

3 June 2022

Proposed changes to Highways Design Guide

The City of Durham Trust supports the aim of the proposed changes, which is to dissuade drivers from parking on footways, but is of the view that increasing the minimum width of residential streets from 4.8m to 5.5m is not the only intervention that is needed. There are also other improvements to the guide which could be made, to reflect changes in national guidance such as LTN 1/20, *Inclusive Mobility* and the *National Model Design Code*.

In the appendix below we present some examples from the Neville's Cross area of Durham City. As will be seen from the measurements of the roads, the correlation between width of the road and pavement parking is not exact. There are examples where a 5.5m carriageway would not be enough to discourage parking on the footway, and examples where the carriageway already exceeds 5.5m but footway parking is common.

The Trust suggests that another crucial factor is whether on-street parking is occurring on one or on both sides of the street. Using paint to mark out parking bays, or preferably by using build-outs with street trees, perhaps combined with seating, to indicate clearly where people can park, is a key part of the solution. The Highways Design Guide should be enhanced as soon as possible to require a much higher standard of street design in keeping with recent NPPF revisions.

Clearly, with the introduction of a new Parking and Accessibility SPD, section 6.7 of the design guide, which summarises residential parking requirements, will require revision. The Trust will be commenting separately on car parking via the consultation on the SPD.

Footway widths

The Trust would urge the Council to update the design guide to increase the minimum footway width from 1.8m to 2m each side. The Department for Transport publication *Inclusive mobility: a guide to best practice on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure* (December 2021) states in section 4.2 that "a width of 2000mm is the minimum that should be provided, as this allows enough space for two wheelchair users to pass, even if they are using larger electric mobility scooters". Guard rails and seating should not encroach on this width. The previous edition, from December 2005, gave the same minimum width.

It would be worth cross-referencing the advice on footway widths at bus stops on page 91 of the guide, as this might be overlooked.

Carriageway widths

The Trust would like to see further amendment of the table of minimum road widths on page 61. Highway lanes of between 3.2m and 3.9m are associated with increased danger to pedal cyclists, because at these widths drivers are tempted to overtake within the lane, leaving an inadequate gap which increases the risk of collision or destabilising the rider. A "close pass" contributes to the sense of danger and can discourage people from cycling. See LTN 1/20 paragraph 7.2.5.

Table 7-2 of LTN 1/20 gives recommended widths for mixed traffic roads in urban environments. For example, on bus routes, a traffic lane width of 3.2m (giving a carriageway width of 6.4m) is recommended. Paragraph 6.1.11 points out that narrower carriageways improve pedestrian safety also, yielding lower traffic speeds and shorter crossing distances.

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As stated on page 45 of the Highways Design Guide, the Manual for Streets, rather than DMRB, should apply where traffic speeds are 40mph or less, therefore the traditional 7.3m width need not be adhered to.

Cycle track provision

The guide should also highlight the need to comply with LTN 1/20 and provide cycle infrastructure where appropriate. As this guide is the primary document that will be given to developers at the pre-application stages, it is important that it directs designers to the correct national guidance. At present section 3.2 on page 22 asks for “consideration” to the needs of cyclists on transitional links and feeder roads. This section should be replaced by a reference to LTN 1/20 Figure 4.1 which sets out clearly the required in different situations. New developments should be required to attain the “green” level of “provision suitable for most people”.

Page 86 should be updated to warn against the provision of shared-use cycle/pedestrian facilities alongside carriageways. LTN 1/20 strongly encourages segregated provision (see section 6.5). Shared-use can be appropriate on shorter links away from carriageways where pedestrian and cycle traffic is light.

Side roads and crossings

Section 6.4 (pages 115-116) covers traffic calming, but discourages its use unless the design of the highway has not sufficiently reduced speeds. This is very hard to prove in a new development! The Trust would like to see active encouragement of raised tables at cross-roads and continuous footways at side roads, which give pedestrians a clear priority and reinforce the recent changes to the Highway Code. They also give significant safety benefits to cyclists. See paragraph 7.6.10 of LTN 1/20.

Tighter kerb radii at side roads are also beneficial for pedestrians, and vulnerable road users in general, contributing to speed reduction through design. Page 63 of the Highways Design Guide currently stipulates a minimum of 6.0m radius on residential access roads. Manual for Streets 2, para. 9.4.10 points out that “advice given in TD 42/95, that minimum corner radii should be 6m in urban areas, should therefore not be taken as representing best practice when the needs of vulnerable road users are to be prioritised”. The paragraphs which follow explain how corner radii as small as 1m can be achieved. The Trust is of the view that in the urban environment the vulnerable road user should always be prioritised.

Transport Assessment and Travel Plans

As this design guide contains a summary of what the Highways Authority expects of a Transport Assessment, it would be good to strengthen this to support sustainable and active travel and the County Durham Plan Policy 21 on Sustainable Transport. Too often the assessment of public transport, walking and cycling access is superficial, being limited to a map showing 2km or 5km isochrones. When a Transport Assessment is necessary, developers should be required to evaluate the quality of the cycling and walking links to nearby amenities, including retail, education, employment and leisure. The cycling assessment could identify which routes comply with the types of provision set out in LTN 1/20 Figure 4.1 and evaluate the junctions en route using the LTN 1/20 Junction Assessment Tool, which is not onerous to apply. This process would help to identify improvements which might justify Section 106 contributions. Similarly the Active Travel Wales guidance provides methodology for pedestrian route evaluation. The assessment should have regard to any proposed infrastructure improvements identified in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) where applicable.

Adopting new wording for section 2.4 (pages 12-13) to prioritise active travel in the Transport Assessment would help to deliver the Council's sustainable transport objectives and reduce carbon emissions. Transport Assessments which do not thoroughly evaluate walking, cycling and public transport access should be refused. The standard of Transport Assessments is currently very poor in this regard, and addressing this should be of the utmost priority in the current climate emergency.

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Appendix: examples from Neville's Cross

Dalton Crescent

The examples from Dalton Crescent (4.8m) and Faraday Court (5.5m) seem to support the proposed increase in width, as in the latter the cars are parked off the footway. But note also that on Faraday Court it is clear which side of the road it is appropriate to park: adjacent to Ustinov College, rather than at the end of private driveways.



Faraday Court

5.5m width



Geoffrey Avenue

5.1m width

In Geoffrey Avenue the road width is not much below the proposed new standard, but it is clear that with cars parked on both sides of the street, footway parking would still occur even if the road were 40cm wider.



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Archery Rise

6.1m width

This street is substantially wider than the proposed standard, but pavement parking is quite common, despite every home having been built with a double garage and wide driveways. Although the cars are only parked on one side in this picture, the fact that cars park on-street on both sides of the road contributes to the urge to park on the footway. Demarcating the on-street parking with painted bays could help.



St John's Road

7.3m width with marked parking areas 2m each side, leaving 3.3m width between.

This street is built to the old standard 24ft carriageway width, but the plots do not have off-street parking. The painted parking bays seem to be effective: there is no pavement parking in this street, and even the truck is fully on the carriageway. This suggests that marking 2m wide parking bays on one side of a 5.5m carriageway could also be effective in regulating the car parking.



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Westhouse Avenue

4.9m width

Westhouse Avenue has plentiful off-street parking associated with each house, but no demarcated visitor spaces on the street. A wider 5.5m road, combined with paint to mark visitor parking bays, might be sufficient to eliminate pavement parking. Alternatively, sufficient visitor bays formed with kerbs, combined with a narrower carriageway of 3.3m, similar to the usable part of St John's Road, would probably work well.

