

Designing Inclusive Streets

We welcome the Government's Inclusive Transport Strategy and look forward to working together to help deliver this agenda across London.

Challenge

London's rising population and associated growth is challenging the ability of our streets both to provide an efficient conduit for people, goods and services and to be a welcoming public realm that encourages and enables people to adopt more active, less car-dependent, life styles.

Our streets have to be flexible to adapt to different challenges and be designed in a way that addresses changing shopping and leisure habits and working patterns, responds to the needs of an ageing population, and is future-proofed to mitigate climate change and accommodate new innovations, such as electric and autonomous vehicles.

Context

London is home to different types of street determined by the complex interplay of their place and movement functions; from quiet local residential streets, to busy high streets, to main roads that carry high volumes of traffic.

Highway authorities across London strive to improve the quality and safety of our streets and help reduce traffic dominance and speed through the design of new streets and neighbourhoods, retrofitting existing residential streets, and creating more welcoming high streets and town centres.

Achieving the right balance between the needs of people who walk and cycle and the access and service needs of shops and businesses in places that are often busy throughout the day and night provides a complex challenge for designers.

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We champion a holistic approach to the design of streets that considers all modes in the round, as well as the character of the built environment, rather than focusing on a single mode or issue. Street design involves many stakeholders and knowledge of regulatory measures, design standards, guidance and expertise across a range of scales and should not be the responsibility of a single profession.

We welcome the co-design approach to street design to bring together technical expertise and local knowledge and people to inform locally-determined solutions. This should start early in the design process and continue as the design progresses from concept to detail design. This need not be more onerous than the current approach where the ultimate users of the street are more often consulted towards the end of the design process.

While recognising the general benefits of consistency, we reject a standardised approach to street design. Most successful designs grow out of a clear understanding of context and policy with well-defined outcomes and concise well-articulated objectives and priorities.

Designers should gather data on local place and movement characteristics and rigorously monitor the design following construction to ensure it has delivered the intended outcomes.

We would expect designers to undertake accessibility audits and Equality Impact Assessments for projects both large and small, and to provide designer's responses which clarify the project objectives and how they have influenced design development.

Research

We welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with people with disabilities to help shape new design guidance based on evidence not anecdote. A starting point would be to understand the essential features needed for an inclusive street environment and consider how both design interventions and traffic management can influence civil behaviour.

A useful starting point for the research would be to take forward the recommendations in the CIHT's Creating Better Streets report (2018). These include that we should stop using the term 'shared space' – which has largely served to confuse – and instead consider street design through reference to the following three types of design approach: pedestrian prioritised streets, informal streets and enhanced streets.

We suggest that the research by Pedestrian Accessibility Movement and Environment Laboratory (2009) be updated and extended to look afresh at methods of control, tactile paving and creating streets which are easily navigated by people with disabilities of all kinds.

We recognise that strategies that reduce traffic volume and speeds is a key determinant in encouraging everybody to choose to travel by more active modes: walking cycling and public transport.

We recognise that in order to provide more inclusive streets local authorities must also provide softer measures such as training and support alongside physical measures to encourage people with disabilities to get out and about.

The DfT has recently commissioned advice on the possible scope for updating both Inclusive Mobility and the Guidance on the Use of Tactile Paving Surfaces and we are willing to engage on any work to update these documents and work with Government to deliver inclusive streets for all.

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