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# 1 Introduction

This Chapter sets out the purposes and aims of Manual for Streets.

It explains who the document is aimed at, its status and the weight to be given to its key recommendations.

It also summarises some of the key changes from previous guidance.

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

1.1.1 *Manual for Streets* (MfS) is intended to help bring about a transformation in the way streets are designed and to show how street design considerations can help improve the local environment quality and contribute towards creating sustainable and mixed communities. A key purpose of the manual is to support the delivery of attractive, safe and well designed residential environments, in accordance with emerging Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing. MfS is expected to be used predominantly as a guide to the design, construction, adoption and maintenance of new streets but it is also applicable to existing streets where they are subject to re-design.

1.1.2 This first edition focuses on residential and other lightly trafficked streets, but some of the key principles are applicable to other types, particularly the fact that streets should be designed not just to accommodate the movement of traffic but should be positively integrated with the built environment while taking the needs of pedestrians and cyclists into account. Future editions of MfS may address busier urban routes with the eventual aim of providing a comprehensive guide to the design of non-trunk streets.

## 1.2 AIMS OF THE DOCUMENT

1.2.1 MfS aims to assist in the delivery of streets that:

- help build and strengthen communities they contain;
- are effective conduits for movement;
- are pleasant and attractive;
- are cost-effective to construct and maintain; and
- Are acceptably safe.

1.2.2 MfS aims to discourage the building of streets that are:

- designed mainly on motor traffic criteria;
- bland and unattractive;
- unsafe and unwelcoming to people on foot and cycle; and
- Poorly specified and constructed.

1.2.3 For the purposes of this document, **a street is defined as a highway that has important functions beyond just the movement of traffic**. The nature of streets and the differences between streets and roads are discussed later in this Chapter.

1.2.4 MfS replaces Design Bulletin 32 and Places, Streets and Movement, which are now withdrawn.

### **1.3 WHO THE DOCUMENT IS AIMED AT**

1.3.1 This advice note is aimed at those engaged in the planning, design and approval of new streets, and modifications to existing streets. This includes the following:

- developers;
- local highway authorities;
- local planning authorities;
- the emergency services;
- utility and drainage companies;
- public transport providers;
- architects;
- highway engineers;
- landscape architects;
- town planners;
- transport planners;
- Urban designers, and
- utility and drainage companies.

1.3.2 A common failing in the past has been that street design has been dominated by the influence of some stakeholders at the expense of others. This, in turn, can result in unimaginatively designed streets which tend to favour motorists over other user groups.

1.3.3 MfS aims to address this issue by encouraging stakeholders to take a more holistic view while assigning a higher priority to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. The intention is to create streets which encourage greater social interaction while still performing successfully as conduits for movement.

1.3.4 Another key problem that can cause delay and a loss of design quality is when different parts of local government fail to coordinate their input to a development proposal, leading to conflicting requirements. This is particularly problematic when the input of one particular section – for example the adopting engineers – become involved late in the process and require significant changes to the design. A more inclusive process is required, which is discussed later in this document.

### **1.4 STATUS OF THE DOCUMENT**

1.4.1 Manual for Streets supersedes "Design Bulletin 32" and its companion document "Places, Streets and Movement", which are now withdrawn. MfS will complement PPS3, when finalised. It does not set out new policy.

1.4.2 MfS has been produced as a collaborative effort involving a range of key stakeholders with an interest in street design. Although it supersedes DB32 and PS&M, MfS is meant to complement rather than replace street design guidance documents produced by some local highway authorities. Local design documents are created with a



view to maintaining the distinctiveness of local roads and it is intended that MfS be used as the basis for any development of these guidance documents.

1.4.3 In the past many standards have been prepared by local highway authorities working largely in isolation. In future a more holistic approach should be taken, usually involving close liaison with local planning authorities.

1.4.4 During its preparation, the authors have endeavoured to ensure that Manual for Streets represents a broad consensus of views and that it is widely accepted as good practice throughout the industry. It has been produced as a comprehensive guide and it is intended that it will benefit everyone with a professional interest in residential streets, regardless of their particular discipline.

1.4.5 As a “One-stop-shop” document, it is recommended that practitioners read all of the sections so as to get a better understanding of the many, and sometimes conflicting, priorities that people have regarding street design. A good design will represent a balance of views with any conflicts resolved through the appropriate degree of compromise.

## **1.5 APPLICATION**

1.5.1 As a joint DfT/DCLG publication, MfS formally applies to streets in England only. In practice, and with the exception of parts of Chapter 3 (Policy, Legal and Technical Frameworks), practitioners may find it useful for designing UK streets outside England.

## **1.6 DEVELOPMENT OF MANUAL FOR STREETS**

1.6.1 The Manual for Streets has been developed by a multi-disciplinary team of highway engineers, urban designers, planners and researchers. The recommendations contained herein are based on a combination of:

- Primary research;
- Review of existing research;
- Case studies;
- Existing good practice guidance; and
- Consultation with stakeholders and practitioners.

1.6.2 Where appropriate references are cited in the text.

## **1.7 CONTEXT OF MANUAL FOR STREETS**

1.7.1 A key feature of MfS is its revision of guidance related to highway design. Traditionally, new highways have been constructed with an emphasis on functionality, ensuring that motorists had wide visibility splays and generous sightlines so that they could react to hazards ahead of them in plenty of time. Conventional guidance required the level of visibility to be increased above the design speed of the road to ensure that they were at least adequate, and usually more than adequate. This was intended to ensure that roads would be as safe as practicable but it has often had unintended consequences for the built environment and its users.

1.7.2 It is now accepted that this approach encourages higher speeds as motorists tend to drive at a speed they feel comfortable with. Providing excessive visibility combined with long straight sections of comparatively wide road have meant that motorists remain comfortable at speeds which are inappropriate for many conditions.

This is especially so where roads have been designed in this way for residential areas. The higher speeds have meant that hazards which suddenly appear at close range, such as a child running into the road, are harder to avoid.

1.7.3 Reducing visibility and using alignments which encourage motorists to drive more slowly should not only maintain or improve on current safety levels but will also help create places which are conducive to social activity and where movement by means other than the car is encouraged. The ability to use tighter road geometry for example makes it easier to create streets that are attractive and interesting places for pedestrians and cyclists to pass through or to stop in and socialise.

1.7.4 Research carried out in the preparation of this document demonstrates that this approach is safe and workable. There is also a wealth of evidence from other countries that confirms that this is the case.

1.7.5 A number of other significant changes to current practice are recommended by Manual for Streets. These include:

- Hierarchies of standard road types, based on simple traffic flows and/or numbers of dwellings (eg Local Distributor, Major Access Road, Minor Access Road) are no longer recommended. Applying standardised road types will make it difficult to achieve a sense of place, which is an important in developing Sustainable Communities.
- Street designs and types should be developed on a location-specific basis, considering both the placemaking and movement functions of the particular streets serving an area.
- Designers should pay attention to the visual quality of street layouts and designs, alongside practical aspects such as providing for movement, road safety and maintenance considerations. Designing in three dimensions will help this process.
- Road safety audit should be replaced by a more broadly-based quality audit, which considers how well street designs have met the objectives that have been set. A documented review that a design meets its objectives is a better defence against liability than simple adherence to published standards.
- Research has confirmed that drivers modify their behaviour in response to their environment. As well as reduced sight lines, the presence of pedestrians and on-street parking will tend to reduce traffic speeds. The concept of a fixed design speed that defines minimum sight distances which must be applied all circumstances is therefore no longer appropriate.
- Design stopping sight distances associated with particular vehicle speeds have been revised downwards based on research and practice in other countries. For example, the revised design SSD for a vehicle speed of 50kph (31mph) is 43m (previously 70m).
- The recommended way in which visibility splays are measured has been changed. The viewpoint on the minor arm should generally be from a point 2.4m back from the give way line, and measured to a point 1m from the kerbline (or to the centreline to the left where overtaking is unlikely).



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## **1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT**

There are 4 main sections making up MfS;

Section A – Policy into practice (Chapters 1-3);

Section B – Design Principles (Chapters 4-6);

Section C – Detailed Issues (Chapters 7 onwards); and

Section D – Case Studies and Appendices.

1.8.1 Detailed issues dealt with in Section C should be used and interpreted in relation to the wider guidance in Sections A and B. Section C is not intended to be used in isolation.

1.8.2 The case studies include examples of good and bad practice and should be referred to by members of all the various disciplines involved in the provision of residential streets. Pointers to particular case studies are also provided throughout the manual.



