

PE1595/GGG

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Our ref: A13444669
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Consideration of Petition [PE1595](#) (Moratorium on Shared Space Schemes)

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to place a moratorium on all shared space schemes until safety and equality concerns have been addressed.

Thank you for your letter of 27 January 2016. I am responding as an official within the Planning and Architecture Division with responsibilities for maintaining policies on urban design and placemaking.

The committee asked the question: whether, in light of the petition, Scottish Government considers that there is a need for more comprehensive guidance on shared spaces to be available to local authorities, particularly with regard to blind, partially sighted and disabled people. At present, there are no plans to review [Designing Streets](#) policy or to produce supplementary guidance related to *shared space*. Policy and guidance (for both roads and planning) is available to local authorities for them to interpret as deemed appropriate given the circumstances in specific cases where any proposal may contain elements of *shared space*. In addition, local authorities are independently responsible for their equality duties under The Equality Act 2010 that requires them to assess the impact of applying new or revised policy or practice against the needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

To explain this answer further I will outline a summary of *Designing Streets* policy, some of the ongoing support given to it, and notes on how *shared space* features within it.

Policy context and support

Designing Streets has been Scotland's street design policy since 2010. It focuses on the needs of pedestrians of all abilities. This planning policy document, subject to extensive consultation and peer review, applies when change is proposed to any street within all urban and rural boundaries. Its user hierarchy clearly prioritises for the needs of pedestrians first and private motor vehicles last. An important element to achieve this prioritisation is for design to influence driver behaviour so that vehicle speeds are reduced.

Scottish Government actively supports the application of *Designing Streets*. Following research into its implementation, published in 2013, a toolbox was developed to aid broader understanding and more consistent application. These tools are aimed at all parties: local authorities, designers and others involved in making or consulting on any proposal to build new streets or alter existing streets. For example, the Quality Audit template supports a balanced approach to assist where there are conflicting priorities, such as can happen in town centres, that should be resolved through multi-disciplinary design.

Planning and Architecture Division, within the wider Scottish Government, is committed to making better places through many policies that encourage better quality places and streets - that are good for the surrounding environment, local economy and community well-being. Scottish Planning Policy, published in 2014 with placemaking as a principal policy, reinforces *Designing Streets*. We have also recently launched the Place Standard tool that aims to create better places by using a highly accessible consultative method.

Designing Streets is a document that covers a very wide range of scales from the connectivity of networks of streets down to detailed elements such as materials. It does not promote one type of solution for any type of road or street within a settlement. But regardless of the context it says that inclusive design should be a first principle in street design.

Within 'Streets for People', one of *Designing Streets*' 18 design sections, *shared space* is introduced as only one possible approach that can be applied if a proposer considers it appropriate to the circumstances. It is worth noting that *shared space*, rather than being a rigid definition of a scheme, can refer to combinations of various elements that may be incorporated into a design. The guidance within the policy document does not promote or prescribe *shared space*, but provides a platform to help local authorities make more informed decisions, recognising that flexibility is needed in individual cases based on specific needs. The policy notes that *shared space*, and level surfaces (a type of *shared space* where all kerbs and barriers to movement are removed) in particular, can cause problems to some users. Therefore a level surface scheme should include alternative means by which visually-impaired people can navigate. In addition, how appropriate a *shared space* could be, and of what type, will relate to speeds and volumes of traffic. Where designs are proposed, local disability groups should be invited to provide detailed input throughout the design stages.

If there is any matter that my colleagues or I could be of assistance to the committee then please get back in touch.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Watson