

REDUCING TRAFFIC SPEEDS – New Principles for improving walking and cycling through street design.

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Qualification of the presenter:

Author is director of Hamilton-Baillie Associates, the UK leading proponent of integrated street design and shared space. Author served on the European Union Shared Space research project, and is an enabler for the UK's Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). He has been closely involved with major streetscape projects including Ashford, Kent and Exhibition Road, London

Proposal:

The 20th Century witnessed dramatic changes in the relationship between pedestrian activity, public life and the configuration of the streets and spaces that make up much of the public realm. Assumptions concerning the need to accommodate traffic movement at speeds of around 30 mph or 50 kph gave rise to the need to constrain and segregate pedestrian movement from the higher speed world of vehicles. The result has bequeathed a near universal language of signs, road markings, barriers, high kerbs, traffic signals and formal pedestrian crossings that define much of the public realm and pedestrian environment.

Recent developments in behavioural psychology and an understanding of the complex relationship between risk, safety and the influence of our surroundings, has begun to point towards new opportunities for integrating pedestrians, cyclists and traffic in ways that challenge many long-held assumptions. Central to this change is an awareness of the importance of traffic speed as the key determinant of pedestrian comfort and safety, and an understanding that this can be successfully constrained through street design measures. Influencing speed, improving civility and enhancing pedestrian accessibility appears to be possible through a range of simple, cost-effective measures that move away from the conventional debate concerning speed limits, and the use of engineering, enforcement and education.

This paper will draw on a range of recent findings that emerge from pioneering schemes and pilot projects that explore the use of contextual design and place-making to influence speeds and driver behaviour. Such schemes include examples from a number of mainland European countries, as well as major projects such as the redevelopment of the former ring-road in Ashford, Kent, New Road in Brighton, and many other UK examples. The paper will update delegates on how the principles behind integrated street design are influencing policy and practice in the UK and elsewhere, and will draw on the research undertaken by the UK's Department for Transport on the subject.

The paper will also set the emergence of civility and integration within a wider context of changes in control and responsibility for interaction in the public realm, a change that has significant implications for the role of governments in regulating and defining movement and behaviour, as well as opportunities for pedestrians to play a key role in improving the quality of life and vitality of the public realm in cities, towns and villages.