

## **Streets manual puts cars in their proper place**

*Manual for Streets* may have its flaws but, contrary to Daniel Black's letter (*LTT* 16 Aug), the promotion of permeable street layouts is not one of them. It should be possible for people to travel within an area and between areas without deviations or detours. This keeps distances short and provides legibility, thus maximising the potential for walking, cycling and bus riding. Advocating such permeability in no way denies the value of selective closures to private motor vehicles in order to provide preferential routes for pedestrians, cyclists and buses (see *Manual for Streets* paragraphs 6.3.11; 6.4.2; 6.5.6; 7.3.3). But, in reality, very few such partial closures are needed to create the necessary priority for the sustainable modes, or to prevent excessive motor vehicle through traffic ('rat runs').

A key aim of the guidance is to halt the practice of impermeable residential layouts, with aimlessly winding 'distributor roads' and loops and cul-de-sacs that create inconvenient and lengthy (not to mention ugly and boring) routes for people on foot and that are difficult to serve effectively by bus.

The guidance stresses (chapters 2 and 3) the need to find solutions that respond to context, requiring careful planning and design, with the accommodation of vehicles as one factor, rather than the dominant factor. The issue of permeability must therefore be addressed in each circumstance, alongside active frontage, preferential routing, passive surveillance, legibility, bus routes, cycle routes, children's play, vehicle speeds and so on.

By including a comprehensive range of considerations and showing how these can be brought together when planning and designing streets, *The Manual* encourages context-sensitive solutions. It illuminates the possibilities for successful streets where pedestrians and street activities are the foremost consideration. It also shows how to tackle those engineering aspects (such as impermeable layouts, sight lines, large corner radii and limitations on direct access) that have so often undermined the creation of liveable neighbourhoods. The practice of giving first consideration to motor vehicles is rejected, and high time too.

**Tim Pharoah**

Co-author, *Manual for Streets*

London SW16