

FAST URBAN CHANGE - A HOW TO GUIDE from the Urban Design Group

This **HOW TO GUIDE** aims to set out in the simplest terms the options available to towns and cities to make life more bearable under the current crisis. It signposts key UK legislation, including powers and legal instruments, as well as the practical measures that local authorities are introducing internationally.

Much of current practice in highways is based on an understanding of what is reasonable. Because of the Coronavirus, what was regarded as reasonable in the past, may not be reasonable now.

Urban designers the world over are ready to help work with others to bring about the changes needed.

A Duty to Act

Local authorities have a duty to act to secure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. They have the powers to implement most of the reasonable requests to enact that duty made as a response to the crisis (including those made by the [Urban Design Group](#)). In most instances local authorities can act instantly provided they have the resources to do it.

Statutory Duties on Local Authorities

The Duty to exercise the functions conferred by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians). Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 Section 122. The functions include the creation of temporary speed limits, and the temporary restriction or prohibition of traffic.

The Duty to provide in or by the side of a highway '*a proper and sufficient footway as part of the highway in any case where they consider the provision of a footway as necessary or desirable for the safety or accommodation of pedestrians*'. Highways Act 1980 Section 66 (1)

The current crisis suggests that "a proper and sufficient footway" requires additional space to better facilitate physical distancing and likely additional pedestrians due to the Government's request for additional people to walk and cycle. This additional footway space will be required to facilitate the 'safety... of pedestrians'. Similarly, the standard for a material obstruction of a footway will change to reflect physical distancing.

The Duty to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway for which they are the highway authority. Highways Act 1980 Section 130

Common Law Duty of Care

Owed by highway authorities to both careful and negligent road users. *Yetkin v Newham* 2010

What to do....

Local authorities in the UK and internationally have been rapidly introducing:

Space for Life

- Traffic-free periods in certain streets, neighbourhoods, town and city centres or wider, ranging from hours to days to longer periods
- Low traffic neighbourhoods
- COVID-Safe High Streets and shopping areas
- Footway/Pavement extensions at pinch-points or busy areas

Space for Movement

- Safe local routes to local shopping centres, pharmacies, medical centres, hospitals and other essential community facilities
- Routes for exercise, including routes to local parks or wildlife corridors
- Supplementing main public transport routes with
 - Temporary strategic cycle routes
 - Temporary strategic walking routes
 - Encouraging short-distance public transport users to make the journey on foot or by bicycle

Space for Children, Space for Elderly and Disabled People

- Protecting children
 - Safe areas for children to play – eg Play Streets
 - Safe routes for children to walk or cycle to school and School Streets
 - Child-safe neighbourhoods
- Protecting elderly and disabled people (also covered by the Equality Act 2010), especially blind people

A Long Term Outlook

The leading local authorities are looking at how these actions can tackle inactive lifestyles, obesity, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions, and to bring about a permanent improvement in happiness and wellbeing.

Detailed Measures

There is a range of different measures that are available to achieve these goals. Most can be undertaken within the powers of a local authority and without the need for lengthy bureaucracy.

Road Danger Reduction Measures

- Mandatory 20mph speed limits, reinforced with physical measures such as build-outs, chicanes, gateways, islands, overrun areas, pinch-points
- Traffic calming using features such as lighting, paving, grass or other covering, pillars, bollards, planters, walls, rails or fences, objects or structures spanning the highway, or trees, shrubs or other plants

Restricting Vehicular Traffic

- Mandatory restrictions or closures of streets or groups of streets to create Pedestrian or Cycle Zones, applying
 - to certain types of traffic, all types traffic, or through-traffic
 - at different times of day or all times of day, apart from access
- Reinforcing restrictions or closures with modal filters, using barriers or planters, or other traffic calming features
- Play Streets
- School Streets

Cycling

- Creating new or widening existing cycle-lanes - temporary (or pop-up), advisory or mandatory – indicated by lines or protected
- Suspension or relocation of parking or loading areas to provide additional carriageway width
- Adjusting design of junctions – eg providing maximum area permitted for advanced stop lines (7.5m depth)
- Providing additional cycle parking

Walking

- Footways extended into the carriageway, using lines, cones, barriers, or raised surfaces, to provide areas for walking, queuing (by shops, bus stops etc) or additional areas for pavement cafes, bars etc (separate licensing required)
- Two-way flow on footways to increase capacity – kerbside pedestrian lane facing direction of oncoming vehicles so that pedestrians are alert to danger
- Removing railing at pavement pinch-points
- Police enforcement of pavement parking where vehicles are causing a material obstruction by preventing pedestrians and wheelchair users to pass and repass whilst observing social distancing guidance

Crossings

- Widening and extending crossings and islands (10m width permitted on signal-controlled crossings and zebras)
- Retiming traffic signals to give more time for pedestrians, or introducing all arm green phase
- Taping over push signal buttons to discourage contact. NB blind people still need to be able to touch the rotating cone on the underside of the button control units

General

- Warning or advisory signs

The combined aim should be to provide a safe, attractive environment, with a view to the long term.

Highway Measures under the COVID 19 Crisis



How

Under Existing Powers

- A local authority may take immediate action

Temporary Traffic Regulation Notice

- No consultation required
- Lasts up to 21 days

Temporary Traffic Regulation Order

- At least 7 days advance notice required through at least one local newspaper
- Lasts up to 18 months

Experimental Traffic Order

- No consultation
- Lasts up to 18 months
- Objections – to prevent an order becoming permanent people must object within six months of the day of the notice coming into effect

Permanent Traffic Order

- Not appropriate for emergency measures

Key Acts and Regulations

[The Highways \(Traffic Calming\) Regulations 1999](#)

[The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984](#) S14,15,16, S122

[The Road Traffic \(Temporary Restrictions\) Procedure Regulations 1992](#)

[Highways Act 1980](#)

[Road Traffic Act 1988](#)

[Traffic Management Act 2004](#)

[Traffic Management Act 2004 Network Management Duty Guidance](#) (2004)

[Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID-19](#) (2020)

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