

Graham Paul Smith
Dip. AD, M Art (RCA), MA (Urban Design)

I am an independent Urban Design Consultant:

I have a career-long experience in teaching, writing, and contributing to the conversation in urban design, international street design, architecture, and fine art.

Selected work:

- **1985**
 - Joint author of *Responsive Environments; a manual for designers* (1985).
- **2004 - 2009**
 - Advisor to lead officer, *Exhibition Road project*, RBK&C, (2004 - 2009).
 - *"Begegnungszonen"*, a review of recent projects around Bern and Zurich, Switzerland, for Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, (2008).
- **2010**, *Manual for Streets 2*, contributor
 - (also *Manual for Streets*, 2007 and
 - *Residential Roads and Footpaths, DB32, layout considerations*, 1997)
- **2012**,
 - (German) *"Urban Streets Manual, RAS06, Directives for the Design of Urban Roads"* Translator, 2012
- **2020**
 - "Disconnected developments: are highways authorities part of the problem? With Katja Stille, Tibbalds Urban Design, presented at: CREATING HEALTHY PLACES - Public Health & Sustainable Transport Summit, 20th October 2020.
 - Contribution to the ICE - Urban Design Group: [Briefing Sheet-Street Design Standards.pdf](#), 2020.

I wish to comment on design and layout of the HIF1 proposals. I agree with all the objector's statements and alternative approaches presented on Day 1 of the Inquiry.

I would say that the conceptual basis for the road design is flawed. This is a Trunk Rd Bypass flung across Didcot when it needs to be a town main street. I grew up in Birmingham at a time when motorway-like roads were thrown across that city. A 1960s error which the city has spent decades attempting to recover from. Let us learn from history in this project.

In November 2018 I and others in Oxford Cycling Network, attended the HIF1 exhibition in Didcot. We were surprised and very concerned by the designs for junctions and roundabouts.

The officer in charge told that whilst continuity for cycling was not shown, he had allowed an unusually large contingency in the estimates for subsequent design improvements. The plans

showed ample cycling provision on the straight sections but no means for people cycling to safely use the widened and threatening roundabouts.

By the end of 2021 cycling was added (although it seems that not one line of the highways have been amended. (I've not checked all drawings). So, now there are lots of wide bellmouths with cycling boldly proceeding on a 'raised' crossover (an unsatisfactory solution).

Why this focus on cycling? For cycling to be a mode of choice it needs something very different than a Trunk Road scheme with cycling added around the edges. DMRB is simply inappropriate here, yet it is the preferred source for the County's highway design choices, together with a form of DB32 'Oxfordshire County Council Street Design Guide' so that any residential development doesn't impact on the roads. This is roads before housing, an approach made obsolete in 1997 by 'Places Streets and Movement, a DB32 companion guide to DB32, DETR.

2007's *Manual for Streets* and 2010's *Manual for Streets 2* should be the starting points here but are entirely ignored.

To minimise the need to use the car, and to maximise walking, cycling and public transport what is necessary is a compact urban form ... with a main street running through. Only with this kind of built form can walking, cycling and public transport be a real choice for all.

The development model, proposed here, a Distributor Road with pods of residential, is guaranteed to maximise the use of the car. This is neither a sensible way to proceed nor does it align with NPPF 114(c) referring to the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code, with note 48 – "policies and decisions should not make use of or reflect the former Design Bulletin 32 which was withdrawn in 2007".

I would conclude that this whole carapace is mortally flawed.

In 2020 I contributed to the ICE - Urban Design Group: [Briefing Sheet-Street Design Standards.pdf](#).

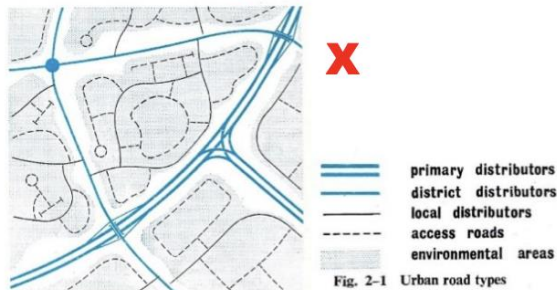
This compares current best practice street design guidance including *Manual for Streets (Department for Transport 2007)*, with *withdrawn old-era street design guidance and standards, that developed from the 1920s including Design and Layout of Roads in Built-up Areas (1946), Roads in Urban Areas (1966) and the initial Design Bulletin 32 Residential Roads and Footpaths, Layout Considerations published in 1977.*

Local authority street design and adoption standards based on the old guidance will not comply with current planning policies or statutory duties and should not be used.

Today there are different and very serious challenges to address, such as obesity, air pollution, climate-change, and the promotion of equal opportunities. Updated planning policies, climate change targets, and new statutory duties make the use of these old standards unlawful. Statutory duties are to be balanced, one against the other. The network management duty, for example, is not a superior duty. Balanced decisions are necessary.

I draw your attention to the following diagrams setting out the differences between outdated and up-to-date guidance.

Layout – Distributor roads and environmental areas – rather than walkable, compact towns



Intended to keep traffic out of residential areas, the withdrawn guidance creates areas of housing ringed and isolated by main roads. These are car-based suburbs, rather than development in the style of traditional towns. Indirect main roads increase travel distances and land-take. The lack of direct routes hinders walking and cycling.

Distributor roads – rather than traditional streets



These are roads that are designed to provide uninterrupted movement for vehicles. Buildings that front the distributor road, and frontage access are prohibited. Connections may only be made with a road at the same or adjoining level in the hierarchy. Problems include:

Inefficient use of land - Up to 75 percent of the area of the highway may be taken up by distributor roads and their margins.

Low-density development - increases travel distances and costs (including waste collection costs)

Safety - Increased risk of fatal collisions for pedestrians, especially elderly people and children owing to the higher traffic speeds.

Poor personal security - owing to the absence of natural surveillance from overlooking buildings.

Figure 6.1: In typical post-WW2 developments (a), the main roads are often the only through routes. In more historic areas (b), there may be quiet parallel routes that could be made suitable for cycling (images from Manual for Streets)



Cycle Infrastructure Design LTN1/20 (referring to Manual for Streets, figure 4.4, 2007)

Graham Smith, 21 February 2024