

## Public realm

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## General principles

- 3.1 The design of roads and other public areas should respect the character of their surroundings in layout, detailing and materials. Historic street surfaces, materials or furniture should be retained, repaired, and where appropriate reinstated.**
- 3.2** Streets and other public spaces in conservation areas, collectively the 'public realm', range from town centre streets to country lanes. The design of public spaces around buildings requires attention to movement patterns, building lines, the size and dominance of buildings and other objects, and how the space can be brought to life with planting, street furniture or public art. In earlier times, spaces were often positively designed to be market places, meeting places, formal squares or boulevards that were planned as an integral part of the buildings around them. In order to continue to provide useable and attractive spaces, thought and coordination needs to go into the design of the public realm and the way it is used.
- 3.3** In Pendle there is a strong tradition of sett paved streets and stone flagged pavements, with these materials traditionally having been sourced locally. The local distinctiveness of the conservation areas is therefore to a large extent derived from the underlying geology of the area, and this can best be reinforced through the continued use of these local materials.

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### 3.4 PPG 15 Planning and the Historic Environment<sup>(13)</sup> states:

*'Floorscape and street furniture often make a vital contribution to the appearance of a conservation area. Traditional stone, or in some cases brick, surfaces and layouts should be retained wherever possible, or re-introduced where there is historical evidence for them. In particular, where there is a tradition of rectangular slab paving, small block pavements and arbitrary new patterns should be avoided.'*

### 3.5 Additional advice can be found in *Manual for Streets*<sup>(14)</sup> and *Streets for All, North West*.<sup>(15)(16)</sup>

## Movement and connections

### 3.6 **New road layouts within and into conservation areas should be designed to respect their character and appearance.**

3.7 The way streets are laid out and how they relate to the surrounding buildings and spaces has a great impact on the aesthetic and functional success of a conservation area.

3.8 When considering a development site there needs to be a broad understanding of its historical development and its relationship with other areas. Each of the conservation areas will illustrate different patterns of development over time and therefore will require an individual response. Designers should consider the general arrangement of buildings and spaces. New buildings and roads can then be laid out to suit the desired urban form, with footways and kerbs helping to define and emphasise spaces. Widths of carriageways, footways and verges need not necessarily be constant or standardised. Important elements of the streetscene, such as stone boundary walls, or areas of stone setts or flags, should be accommodated sensitively into new layouts rather than sacrificed to create wider vehicle sight lines or more standardised surfaces.

3.9 The design of new street systems in conservation areas should also start from the need to establish a clear, legible, 'joined-up' structure for the area, not purely from the technical demands of traffic. A new layout may, in part, be suggested by the topography, natural desire lines and access routes to the site. New routes should connect into existing routes and movement patterns, both for vehicles and pedestrians. It should be possible for pedestrians, including those with disabilities, and cyclists, to move freely between all parts of a layout, both locally and on a wider scale.

### 3.10 CABE has produced a series of Briefing notes exploring good street design.<sup>(17)</sup>

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13 Department of the Environment (1994): Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15): Planning and the Historic Environment  
 14 Department for Transport / Communities and Local Government (2007): Manual for Streets  
 15 English Heritage / Department for Transport (2005): Streets for All, North West  
 16 PPG13: Transport, ODPM (2001)  
 17 CABE Space (2008): Civilised Streets; This Way to Better Streets; Living with Risk: Promoting Better Public Space Design

## Road surfaces and verges

- 3.11** New highway surfaces or verges should complement the surrounding architecture in design, materials, colour, texture and detailing.
- 3.12** Many of the conservation areas retain areas of **stone setts**, primarily in back streets, but to a lesser extent in front streets, which add a great deal to the character of the area, and should always be retained. Any necessary repairs should be done sympathetically using matching natural materials. Grassed or 'soft' verges commonly exist in the more rural areas, and these should normally be retained rather than paved over, in order to retain the rural character.

- 3.13** Where it is proposed to create new highway surfaces or verges these should complement the surrounding architecture in colour, texture and detailing. Surface materials should be appropriate to their surroundings and respect local traditions, and it will be important to ensure that the specification is appropriate to the intended use.



**Picture 3.1** Stone setts add greatly to an area's character

- 3.14** Surface treatments should reflect their urban, suburban or rural character, as appropriate. It should be the aim in public realm schemes to retain or reinstate stone setted and 'flagged' surfaces, and grass verges, taking into account the needs of all users. Setts can have a positive effect in reducing traffic speed, although care should be taken not to reduce the mobility of pedestrians. PPG15 points out that tarmac, surface-dressed with a suitable local aggregate, remains an appropriate and inexpensive finish for many conservation areas. It may in some areas be a more suitable and less 'urban' alternative than setts, however it should always complement the surrounding architecture in colour. A plain black bitmac finish will not usually be appropriate in conservation areas.
- 3.15** **Kerbs** help to reinforce building and street alignment, and have been used traditionally to delineate pedestrian and vehicle space. If a street is to be pedestrianised, it is important to retain the traditional relationship between footways and carriageway, including kerb lines. Wall-to-wall surfaces are often unsuitable and the scale, texture, colour and laying patterns of any new materials should be sympathetic to the area's appearance. Local sandstone kerbs are common in the conservation areas, and should be retained wherever they exist. Plain concrete kerbing is not usually suitable for historic or rural locations. Drainage is an important consideration, expressed in paved channels and gullies and cast iron fitments (grates and coverings), that should be kept wherever possible. Historic back streets usually have their own configuration of stone setts, larger stones and edging stones that are locally distinctive. These are valuable features which add to the character and appearance of a conservation area.

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#### Footpaths, cycle routes and shared surfaces

**3.16 Paths should complement their surroundings in design, materials, colour, texture and detailing.**

**3.17** Some areas of original stone flag paving remain to pavements, although unfortunately most has now been replaced or covered over with tarmac. This historic paving contributes to local distinctiveness and should be retained wherever it exists. Flagstones are the preferred paving surface for new footways in conservation areas. Small paving modules do not normally reflect the scale of flagstones and should usually be avoided on pavements. Rural paths



**Picture 3.2 Original stone flag paving**

should be kept informal; paving such routes would give them an unnaturally urban appearance. Gravel surfaces are normally more appropriate. The more modern resin-bound gravel surfaces can be useful for paths in conservation areas as the colour and aggregate can be selected to suit the local context.

**3.18** In conservation areas, visually obtrusive coloured surfaces, such as those used for bus and cycle lanes, should normally be avoided. The interaction of pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle should be managed to avoid the need for rigid segregation, thereby reducing the need for road markings and physical barriers.

**3.19** Conflict can arise where streets or spaces have uneven historic surfaces that are difficult for wheelchair users or the partially mobile. Whilst often it may be possible to sign an easier route, there will sometimes be the need for a carefully detailed level path around or across the historic surface as a necessary intervention (see 2.20 *Inclusive Design*).

#### Car parking provision

**3.20 New car parking areas should not dominate the built form, and should respect the character and appearance of a conservation area in both design and location.**

**3.21** There is often a conflict between the desire to own and park a car, and the collective desire to enjoy a safe and attractive place. A balance between the two needs to be reached to ensure the character of conservation areas is not compromised. Useful guidance can be found in *Car Parking: What Works Where*.<sup>(18)</sup>

**3.22** It is not only the amount of car parking for each individual development which needs to be considered (set out in the Pendle Local Plan as 'maximum parking standards'), but how and where it is accommodated in relation to the buildings and the street. In order to ensure that the character of an area is preserved, the following points should be taken into account when considering the design of parking areas:

- Achieving a **quality layout of buildings and spaces** should be the priority in any new housing development; quality of urban design is important above all else;
- Parking areas should be designed as an **integral part of the overall design** so that areas of car parking do not visually dominate;
- Car parking should be integrated into the design of the development to ensure that it is overlooked to increase natural surveillance;
- A single solution may not be achievable. A combination of on-plot, off-plot, and on-street may be appropriate, according to location and topography.

### Street furniture

**3.23** **Street furniture, signs and lighting should be appropriate to their context in design, materials and location.**

**3.24** In some of Pendle's conservation areas there are examples of historic street furniture such as bollards, lamp posts, signs, ironwork, or old post boxes. These can sometimes display crests or manufacturer's marks. Where these exist they add much to the local distinctiveness of an area, and should therefore be retained.

**3.25** The introduction of new street furniture requires careful thought and co-ordination. In many streets and public spaces, the clutter of unco-ordinated street furniture and signs gets in the way and masks local character. Materials, size and form should be inspired by the surrounding context, with existing building and pavement lines used to guide their placing. The best street furniture is often elegant and simple, yet functional and easily maintained. It should not dominate the street scene, nor add to street clutter. In some conservation areas, particularly town centres, bespoke seating, litter bins or other furniture may be appropriate, and can help to reinforce local character and create a sense of place.

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- 3.26** Where **bollards or traffic guardrails** are necessary, standard 'catalogue' designs should be avoided, as these can dilute local character. For continuity it may be appropriate to use recast replicas of existing historic originals, or new designs based on these. However care should be taken not to detract from the integrity of the originals. New traffic barriers or guard rails should be well designed and finished in a black or other painted colour rather than a plain galvanised finish.



**Picture 3.3 Historic street furniture adds richness and detail to the surroundings**

- 3.27** Where older **signs** remain, they should be retained and restored, with their siting and style used to inform the design of new signs and nameplates. In most cases nameplates should be fixed to boundary walls or railings, or placed at the back edge of the footway. Other signs, such as information boards, finger posts or traffic signs, should as far as possible be combined with existing street furniture in order to reduce clutter.



**Picture 3.4 Older road signs add to character**

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- 3.28 Lighting fixtures** should be appropriate to their context in material, scale, design, colour and illumination. Lights should be effective but unobtrusive in design. Particular care should be taken in rural settings where over-illumination can generate a more urban feel. When using traditional styles of lighting the head and column must be in proportion, as an oversized light on a slender or short support will appear awkward and top heavy.
- 3.29** Off-the-peg 'period' columns and lanterns are not universally appropriate in historic areas. Special designs reflecting established local styles or motifs, or simple modern designs, may be preferable. The most appropriate colour will often be black. Plain concrete or galvanised finishes will not usually be appropriate.



Picture 3.5 Examples of older lighting remain

### Street trees and planting

- 3.30 Tree planting and landscape features should be used selectively to enhance the space between buildings, reinforcing an area's character and distinctiveness.**
- 3.31** Trees, shrubs and other planting should be used to reflect the history, tradition and architecture of their setting, whether urban green spaces, or more rural village settings. Types and species used should be appropriate to the size, scale and formality of the public area or thoroughfare. Where level planting beds are used, care should be taken with design and positioning, to avoid areas being walked through or attracting litter. Raised planters should be well designed and sensitively placed.



Picture 3.6 Street trees can enhance public spaces

- 3.32** A well-designed landscaping scheme can make an important contribution to the appearance and impact of a building or group of buildings, can add to the quality of a development or open space, and can provide screening for unsightly features such as busy roads.