

THE **URBAN STREET!** ENVIRONMENT

Design, Management & Maintenance of Amenity for Streets and Public Spaces



TOP SCHEMES FOR TAMING TRAFFIC

Pedestrian power in Borehamwood

Godalming design wins on quality

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Catching the eye with artistic design

The growing interest in traffic calming in the UK is part of a wider concern at the conditions required to achieve an acceptable environment for pedestrians and other non-motorised road users.

In town centres and residential areas alike, vehicles are increasingly being seen as having too dominant an impact on life - bringing problems of safety as well as visual and physical intrusion, noise and pollution.

But taming traffic needs careful design and planning to avoid new conflicts and to ensure an effective and durable balance between drivers and pedestrians.

To achieve best results, careful integration of highway design and speed control features into the overall streetscape, and sensitivity to local circumstances and architectural styles, is needed to ensure aesthetic quality. One of the acknowledged keys to success is the establishment of genuinely multi-disciplinary working between engineers, architects, planners, urban designers and others with relevant professional skills.

The need for this kind of teamwork was highlighted by the the judges in the 1994 USE Traffic Calming Awards and rewarded in their final decisions. This year the judging panel chose two winners out of the six finalists. The traffic calming of the major Shenley Road traffic thoroughfare and shopping street in Borehamwood, by Hertfordshire County Council and Hertsmeire Borough Council, won for its boldness and innovation, while Godalming's town enhancement scheme, led by Waverley Borough Council with the support of Surrey County Council, was judged a winner for its quality of overall design (see panel on next page for full descriptions).

Chairman of the judges, and reader in transport and urban planning at South Bank University, Tim Pharoah, said the Borehamwood scheme, which has traffic-calmed a major route carrying over 18,000 vehicles per day, outclassed anything he has seen in Europe and was a major breakthrough in traffic calming techniques, giving pedestrians a new freedom in what was once a vehicle-dominated high street.

With regard to Godalming, the judges said that the scheme's design and implementation was of



The Borehamwood scheme (left) and Godalming's (below) were the two winners in this year's awards



Top schemes for taming traffic

The 1994 USE Traffic Calming Awards winners were announced in London in October at the second national traffic calming conference. This year the judges chose two joint winners from the six finalists. **Bernadine Walsh** reviews the top schemes and the multi-disciplinary approach that led to their success.

an exceedingly high standard. Colin Davis, architect and town planning consultant, and member of the judging panel, commented on the high visual quality of the scheme, and the co-operation that

had taken place between the district planners and the county engineers. "We will only achieve traffic calming with the technical strength and design sensitivity that is seen in Germany for example, if

Winning by innovation, boldness

Shenley Road, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire

BOLDLY GOING WHERE no traffic calming scheme has gone before. That was the verdict of the judges when they chose Shenley Road in Borehamwood in Hertfordshire as one of the two winning schemes in the 1994 USE Traffic Calming Awards.

"Pedestrians control the drivers without any difficulty," said the awards' judging panel chairman, Tim Pharoah. "The scheme should be visited by people from throughout Europe and the rest of the world. I've never seen a scheme as bold and

a wide central island separating a single narrow traffic lane in each direction, introducing 10 road humps with pedestrian refuges to slow vehicles and provide flat crossing points (complete with new 'pedestrians crossing' warning signs), constructing three mini-roundabouts, and accommodating on-street parking in defined bays with commercial servicing and orange-badge parking on dedicated areas at footway level.

"The effectiveness of the new traffic calming features can be measured by the fact that they replaced a traffic light controlled junction and three sets of pelican crossings," says Hopper. "There was no alternative traffic route provided for the 'A' road, but traffic now flows better, though at a slower pace of about 20mph, giving pedestrians a safer and quieter environment, whilst still accommodating buses and emergency vehicles." Adds Hopper: "Flows of traffic have been maintained and yet the quality of life for pedestrians has been raised to a level well beyond that attained anywhere else in Britain on a road carrying this volume of traffic."

As well as the traffic calming measures, all the footways have been resurfaced with a mixture of smooth concrete slabs and brick pavers. New street furniture has been introduced, and planting carried out to soften the landscape and add interest. Artwork has been commissioned in the form of feature 'film strip' seating and 'film' railings, to reflect the town's historic associations with the movie industry, and a new, bold modern lighting scheme has been installed. "The street scene is no longer dominated by vehicles and it is people who really matter," adds Hopper.

Urban Initiatives, the London-based urban planning and design practice, have now been

appointed by Hertsmeire Borough Council to undertake a town centre study in Borehamwood. The aim is to come up with an achievable package of physical development options to further enhance the revitalisation of the town's shopping area.

Scheme design: Hertfordshire County Council and Hertsmeire Borough Council. **Contractors:** Harton, Costain Building and Civil Engineering and Glenside Landscape and Construction. **Suppliers:** Urbis, Baggeridge, Bardon, Marshalls, Broxap & Corby, Iles, Furnitubes, Woodhouse, SMP, Nicholas Pryke, Julia Farrant.



Borehamwood's traffic calming of Shenley Road was described as 'bold and innovative' by the judges

innovative," he said.

Keith Hopper, principal engineer responsible for town centres for Hertfordshire County Council, says the key to the success of the traffic calming of the 1950s Shenley Road shopping street, which carries 18,000 vehicles per day, is the way pedestrians cross on the scheme's specially-designed flat top road humps. "The freedom of movement that this creates for pedestrians has to be seen to be believed," he maintains.

The traffic calming measures, introduced by Hertfordshire and Hertsmeire Borough Council, included narrowing Shenley Road by the provision of

each profession learns to understand the objectives and limitations of the others, and contributes to an integrated team effort. We saw that in operation in Godalming," he said.

As well as Godalming and Borehamwood, four other schemes also made it to the finals of the awards and were commented on by the judges after presentations during the second national UK

traffic calming conference.

In his summing up, chairman of the judges, Tim Pharoah, said one design issue had yet to be resolved in traffic calming. It centred on the question of whether it was better to manage traffic in town centres by clear demarcation between vehicles and pedestrians, or whether a free range, more confusing environment caused everyone to take care and

therefore promoted safety by design. However, he said, while the latter strategy may suit the agile and fit, it could be threatening for those who were fragile and elderly.

Pharoah went on to warn that there was a danger of a backlash against traffic calming unless the standards of design, landscape and construction were improved. "If the quality is not sufficiently high,

and attention to quality in design

Godalming town centre, Surrey

WHILE THE BOREHAMWOOD scheme impressed the judges with its bold approach, Waverley Borough Council's town centre enhancement of Godalming in Surrey shared the winner's accolade for its high quality of design.

"The design is sophisticated and complements the historic buildings without being intrusive. The judges particularly liked the attention to construction detail and the choice of paving materials. Public consultation had clearly been important in achieving the high quality result," judging chairman, Tim Pharoah, said. He cited the decision of the town's new Waitrose supermarket to have its entrance directly onto the street as an indication of the faith in the traditional town centre.

However Pharoah felt there was a lack of integration of the scheme with the rest of the town's environment, saying that outside the centre itself it was still a traffic-dominated environment. "We shouldn't just be creating showpiece schemes, but should also think how they relate to the town as a whole," Pharoah advised.

Godalming is an historic town, and the enhancement of the town centre was led by Waverley Borough Council with the support of Surrey County Council. The aim was to capitalise on removal of traffic from the town centre following the completion of a relief road without a formal pedestrianisation but by radically downgrading the provision for vehicular movement. A multi-disciplinary group including representatives from the county highways and the district planning department was responsible for progressing the scheme which features a single carriageway route for moving vehicles, defined with granite kerbs. These are laid flat to give the strong visual impact of a traditional high street. Ramps have been constructed at intervals in granite setts to create rumble strips, accompanied by bell bollards to provide a pinch point. Adjacent rails give pedestrian protection and create a gate-like effect with cycle parking facilities. Service bays alongside the vehicle track are flush with the footpath to enable pedestrians to spread onto the space available when not in use by vehicles. A double row of granite setts provides a tactile and visual delineation of the traffic area.

The main pedestrian areas in the High Street and Bridge Street are paved with brindle clay pavements while blacktop has been used on the narrow vehicle track. A blue/grey paviour surfacing defines vehicle crossovers to private parking and junctions.

The town's Church Street has been treated in a slightly different manner, with its curves retained and repaving in York stone on the footway and smooth setts



laid in the carriageway.

Throughout the scheme area, the clutter of traffic signs, grey poles and yellow lines has been removed as far as possible by designation of a restricted parking zone and the co-operation of property owners in allowing the relevant signs to be fixed to walls wherever possible. Traditional street furniture introduced with the scheme includes lighting, seating, bus shelters and litter bins chosen to harmonise with the historic centre.

"The scheme has provided a safe and more attractive shopping area for Godalming residents and visitors alike, as well as a quieter place to live," says project co-ordinator, Tony Stovin, of Waverley Borough Council. "However, having tasted freedom from the car the public are now seeking full pedestrianisation. This is difficult because of the servicing needs and access to residential properties. Extensive rear servicing is impractical and would be detrimental to the historic fabric of the town. "Furthermore, limited traffic contributes to the activity and policing of the town, particularly in the evenings. However the possibility of licenced access and restricted servicing during core shopping hours is being investigated to remove any extensive vehicle movement and enable the town centre to evolve," Stovin says.

Scheme design: Waverley Borough Council, Surrey County Council and Modern Design Group. **Engineers:** Monson Engineering **Quality Surveyors:** Peter North and Partners **Contractors:** Brophy Construction **Suppliers:** Tarmac Bricks, Ketley Bricks, Marshalls Paving, Furnitubes, Broxap & Corby, The Cast Iron Workshop, Urbis, The Woodhouse Company, D.W. Windsor.

Godalming won for its high quality of design which the judges said complemented the historic buildings

the backlash could become quite vicious," he warned. This, he maintained, could prevent traffic calming developing in the way that it should, and becoming a normal part of new residential estates and urban enhancement and maintenance programmes.

"We want to see high quality traffic calming being absorbed into mainstream practice," concluded Pharoah. ▶

The 1994 Judges

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| TIM PHAROAH | - reader in transport and urban planning, South Bank University, London. |
| COLIN DAVIS | - architect and town planning consultant, Colin J. Davis & Associates |
| ANDREW DAVIS | - director, Environmental Transport Association |
| HEATHER WARD | - principal research fellow, University of London Centre for Transport Studies. |