

Appendix B5: Regional meetings

Section RM1: Introduction

- 1.1 As part of our review of 'Highway Requirements for Development' we organised two meetings with other highway authorities in the midlands and north-west regions (around 18 authorities in total).
- 1.2 Our first meeting, held in June 2003, was about commuted sums and fees. (Please see Part 4, Section MC18 for more details on commuted sums.) Our second meeting, held in October 2003, discussed shared-surface roads and 'Home Zones'. (Please see Part 3, Section DG3 for further details on 'Home Zones'.)
- 1.3 Key aims of the meetings were to:
 - find out how other authorities deal with these matters;
 - share best practice and, where possible, agree a common approach;
 - share problems; and
 - Identify areas for further work.
- 1.4 Section RM2 summarises the commuted sums and fees meeting. The shared surface and 'Home Zones' meeting is summarised in Section RM3.
- 1.5 The discussions at these meetings have helped to shape our new document, 'Highways, transportation and development'.

Section RM2: Meeting on commuted sums and fees

- 1.6 In summary, key issues include the following.
 - The meeting agreed it is legal to obtain commuted sums.
 - There is a need for a consistent approach to commuted sums to help gain wider acceptance by developers. Also, highway authorities could promote the way they do things and seek national consensus.
 - The meeting agreed on the circumstances where developers should pay commuted sums.
 - There was general agreement on the way to calculate commuted sums.
 - The meeting agreed that highway authorities must have clear accounting systems to hold and safeguard commuted sums and to make sure that they are spent properly.
 - We, Leicestershire County Council, would review its section 38 and section 278 design and inspection fees following a survey of those charged by the other authorities.

Section RM3: Meeting on shared surfaces and Home Zones

- 1.7 In summary, key issues on shared surfaces include the following.
- Road and building layouts need to be considered together.
 - It is very important for developers to hold early, pre-application discussions jointly with the planning and highway authorities, although there is a problem with the time and staff resources it takes to deal with non-standard layouts.
 - Shared-surface roads only work well where the number of vehicle movements is limited (for example, in a cul-de-sac of up to 25 dwellings or developments of up to 50 dwellings where there are two points of access). Rat runs must not be created where there is a through route.
 - Where shared-surface roads are off high-category or high-speed roads, it is common practice to require a transition length of 10 metres to 15 metres before the shared surface starts.
 - Residents have criticised narrow roads and the lack of parking space. There can also be problems with maintaining access for emergency services, winter maintenance vehicles and refuse collections when larger vehicles are used (and when there is extra traffic caused by separate collections for recycling).
 - We discussed the problem that 'people see the shared surface as an area for the car'. There are also problems with service margins, including access for maintaining equipment. Utility companies (for example gas, water, and cable-TV suppliers) should be involved at an early stage.
 - Other problems reported include:
 - residents wanting footways or grass service margins to be hard-paved.
 - service margins being used for parking (a problem which will worsen with increased car ownership and less provision for off-street parking); and
 - residents creating additional parking or planting areas and using rocks to protect them from vehicles.
 - The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is leading to some design problems, particularly with differences in vertical levels.
 - There is a problem with maintaining soft landscaping in the adoptable highway.
 - Few authorities require safety audits for shared-surface roads at present. Most will require safety audits in future and will require a developer to correct problems identified at stage 3 as a condition of a Section 38 agreement.

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- General experience is that actual vehicle speeds exceed the design speed (the vehicle speed assumed for the design of the road), although very few speed surveys are carried out.
- Most authorities require the highway boundary to be clearly marked.

1.8 Key issues on Home Zones include the following.

- There is no real experience of developments that are truly Home Zones. There is some uncertainty about what constitutes a Home Zone, particularly as there are no supporting national regulations, although the Government has now published draft regulations for consultation purposes.
- A design brief is useful to detail the thinking behind a development proposal and the way that the layout is intended to function.
- Design speed is an important factor (a majority of delegates indicated that they would be prepared to use restricted visibility as a means of controlling vehicle speeds).
- An upper limit of 300 dwellings is too large and is not considered to be appropriate for a Home Zone. Generally, the suggested maximum is 25 dwellings in a cul-de-sac or 50 dwellings in a loop.
- Highway authorities need to be flexible, but they should carry out a risk assessment of a development proposal where the road layout is not standard.
- Using vehicle track plots to determine proposed road layouts is considered better practice than using the prescribed standards.
- Utility companies (for example gas, water and cable-TV suppliers) should be involved at an early stage.
- Discussions about construction materials should take place with those responsible for the future maintenance of the layout at an early stage.
- There is concern about response times for emergency services.
- A disability audit is needed, taking account of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Sales literature should make potential house purchasers aware of the nature of the layout and any traffic-calming measures.

1.9 The meetings concluded that there is very little information on 'post-construction' evaluation of developments.

1.10 We, Leicestershire County Council, will consider surveying newly-completed developments to establish whether the guidance in 'Highways, transportation and development' has helped to deliver, safe, accessible, high-quality developments that meet the needs of residents and visitors.