

FACT SHEET. This document contains all the information you'll need to answer the question below. We provide this information so that you can focus your time on thinking and writing – please try and use this information rather than spending time researching further.

QUESTION: Should “shared spaces” in urban planning be promoted?

Urban Design Group

One of the objectives of Shared Schemes is to reduce vehicle speeds to below a level where they are capable of inflicting serious and fatal injuries on vulnerable road users. There is evidence from schemes such as Poynton or Bexleyheath High Street that the approach is successful.

Holmes Report on Shared Space

When asked to rate their experience of a shared space, 63 per cent of the sample rated it as poor, 19 per cent as fair and 18 per cent as good.

Poynton Town Council

The Poynton shared space scheme comprised the removal of all traffic signals, pedestrian guardrailling, and road markings from the junction. In its place a double roundel arrangement of two overlapping circles was outlined using contrasting colours of block paving, with only kerbs of a slight upstand separating the pedestrian areas from the carriageway.

Evaluation of Shared Space to Reduce Traffic Congestion

This research focuses on evaluating and quantifying the traffic congestion relief abilities of shared space designs utilizing Vissim traffic microsimulation software and the economic impact these changes can make. A major pedestrian crossing location on West Virginia University's Downtown campus along a major urban arterial was chosen as the case location upon which the model was to be built. The results of the analysis show that shared space can reduce vehicle travel time by up to 50% and delays by 66%.

Project for Public Spaces

A shared space design is typically a low-speed environment that desegregates road users and removes traffic controls such as traffic lights, excessive signage and road markings. This “humanization” of the road then frees up space for non-traffic functions. While the level of “sharedness” can vary depending on the interaction between modes of transport, in general, shared space fosters civility and interaction between modes, which enables users to move safely through the space using social cues rather than assigning right-of-way to one mode over another.

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea pedestrian behaviour study

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea statistics show the average speed of vehicles in the Exhibition Road shared space road in South Kensington is now 27mph – up from 22mph in 2013. Paralympic swimming gold medallist Lord Holmes described this increased speed as "lethal".

Project for Public Spaces

Where in the late 19th century streets were still part of a coherent scheme, in the 20th century the (re)design of streetscapes became the responsibility of traffic engineers rather than planners or architects. Following the grand vision of freedom promised by the car, the unrestricted flow of traffic became the standard. With higher speeds and more motorized traffic, then, came increased danger on the road, and the

resulting demand for safer infrastructure often took the form of a separation of road users. Cobblestones had become concrete or asphalt, while road marking and signs divided the street. Crosswalks highlight where pedestrians are still able to cross the street, effectively banning them from crossing at any other place.

Holmes Report on Shared Space

Lack of kerbing is a common element of shared space design known as level surface. This causes particular problems in terms of losing the sense of “safe” space. As one parent wrote: “When I was walking with my young children who were taught to walk on a pavement and stop at a curb I almost lost my young daughter who ran into the path of a large car which appeared not to moderate its speed to accommodate the shared space.”

UK Department for Transport

The UK Department for Transport defines shared space as “a design approach that seeks to change the way streets operate by reducing the dominance of motor vehicles, primarily through lower speeds and encouraging drivers to behave more accommodatingly towards pedestrians.”

Women and Equalities Committee report

Michael Broderick: “As a person with Cerebral Palsy who walks with crutches and who had previously fallen in a roadway years ago, shared space schemes terrify me. With traditional roadway schemes and traffic lights or zebra crossings I have always had a level of comfort that—despite my disability—I have time to get across the road and that I will be seen. With shared space I have no comfort. I have fear. I am a proud disabled man. I am not a second class citizen. But shared space schemes certainly make me feel like one.”

Dutch Institute for Road Safety Research

Academic traffic engineers at Dutch Institute for Road Safety Research (SWOV) refer to [shared space as] the “creation and design of residential areas,” where “traffic is a guest,” and “the layout should clearly indicate that the primary function of the area is residential.”

Urban Design Group

Everybody uses the streets and spaces in our towns and cities therefore it is essential that a design balances the needs of the very wide range of users. This necessarily requires compromise from everyone. I do not believe that the best design is necessarily one that focuses on the needs of the most vulnerable user group. It is crucial that the design of public realm is not skewed to any particular user group as this will adversely affect others and produce bad design.

Holmes Report on Shared Space

The pattern of non-reporting of accidents in shared spaces to the police seen in our survey, with very few respondents (11 per cent) reporting incidents, calls into question the validity of a) the methodology recommended by the UK Department for Transport on how to monitor operational safety of a shared space and b) previous evaluations of shared space using road accident statistics if this under-reporting has not been taken into account.