

Chapter 12 Town Centres

12.1 Introduction

This chapter alludes to the wider aspects of town centre management but concentrates on transport aspects. Nevertheless, decisions on traffic and transport systems in town centres should be made in the context of an agreed overall management strategy [NIa]. The control of traffic and its undesirable effects, such as noise and fumes, should be one specific aim. At the same time, traffic management and the promotion of alternatives to the private car contribute to other aims – including encouraging investment, environmental improvement, generating a coherent image for the town centre and allowing more imaginative use of public space. The underlying assumption is that provision should only be made in town centres for traffic that is essential to the economic survival and development of that centre, so that the maximum space is retained for core activities and the highest possible level of amenity provided for pedestrians. A co-ordinated approach to town centre initiatives, including traffic restraint measures, is needed to put these principles into effect (ICE, 1993).

12.2 Transportation Planning Objectives

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 6 Town Centres and Retail Developments (DOE, 1996a) [NIb] [[Sa] sets out objectives for transportation planning in town centres, under the following three headings.

Access to Town Centres:

- ❑ to manage access by car and parking, as part of an overall strategy for the town centre;
- ❑ to promote improvement in quality and convenience of alternative modes to the car; and
- ❑ to meet the access and mobility needs of disabled people.

Traffic Management:

- ❑ to take an integrated approach to transport in town centres, which complements the strategy for development;
- ❑ to provide good access by car, public transport, bicycle and on foot;
- ❑ to review the allocation of space for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport in shopping areas and the scope for implementing priority measures;

- ❑ to protect and enhance the pedestrian environment;
- ❑ to reduce the impact of through traffic and address the need for deliveries; and
- ❑ to be consistent with advice in PPG13 Transport (DOE/DOT, 1994) [Sb].

Car Parking:

- ❑ to produce a comprehensive parking strategy for the town centre;
- ❑ to set appropriate maximum car parking guidelines for new developments;
- ❑ to ensure that car parking in the town centre serves the town centre as a whole;
- ❑ to promote the provision and use of car parks for shoppers and other short-term parking; and
- ❑ to set policies and parking charges, which give priority to short-term parking for visitors and shoppers, rather than commuters.

12.3 Vital and Viable Town Centres

The design and management of town centres requires the skilled application of many of the techniques described elsewhere in this book. The fundamental challenge is to create a high quality environment for pedestrians, whilst retaining access for essential private traffic, public transport and vehicles used for servicing and maintenance (see Photograph 12.1). Hard choices have to be made about the extent to which access is to be allowed and what exemptions from restrictions are to be made, for example for cyclists or people with disabilities. Where vehicle access is permitted, at all times or only at certain times of the day, the detailed design of the areas shared between vehicles and pedestrians is critical to the way in which space will be used and to the success of the town centre. This need for balance is clearly established in Government policy (HMG, 1987). The advice in PPG6 (DOE, 1996a) [Sa] emphasises a significant shift in the nature of that balance.

In addition to PPG6, a range of Planning Policy Guidance from central government emphasises the importance of recognising the links between, and the co-ordination of, land-use and transport decisions. Some of the key PPGs cover General Policy and Principles (DOE, 1996b), Transport (DOE/DOT, 1994),



Photograph 12.1: An example of a high quality street environment.

Planning and the Historic Environment (DOE, 1994a) and Tourism (DOE, 1992) [Sc]. In the case of transport, further guidance is provided in PPG13 – A Guide to Better Practice (DOE/DOT, 1995). The importance of a strategic planning framework is examined in more detail in Chapters 1, 3 and 6.

Town Centre Strategies are devised to facilitate the continuing evolution of the centres, keeping them competitive with out-of-town complexes and neighbouring town centres and meeting the needs of the local population. The character of a town centre will be determined by its history, the type of community it serves and the nature of competing or complementary centres. There is no magic formula for a successful town centre but the Urban and Economic Development Group (URBED) publication *Vital and Viable Town Centres* (HMG, 1994) identifies three broad indicators of health. These are:

- ❑ attractions – the core facilities in the town centre;
- ❑ amenity – the supporting facilities and general environmental standards; and
- ❑ accessibility – how easy it is to reach and to move around within the centre.

Focal points for activity, including town centres, inevitably attract traffic if they are successful. They will not thrive if users cannot access them with comparative ease. The medium- to long-term viability of a town centre may, therefore, depend as much on the development control decisions made, within government guidance, by a planning authority, as on traffic management or environmental

initiatives designed to bring about immediate improvements (BDP, 1992). Statutory Local Plans, supported by PPGs [Sc] and other central government policies, provide the basis both for resisting unsuitable out-of-town proposals and for supporting appropriate development in town centres. Approvals for town centre sites should ensure that the applicant has addressed not only land-use issues, such as purpose, density, scale, appearance and orientation of the development, but also its likely traffic generation, level of parking provision, accessibility by public transport, cyclists and pedestrians and when and how it is to be serviced. The Institution of Highways & Transportation (IHT) has published useful guidelines for assessing such effects of development proposals (IHT, 1994) and Part 4 of this book examines the topic in more detail.

A particular characteristic of most town centres, and the key to their long-term economic survival, is the diversity of activity they provide. Retailing, employment and services, such as banking and refreshment, will be found in all centres. Most also provide leisure facilities and some have residential accommodation. Historic towns can have the added advantage that the fabric of the town represents an attraction in itself. With such a variety of activity, town centres can be in use by the public for 16 or more hours each day. Add to this the out-of-hours servicing and maintenance and 24-hour activity is becoming increasingly common in town centres (Comedia, 1991). Control and management of access may be needed throughout the day and night in such circumstances, to protect the amenity of residents or to minimise the risk of accidental or criminal damage to public and private property. Conversely, provision must be made for all legitimate servicing and maintenance activity and for users of facilities to gain access, so that the diversity essential to healthy town centres can be maintained.

There must also be at least a minimum level of activity in a town centre for it to be successful. People in a town centre expect a choice of shops or to be able to perform a range of tasks in one location or both. In other words, there needs to be a 'critical mass' of facilities, without which a town centre is likely to enter into a spiral of decline. The scale of this will vary from centre to centre and will depend, crucially, on the attractiveness of alternative centres (BDP, 1992).

The need to provide both diversity and critical mass in a town centre will influence the area defined as the centre. Apparent fringe areas may, in fact, be an intrinsic part of the town centre. A street of estate agents or specialist shops may appear to be detached

from the main shopping area but, nevertheless, make an important contribution to the centre as a whole. This must be considered when planning changes to access.

Some town centres benefit from particular features or characteristics, which add to the attractiveness for visitors. River-fronts and wharf areas often act as a focus for leisure activity and historic areas or cultural buildings may draw users to a centre. Indeed, every effort should be made to promote such features as a component of the town's quality and heritage. Doing so can, however, produce its own traffic management problems, including the need to accommodate peaks of activity on a seasonal basis, at weekends or at certain times of the day, and to provide more than usually comprehensive information (such as pedestrians' direction-signing) for occasional or one-off visitors. Many nationally and internationally recognised historic centres, such as York and parts of London, have responded by developing tourist management strategies, including provision for coaches and marketing public transport as a means of accessing major attractions. The English Historic Towns Forum has published guidance on the management of visitors in large numbers (EHTF, 1994a).

A key pointer to success in a town centre is the level of pedestrian activity and the environment in which it takes place. Whatever means of travel a visitor uses to access the centre, he or she will almost certainly spend some time as a pedestrian, a definition which, here, includes wheelchair and pushchair users. It is essential that pedestrians' needs and aspirations are given the highest priority. Doing so is also likely to increase the overall performance of a town centre (TEST, 1988). Public expectations of town centres have heightened over recent years. Out-of-town shopping centres, with their contained and managed environments, have set standards that users want to see replicated, as far as practicable, in town centres. The IHT has published guidelines on moving towards meeting these aspirations, through more wide-spread and effective pedestrianisation (IHT, 1989), and the needs of pedestrians are explored in more detail in Chapter 22. Providing a high quality environment is the essential complementary step to meeting basic access needs for vehicles and ensuring good accessibility for pedestrians.

12.4 Creating a High Quality Environment

Two components of a high quality environment are the appearance of the area, both public and private

buildings and spaces, and the way it is used. Both are crucial in a town centre. Users will feel more at ease and will respect an area better if it has a coherent overall image, has been well designed at the detailed level and is well maintained and enforced. This applies everywhere but is particularly important in the case of Conservation Areas. All well-kept areas will be more likely to encourage users to spend time there and will contribute further to the positive feel of the town (see Photograph 12.2). The importance of this basic maintenance of standards is expanded upon by Mitchell (1986) and Hillman (1988).

As well as the core facilities that a town offers, such as shops, employment services and commercial and leisure facilities, users in high quality town centres typically look for:

- ❑ places to rest and relax (see Photograph 12.3);
- ❑ informal entertainment;



Photograph 12.2: An attractive and well maintained city centre space.



Photograph 12.3: A place to rest and relax.



Photograph 12.4: An example of a managed market.

- ☐ managed markets/street trading (see Photograph 12.4);
- ☐ facilities to amuse children;
- ☐ information on facilities or events (see Photograph 12.5);
- ☐ feelings of safety and security;
- ☐ cleanliness and tidiness, including the prompt removal of graffiti and flyposting;
- ☐ attractive planting, landscaping, features and use of materials;
- ☐ spaces free from clutter;
- ☐ freedom from heavy traffic; and
- ☐ freedom from noise and fumes.

Safety and security aspects are also significant to users and all projects should address these at the design stage (LBM, 1994).

Measures to meet these requirements will be more effective if they are introduced, within an overall urban design framework, which provides:

- ☐ a coherent image and sense of place;

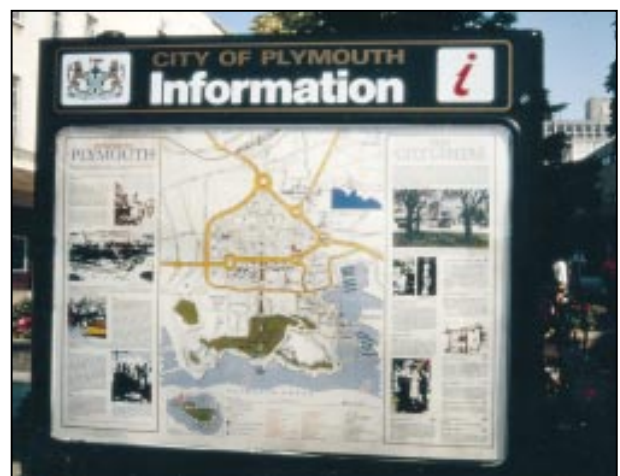
- ☐ emphasis on focal points and points of interest, such as buildings and spaces;
- ☐ positive/systematic treatment of the links between spaces; and
- ☐ integration of the public and private domains.

The framework documents should cover how the area is to be used and how it is to look when complete. A good example of this is the Glasgow City Centre Public Realm Study (Gillespies, 1995a). The process of achieving the vision is more appropriately covered by the type of action plan, advocated in Section 12.5, on Town Centre Management.

The focus of this Chapter on traffic and transport issues means that specific reference is warranted to three aspects of physical design. These are:

- ☐ space-sharing between pedestrians and vehicles;
- ☐ the geometric design of shared spaces; and
- ☐ the choice and maintenance of materials for areas of street-space used by people and vehicles.

Definitive rules for sharing space between pedestrians and vehicles in town centres are difficult to provide. There will always be an element of professional judgement as to acceptable arrangements and appropriate designs for shared spaces. Furthermore, public consultation may show a particular combination to be acceptable to users of one town centre but not of another. At one extreme, half a dozen service or maintenance vehicles per hour, driven carefully in an otherwise fully-pedestrianised street, will not cause undue danger or disturbance to pedestrians and are unlikely to affect the way pedestrians use the street. In these circumstances, people crossing the street are likely to walk in straight lines towards their next destination, ignoring vehicle paths. On the other hand, pedestrians in a street carrying 30 or more buses an hour are likely to treat the space used by the buses as an exclusive



Photograph 12.5: Town centre information display.

vehicle-path, irrespective of the way it is delineated. They will tend to cross this path at right angles and walk near the edges of the street. Most decisions about space-sharing lie somewhere between these examples.

One guideline is to provide clear delineation of vehicle-paths, where vehicles are predominantly passing through, rather than gaining access to, a street. This would apply, for example, in the case of:

- ❑ bus routes;
- ❑ through cycle-routes; and
- ❑ access roads to car parks.

More extensive guidelines on Buses in Shopping Areas are included in the report of a study carried out for London Transport (TEST, 1987).

Even where vehicles are being allowed access for local servicing only, separate paths may be justified where the flow or speed of vehicles would otherwise cause anxiety to pedestrians. Nevertheless, emphasising by design that a street is intended to be primarily for



Photograph 12.6: Shared space where pedestrians are not threatened by the presence of occasional vehicles.



Photograph 12.7: Good town centre traffic management – Town Hall Square Reading. Courtesy Babbie Group.

pedestrians can influence the way vehicles use the street (see Photograph 12.6). Reducing carriageway widths, raising pedestrian crossing points, introducing chicanes and tightening turning radii can all help to calm intruding traffic. Some of the most effective street designs manage to control drivers' behaviour, by combining speed-reducing features with more subtle measures, such as the visual treatment of entry points to the street, the placing of street furniture within the street, the choice and detailed layout of surfacing materials and even the presence of large numbers of pedestrians. Most of these elements combine in the 20 miles/h zone in Newbury's main shopping street, for example, where flat-topped road humps have become informal pedestrian crossings. Traffic Calming Guidelines (DCC, 1991) and Traffic Calming in Practice (CSS, 1994) provide illustrated examples of many of the measures available and the DOT has published both a brief catalogue of road safety measures (DOT, 1994) and a bibliography of relevant Government guidance on traffic calming (DOT, 1996f) [Sd].

Traffic calming is an evolving technique with innovative schemes being trialled by imaginative local authorities. Such innovation is to be encouraged but it is essential that the measures are introduced within an overall strategy for calming and safety, that a full audit is carried out of the likely safety performance of individual schemes (see Section 16.11) and that the necessary statutory approvals are obtained. The IHT has published guidelines on some of these aspects (IHT, 1990 and 1996). Road Safety as a whole is considered in more detail in Chapter 16. A location which has combined many of the principles of good town centre traffic management is Town Hall Square in Reading (see Photograph 12.7). A road which separated the Old Town Hall, now a museum, conference and entertainment venue, from



Photograph 12.8: an example of an appropriate maintenance method.



Photograph 12.9: An example of the purposeful use of bollards.

the town centre was closed to through traffic and incorporated into the Town Hall forecourt to form a public square, whilst retaining vehicular access for servicing. Although the short link that was closed offered a saving of hundreds of metres over the alternative route, subtle design has resulted in few contraventions of the restrictions and has led to the square being a focus for leisure activity in the town centre.

The longer-term integrity of shared or pedestrianised areas is heavily dependent on the performance of surfacing materials. It is critical that these are capable of carrying the loads and withstanding the uses to which they will be subjected in practice. Full account must be taken of the type of maintenance, delivery and service vehicles that will use each part of the street and of the maintenance methods that will be used on the surfaces themselves (see Photograph 12.8). For example, refuse vehicles may be the heaviest vehicles using a particular surface and high-pressure water, used for cleaning, can quickly wash out bedding sand for artificial stone-paving or blockwork, producing subsidence or failure. The designer can provide protection and prevent access to parts of a street by the strategic placing of street furniture or the purposeful use of bollards (see Photograph 12.9). This, may however, add

unnecessary clutter and a better environment is provided by designing and constructing surfaces to withstand the types of vehicles that are likely to use them, for whatever reason.

The choice of materials, and their detailed deployment, should take full account of the overall townscape. Footway and carriageway surfaces, which complement and blend in with the surrounding buildings, help to create a coherence to the area as a whole. Users are more aware of being in a functioning town centre and that they should give priority to the activities and pedestrian movement taking place there. Again, particular attention is warranted to the design of street works in historic areas, a need emphasised by English Heritage (EH, 1993).

Although the choice of appropriate materials and construction, to withstand expected loading and to maintain or enhance the visual coherence of an area, are essential steps, more is needed to guarantee a high quality environment. Careful attention must be paid to the detailing of construction and to the overall layout of surfaces, signs and landscaping, if the maximum value is to be obtained. Attention to detail is important in any scheme but its absence is most likely to be noticed in historic areas, a point recognised in a series of publications by the Civic Trust (CT *et al*, 1993 and 1994), the English Historic Towns Forum (EHTF, 1994b) and the DOT (DOT, 1996a) [Se].

However well-designed and constructed a scheme is, regular care and maintenance are essential to the quality of the town centre. Town Centre Management Strategies need to provide for regular and systematic inspection of the fabric of the area, to encourage and facilitate public reporting of damage, vandalism (including graffiti) or failures, using 'Defects Cards' or 'Hotlines' for example, and to act promptly when such damage is reported. At the same time, litter-picking, sweeping, gully-emptying, landscape maintenance and other periodic maintenance activities need to be programmed at appropriate intervals. In times of highly constrained budgets, the period between programmed maintenance visits, or the degree of deterioration which is deemed to warrant reactive maintenance, tends to increase but excessive relaxation of standards can prove to be a false economy. If left unattended, relatively minor damage to surfacing can lead to major deterioration of the surface, requiring significant investment to restore its integrity at a later date. Similarly, failure to repair broken street furniture, or to remove graffiti, can lead to 'copy cat' damage, either through carelessness or as deliberate acts of vandalism. The

need for good maintenance strategies for town centres has been acknowledged for many years (Hillman, 1988). Comprehensive guidance on the maintenance of physical assets is contained in the Highways Maintenance Handbook (Atkinson, 1990).

The foregoing analysis of designing effectively for vehicles using and sharing pedestrian space illustrates that traffic management, urban design and engineering design should be carried out as a co-ordinated exercise, if the end result is to contribute fully to a high quality town centre environment. Much valuable work in recognition of these principles has been carried out in Scotland, on the initiative of the former Strathclyde Regional Council (SRC, 1994 and 1995) and more recently by Scottish Enterprise.

12.5 Town Centre Management

Town Centre Management, which derives from the need to view town centres as complex and integrated entities, manifests itself in a wide range of forms, from the purely janitorial, keeping streets clean and tidy, to the long term strategic, facilitating and promoting major change, with many combinations in between (Gillespies, 1994 and 1995b). Each is an equally valid approach, if based on an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats



Photograph 12.10: Enforcement of parking regulations.

that apply to the centre (a SWOT analysis). Town Centre Management may be the responsibility of a nominated Town Centre Manager, with a permanent staff or an ad-hoc team of people. The Association of Town Centre Management advocates tailoring the approach to the needs of the particular location and suggests the following definition for Town Centre Management (Donaldsons *et al*, 1994):

‘Town Centre Management is the effective co-ordination of the private and public sectors, including local authority professionals, to create, in partnership, a successful town centre – building upon full consultation.’

Whatever form of Town Centre Management is adopted, some common elements should be:

- ❑ a vision or overall strategy;
- ❑ an Action Plan for achieving the vision;
- ❑ partnership with users, businesses, service providers and investors, with clear agreements over responsibilities;
- ❑ active leadership and promotion of the overall plan, including fund-raising;
- ❑ day-to-day management and control; and
- ❑ enforcement power and duties (see Photograph 12.10).

The overall action plan, supplementing the vision or strategic plan, should cover changes to traffic management, servicing and access. It should detail the desired end-scheme, as outlined in the strategic plan, and set out how its implementation is to be phased. Restrictions on access are often initially opposed by businesses and may have to be introduced in a less stringent form, or over a smaller area, than originally proposed. Once successful, pressure is then frequently brought to bear to extend the restrictions. It is, therefore, worth adopting a stage-by-stage approach, helping to retain public support for the strategy at all stages.

Any long-term plan should also allow for updating in the light of developing circumstances. For example, land-use changes may occur which dictate alterations to access arrangements.

Once changes have been effected to access arrangements, as part of an overall plan, a key town centre management function is to ensure the operation and enforcement of those access restrictions and priorities. This involves establishing working relationships with groups, such as traders and market-stall operators, to ensure compliance with voluntary agreements or permit systems. Similar relationships are needed with bus and taxi operators, over issues such as temporary parking and the



Photograph 12.11: The pedestrianised town centre of Reading. Courtesy: Babbie Group.

layover of vehicles in the centre. Liaison is needed with the police to enforce access restrictions and on-street parking regulations, unless these have been taken over by the local authority. Town centre managers are usually directly responsible for controlling issues such as street trading, markets and off-street council car parking and for liaising with private car park operators. An effective means of establishing and maintaining contact is the creation of town centre working groups, with membership drawn from the spectrum of organisations involved in service provision. The groups require careful management to avoid degeneration into ‘talking shops’. Making them task-focused can prevent this happening.

The pedestrianisation of Reading Town Centre is one example, out of many well-planned and implemented town centre improvements (RBC, 1989) (see Photograph 12.11). Promoted by both the County and Borough Councils, its radical impact on traffic circulation, including bus-routeing, was endorsed, following extensive consultation and promotion. It was the culmination of strategic transportation and land-use planning over many years, yet its eventual acceptance required extensive on-the-ground negotiation, with individual businesses and service providers, and consequent changes to the detail of the initial proposals. Much of this negotiation was carried out by the Town Centre Manager. The initial scheme, in its modified form, was so well received that it has subsequently been extended, with further access restrictions coming into effect.

A key lesson from the Reading project is that a successful and thriving town centre is dependent on sensible implementation and enforcement of controls



Photograph 12.12: Restrictions on vehicular access at particular times.



Photograph 12.13: Park and Ride as an alternative means of access for car-users.

and restrictions and management arrangements must be capable of adapting quickly to change. However thorough the pre-planning of access restrictions might be, unforeseen circumstances can arise which call for a relaxation of the formal restrictions. The system must be capable of accommodating these on a flexible and equitable basis.

12.6 Managing Town Centre Access

Previous sections have stressed that high quality town centres require restrictions on vehicle access. At the same time, their success is dependent upon significant numbers of people being able to gain access to the facilities offered and on the servicing and maintenance of these facilities. Demand for private vehicle access will usually exceed the levels compatible with a high quality environment and some form of demand-management will need to be employed. It is essential, however, that restraint measures are considered as part of a co-ordinated package of measures. The elements of demand-management will include 'sticks' and 'carrots', such as:

- restricting access to particular areas and/or spaces;
- restricting access at particular times (see Photograph 12.12);
- regulating demand by parking cost and supply;
- prioritising access for specific types of user, such as permit holders and Orange Badge holders;
- prioritising access for specific vehicle-types, such as buses, light rail, taxis, and cycles;
- making alternatives to car-use more attractive (eg park and ride) (see Photograph 12.13); and



Photograph 12.14: Specific provision for cyclists.

- ❑ regulating demand by road-use pricing.

Measures for deterring and restraining traffic are explained more fully in Chapters 13, 19, 20 and 21 and their enforcement is addressed in Chapter 14.

Implicit in this approach is the concept of need. Most people would accept that disabled people should be given privileged access. The extent to which other users should be assisted or discouraged may vary according to local priorities. A typical list of users to be included in a priority hierarchy might be, as follows:

- ❑ emergency services;
- ❑ pedestrians;
- ❑ disabled people;
- ❑ cyclists;
- ❑ public transport users;
- ❑ drivers of delivery vehicles;
- ❑ public utility operators;
- ❑ taxis; and
- ❑ private cars.

Chapters 22, 23 and 24 detail how walking, cycling and public transport uses can positively be encouraged and appropriate provision made for people with impaired mobility.

The need for positive measures for pedestrians has been stressed throughout this chapter and specific reference has been made to the IHT Guidelines on pedestrianisation (IHT, 1989). The particular needs of people with impaired mobility are also covered by IHT Guidelines (IHT, 1991) and the DOT has published more specific guidance on Parking for Disabled People (DOT, 1995a) [Se].

The National Cycling Strategy (DOT, 1996b) [Sf] sets out how the specific needs of cyclists can be met and how cycling can play a significant role in urban transport policy, including town centre strategies (see Photograph 12.14). The DOT has also published a Cycling Bibliography (DOT, 1995b) [Sd] and guidance on specific issues such as Bike-and-Ride (DOT, 1996c) [Se].

The role of public transport in serving town centres is addressed in the Chartered Institute of Transport's 'Better Public Transport for Cities (CIT, 1996) and useful practical guidance on designing for buses is given in Better Buses – Good Practice in Greater Manchester (AGMA, 1992).

Crucial to the vitality of town centres is the need to provide for effective servicing. Businesses have become increasingly flexible in their acceptance of loading restrictions, especially where these have been introduced as a component of an environmental

improvement. Nevertheless, there is a limit to the times when businesses can accommodate deliveries, especially in the case of small businesses where the proprietor has to be present to receive the goods. There will always be a need to provide for emergency service access. In the case of markets, stall-holders may also need to top-up stock during the day, again requiring special arrangements. Acceptance of a town centre proposal often depends crucially on careful negotiation with individual businesses or their representatives, such as Chambers of Commerce, over restrictions on access and on patient explanation as to why they are needed. Guidance on managing lorry movement is offered by the Freight Transport Association (FTA, 1983) and the Civic Trust (CT *et al*, 1990) and the topic is addressed in more detail in Chapter 25.

In addition to influencing the balance between modes, prioritisation can occur between users of the same mode, for example in the allocation of, and charging for, parking space. Typically, this would be:

- ❑ disabled people;



Photograph 12.15: Vehicular access to rear service courts only.

- ❑ residents;
- ❑ short-term shoppers;
- ❑ users of leisure facilities;
- ❑ people on personal business;
- ❑ local employees on unsocial hours;
- ❑ other local employees; and
- ❑ onward commuters (eg parking-and-riding).

Chapter 19 explores the possibilities for parking management in more detail.

This approach has, for example, been used in the prioritisation of both on- and off-street parking space in Wimbledon Town Centre in the London Borough of Merton (Nicholson, 1995). More general advice on parking provision is available in Parking Policy, Design and Data (Young, 1991), through the British Parking Association (BPA, 1988) and in PPG13 – A Guide to Better Practice (DOE/DOT, 1995) [Sg].

In allocating space, by whatever method and for whatever mode of travel, it is important to look individually at the component areas of a town centre. A town centre square is always a focus for pedestrian activity and should be kept as free of traffic as possible. All traffic could be banned throughout the working day, for example, with servicing and maintenance traffic only being allowed outside these hours. Elsewhere, a street on the edge of the main shopping area might be designated for use as the principal setting down and picking up location for

buses serving the centre. This could result in an increase in traffic flow, through the concentration of activity in one street. This may actually be seen as an advantage by businesses in the street, who experience increased passing trade.

The creation of different categories of roads and spaces, with clear rules about the types of vehicle allowed access and at what times of day, is a fundamental element of co-ordinated town centre design. Some typical categories would include:

- ❑ a pedestrian zone with no vehicular access;
- ❑ servicing traffic only, but time restricted;
- ❑ a bus-only street;
- ❑ cycles and Orange Badge holders only;
- ❑ special permit holders only, such as market stall-holders; and
- ❑ access to specific premises only, such as car parks and service yards (see Photographs 12.15).

Generally, through traffic should be excluded. To achieve this, in many city centres, alternative routes have to be built, or designated, to by-pass the town centre. The location of these all-purpose routes must be considered carefully, as they can form barriers to movement into, and out of, the town centre, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. Part 5 of this book examines the techniques for major infrastructure construction and Chapters 15 and 18 respectively look at information for transport users and at the management of the transport network for maximum efficiency.

Under certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to provide for through movement in a town centre for modes other than private cars. A light rapid transit route may run on-street, serving cross-town movement as well as access to the town centre. The same may apply for bus or cycle routes. Chapter 34 looks at the provision of fixed-track routes.



Photograph 12.16: Vehicles powered by CNG minimise pollution.



Photograph 12.17: Signing of town centre car parks with real-time information.

Public concern about the effects of noise and pollution on health and quality of life is reflected in Government guidance (DOE 1994b [Sh] and 1994c [Si]). The Government has also suggested ways in which positive action, through planning decisions (DOE/DOT, 1993) and traffic management (DOT, 1996d), can control pollution and has also recognised the need to consider the possible adverse effects of traffic-calming measures (DOT, 1996e).

With heightened public awareness of traffic pollutants, consideration could be given to requiring, or favouring, vehicles which minimise pollution, when considering who should be allowed access to restricted areas. Light rail vehicles are quiet and non-polluting at their point of use and therefore suitable for town centres (as in Manchester City Centre, for example). Similarly, hybrid electric buses offer an environmentally-friendly alternative, in certain circumstances; electric minibuses are used on the 'Downtown Shuttle' in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA, for example. Vehicles powered by compressed natural gas (CNG) might be of more general and immediate applicability in the UK (see Photograph 12.16). Similar in many ways to petrol or diesel vehicles, they are quieter and emit virtually no noxious gases or particulates. Many types of vehicle are available, with CNG engines as an 'off-the-peg' option.

An analysis of the benefits of different types of alternative fuel and of other methods of reducing vehicular emissions is contained in the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report on Transport and the Environment (RCEP, 1994)

Any vehicle-user, public or private, has to park or get off their vehicle at some point in a town centre. They will need either secure and safe facilities, in which to park their own vehicle, or safe and comfortable areas in which to wait for public transport. In all cases, the route from their parking or alighting point to the main areas of town centre activity must be well signposted, safe, easy to use and well lit. Parking facilities and pedestrian links to them must be seen by users to be part of the town centre, so that a positive image is conveyed from the moment of arrival. Chapters 15, 19, 22 and 24 address requirements for users of public and private vehicles.

This concept of a town centre being welcoming to all arriving users starts even before the alighting point. For private vehicle-users, routes to car parks or cycle-parking facilities should be clearly signed, with real-time information about available spaces where possible (see Photograph 12.17). Pedestrians and cyclists should have safe and comfortable routes on



Photograph 12.18: Information and consultation.

the approaches to the centre, especially where their routes cross major vehicle routes. The ways of achieving this are detailed in Chapters 15, 22 and 23.

12.7 The Importance of Consultation

Throughout this chapter, references have been made to the need to generate acceptance among users of proposals, especially those involving restrictions. This will only be achieved if effective consultation is carried out (see Photograph 12.18), at all stages of the process, from identifying existing shortcomings and creating the vision or overall plan, through promoting specific proposals within the plan and implementing agreed proposals, to enforcing regulations designed to make the implemented scheme work well. Advice on consultation is presented in Chapters 10, 11 and 13.

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