

# Manual for Streets



Street wise: guidance puts the needs of pedestrians and places ahead of traffic

The *Manual for Streets* is a government design guide applicable to all residential and lightly trafficked streets. It replaces previous guidance that led to soulless development intended primarily to serve the needs of the car, especially the outdated Design Bulletin 32 that has been used for more than 30 years.

The focal point before the first appearance of the guide was almost always the movement role of residential streets at the expense of their place-making function. Neighbourhoods were seen as places to move through or pass by rather than areas in which to live. The roles of planning and urban design were marginalised by the dogmatic application of rigid highway engineering standards. Studies have revealed that this approach has no evidence base and it has in effect made roads less safe by encouraging people to drive at speed.

The manual is supported by thorough research. "We succeeded in replacing the flimsy evidence base that underpinned the engineering-led orthodoxy of the old guidance in Design Bulletin 32 with something that puts the needs of people, not just cars, at the heart of how our neighbourhoods are laid out," says Ben Castell, practice director at consultants Tribal Urban Studio.

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) housing audits have demonstrated the shortcomings of the old system. Car parking that detracts

from the street scene, failure to integrate with existing roads and designs that are not specific to the scheme or area emerged as particular weaknesses in new housing development.

The *Manual for Streets* proposes a user hierarchy that puts pedestrians first and cars last. It calls for collaboration between planners, designers, engineers and the public from the outset and recognition of streets as places for social interaction among all age groups.

It seeks design and access statements for all scales of development and networks of streets and choice of routes. It promotes a move away from hierarchies of standard road types in favour of street character types referring to vehicle movements, generally limited to 20mph, and to place. It puts the emphasis on flexibility of approach, local distinctiveness and good design quality audit systems.

There is evidence that the manual is changing practice on the ground. Local authorities nationwide are starting to adopt its principles and developing their streetscape and public realm guidance in response. Developers are realising the opportunities that the manual offers and the Planning Inspectorate is using it to rule against poorly designed schemes. CABE predicts that its lessons will lead to a transformation of new development and existing streets. All players are finding the freedom and confidence to insist on higher quality.

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## KEY PARTICIPANTS

### Manual for Streets

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## JUDGES' COMMENTS

"We were impressed by the way the *Manual for Streets* was produced and by the results achieved. With any guidance document related to design there is a risk that a new uniformity will result from slavish replication. However, the manual should avoid that trap by concentrating on establishing the principles of good design. The guidance is well-written and illustrated, making its messages easy to understand in what can too easily become a jargon-packed subject area. By supporting connectivity, walkability and quality of place, the manual is likely to prove one of the key documents produced by the government in supporting the delivery of sustainable development."