clean, maintain and generally look after an existing area. It is therefore important to consider the revenue implications of capital schemes. Investment in quality schemes can reduce maintenance and other costs. Saving on initial costs, for example by use of cheap materials, can stack up long term problems of maintenance funding.

Funding opportunities for town centre access improvements are potentially diverse. Regeneration or transport funding offers a number of possibilities, for example:

- The Community Empowerment Fund - intended to boost community involvement in Local Strategic Partnerships. Funded through the DTLR and Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
- English Cities Fund - for mixed-use regeneration schemes in a number of pre-selected areas, funded through DTLR.
- Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities Funding - projects to help urban (and rural) communities improve their environment. Funded through the New Opportunities Fund;
- Home Zones - allows local authorities to improve the quality of life in residential streets. Includes 'designing out' traffic or providing street furniture. Funded through DTLR.
- Heritage Lottery Fund - projects of all sizes that protect or enhance public access to historic sites, funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Local Transport Plan - bids for transport projects from highway authorities, funded via individual local authorities and DTLR.
- Millennium Commission - support for individuals who wish to carry out projects that will benefit their communities.
- Regional Development Agency Single Pot - replaces the Single Regeneration Budget in Spring 2002. Used to fund projects that help to deliver regional strategies, funded via RDAs.
- Section 106 planning agreements - negotiated between developers and local planning authorities.

Funding sources of course change, and opportunities occur with development proposals. It is therefore inappropriate here to prescribe appropriate sources.

Further research will be required on a case-by-case basis to identify particular funding arrangements for each access improvement project. This will need to identify both capital and revenue funding. Authorities should be as innovative as possible. For example, in Birmingham, the Mailbox development provides a fund to maintain the surrounding public realm.

In reviewing the quality of their town centre links, local authorities may find it helpful to distinguish between links where the main need is for better maintenance, and those where physical changes are required. The important difference is not necessarily the scale of change, or even the total amount of money required. The important difference is that capital works can be dealt with as a "one off' project, whereas maintenance is on-going, requiring vigilance over time.

The maintenance quality of access links is also likely to reflect the general standards of maintenance across the network of streets for which the local authority is responsible. Local authorities should, of course, aim to maintain all their streets and paths to a good standard, and singling out access links for priority treatment could be seen as a symptom of poor standards. Special arrangements may be set up however. It is fairly common, for example, for restaurants and other businesses to fund extra rubbish collection in city centres.

In devising an access link project, however, it will be important to set up a mechanism for ensuring ongoing maintenance. This should include a periodic review to ensure the link is functioning as intended, and is being fully maintained.

A step-by-step process

It will be important to manage the design process in a structured manner. This means planning the various activities and community participation process to enable the focus on quality to be sustained throughout the project's lifetime - from inception through to route design, construction and ongoing management. To achieve success, it is crucial to develop a well defined process, with each step contributing to the realisation of the long term vision. The step-by-step process is shown on the next page.

Organising your access project

	Project Stage	Outputs
1.	**Getting Started**	
	• Inception • Create project team and management structure • Refine project objectives, work programme • Initiate active stakeholder involvement • Establish review process for monitoring and control	• Inception report • Project execution plan • Decision on scope of project
2.	**Appreciating the access route context**	
	• Define assessment criteria • Collate existing data and information • Undertake site analysis and context appraisals, route audits • Community appraisal: e.g. design charette or planning for real workshop • Planning policy analysis • Environmental and landscape appraisal • Transport and accessibility appraisal • Engineering feasibility and constraints • Meet stakeholders and canvass opinions • Liaise with statutory service providers	• Project appreciation and definition report • Design principles, objectives, vision and initial concept ideas
3.	**Planning access route(s) improvements**	
	• Generate possible options • Explore public realm improvements that can be made • Identify changes in traffic priority that are needed, and scope for road space reallocation to benefit those on foot • Identify potential for new links that could be provided, for example through redevelopment opportunities • Explore sources of funding, including developer contributions • Evaluate options, undertake environmental, community and transport assessments, financial appraisals • Establish preferred approach, outline proposed design, plus any required landscape strategy, design guidelines, quantity surveying • Define delivery mechanisms • Present design rationale to client team/community forum	• Draft route development project • Impact assessments if required • Financial appraisal • Maintenance strategy
4.	**Detailing the route**	
	• Identify priorities (short/medium/long term) • Produce route masterplan or development brief • Prepare route development action plan and programme • Focus on detailed design development	• Detailed route development project • Design guides or codes if required • Development briefs • Action plan
5.	**Following up**	
	• Confirm implementation and management arrangements • Monitor project implementation against design principles, and project objectives • Adoption of project development framework • Promote and market proposals • Sustain community involvement • Create media interest if necessary	• Implementation strategy • Individual project proposals • Monitoring reports


Sainsbury's

07

Annexes

- 5 Cs route audit
- Community route audit
- Placecheck audit
- Survey of local authorities
- Useful contacts
- References and further reading
- Acknowledgements

7.1 The 'Five Cs' Route Audit

The 'Five Cs' attributes of route quality (Connected, Convenient, Comfortable, Convivial and Conspicuous) are discussed in sections 2, 3 and 4 of this guide. Section 4 highlights best practice principles based upon the Five Cs. The table below provides a guide to assess pedestrian links following these principles and to assist in identifying areas for improvement along the route. It is based on the framework for assessing the environment for walking first published by the London Planning Advisory Committee in *Advice for a Strategy for Walking in London* (1997) and adopted by the DETR document *Encouraging Walking: Advice to Local Authorities* (2000). The table provided allows for comments on different aspects of the route to be noted as the audit is being undertaken. The answers to these questions should provide a good basis for an action plan. The Yes/No column allows for a tick or cross to be placed alongside each of the issues so that it is possible to see at a glance where the problems exist along the route.

The 'Five Cs' Route Audit

Issue	Yes/No	Comment
Is the route connected? • How well is walking integrated with public transport? • Are there connections between public transport stops? • Are routes to key destinations continuous, that is without barriers such as rivers or major roads that force a diversion? • Do walking routes give good access to key destinations? Do they connect well with other parts of the town network? • Is the distance to the town centre or public transport stops as short as possible? • Are pedestrian crossings sited on 'desire lines' where people want to cross to get to the town centre?		
Is the route comfortable? • Are route design standards adequate, such as footway widths, good quality walking surfaces, and provision for disabled people? • Are there seats, public toilets, kiosks or other facilities provided along the way? • Is pavement parking a problem? • Is the walking surface clear of obstructions, broken paving, etc? • Is there fast moving or heavy traffic close to the route?		
Is the route convenient? • Is the route at a continuous level; for example is the carriageway raised to footway level at junctions and crossings? • Can streets be crossed easily and safely? Can pedestrians assert their right of way as at Zebra crossings or must they wait for a signal? • Have important routes been given sufficiently high priority, for example short waiting times at signalled crossings on routes to the town centre? • Can roads be crossed in a single stage (i.e. not staggered crossings)? • Are there pedestrian signals or phases at traffic signalled junctions? • Is it easy for people to report footway faults?		
Is the route convivial? • Are there plenty of users throughout the day and evening? • Is crime or fear of crime a cause for concern? • Is urban design to a high standard? Is it as attractive as it could be? • Are the walking routes interesting? • Are the footways substantially free from litter and dog mess? • Is there a problem with cycling on the footway? Are routes safe?		
Is the route conspicuous? • Are walking routes clearly signposted? Is it obvious how to get to the shops, leisure facilities or bus stops? • Are local walking routes published? Are there local maps and are they included with travel and tourist information? • Are street names clearly visible, and are there sufficient repeater name plates?		

7.2 Community Route Audits

The concept of Community Route Audits is that they are undertaken not just by professional staff on behalf of the local authority, but jointly with people who either are users of the route, or who represent users. The template presented here was developed in conjunction with Living Streets (formerly the Pedestrians' Association) and piloted in three places as part of the research informing this guide. The pilot audits were undertaken in Hexham (a small town in Northumberland), Manchester (a major city in north west England), and Oxford (a medium-size historic town in south east England). The quotations included below are taken from participants in the pilot audits.

The Community Route Audit procedure incorporates the use of quality criteria as with the 'Five Cs' audit set out above, but is elaborated in terms of establishing a dialogue between users and audit staff. It is thus an extension of the 'Five Cs' approach.

Community Route Audit in progress, Oxford

Using experience from the pilots undertaken for this guide, the following key aspects of the method have been identified:

- The audit is carried out with a group of representatives from the local community so that views and opinions of the public can be ascertained in addition to professional opinion.

- The group should be sufficient in number to obtain a variety of views. It is helpful if the group is representative of the community as a whole so that first hand views can be obtained from a range of users, i.e. elderly people, people whose mobility is impaired, mothers with children, as well as people who are fit and unencumbered.

- People who are not familiar with the place being audited should be included in order to glean opinions from the perspective of visitors. For example, local users may be unaware of signing requirements, while they may have knowledge of direct routes that are not apparent to the visitor.

- The audit begins with a briefing session for the group, explaining the purpose of the exercise and the programme. For the pilot audits, participants were provided with an information pack outlining the reasons for the audit and highlighting some key issues for consideration during the walk. These issues can be extensive, however, and addressing them one by one can be time consuming, particularly if the arrival point is distant from the town centre. The list of issues may therefore be better used as a prompt for discussion during and after the audit. The information and issues pack used in the pilot audits (and modified in the light of comments received from users) is reproduced below:

Group briefing session

Introduction

The 'Missing Link' project is concerned with the links between arrival and departure points and the attractions offered in the town centre. It is about movement between one or the other and the quality of this experience. Additional factors that may play a part in the quality of the link include the range of facilities and the role of the link in the wider pedestrian network.

The objective is to gather your comments, impressions and reactions, and to stimulate discussion on the issue of the 'missing link' through these surveys.

To focus attention along the routes to be audited we have combined the 'Five Cs' criteria with the Community Street Audit method of Living Streets. The 'Five Cs' are measures of the quality of a walking (or cycle) route. They are that the route should be Connected, Convenient, Comfortable, Convivial and Conspicuous.

Discussion questions for de-briefing session

- How important is the quality of the link(s) to the vitality of the town?
- How important is the quality of the link(s) to you as a user?
- Does the quality of the link affect whether you visit a particular centre?
- Could the local authority do more?
- Do you have any suggestions as to what could be done?

How to use the table

We will walk (insert number) route(s) today. Each route will be divided into four sections:

1. The arrival point;
2. The interface with the street outside;
3. The route itself (which may be subdivided further depending on length and homogeneity); and
4. The destination point (or points).

A series of questions are posed for each section of the route and space is provided for your comments. After exploring each section there will be time for discussing points. Ideally, comments will be cross-referenced with annotations on the street map provided. Photographs may be helpful in understanding the points you raise later on. Ask the facilitator to take photographs if necessary.

Following completion of the routes and/or during lunch there will be time to discuss these issues and the questions listed above - essentially, what are the access issues and what can be done to resolve them?

Route Audit

The Route	.....
From (Arrival Point - Cross reference with map):	.....
To (Attraction - Cross reference with map):	.....
Date:	.....
Time:	.....
Weather and Light:	.....
Name:	.....
Contact telephone number (optional):	.....

Questions	Comments
Issues - Section 1: The arrival point (and departure point - if the same location) • Is there a sense of arrival, do you feel welcome? • What facilities are available? • How good are the facilities? • What information is available about getting to the centre? • Is the way out clear? • Are there any separate departure issues (e.g. are car parking spaces easy to locate on return; is information provided about onward destinations)?	
Issues - Section 2: The interface between the arrival point and the public/private realm outside (forecourts, streets, footways etc) • Is there space to orientate oneself? • Is seating available? • Is there protection from the weather? • Any other facilities available (cafes/telephones etc)? • Are there directions to the centre/attractions? • Are there means of accessing the centre other than walking (e.g. Bus/tram/taxi/bicycle hire)? Are these easy to locate?	
Issues - Section 3: The route itself (long routes may be subdivided, with separate comments for each sub-section) **General provision** • Does traffic intimidate or endanger people on foot? • Are traffic speeds too high, bearing in mind the uses of the street (e.g. shopping and residential as well as through traffic)? • Are levels of permitted parking appropriate for a particular streetscape? • Do parked cars obstruct sightlines, making crossing the road more hazardous, or detract from the attractiveness of the street scene? • Do roads and traffic make it difficult to follow your route? • Is space dedicated for people on foot? • Is separate provision made for cyclists? • Are walking/cycling routes direct - do they follow desire lines? • Does the road layout fairly reflect the conflicting needs and volumes of different user groups? • Is the route overlooked and does it feel safe to walk? • Are there sufficient choices of route?	

Questions	Comments
Footway quality • Is there beauty and interest, variety and harmony along the route? • Are footways in good condition? • Are appropriate materials used and correctly installed? • Are footways of adequate width? • Do surfaces clearly indicate where the pedestrian is expected to go? • Are there temporary obstructions on the footway (refuse, advertising boards etc.)? • Are the streets/footways clean? • Are footways well maintained, with repairs made in matching materials? • Are parking controls properly enforced? • Are sightlines blocked? **Furniture and facilities** • Is street furniture intelligently positioned and aligned? • Is street furniture well designed and attractive to look at? • Is the street free from clutter (poles, signs, control boxes etc.)? • Are there facilities for people with mobility difficulties? • Are there sufficient benches and toilets provided and are they well located? • Is lighting appropriate for pedestrians? • Is there a range of well maintained landscaping (e.g. trees and shrubs)? **Road crossings** • Are crossing facilities in the desired direction of travel? • Are crossings at ground level (i.e.: no subways/bridges)? • Is permanent priority over vehicles provided (as at a Zebra crossing)? • If light-controlled crossings, are they "straight across" or staggered? • Are people herded with railings? • Do pedestrians have to wait long before the lights change? • Do they get enough time to cross? • Are pedestrian phases provided at light controlled junctions? • Do crossings feel safe? **Information** • Are signs provided along the route from arrival point to attractions and back? • Are signs well designed and placed? • Can signs be read at night? • Do signs indicate distances and average times to destinations?	
Issues - Section 4: Arrival at town centre/attraction • Is the point of arrival clear? • Is there celebration of arrival? • Is the location clean? • Are other attractions clearly signed? • Is the network within the centre clear and of good quality? • Is there a change in route quality after arrival (is quality higher in the centre?)? • When departing, is the route to the departure point clearly indicated or visibly obvious?	

User group feedback and comments

Pilot Community Route Audits were undertaken as part of the study leading to this guide, in Hexham, Manchester and Oxford. Some points arising from these exercises are set out below.

- Routes must be carefully identified in advance of the audit, and confirmed with the user participants.
- In large towns and cities the access routes may be more difficult to isolate from the general pedestrian network, due to the multiplicity of arrival points, and the size and range of potential attractions.
- Participants in the audits on clear, short routes were willing to record their comments on the plans and forms provided. This was found to be less practicable on longer or more complex routes.
- More than one professional facilitator is required, in order to fulfil different roles during the audit: to lead discussion; to record comments; to take photographs.
- If a large group of people is involved (more than about 8 to 10 including facilitators) it may be better to subdivide the group. Larger groups cannot easily share what is being said, and they run the risk of some people feeling excluded. In addition, large groups of pedestrians can more easily assert priority over motor traffic, and cause a (usually positive) change in driver behaviour, thus giving a false impression of the ease of crossing the road.
- It is useful to involve a range of different types of participant, e.g. people with a visual or mobility impairment, a wheelchair or scooter user, someone with a child buggy, someone carrying or pulling a heavy bag. Each of these will provide a different perception of route quality and will be looking for or require different features along the route. If it proves difficult to get together a group of this kind, the participants to an extent 'role play' in order to assess the route from different user perspectives.
- During the course of the day, participants may reveal a very wide range of views and perceptions. These can help to broaden understanding on the part of the professionals who will later have to produce plans for action.

Some examples from the pilot audits are given below:

- *'The pedestrian is compressed - under threat':* a reference to there being too little footway width alongside a wide and heavily-trafficked carriageway.

- *'People need a nose for the place': 'There is an assumption that because the town is small people know where they are going':* references to a lack of signage.

- *'Local councillors and officers need to walk around the town and experience how they would arrive and depart':* a reference to the fact that few of them actually live in the town that they have jurisdiction over.

- *'You need to grab people the moment they arrive and make them feel welcome':* a reference to the need for presentation of the town's qualities at arrival points.

- *'If it is not made easy for people - visibly spelt out - then they will go elsewhere': 'I always meet my mother in Manchester. Where she lives the walk from the station into town is horrendous':* discussion on the issue of the importance of good quality access links for the success of a town (in this case Preston).

- *'The town relies on footfall not wheeltred':* comment on (an alleged) mis-perception by traders, councillors and officers of the relative importance of access by car and on foot.

- *'Small towns elsewhere in Europe celebrate their market place - here we fill it with a load of cars':* discussion about poor landscaping and absence of places to rest or simply enjoy being in town.

- *'There are too many ambush zones':* comment on poorly thought-out landscaping.

7.3 UDAL Placecheck Audit

The Placecheck method was developed by the Urban Design Alliance (UDAL) with the support of English Partnerships and the DETR (now DTLR). It followed the report *The Connected City* (Urban Initiatives, 1997) and built on the approach detailed in the report *By Design* (DETR/CABE, 2000).

Placecheck is a method of assessing the qualities of a place, showing what improvements are needed, and focusing people on working together to achieve them. It is designed to be an inclusive contribution to asking and answering a range of questions about the processes of change and the potential for physically improving an area.

Compared to the Five Cs criteria and the Community Route Audits described above, Placechecks go wider than audits of walking routes, and address broader issues relating to the quality of a place.

As with Community Route Audits, Placechecks can be performed by any group of people, from any sector or organisation in any location. They consist of a range of questions which participants address, although not necessarily 'on site'.

The questions are not comprehensive but are intended as prompts which need to take account of the size of the area, the aim of the Placecheck, and the familiarity of the participants with the concepts and issues covered.

The Placecheck is divided into three parts providing a sequence from general prompts to fairly comprehensive questions. The first two sets of questions are reproduced here.

PART A:
Three Basic Questions
1. What do you like about this place?
2. What do you dislike about it?
3. What needs to be improved?

PART B:
Fifteen more specific questions
The people
A: Who needs to be involved in changing the place for the better?
B: What resources are available locally to help people get involved?
C: What other methods might we use to develop our ideas about how to improve the place?
D: How can we make the most of other programmes and resources?
E: How can we raise our sights?
F: What other initiatives could improve the place?

The place
G: How can we make this a more special place?
H: How can we make this a greener place?
I: How can the streets and other public spaces be made safer and more pleasant for people on foot?
J: How else can public spaces be improved?
K: How can the place be made more welcoming and easier for people to find their way around?
L: How can the place be made adaptable to change in the future?
M: How can better use be made of resources?
N: What can be done to make the most of public transport?
O: How can routes be made better connected?

PART C:
Consists of over a hundred more detailed questions building upon the questions in Part B. These can be seen on the UDAL website: www.placecheck.com.

7.4 Survey of local authorities

As part of the research leading to this guide, town centre access routes (described as the 'missing links') were surveyed in whole or in part in more than 50 towns and cities in Britain and other countries. Many of these are referred to in the document.

In addition, a postal questionnaire survey was carried out to establish to what extent local authorities are aware of the town centre access issue, and are taking action to improve the quality of routes in their areas. Questionnaires were sent to all local authorities and town centre managers in the UK. A 19% response rate was achieved overall, including an impressive 27% of local authorities.

As a follow up to the survey, a practitioner workshop was conducted and the issues raised were assimilated into the guide.

A selection of key findings is given below.

Is the Missing Link a Problem?

- 76% of respondents perceived the Missing Link to be a problem in the area in which they work. The remaining 24% said that they had adequately tackled linkage problems, or that their area contained only small centres, which were compact enough not to have linkage problems.

- 91% of respondents felt that there was a need for more guidance (indicating support for the present guide).

Are good links important for the vitality/health of a centre?

- 96% of respondents agreed with this assertion.

Have you developed projects recently to tackle the Missing Link?

- More than two thirds of respondents claimed recently to have developed projects aimed at improving access to town centres. These projects ranged from well-publicised award winners such as Oldham Bus Station and West Bridgford town centre, to less well-known local links, an example being an alleyway in Horley, Surrey. The range of examples indicated a true enthusiasm amongst practitioners for tackling town centre access issues.

Who are the key parties who should be involved in the process?

- With the majority of respondents being local authority planners, 94% stated that they themselves were amongst the key practitioners that need to be involved. A similarly high requirement is placed with highway engineers and numerous comments are made suggesting that these two should combine to be the lead players in the process. However, public transport operators and urban designers especially and retailers, the public, landowners and car park operators are also widely seen as key players, with each group being identified by more than 60% of respondents.

7.5 Useful Contacts

For further advice and guidance you may wish to contact the following organisations:

The Arts Council
14 Great Peter Street
London SW1P 3NQ
Tel: 020 7333 0100
www.artscouncil.org.uk

ATCM
Association of Town Centre Management
1 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9BT
Tel: 020 7222 0120
www.atcm.org

BCSC
1 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9BT
Tel: 020 7222 1122
www.bcsc.propertymall.com

BURA
British Urban Regeneration Association
33 Great Sutton Street
London EC1V 0DX
Tel: 020 7253 5054
www.bura.org.uk

Civic Trust
17 Carlton House Terrace
London SW1Y 5AW
Tel: 020 7930 0914
www.civictrust.org.uk

CABE
Commission for Architecture and The Built Environment
The Tower Building
11 York Road
London SE1 7NX
Tel: 020 7960 2400
www.cabe.org.uk

DTLR
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5PU
Tel: 020 7944 3000
www.dtlr.gov.uk

English Heritage
Customer Services
PO Box 9019
London W1A 0JA
Tel: 020 7973 3434
www.english-heritage.org.uk

EHTF
English Historic Towns Forum
PO Box 22
Frenchay
Bristol BS16 1RZ
Tel: 0117 975 0459

Institution of Highways & Transportation
6 Endsleigh Street
London WC1H 0DZ
Tel: 020 7391 9977
Fax: 020 7387 2808
www.iht.org

Landscape Design Trust
13a West Street
Reigate
Surrey RH2 9BL
Tel: 01737 225374
www.landscape.co.uk

Landscape Institute
6-8 Barnard Mews
London W1N 4AD
Tel: 020 7738 9166
www.l-i.org.uk

Living Streets
31-33 Bondway
London SW18 1SJ
Tel: 020 7820 8208
www.livingstreets.org.uk

Local Government Association
Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ
Tel: 020 7664 3000
www.lga.gov.uk

Rees Jeffreys Road Fund
13 The avenue
Chichester
West Sussex PO19 4PX
Tel: 01243 787013

RIBA
Royal Institute of British Architects
66 Portland Place
London W1N 4AD
Tel: 020 7307 3677
www.architecture.com

RICS
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
12 Great George Street
Parliament Square
London SW1P 3AD
Tel: 020 7334 3751
www.rics.org.uk

RTPI
Royal Town Planning Institute
41 Botolph Lane
London EC3R 8DL
Tel: 020 7929 9494
www.rtpi.org.uk

RUDI
Resource for Urban Design Information
Oxford Brookes University
Gipsy Lane
Oxford OX3 0BP
Tel: 01865 483139
www.rudi.net

Sustrans
35 King Street
Bristol BS1 4DZ
Tel: 0117 926 8893
www.sustrans.org.uk

TCPA
Town and Country Planning Association
17 Carlton House Terrace
London SW1Y 5AS
Tel: 020 7930 8903
www.tcpa.org.uk

UDAL (Urban Design Alliance)
70 Cowcross Street
London
EC1M 6DG
Tel: 020 7251 5529
Fax: 020 7387 2808
www.udal.org.uk

Urban Design Group
70 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6DG
Tel: 020 7250 0872
www.udg.org.uk

7.6 References and further reading

Key references

If this guide has inspired you into further reading, then you are in for a real treat. There are some great texts out there. The following section divides the reading into three categories: perspectives on urban design, retailing and town centres and transport and accessibility. This helps the reader, but is of course unfair - there is much overlap between the issues and, indeed, integration of the disciplines is the aim of the game. To pick out the most important material is again unfair, but here goes anyway:

- **Townscape analysis:**
  - Cullen, G (1961) Townscape
  - Lynch, K (1981) A Theory of Good City Form
- **Urban design:**
  - Llewelyn-Davies For English Partnerships (2000) The Urban Design Compendium
  - Tibbalds, F (1992) Making People-Friendly Towns
- **Quality in practice:**
  - Gehl, J & Gemzoe, L (2001) New City Spaces
  - English Heritage (2000) Streets for All

Further reading

Perspectives on urban design

Alexander, C Et Al (1987) A New Theory of Urban Design

Appleyard, D (1981) Liveable Streets, Berkeley, University Of California Press

ATCM/DETR (1997) Managing Urban Spaces in Town Centres: Good Practice

Bentley, I Et Al (1985) Responsive Environments, Architectural Press

Calthorpe, P (1993) The Next American Metropolis, New York

Calvino I (1974) Invisible Cities

Colquhoun, I (1995) Urban Regeneration

Coupland, A (Ed) (1997) Reclaiming the City, E & EN Spon

Cullen, G (1961) Townscape

DETR & CABE (2000) By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System; Towards Better Practice

English Heritage (2000) Power of Place: The Future of the Historic Environment

English Partnerships (1996) Time for Design

English Partnerships (1998) Time for Design II

English Partnerships (1999) Space for Growth

Gehl, J (1987) Life between Buildings: Using Public Space

Gehl, J & Gemzoe, L (2001) New City Spaces, The Danish Architectural Press

Goodman, P (1960) Communities

Hall, P (1998) Cities in Civilisation

Hillier, B (1996) Space is the Machine, Cambridge University Press

Jacobs, A & Appleyard, D (1987) Towards and Urban Design Manifest: American Planning Association Journal.

Jacobs, A B (1993) Great Streets, Massachusetts, MIT Press

Jacobs, J (1961) The Death and Life of Great American Cities, New York Random House

Katz, P (1994) The New Urbanism: Towards an Architecture of Community

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The firm is at the cutting edge of emerging planning policy work, for example, *Planning for Sustainable Access* and *Transport Assessments* (both to be published as companion guides to PPG13), the *PPG13 Best Practice Guide* and *Sustainable Residential Quality Studies*, which are acknowledged in the Government's White Paper: *Planning for the Communities of the Future.* The firm is the author of the best practice guide *The Urban Design Compendium,* published by English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation with DETR support, and was involved in the *Urban Task Force.* The firm also recently produced *Better Places to Live: By Design; A Companion Guide to PPG3* for the DTLR.

Llewelyn Davies has been involved in city centre or city region design studies in contexts as varied as Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Newcastle and Reading. Llewelyn-Davies has developed an unparalleled record of producing masterplans and strategies for the regeneration of urban areas and of working at plan implementation with private sector developers. These projects include work from a strategic to local scale, involving masterplans, design briefs, urban design guidance, the production of supplementary planning guidance, and managing projects through the statutory planning processes.

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