

Manual for Streets

This is a briefing for Living Streets campaigners on the Government's new Manual for Streets. The Manual provides guidance to local authorities on how to design new residential streets.

Living Streets is pleased with the Manual. It backs up our case that streets should be designed to meet their roles as meeting and social places as well as places for traffic. It also guides local authorities to consider the needs of pedestrians before they consider the needs of drivers.

However, the Manual will only make a difference if local authorities change what they do as a result. Living Streets campaigners can help, by using the Manual as a campaigning tool. For example, you may want to quote the Manual to back up your case when lobbying local authorities for change. This briefing sets out the Manual's most important changes.

Background

The Manual for Streets has been written by the Department for Transport and the Department for Communities and Local Government. For residential streets, it replaces Design Bulletin 32. It makes it clear that the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), which is used as the standard for Trunk Roads, is not suitable for lightly-trafficked residential and mixed-use areas. Living Streets believes that the DMRB has been too big an influence on local streets, and that this has led to many being designed as if they were trunk roads.

The Manual aims to cut across traditional professional boundaries and is intended for, amongst others, architects, highway/traffic engineers, road safety auditors, town planners, transport planners and urban designers.

What the Manual says

The Manual contains five specific changes which are helpful to our case:

1. It places equal weight to the 'place' and 'movement' functions of the street, when defining street hierarchies.

Local authorities usually classify streets according to vehicular movement, ignoring the other social functions that the street may have. The Manual recommends replacing this with a new matrix classification, which weighs up both the

'movement' and 'place' function of a street. In this way, 'place' could be given a greater weighting than movement - for example, in residential streets, home zones or high streets. This will change the way that local authorities value streets - giving proper weight to the human aspects as well as vehicular.

Para 2.4.4 "Streets should no longer be designed by assuming Place to be automatically subservient to Movement. Both should be considered in combination, with their relative importance depending on the street's function within the network. It is only by considering both aspects that the right balance will be achieved."

Points for Living Streets campaigners: does your council properly consider 'place'? Should its classification system be revised so that people, as well as traffic, are considered?

2. It introduces a user hierarchy where pedestrians are considered first in the design process.

A hierarchy of street users - with pedestrians at the top - has been a concept which Living Streets has long supported. The Manual states it is a 'fundamental characteristic' that the design of a street scheme should adhere to a hierarchy which puts pedestrians first, followed by cyclists, public transport users, and then specialist service vehicles - with other motor

traffic after that. The Manual's support for a hierarchy is an unambiguous statement which can be used by Living Streets campaigners to challenge decisions where pedestrian needs aren't considered first.

Para 3.6.9 "[Pedestrians] should at least be considered first followed by consideration for the others in the order given. This helps ensure that the street will serve all of its users in a balanced way."

Points for Living Streets campaigners: are there examples where the needs of pedestrians are not considered first by your local authority? Can you use the Manual for Streets to press for a change in policies and/or practice?

3. It recommends a maximum design speed of 20 mph for residential streets.

By ensuring that traffic travels at no more than 20 mph, pedestrian casualties can be reduced and social activity encouraged. Living Streets has long called for a reduction in the default speed limit in built up areas to 20mph. The Manual recommends that new residential streets are designed to make it very difficult for traffic to exceed 20 mph. This can be done through psychology and perception, reduced visibility for drivers, physical features, street dimensions and changes in priority.

Para 7.4.2 "For residential streets, a maximum design speed of 20 mph should normally be an objective. The severity of injuries and the likelihood of death resulting from a collision at 20 mph are considerably less than can be expected at 30 mph."

Points for Living Streets campaigners: does your local authority make full use of 20 mph speed limits? For new roads, or re-designing existing roads, does it put in measures to slow traffic to below 20 mph?

4. It recommends a new approach to safety audits, advocating the more balanced approach of a Quality Audit.

Too often, safety audits are about removing the pedestrian from the danger rather than removing the danger from the pedestrian - leading to street environments which try to prevent walking rather than enabling it. Often, a safety audit's recommendations are simply

adopted without challenge. The Manual proposes a Quality Audit process, which as well as safety also considers other aspects such as pedestrian needs, visual quality, access, street use.

Para 3.7.8 "It is important to note that the design team retains responsibility for the scheme, and is not governed by the findings of the Road Safety Audit."

Points for Living Streets campaigners: does your local authority undertake 'Quality Audits' of new scheme proposals, or just Road Safety Audits?

5. It urges a return to a more traditional, connected street layout.

It is easier for people to walk to the services which they need if their streets are inter-connected. Living Streets campaigns for 'walkable' neighbourhoods, where most local services are within 15 minutes walk. With cul-de-sacs, people take long routes to access services, and this makes walking less likely. The Manual recommends returning to the more traditional grid layout of streets, which are fronted by buildings and where there is mixed use.

Para 4.4.1 "Manual for Streets encourages a reduction in the need to travel by car through the creation of mixed-use neighbourhoods with interconnected street patterns, where daily needs are within walking distance of most residents"

Points for Living Streets campaigners: is 'walkability' a factor when planning applications for new developments are considered by your local council?

What you can do

Write to your council's Cabinet Member for Transport, requesting a meeting to discuss the Manual for Streets.

A full copy of the Manual for Streets is available as a free pdf download from www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/manforstreets. It is about 150 pages long, and easy to read/search through.

A shorter notes-version will be available shortly from CAGE Space - Living Streets will post details on our website when it is available.