



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# Re-imagining urban spaces to help revitalise our high streets

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**Foreword from Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and Grant Shapps MP, Minister for High Streets**

Shopping habits and social attitudes have changed. To remain relevant and as important to communities and businesses as they have been in the past, the centres of our towns and cities and our high streets have to change with them.

The Government's response to the Portas Review supported the vast majority of Mary Portas' recommendations to help local places turn themselves around. **The next step is over to you.**

There is no point in simply chasing the traditional model of the high street - a place where people come together to shop. Retail is an important element of a thriving town centre, but it's not sufficient. **Instead, you need to re-imagine your high street and town centre**, and drive towards a new future where people come together for many different reasons. Simply continuing as you are is not an option.

Shared and public spaces are vital ingredients of town centres and high streets. These spaces are what knit a place together, and are often under-used, becoming simple thoroughfares. Creative thinking is needed so **these spaces can become the focal point for the social interaction** that is the epitome of the high street experience – an area that is enjoyed by all members of the local community.

There are many examples of this kind of thing happening already. Poundbury in Dorset, for example, has completely decluttered its streets and taken inspiration from the local vernacular to create its own version of "shared space", where cars and pedestrians share an airy and uplifting space. Bath supplements a shopping experience with uplifting architecture, café culture and street performance. The list goes on.

We think these examples are great. But this kind of thinking is not common. **We want to see more people being creative about how they design and use the spaces in their town centres and high streets, in a way that takes its inspiration from local characteristics and resonates with local people, boosts the local economy, and helps keep the community heart beating.**



*Eric Pickles*



*Grant Shapps*

## ***Introduction***

The Portas Review<sup>1</sup> highlighted the challenges that face our high streets and town centres. With shopping habits changing, high streets need to evolve – to build on their strengths and offer a viable and exciting alternative to out-of-town and internet shopping. High streets and town centres that are fit for the 21st century need to offer a different mix of retail, services and facilities, a different style of interaction, and a variety of experiences that are about more than shopping.

**Town centres and high streets have buildings and roads, but the spaces in-between are what hold them together as a place – the open spaces, streets, squares, green spaces and the network of pavements and pedestrian thoroughfares that knit them together. All too often, these spaces are used as no more than that – thoroughfares – and we start to forget that they can be so much more.**

This document is aimed at anyone working to improve their high street, town centre or retail area, whether you are a neighbourhood partnership, a group of businesses, a private landowner or a local authority. Its goal is to remind us of the potential of these urban spaces, and how, with some imagination and creative thought, they can add identity to a place to help combat clone town syndrome, and help make the local high street a destination of choice.

The section at the back of this document aims to signpost some of the key documents, guidance, tools and sources of support that you may find helpful in thinking about how best to design or use the urban spaces in your area.

## ***The scope of this document***

The terms “public space” and “urban space” are widely understood to include open spaces, streets, squares, green spaces and pedestrian thoroughfares. The term “shared space” however means different things to different people. In this document, we are taking a wide definition that encompasses all the following:

- spaces similar to public spaces but which happen to be privately owned, such as the walkways and spaces in shopping centres.
- the transport policy definition of shared space principles – sometimes referred to as “living streets” or “naked streets” – which promote an approach to street design that deters the domination of the space by cars. *(This aspect of shared space is explored on pages 12 and 13.)*
- issues around managing common spaces, where the space is inclusive and the benefits of improving or maintaining it are shared with all users.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/regeneration/pdf/2081646.pdf>

## ***So much more than shopping***

High streets and town centres have always been about much more than shopping. Retail is an important part of the town centre mix, but people also come for many other reasons, such as to visit cafes, restaurants, pubs, galleries, museums, cinemas, parks, hairdressers, beauty parlours, doctors and dentists, libraries, banks, solicitors, and estate agents. And there's a strong social factor too – the high street is often the place where local people come together to meet friends and join in community activities. It can provide a setting for shared experiences, and be a focal point of local identity, community pride, and common heritage and values.

*Fountains, carousel and the theatre in Williamson Square,  
in the heart of Liverpool's shopping district*



© Living Streets

The spaces in a high street or town centre can be where this social ingredient can be most evident. In the Government's response<sup>2</sup> to Mary Portas' Review of High Streets in March 2012, we talked about High Streets as the heart of our communities. Taking that analogy further, the urban spaces and network of pedestrian walkways in our town centres and high streets can be described as the veins and arteries that keep that community heart beating.

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<sup>2</sup> The Government's response to the Portas Review lays down a challenge for local partners to re-imagine their town centres and high streets, ensuring they offer something new and different that neither out-of-town shopping centres nor the internet can match - an experience that goes beyond retail, with creative use of public spaces and a vibrant evening economy.

The response also outlines a new package of measures to help high streets reclaim their role at the heart of our communities.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/regeneration/pdf/2120019.pdf>

## ***Finding the right local recipe***

There are numerous ways of using and improving urban spaces, but not all of them are right for every place. Pedestrianisation, for example, can result in places becoming lifeless at night, giving rise to security concerns. However, in another setting this might not be an issue and pedestrianising a street could be exactly what is needed.

Local people with a good understanding of life in the area will be in a good position to identify the elements that together will make a positive difference, and are often well-placed to lead and deliver improvements. They may have greater day-to-day awareness of what is valued locally, of localised issues and possible solutions, and they may be able to provide the necessary momentum to initiate change.

To survive, high streets need to be visited by all the local communities, and public spaces need to be open to and attractive to everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability or ethnicity. Local community and business buy-in can make or break a public space initiative. Decisions on the approach to revitalising an area or space must ensure that local businesses and the local community, particularly those with disabling conditions or impaired mobility and other marginalised groups, are involved in the decision process to ensure that all members of the community can enjoy the benefits.

Strong community buy-in and pride in the initiative can bring in people and communities who might otherwise have gone elsewhere, boost creative ideas, ensure the space is used as envisaged, and help reduce anti-social behaviour that could otherwise erode its success.

The first task is to understand how people experience the area at present - with different primary purposes in mind and with different needs, and at different times of the day.

You can then agree a vision – shared between local people, local businesses and local government – around which you wish to transform the town centre high street experience. This may require an equality impact assessment and some tough strategic judgements – not every high street will be ideally suited to make a credible distinctive offer, and there may be a need for some scaling back and/or changes of use in some areas. These are challenges for local authorities, acting together where necessary, within the new planning framework. Imagination is key, and new forms of engagement will be needed to understand how places might work for the people who do not currently use them: what will encourage people back or attract others for the first time.

Once you have settled on a shared vision, you can plan how to make it work, and the role of the shared and public spaces within that. Choices will then have to be made about actions and changes. These again must be supported by local businesses and communities, and must be realistic – in some places resources will be available for very significant investment; in others investment will be limited.



*In the redesign stage of New Road, Brighton, a street audit was carried out, capturing how the street was currently used – which people visited and why, what features they valued, and how they used and moved around the space. Extensive consultation was carried out with a wide range of local residents and external partners. This informed everything from the positioning of street furniture to the choice of a ‘shared space’ treatment and materials.*

*New Road – before*



*New Road - after*



© Brighton and Hove City Council

Several mechanisms and tools exist that can help with these tasks (*see reference section for further details*). Local town teams created under the Portas programme bring together local businesses, communities, and other public, private, community and voluntary organisations together to articulate and deliver a shared vision for a high street, and community and neighbourhood planning exercises can formalise these and enable them to hold weight in planning decisions. Toolkits such as Placecheck and Spaceshaper can be used to agree what the issues are and how they can be addressed through funding programmes and the planning system.

A street audit can demonstrate how the space is currently used by different people at different times of day and night, and inform decisions on how it can be improved. It is also worth considering the extent to which the use of the space complements or competes with surrounding businesses, provides choice and value for customers, and affects the town centre experience as a whole.

## ***Reclaiming the space***

All too often, habit and busy lives can make us forget that urban spaces and pavements can be more than a path along which to hurry from A to B. These under-used assets could be enhanced to help revitalise our town centres, boost economic performance, support regeneration, and build community pride and social integration.

The potential uses of these spaces are many. The simplest is their use as a spillover from the surrounding units – open store frontages with room for racks and baskets of goods outside to entice shoppers in; a tasting area for a delicatessen; attractive outdoor seating areas for cafés, restaurants and bars. Care needs to be taken to ensure that these spillovers leave sufficient space for passers by, including for example those with wheelchairs or buggies or using a cane.

*A florist's shop spills out into the street,  
Soho, London*



© Living Streets

*Stopping to chat at a pavement café,  
Soho, London*



© Living Streets

*Pavement cafés, Mansfield*



© Association of Town Centre Management

Shared and public spaces can in themselves also provide a venue and a reason to visit – for example a space in which to work, to play, or to exercise. Interactive



maps, planters, trees, water features, wireless internet access, art and sculpture can provide reasons to slow down, to stop and reconnect with the world around us. Traffic speed restrictions can reduce noise and pollution, improve safety and offer a more tranquil social environment. Carefully placed street seating and pavement cafés enable people to rest, to talk, and take time to soak up the experience.

*A pleasant place to sit, Oxford*



© Living Streets

*A Tai Chi class in Dingwall, Scotland*



© Highland Tai Chi

*Children playing in the fountains in Millennium Square, Bristol*



© Alice Darley

*Bryant Park Reading Room, New York – an outdoor library with recitals and storytelling*



© Association of Town Centre Management

Community growing projects in otherwise neglected spaces can create colour and interest and turn eyesores into attractions – such as the Todmorden Green Route for example, which has seen fruit and vegetables being planted in public spaces and scraps of vacant land all over the town. Vacant sites awaiting development can be turned into pocket parks or wildflower meadows, or public green spaces.

Pop-up stalls, stands and markets can add colour, enticing smells and noises, and energy to the streetscene, and can encourage people to move along from one part of the street or town centre to another less frequented part. Markets in particular can be an important asset to the area economically – for example supplementing the variety of goods and services available, providing enterprise opportunities, and attracting visitors – and socially – encouraging different communities to intermingle, and including social groups who might otherwise not be attracted to the town centre.

Market day in Alton, Hampshire



© Association of Town Centre Management

Sharrow Vale market, Sheffield



© National Association of British Market Authorities

The introduction of busking, performance, cultural celebrations, festivals and events can add further excitement and vitality, and significantly increase footfall from nearby and further afield. And a forward programme or regular pattern of such events can enable people to plan their visits to the area, invite friends, and spread the word.

*The regeneration of Gloucester Docks has been inspired by the heritage of the city. New commercial and residential developments have breathed life back into historic warehousing, making the most of key landmarks. Pedestrian links through the area to key destinations in the city have been enhanced with way-marking and distinctive art installations. An exciting programme of community festivals and events celebrate local history. These both strengthen the local community around a common purpose and a shared past, and attract visitors – providing an opportunity to showcase local businesses and bolster the local economy.*



© Marketing Gloucester Ltd

Southgate's 2pm performance slot, Bath



© Aviva Investors

Dancers, Manchester



© Mark McNulty



*Crowds at the Stockton International Riverside Festival*



© ISAN

*The “Play Me I’m Yours” initiative placed pianos in public spaces - Harrow Rd, London*



© Luke Jerram



*The Heritage Lottery-funded “Our Town Our Basildon” project created a heritage trail celebrating highlights of the town and its history. This and spin-off activities, such as the creation of an information hub which displayed children’s photos and stories about the town, re-ignited people’s interest in their local high street and provided an additional reason to visit.*

The potential for urban spaces to support growth in the evening and night-time economy should not be ignored – not just in terms of outside seating areas for pubs, bars and restaurants, but also events such as night markets, outdoor concerts and theatre, firework displays, and night-time street performances. These need to be sensitively and carefully managed to preserve acceptable noise and crowd behaviour. Clever lighting can highlight attractive or historical features and architectural details, deter anti-social behaviour, and increase safety.

*Bristol has a packed programme of festivals and events in its city centre streets and squares, including a regular auto-moto festival and a garden life show in the central shopping area. City centre events last Summer also included a pop-up casual and fine dining event in tipis, an outdoor “comedy garden”, and a street theatre performance of Treasure Island. The biggest event is the annual Harbour festival which spans a whole network of public spaces across a large area of the centre, with live music, circus, dance, comedy, boats, tall ships, markets and children’s activities, with a firework finale.*

© Tim Martin Photography



© Paul Box

Vacant units, particularly if they stay empty for a long time or there is a sudden increase, can be a very clear sign that all is not well in the high street, and can prompt a mass exodus of visitors and businesses. The temporary use of empty units – often called “meanwhile use” – for public and community purposes such as artistic displays and galleries, pop-up shops or market stalls, or by community groups, can temporarily turn these spaces into part of the public realm and nip area decline in the bud by maintaining a sense of energy as well as adding to local diversity.

*In Blackpool, the Culture Shops programme created over 30 artistic and community displays in seven empty shops over the course of a year. This provided a temporary lift to empty properties, improving the appearance of both individual shops and the surrounding locations, making areas of the town feel safer and more vibrant. There were also benefits for the artists and community groups involved.*

*In Chorley, a number of art and craft exhibitions and children's and family art workshops have taken place within empty units in the town's shopping centre.*

#### *Blackpool's Culture Shops Programme*



*Artwork: Maggie McManus & Arts for Health Group  
Photo Linzi Cason*



*Artwork: Noel Cluett  
Photo: Jonathan Lynch*

Encouraging mixed use of public buildings such as libraries and community halls can provide an indoor extension of the public space that can house cafés, galleries, stalls, internet access, and host community gatherings such as music recitals, relaxation classes, book clubs and storytelling, workshops and presentations. Some of these might take place after usual closing hours, increasing local footfall and a more varied social scene into the evening.

## ***Redesigning the space***

Small design changes can make a big difference to the attractiveness of a space and the way it is approached and used, and can help reinforce the local vision for the kind of place you want to create. And some situations offer the opportunity for a more structural redesign of the space.

The vital role that trees, parks, gardens, waterways and other green spaces can play in promoting sustainable places is often overlooked. These patchworks of green woven through our cities and towns – known as green infrastructure – provide numerous environmental, economic and social benefits, creating the kind of places people want to live, work, visit and invest in.

The quality of the walking environment is a huge factor in people's shopping choices, and people who walk to their high street have been shown to spend more, and in a wider range of shops, than visitors arriving by car, bus or bike. Attractive features such as planting, waterways and pocket parks along the route to the high street or town centre can help make walking and cycling a pleasant alternative to driving, and it can be worth investing to ensure an obvious, accessible and enticing walkway from public transport hubs and the town centre.

© Joe D Miles



*In Walthamstow, the redeveloped square, gardens and high street provide a safe and attractive link between the main transport hub and the central shopping area.*

© Living Streets



*A pleasant walkway to town, Loanhead, Scotland*

Green spaces and play spaces can also provide further reason for people to visit their town centre, as well as encouraging them to stay longer when they do. Design can create adaptable spaces where people of all ages and abilities can work, rest, relax and play.

*A children's play area can be a real asset and attraction in a shopping area, encouraging more families to come, and turn their shopping trip into a varied day out. Here a climbing frame has been erected in Horsefair Shopping Centre, Wisbech.*

© Archant





*Sheffield's Peace Gardens*



© English Heritage

*The roof of a retail unit in Cardinal Place, London, has been used creatively to provide space for a public park. The space is frequented by shoppers and office workers, and hosts events such as film and sporting event screenings and live theatre performances.*



© Capita Symonds

The creative use of sightlines can highlight monuments or landmarks and enhance visitors' ability to orientate themselves and navigate their way around.

*The layout of the Princesshay shopping centre in Exeter creates vistas to the city's landmarks, such as the cathedral and the old city wall to enhance sense of place.*



© John Thompson, The Academy of Urbanism

Modern developments can be designed to complement local historical features. Use of high quality and locally characteristic materials, particularly surface treatments, can uplift tired places to attract businesses and customers and emphasise local character, historic features and buildings. It can foster local ownership and care of public spaces, and help reduce maintenance issues.

*In the heart of Bath, a World Heritage Site, the Southgate Bath development has provided a sympathetic retail and leisure environment inspired by the city's Georgian character. The public spaces are used for a variety of events including the popular '2pm slot' which provides a platform for local musicians and performers. Together with the summer deckchairs installation, this creates a modern echo of the scene in the nearby 'Palace Gardens' with its deckchairs and Victorian bandstand.*



© Aviva Investors

In some places, the careful introduction of “shared space” principles in the design of pavements and roads can promote a more open feel and a more cooperative relationship between pedestrians, motorists and other road users through the minimisation or removal of kerbs and other features such as lines, signs and signals.

Such solutions need to be considered case by case, with special care taken to accommodate the needs of all groups of society, particularly blind and partially sighted people who may find it harder to find their way along the street. Shared space schemes can involve significant initial capital costs, so it is important to consider a range of approaches before investing.



*The redevelopment of Exhibition Road in Kensington includes a radical decluttering where all street furniture was removed and the rest combined as far as possible. Distinctive chequered granite paving runs the length and breadth of the road. A pedestrian corridor, marked by a linear drain and corduroy paving, flanks both sides of the road. There is room for two lanes of traffic, with a transition zone on one side housing parking bays, cycle racks seating and other items of street furniture. The linear drain and tactile corduroy paving help blind and visually impaired people to know when they are moving from the pedestrian corridor into the transitional shared space. Kerbs have been removed other than at bus stops to enable easy boarding.*



© Alice Darley, Department for Communities and Local Government

*Poundbury in West Dorset is a new-build mixed use development that has pushed design boundaries, including in the design of its spaces. Street design and width differs according to use. In local residential roads traffic has been slowed and the space reclaimed for pedestrians through the use of shared space principles such as continuing "footway" surfacing across road junctions, and natural design features such as the width of streets and positioning of buildings. The attractiveness and open feel of the public realm has been maximised, including by reducing urban clutter, for example by mounting street names and lighting directly onto the buildings. The street layout creates vistas and uses landmarks to add variety and interest, strengthen sense of place, and help people find their way round the town. Design and materials take their cues from local towns and villages, with the exception of new landmark buildings which weave in inspiration from further afield, eg. Europe. Public art and local craftwork, incorporated into many features from street furniture, signage, and lighting schemes, enhances a distinctive character which is rooted in its community.*



© West Dorset District Council



© Richard Ivey at The Prince's Foundation



© Town and Country Planning Association



© West Dorset District Council



© Duchy of Cornwall

Over time, pavements and public spaces can become cluttered with street furniture such as signs, posts, bollards, railings, control boxes and advertising boards. Such items can accumulate if their use is never reviewed. Clutter like this can create confusion, spoil the street scene, and hinder ease of movement. Such effects are often subliminal as people become used to cluttered spaces, but the effect of removing redundant items and simplifying the rest (e.g. by rationalising signage or mounting lights and cameras on buildings or combining them on a single post) is often startling.

*Walworth Road, South London – same stretch of road before and after de-cluttering and extending the pavement.*



© Living Streets



© Southwark Council

When reducing urban clutter, security need not be compromised. Protective security measures against vehicle-borne threats can effectively be integrated into street furniture such as planters, cycle racks, bus stops, and water features through specialist reinforcement, without compromising on the attractiveness of the streetscape. Natural traffic calming and improved visibility can provide further protection.

Streetscene issues – for example waste, graffiti, flyposting, and anti-social behaviour – can be naturally reduced by clever design and the removal of redundant furniture or barriers, or by the clever placement of a market stall. In Melbourne, for example, a late-night flower stall and a pavement café on a raised platform provide informal surveillance that deters crime and anti-social behaviour.

Where physical changes to the streetscene are being considered, this provides the opportunity to reassess parking provision for cars and cycles and ensure sufficient spaces are available for workers, shoppers and other visitors. If cycle parking is to be well-used, it needs to be sited conveniently close to key destinations, well overlooked, and with ample fixtures to which cycle locks can be secured.

Physical changes by definition can leave a long-term legacy, and it would be advisable to consider sustainability and adaptability in case economic situations or social attitudes change.

## ***Managing and maintaining the space***

One thing that can limit creative and exciting use of public spaces is the challenge of managing and maintaining them. It can be hard to identify or justify expenditure to invest in innovative changes or events, when the benefits of doing so are shared with surrounding businesses. Business Improvement Districts can provide a mechanism to address this, as can social funding platforms such as Spacehive (*see reference section for further details*).

Active management of public spaces (for example, via a business improvement district, a town centre manager or local 'ambassadors') is vital to their usability and people's enjoyment of them, and can deter anti-social behaviour. Regular maintenance will be required, including regular street cleansing and litter clearance, emptying litter bins, removing graffiti, fly-posting and clearing trade waste and any fly-tipping. Reasonable parking charges and a sympathetic but sensible approach to enforcing parking restrictions will help ensure that the right balance is struck between the need to keep streets clear and the convenience of car-borne shoppers and other visitors.

All users of a public space have a role in maintaining it. Community and business engagement and clever design, e.g. choice of materials and pre-emptive surface treatment of these, can minimise such problems and ease remedial action, and it can also help to get everyone involved in reporting any problems and get agreement on whose job it will be to take remedial action when needed.



## Resources and References

This section aims to signpost some of the key documents, guidance, tools and sources of support that you may find helpful in thinking about how best to design or use the urban spaces in your area.

This list is by no means exhaustive, nor does their inclusion imply that the solutions proposed are what central Government would wish to see – it is for local people to decide what is right for your area.

To help you navigate this list, the resources are grouped by the same headings used in the narrative.

### Finding the right local recipe

#### *You might like to look at:*

- **Spaceshaper** - A practical toolkit and facilitated exercise to assess the quality of a public open space and help make investment decisions to improve it. It collects the views of the people who use and manage the space to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the space, and assess how well it meets everyone's needs. [www.landscapeinstitute.org/Spaceshaper/](http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/Spaceshaper/)
- **Placecheck** – An easy-to-use planning tool for initiating community debate about what needs to be improved. [www.placecheck.info/](http://www.placecheck.info/)
- **Neighbourhood Planning** - Empowering communities to shape the development and growth of a local area through the production of a neighbourhood development plan, a neighbourhood development order or a Community Right to Build Order. [www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/neighbourhoodplanningvanguards/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/neighbourhoodplanningvanguards/)
- **Neighbourhood Planning Toolkits** – A variety of tools to assist neighbourhoods. [www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/cabe/services/plan/neighbourhood-planning-toolkits-and-guidance/](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/cabe/services/plan/neighbourhood-planning-toolkits-and-guidance/)
- **Community Street Audit** - A professionally facilitated approach to assessing streets by engaging with local communities and giving them the tools and confidence to identify problems and areas for improvement, backed up by a technical report to help drive those improvements through. [www.livingstreets.org.uk/professionals/working-with-communities/community-street-audits](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/professionals/working-with-communities/community-street-audits)
- **Community Led Spaces** – A guide to the issues involved in transferring ownership and management of public space from local authorities to community groups. [www.cabe.org.uk/publications/community-led-spaces](http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/community-led-spaces)
- **First Impressions Toolkit** – A simple tool to provide feedback to a community from a "first time" visitor. [www.atcm.org/tools/the-first-impressions-exercise.php](http://www.atcm.org/tools/the-first-impressions-exercise.php)

- **Town Centre Health Check** – A health check to understand how a town or city centre is performing. [www.atcm.org/tools/town-centre-healthcheck.php](http://www.atcm.org/tools/town-centre-healthcheck.php)

***Other resources and sources of expertise:***

- **Public Realm Information and Advice Network (PRIAN)** – A group dedicated to encouraging and disseminating best practice in the design, management and maintenance of the public realm. [www.publicrealm.info/](http://www.publicrealm.info/)
- **Urban Design Group** – A website including details of urban design practices, publications and future urban design events, and a regular newsletter with urban design news, articles and blog posts. [www.udg.org.uk](http://www.udg.org.uk) The UDG media catalogue includes digital material in which contributors explain their projects and ideas. [www.urbannous.org.uk/udgevents.htm](http://www.urbannous.org.uk/udgevents.htm)

## Reclaiming the space

***You might like to look at:***

- **Art in the Open: Inspiring creative approaches for town centres** – A toolkit to support the development of arts for town centres. [www.artintheopen.org.uk/pdf/AITO\\_ToolKit.pdf](http://www.artintheopen.org.uk/pdf/AITO_ToolKit.pdf)
- **Public Art Online** – A public art information site which provides guidance on the placement and commissioning of public art, with case studies from around the UK and internationally. [www.publicartonline.org.uk/](http://www.publicartonline.org.uk/)
- **Purple Flag - Reclaiming the space at night** – A movement to improve town and cities at night. [www.purpleflag.org.uk/](http://www.purpleflag.org.uk/)
- **ISAN** publications, DVD and toolkits, offering best practice support in advocating for outdoor arts and practical guidance for organisers of outdoor arts events. [www.isanuk.org](http://www.isanuk.org)

***Other resources and sources of expertise:***

- **Action for Market Towns** – A membership organisation working with town teams and councils to maintain the vitality and viability of small towns across the UK. Database of over 300 case studies; training and consultancy on localism and town centres and a national town centre benchmarking scheme. [www.towns.org.uk](http://www.towns.org.uk)
- **Association of Town Centre Management** - An organisation representing all town centre stakeholders, including Town Centre Partnerships, BIDs and Evening Economy Partnerships. [www.atcm.org](http://www.atcm.org)

- **BEAM** – An organisation dedicated to the imaginative understanding and improvement of the public realm by helping people make great places to live, work and play in. [www.beam.uk.net](http://www.beam.uk.net)
- **British Council of Shopping Centres** – A membership body and authoritative voice for retail-led regeneration and for the management of and investment in shopping places. BCSC represents over 450 businesses in the retail property sector, including, owners, developers, designers, architects and retailers, offering events, educational programmes, research and business to business networking. [www.bcsc.org.uk](http://www.bcsc.org.uk)
- **Heritage Lottery Fund** – Expertise and a range of funding programmes to conserve the UK's diverse heritage, and help more people to learn about their heritage. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)
- **Historic Environment Local Management** – A website providing a source of information, training and guidance about managing change in the historic environment. [www.helm.org.uk](http://www.helm.org.uk)
- **ISAN (Independent Street Arts Network)** – A strategic and membership organisation that develops outdoor arts in the UK by advocating its benefits and through the dissemination of good practice in the planning, staging and safe management of outdoor arts events. ISAN members include producers, presenters, promoters, artists and support agencies working in outdoor arts. [www.isanuk.org](http://www.isanuk.org)
- **National Association of British Market Authorities** – A membership organisation open to any organisation having control of retail, wholesale, livestock markets, public abattoirs and pleasure fairs. Offers events, training and consultancy services. Free market health check and advice from a team of market consultants. [www.nabma.com](http://www.nabma.com)
- **National Market Traders Federation** – An organisation run by market traders, for market traders providing business support and insurance. [www.nmtf.co.uk](http://www.nmtf.co.uk)
- **Meanwhile Space** – A community interest company providing consultancy, brokerage and guidance for landlords, Local Authorities and others interested in innovative interim uses for empty property and sites. [www.meanwhitespace.com](http://www.meanwhitespace.com)
- **Royal Town Planning Institute** - The RTPI's website holds information on exemplar schemes relating to town centre regeneration and the public realm. [www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk)

## Redesigning the space

### *You might like to look at:*

- **It's Our Space** – A guide for community groups working to improve public space. [www.designcouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/cabe/its-our-space.pdf](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/cabe/its-our-space.pdf)

- **Streets for All** – Regional manuals and practical case studies, providing inspiration and advice on street design which reflects the region's historic character. [www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/planning-and-transport/streets-for-all/regional-documents/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/planning-and-transport/streets-for-all/regional-documents/) and [www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/streets-for-all-practical-case-studies-a-summary/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/streets-for-all-practical-case-studies-a-summary/)
- **Heritage at Risk** – A searchable national database of entries on the most recent Heritage at Risk register. [www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/). *N.B. Some local authorities also maintain their own lists of buildings at risk*
- **Understanding Place** – Guidance on conservation area management and how to assess historic significance through Historic Area Assessments. [www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-place-conservation-area/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-place-conservation-area/)
- **Going to town: improving town centre access** – A good practice guide highlighting what can be done through a concerted effort to improve the key routes from the arrival points to the main attractions. [www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningpolicyandlegislation/currentenglishpolicy/goodpracticeguides/improvingtowncentres](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningpolicyandlegislation/currentenglishpolicy/goodpracticeguides/improvingtowncentres)
- **Microeconomic Evidence for the Benefits of Investment in the Environment** – Demonstrates the economic and health benefits of green infrastructure in towns and cities. [publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/32031](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/32031)
- **Local Green Infrastructure – helping communities make the most of their landscapes** [www.landscapeinstitute.org/PDF/Contribute/LocalGreenInfrastructurewebversion\\_000.pdf](http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/PDF/Contribute/LocalGreenInfrastructurewebversion_000.pdf)
- **Trees in the Townscape, a guide for decision makers**, Trees and Design Action Group. [www.tdag.org.uk/trees-in-the-townscape.html](http://www.tdag.org.uk/trees-in-the-townscape.html)
- **Design Wayfinder** – A short document to help authorities, developers and communities identify the main sources of guidance and best practice on good design. [www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/cabe/localism-and-planning/design-wayfinder/](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/cabe/localism-and-planning/design-wayfinder/)
- **Street Pride** – A national campaign supporting local action to help rid our streets of unnecessary clutter. [www.civicvoice.org.uk/campaigns/street-pride/](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/campaigns/street-pride/)
- **Sight Line: Designing better streets for people with low vision** – Design recommendations to help blind and partially sighted people navigate their local streets independently and safely. [www.cabe.org.uk/publications/sight-line](http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/sight-line)
- **The Principles of Inclusive Design.** [www.cabe.org.uk/files/the-principles-of-inclusive-design.pdf](http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/the-principles-of-inclusive-design.pdf)

- **Inclusive Streets: Design principles for blind and partially sighted people** – Booklet commissioned and produced by Guide Dogs for the Blind.  
[www.guidedogs.org.uk/fileadmin/gdmain/user/What\\_we\\_do/Shared%20Surfaces/Documents/Inclusive Streets Design Principles booklet Guide Dogs 2010.pdf](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk/fileadmin/gdmain/user/What_we_do/Shared%20Surfaces/Documents/Inclusive_Streets_Design_Principles_booklet_Guide_Dogs_2010.pdf)
- **Guidance on the Use of Tactile Paving Surfaces** – Advice on the design of the pedestrian environment to aid visually impaired people.  
[www.dft.gov.uk/publications/guidance-on-the-use-of-tactile-paving-surfaces/](http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/guidance-on-the-use-of-tactile-paving-surfaces/)
- **Land in limbo - making the best use of vacant urban spaces: public space lessons** – How to transform vacant urban open spaces into valuable public assets.  
[www.cabe.org.uk/publications/land-in-limbo](http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/land-in-limbo)
- **Living with risk: promoting better public space design** – How reaction to health and safety concerns is affecting the quality of streets, parks and squares.  
[www.cabe.org.uk/publications/living-with-risk](http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/living-with-risk)
- **Living Streets' online professionals' area** – Case studies of realistic street improvement schemes, large and small, including frank video interviews with scheme designers and engineers. [www.livingstreets.org.uk/professionals](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/professionals)
- **Rediscovering Mixed-Use Streets** – A report looking at how mixed use high streets function and are managed, what views the different stakeholders hold of them, how the tensions and conflicts manifest in their operation are articulated and what improvements could be made. [www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/2018-mixed-use-streets.pdf](http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/2018-mixed-use-streets.pdf)
- **Manual for Streets 1 & 2** - The Manuals for Streets emphasise that streets should be places in which people want to live and spend time in, and are not just transport corridors. In particular, the manual aims to reduce the impact of vehicles on residential streets by asking practitioners to plan street design intelligently and proactively, and gives a high priority to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport. [www.dft.gov.uk/publications/manual-for-streets](http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/manual-for-streets)
- **Landscape architecture: A guide for clients** – Includes many examples of landscape-led projects demonstrating the value of public realm.  
[www.landscapeinstitute.org/PDF/Contribute/Landscapearchitecture-Aguideforclients2012A3.pdf](http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/PDF/Contribute/Landscapearchitecture-Aguideforclients2012A3.pdf)
- **Protecting Crowded Places: Design and Technical Issues**  
<https://vsat.nactso.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/AreasOfRisk/Crowded%20Places-Design%20and%20Tech-Jan%202012.pdf>
- **Crowded Places: The Planning System and Counter-Terrorism**  
<https://vsat.nactso.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/AreasOfRisk/Crowded%20Places-Planning%20System-Jan%202012.pdf>



### ***Shared Space, Transport, Traffic and Parking:***

- **Local Transport Note 1/11: Shared Space** -- Aimed at assisting those designing and preparing street improvement and management schemes. Particular emphasis is placed on stakeholder engagement and inclusive design, where the needs of a diverse range of people in terms of disability, age etc. are properly considered at all stages of the development process, and on sustainable design where future maintenance needs are considered as part of the design process.  
[www.dft.gov.uk/publications/ltn-01-11](http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/ltn-01-11)
- **Inclusive Mobility A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure.** [www.dft.gov.uk/publications/inclusive-mobility/](http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/inclusive-mobility/)
- **Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/11: Vehicle Security Barriers within the Streetscape** – Advice about why vehicle security barriers may be needed and how they might best be integrated into streetscapes.  
<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/tal-1-11/1-11.pdf>
- **Local Transport Note LTN 1/08 Traffic Management and Streetscape** – A guide to help all those involved in the design of traffic management measures to prepare schemes that consider and care for the streetscape. Advice on minimising traffic signs, road markings and street furniture achieving this is given with reference to case studies. <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/local-transport-notes/ltn-1-08.pdf>
- **Other Local Transport Notes** from Department for Transport, including:
  - 2/09 - Pedestrian Guardrailing  
<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/local-transport-notes/ltn-2-09.pdf>
  - 2/08 - Cycle Infrastructure Design  
<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/local-transport-notes/ltn-2-08.pdf>
- **Sustrans information sheet FF37 - Cycle Parking**  
[www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/Info%20sheets/cycle%20parking%20info%20sheet.pdf](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/Info%20sheets/cycle%20parking%20info%20sheet.pdf)
- **Accessible Bus Stop Design Guidance Note BP7/06** (Transport for London)  
[www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/businessandpartners/accessible\\_bus\\_stop\\_design\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/businessandpartners/accessible_bus_stop_design_guidance.pdf)
- **Naked streets** policy briefing, case studies, a useful film about countering perceptions of a public space and background to fitter for walking work including case studies.  
[www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Policy\\_briefings/pb0109nakedstreets.pdf](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Policy_briefings/pb0109nakedstreets.pdf) and [www.livingstreets.org.uk/professionals/working-with-communities/fitter-for-walking](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/professionals/working-with-communities/fitter-for-walking)
- **Analysing the perceptions of pedestrians and drivers to shared space**  
[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1369847812000149](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1369847812000149)

### ***Other resources and sources of expertise:***

- **Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure** – A source of integrated security advice (combining information, personnel and physical) to organisations which make up the national infrastructure. [www.cpni.gov.uk](http://www.cpni.gov.uk)
- **CIRIA** - Advice on addressing crime and disorder through planning and design. [www.ciria.org](http://www.ciria.org)
- **Green Infrastructure Partnership** – A partnership of over 200 organisations looking at ways green infrastructure can provide environmental enhancements, improve communities' health and quality of life, help drive local investment and growth and make better places for people and wildlife. [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/green-infrastructure](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/green-infrastructure)
- **Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People** – An independent body consisting of representatives from the principle organisations of blind, deafblind and partially sighted people, with a specific interest in access and mobility. Policy statements have been produced on a range of issues to provide guidance to central and local government; providers, designers, operators and managers of transport facilities, buildings and the pedestrian environment. [www.jcmbps.org.uk](http://www.jcmbps.org.uk)
- **The GraBS Project** – A European network with expertise in using green and blue infrastructure to help new and existing mixed use urban developments adapt to projected climate scenarios. [www.grabs-eu.org](http://www.grabs-eu.org)
- **Townscape Heritage Initiative** – The Heritage Lottery Fund's targeted grants programme for improving the historic buildings, structures or spaces of high streets across the UK. [www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes/Pages/townscapeheritageinitiative.aspx](http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes/Pages/townscapeheritageinitiative.aspx)

## **Managing and maintaining the space**

### ***You might like to look at:***

- **Spacehive.com** - A funding platform for neighbourhood improvement projects. The service allows anyone to pitch for funding from their community for capital projects. Supporters pledge online and are only charged if the project succeeds in raising its target funds. Spacehive.com was recently successfully used to fund a community centre in Wales. [spacehive.com/Home/AboutUs](http://spacehive.com/Home/AboutUs)
- **Street Operations Guides** – A wide series of guides covering range of streetscene issues, including trade waste, graffiti, beggars. Requires Association of Town Centre Management membership to access. [www.atcm.org/practice/category.php?catID=36](http://www.atcm.org/practice/category.php?catID=36)
- **Financing the Management & Maintenance of Civic Spaces** – A report highlighting untapped opportunities for revenue generation from civic space to fund management and maintenance. [www.atcm.org/mfiles/files/471-oneneexecreportLR.pdf](http://www.atcm.org/mfiles/files/471-oneneexecreportLR.pdf)

- **State of our Streets** – A policy paper including good practice case studies from councils and communities across the country on management and maintenance approaches which have made streets safer, more attractive and more enjoyable. [www.livingstreets.org.uk/state-of-our-streets](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/state-of-our-streets)
- **Love Where You Live Campaign**, (Keep Britain Tidy) – Aims to reduce litter and increase civic pride by encouraging community activity and personal responsibility to manage and improve the quality of local environments. [www.lovewhereyoulive.org](http://www.lovewhereyoulive.org)
- **Streetscape Guidance report** (Transport for London) – Gives advice and information to Transport for London staff that look after the design, appearance and upkeep of London's streets and roads. [www.tfl.gov.uk/businessandpartners/publications/4858.aspx](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/businessandpartners/publications/4858.aspx) *N.B. Similar streetscape guides also exist in several other areas including Southampton, Kent, Essex, and Suffolk.*
- **Industry Criteria and Guidance notes for BIDS** – Guidance to assist prospective Business Improvement Districts in the development of proposals and business plans which are capable of attracting wide support from the retail and banking sectors. [www.brc.org.uk/brc\\_show\\_document.asp?id=4358&moid=7688](http://www.brc.org.uk/brc_show_document.asp?id=4358&moid=7688)
- **National Counter-Terrorism Security Office** – A range of guidance documents tailored to specific sectors such as shopping centres and bars, pubs and nightclubs, which may assist in improving the protective security of your site, venue or locale. [www.nactso.gov.uk](http://www.nactso.gov.uk)

***Other resources and sources of expertise:***

- **Keep Britain Tidy** - National anti-litter campaigns, materials, information, research, networks and training on litter and how to combat it. [www.keepbritaintidy.org](http://www.keepbritaintidy.org)
- **British BIDS** – a membership organisation focused on thought leadership, research and market commentary on the development, management renewal and evolution of British Improvement Districts in Britain. A fee applies. [www.britishbids.info/](http://www.britishbids.info/)
- **UK BIDs** – a membership organisation committed to supporting robust and successful Business Improvement Districts in the UK. Incorporates the National BID Advisory Service. The site contains case studies and information about successful BIDs as well as information to help establish a BID. Requires membership of the Association of Town Centre Management [www.ukbids.org/index.php](http://www.ukbids.org/index.php)

## **Contacts**

For more information on the Government's programme of support for high streets, see:

[www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/economicgrowth/highstreetsportas/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/economicgrowth/highstreetsportas/)

Or contact:                    Local Growth & Regeneration Implementation Division  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU  
Tel: 0303 444 0000

Further information and support on the main themes raised in this report is also available from our partners in this publication:

**Arts Council England**    [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)    0845 300 6200

**Association of Town Centre Management**    [www.atcm.org](http://www.atcm.org)    0300 3300 980

**British Council of Shopping Centres**    [www.bcsc.org.uk](http://www.bcsc.org.uk)    0845 270 0775

**Civic Voice**    [www.civicvoice.org.uk](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk)    0151 708 9920

**Department for Culture, Media and Sport**    [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)    020 7211 6000

**Design Council Cabi**    [www.designcouncil.org.uk/cabi](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/cabi)    020 7420 5200

**English Heritage**    [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)    0870 333 1181

**Groundwork**    [www.groundwork.org.uk](http://www.groundwork.org.uk)    0121 236 8565

**Guide Dogs for the Blind**    [www.guidedogs.org.uk](http://www.guidedogs.org.uk)    0118 983 5555

**Heritage Lottery Fund**    [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)    020 7591 6000

**ISAN (Independent Street Arts Network)**    [www.isanuk.org](http://www.isanuk.org)    020 7388 9767

**Keep Britain Tidy**    [www.keepbritaintidy.org](http://www.keepbritaintidy.org)    01942 612621

**Landscape Institute**    [www.landscapeinstitute.org](http://www.landscapeinstitute.org)    020 7685 2640

**Living Streets**    [www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk)    020 7377 4900

**National Association of British Market Authorities**    [www.nabma.com](http://www.nabma.com)    01691 680713

**Royal Town Planning Institute**    [www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk)    020 7929 9494

**Trees and Design Action Group**    [www.tdag.org.uk](http://www.tdag.org.uk)

**Town & Country Planning Association**    [www.tcpa.org.uk](http://www.tcpa.org.uk)    020 7930 8903

**UK Regeneration**    [www.ukregeneration.org.uk](http://www.ukregeneration.org.uk)    0207 380 4524

Additional thanks to the following for their contributions:

Association of Market Towns

Country Markets

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Department for Transport

Historic Towns Forum

Home Office

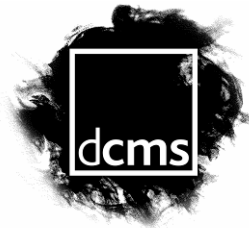
NESTA

Royal Institute of British Architects

Urban Pollinators



A Department for Communities and Local Government publication,  
in collaboration with:



department for  
culture, media  
and sport



**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



ENGLISH HERITAGE



**tcpa**



Trees & Design  
Action Group



*“Creating vibrant public spaces and encouraging community involvement in town and city centres bolsters places both socially and economically. As retail destinations continue to compete with online and multi-channel retailing, we should remember that the most successful locations benefit from the creation of ‘theatre’ and a sense of place. At this time of enormous change for the retail property industry, we must all work together, taking shared responsibility for the future prosperity of our town centres.”*

**Edward Cooke, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, British Council of Shopping Centres**

*“Living Streets welcomes **Re-imagining Urban Spaces to Help Revitalise Our High Streets** as a useful toolkit which will help local authorities create and maintain safe, attractive town centre and high streets where people want to walk.”*

**Tony Armstrong, Chief Executive, Living Streets**

*“This report demonstrates the huge impact that well-designed places have on community life. A good public square offers safety, security, a meeting place and a focus for the community. A beautiful park offers a refuge from the bustle of the city; not only a place to meet but one where people of all ages can feel at ease. Landscape architects continue to take the lead in developing landscapes at the heart of towns and cities, in the street and in public parks, all of which make a huge contribution to the communities with which they work.”*

**Sue Illman, President, Landscape Institute**

*“This publication is a welcome call to action to re-imagine our high streets and town centres. In thinking about the future of our public spaces we need to ensure they are attractive, vibrant and accessible to everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability or ethnicity.”*

**Kate Henderson, Chief Executive, Town and Country Planning Association**

*“This is great news for high streets across the country and a fantastic opportunity for arts organisations and businesses to bring innovative and exciting new projects to local places. The Arts Council believes that arts and culture has an important role to play in helping to bring about positive change in local communities and we look forward to supporting ventures which will help revitalise our high streets while getting people involved with the great things the arts have to offer.”*

**Alan Davey, Chief Executive, Arts Council England**

*“Nabma is delighted to welcome this initiative and the good practice examples of making positive use of public space. Markets can make an important contribution to creating activity in public places providing colour and vitality and also bringing people together to create a real sense of community spirit.”*

**Graham Wilson, Chief Executive, National Association of British Market Authorities**

*“ISAN wholeheartedly endorses **Re-imagining Urban Spaces to Help Revitalise Our High Streets** as a valuable resource for all those interested in using new and exciting creative approaches to re-invigorate town centres and high streets. [...] Outdoor arts create a rationale for visitors to make extra effort to attend and bring diverse communities together [and] help contribute to a destination’s ‘sense of place’. **Re-imagining Urban Spaces to Help Revitalise Our High Streets** offers both the vision and the know-how to improve high streets and town centres through creative solutions from simple design enhancements through to outdoor arts. It recognises the importance of people and place.”*

**Helen Cadwallader, Director, ISAN (Independent Street Arts Network)**