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Joint Circular from the  
Department of the Environment  
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## PLANNING OUT CRIME

1. This Circular gives advice to local authorities, developers and designers about planning considerations relating to crime prevention. It has been produced in consultation with the Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers.
2. Successful crime prevention often depends on a wide range of measures. Crime prevention initiatives on housing estates, for example, are known to require a package of measures which address a range of issues—not just crime itself—and involve several agencies. The planning system is one, but only one, important factor in a successful crime prevention strategy. Good planning alone cannot solve the problem of crime but when co-ordinated with other measures, its contribution can be significant.
3. Crime prevention is capable of being a material consideration when planning applications are considered. As with other material considerations, the weight that is given to it will depend on the individual circumstances of the case. The importance of security in the design of developments may depend, for example, on the likely frequency and seriousness of different types of crime in the area, and the perception locally of the risk of crime occurring. The approach adopted by local planning authorities should be sufficiently flexible to allow solutions to remain sensitive to local circumstances. There should be a balanced approach to design which attempts to reconcile the visual quality of a development with the need for crime prevention.
4. The causes of crime and vandalism are complex but it is widely accepted that environmental factors can play a part. Desolate, sterile and featureless surroundings can engender feelings of hostility, anonymity and alienation. Used sensitively the planning system can be instrumental in producing attractive and well-managed environments that help to discourage anti-social behaviour. It can also be used to make it harder for criminals to find targets. It can do this by encouraging developers to adopt designs for new

developments that take the security of people and property fully into account, and by influencing the siting of new residential, commercial and leisure developments. A wide and varied range of land uses can help to create environments that are lively and well-used (see paragraph 14), thus deterring criminal activity. But in drawing up planning policies with this objective, local authorities should bear in mind the need to avoid the juxtaposition of incompatible land uses that could potentially give rise to conflict.

5. Advice on a number of crime prevention measures which, strictly speaking, are not subject to planning control but which local authorities, developers and designers may find useful, is given in Annex A. A bibliography listing a number of recent publications on crime prevention issues is given at Annex B.

#### *Designing to Reduce Crime*

6. Once a development has been completed, the main opportunity to incorporate crime prevention measures will have been lost. Where there is potential to reduce crime this should feature in discussions authorities have with developers and their designers at the outset of the design process.

7. Many studies suggest that the layout of developments can play a part in reducing the risk of criminal activity both to individuals and to property. For example, the location of dwellings so that the main living areas face the access road can help the residents to see visitors and tradespeople, and to control access to their premises. Detailed advice on the way that the layout of residential developments can improve security is given in the joint Department of the Environment and Department of Transport Design Bulletin 32 "Residential Roads and Footpaths—Layout Considerations" (HMSO, 1992).

8. Local authorities and developers will want to take note of design guidance contained in the Police Architectural Liaison Manual of Guidance, which explains important crime prevention principles. Copies can be obtained from the Home Office Crime Prevention Centre, Police Headquarters, Cannock Road, Stafford ST17 0QG (Tel: 0785 58217).

9. Local authorities are advised to consult Police Architectural Liaison Officers (Crime Prevention Design Advisers in the Metropolitan police service) on planning applications for those developments where there is potential to eliminate or reduce crime through the adoption of suitable measures at the design stage. This is especially important for major developments such as new housing estates, industrial estates, shopping centres, leisure complexes and car parks. It is important to consult Police Architectural Liaison Officers at as early a stage as possible—by the time a formal application is submitted, the opportunity to take account of advice may already be limited.

10. Police forces throughout the country promote the "Secured by Design" scheme. This scheme, which covers new housing, the rehabilitation of existing housing and commercial developments, provides guidance for developers and planning authorities on best practice. It is a free service for architects, builders and local authorities.

11. Pre-application discussions between the local planning authority and the developer offer an opportunity to consider security issues at an early stage and to incorporate crime prevention measures into the planning application itself. Where local planning authorities find it necessary to consider using conditions to secure crime prevention objectives, they should ensure that any conditions they impose are reasonable and necessary, relevant to the development and to planning, enforceable and precise (as outlined in DOE and Welsh Office Circular 1/85).

#### *Development Plans*

12. Crime prevention is one of the social considerations to which regard must be given in development plans [see also paragraph 51 of Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 1, paragraphs 5.48-5.51 of PPG12 and paragraphs 5.46-5.49 of PPG12 (Wales)].

13. Local plans and Part 2 of unitary development plans should establish principles for the design, layout and landscaping of new residential or commercial development; these should aim to reassure the public by making crime more difficult to commit, increase the risk of detection and provide people with a safer, more secure environment. These principles may include the deterrent effects of good design, layout and lighting. They can also embrace broader concepts such as the desirability of avoiding over-large, single-use developments which are sparsely populated at particular times of day. Development plans can be used in a positive way to encourage the provision of leisure or social facilities for the young.

14. One of the main reasons people give for shunning town centres at night is fear about their security and safety: one of the main reasons for that fear is the fact that there are very few people about. Breaking that vicious circle is a key to bringing life back to town centres. By adopting plan policies that encourage a wide and varied range of uses, local authorities can help to foster the creation of lively, attractive and welcoming environments. This objective may require wider measures than those justified by land use policy. They might well extend, for instance, to enabling arrangements that help promote the "night economy" eg late night buses and trains fitting in with closing times of entertainment facilities. This type of environment, coupled with the use of closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras (see Annex A) and security systems that provide a rapid response to criminal activity, can provide more safety and security for the public and prove a greater deterrent to crime in general than deserted areas with 'dead' shop fronts and fortress-like security measures. Policies aimed at fostering the vitality and viability of town centres (see PPG6 "Town Centres and Retail Developments") should be used to encourage the development of recreational and cultural facilities—such as sports centres, cinemas and theatres—that bring life to urban areas after dark. The Government's 'Flats Over Shops' initiative has demonstrated the potential for restoring and establishing residential accommodation in town centres. All these objectives are conducive to greater activity in the evening and at night, thus increasing the opportunities for members of the public to see what is going on (passive surveillance).

### *A Strategic Approach*

15. It is important that crime prevention schemes are designed to meet specific security needs location by location. There may be particular "trouble spots", for example, highly vulnerable to opportunistic crime, for which effective and simple crime prevention measures are available.

16. Wider remedies may be needed for other aspects of crime. This points to the advantages of ensuring as far as possible that local action fits into a crime prevention strategy or framework for a wider area. Local authorities are well placed to facilitate a wider, more strategic approach to crime prevention. In liaison with the police, they may therefore wish to consider initiating or promoting strategic crime prevention schemes, taking into account the needs of an area as a whole. This might involve, for example, undertaking an appraisal of an area's security needs in consultation with the police, those involved in parallel crime prevention initiatives, the business community, the voluntary sector and the public, and developing an agreed strategy. The geographical coverage of such wider schemes will of course vary with local circumstances.

17. Where appropriate wider, area-based approaches might for example incorporate some degree of pedestrianisation, or the installation of CCTV systems in town centres, or the introduction of suitably designed street furniture (see paragraphs A5 and A6 of Annex A). Local businesses are likely to benefit from such schemes—they would not only be afforded more protection from crime, but any consequent increase in the public's use of an area is also likely to result in an increase in trade. When local businesses would benefit from the adoption of such schemes it would be reasonable for local authorities to ask them to bear a proportion of the costs. Such financial assistance can be used, for instance, to part-fund the appointment of a town centre manager (see paragraph A1 of Annex A).

18. A strategic, area-based approach is likely to be beneficial generally. But it would be of particular value in the case of historic town centres or conservation areas where it is especially important to ensure that crime prevention measures respect the character of the area.

### *Housing Estates*

19. Successful crime prevention on existing housing estates has been shown by research to depend on a variety of factors, including changes to estate management, as well as the design of the whole layout and of the individual blocks and homes within the estate. An extensive recently-completed study<sup>1</sup> supports a broad approach as promoted by the Department of the Environment in its Estate Action and related programmes.

20. Recent work<sup>2</sup> for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on new residential developments by housing associations has emphasised the value of small-scale developments in locations with good access to amenities. Social housing developments of the size (say, up to 1,000 dwellings or more) that were common up to the 1970s are no longer regarded as desirable. Where large housing developments are being regenerated, or new developments are

<sup>1</sup>DOE, *Crime prevention on Council Estates* (HMSO, 1993)

<sup>2</sup>D. Page, *Building for Communities* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1993)

proposed, they should be divided into distinct neighbourhoods, each with a recognisable character and focus and convenient access to amenities. This will help encourage residents to have a sense of "ownership" of their immediate area and make it easier for them to exercise concern with its upkeep. If housing areas can be kept reasonably small and adjacent to necessary amenities and other uses, so much the better. Diversity of ownership and tenure can help to break down otherwise monolithic developments.

21. There is a considerable body of experience and advice on the way the design and layout of external areas of housing estates can affect levels of crime and the fear of crime. Summary guidance on this has been prepared by the Department of the Environment's Estate Action Team<sup>3</sup>.

22. In all this, there is a clear role for planning and design advice at the earliest stage of creating new housing areas or improving old ones. On new and existing estates, the provision of sporting, leisure and recreational facilities, particularly for the young, has a part to play in reducing the incidence of crime. The importance of providing recreational facilities is emphasised in PPG17 "Sport and Recreation".

#### *Landscaping*

23. Sensitive and skilled design should be capable of reconciling the need for acceptable landscaping and the need to produce safe environments. Generally speaking, however, landscaping schemes should avoid creating hidden areas, near footpaths for example, where crime is easier to commit. Thorny species of shrub—such as varieties of pyracantha, berberis and hawthorn—can be an additional deterrent to intruders, particularly when used in domestic gardens.

24. Advice on the use of street furniture and planters is given in Annex A.

#### *Roads, footpaths and subways*

25. The general design principles of defensible territory, variety and the need to keep areas open to view also apply to the layout of minor roads and footpaths. Care should be taken that well-intentioned segregation schemes for pedestrians and cyclists do not lead to over-isolation, especially at night. Attractive pedestrian links and cycleways can be formed through amenity open space. If these are divorced from adjoining housing or other developments, it is essential that there should be alternative safe and convenient routes for people to take should the links through open space be at risk from criminal activity. Advice for local authorities when drawing up proposals in their development plans for pedestrians and cyclists is given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 "Transport".

26. The security of premises can be reduced where a footpath or alleyway provides unrestricted access to the rear. Where such access is unavoidable, consideration should be given to ways of denoting or suggesting ownership and restricting its use to the occupiers, such as the provision of a gate. Wherever possible, footpaths and alleyways should be wide, clear of hiding places, well lit and should follow a direct route.

<sup>3</sup>DOE, *Handbook of Estate Improvement* (Part 2: External Areas) (HMSO, 1991)

27. Subways can cause concern to the public. However they are an effective way of separating vulnerable road users from vehicular traffic and consequently reducing the risk of road accidents. When properly designed with wide approaches, good through visibility, good lighting and within view of passing pedestrians and traffic, fears about personal safety can be minimised. The Department of Transport issued advice on good design in July 1993 (TD36/93- "Subways for pedestrians and pedal cyclists—layout and dimensions" Design manual for Roads and Bridges, volume 6, section 3 part 1).

### **Other Security Measures**

#### *Security shutters*

28. The installation of external security shutters is likely to materially affect the external appearance of a building and thus constitute development requiring planning permission. The installation of an internal shutter behind a shop window is unlikely to require planning permission.

29. If there is a proposal to install external or internal security shutters on premises which are included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, listed building consent will almost certainly be required. As with other proposals which are likely to affect the character or appearance of a listed building, each case must be decided on its merits. When deciding a planning application for the installation of shutters on a building situated in a conservation area, the local authority is required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

30. Security shutters illustrate the tension that can exist between the need for effective crime prevention measures and the need to maintain or improve the environmental quality of an area. Proposals for their introduction, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas, can be controversial. It is therefore important that applicants bear in mind that shutters are only one of a number of possible measures that can be used to improve the security of business premises. Some alternative ways of making shop fronts more secure, which should be considered particularly where the premises are located in an environmentally sensitive area, are given in paragraph A4 of the Annex.

31. The creation of a fortress-like atmosphere can be self-defeating. Solid roller shutters can have an adverse environmental effect, giving an area a 'dead' appearance and contributing towards the creation of a hostile atmosphere. They are also vulnerable to graffiti. This not only gives out signals about an area's vulnerability to crime, but can also deter the public from using such locations, thus losing the benefit of passive surveillance. Areas which lack activity, or appear deserted, can be attractive to criminals who perceive that they are less likely to be detected.

32. Where security shutters are required, and the appearance of the premises or the street scene are important, the use of shutters with an open grille design should be considered. This type of shutter can let light from premises onto the street outside normal trading hours and can help to maintain the attractiveness of the area. Shutters of this type also enable passers-by to see inside, which can help to deter criminals further.

33. In all these circumstances, local authorities should be alive to the very real concerns of the business community, and should be willing to explore with applicants the scope for acceptable solutions to their security problems.

#### *Bollards*

34. The installation of bollards, pillars or railings at the kerbside on highway land for the purpose of safeguarding people using the highway can also be an effective deterrent against certain types of crime (typically "ram-raiding") in shopping areas. (see also paragraphs A5 and A6 of the Annex on the use of street furniture). If the land immediately in front of a shop or entrance to a shopping centre is in private ownership, it is open to the owner or occupier of the land to apply for planning permission to install bollards or pillars. In all cases, schemes for the installation of bollards should take full account of the need to avoid creating difficulties for people with visual disabilities.

#### *Car Parking*

35. Car parking areas can be especially prone to crime: developers and local authorities are therefore advised to liaise with the police when considering their design and location. The "Secured Car Parks" scheme promoted by the police suggests potential problems can be minimised if careful attention is paid to levels of lighting, surveillance by staff or CCTV and limiting the number of access points. Wherever possible, residential parking should be within the owners' view.

#### *Outdoor Notification of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes*

36. A properly approved and well-supported Neighbourhood Watch or Home Watch scheme can help to deter crime in residential areas. To be effective, it is essential that the existence of such a scheme is publicised locally. The provisions of Class 10 in Schedule 3 to the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992 (S.I. 1992/666) enable a Neighbourhood Watch or similar sign to be displayed on or near highway land to give notice that such a scheme has been jointly established by the police authority and (usually) a local committee of residents. Some limitations apply to the display of this type of notice to ensure that it is not too intrusive or disproportionately large. These limitations are explained in detail in the DOE and Welsh Office booklet "Outdoor Advertisements and Signs: a Guide for Advertisers", which is available free from local planning authorities, or from the Department of the Environment, PO Box 151, London, E15 2HF.

#### *Financial and Manpower Implications for Local Authorities*

37. The Guidance contained in this Circular is not expected to result in any significant additional burden on local authorities.

*Cancellation*

38. Paragraph 4 of Appendix C to DOE Circular 22/88 (WO Circular 44/88) is hereby cancelled.

RICHARD JONES, *Assistant Secretary*  
H R BOLLINGTON, *Assistant Secretary*

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[DOE PDC 8/2/06]

[WO PAA 08/02/005]



## GENERAL ISSUES

### *Managing public spaces*

A1. Fear of crime, whether warranted or not, is a significant problem in its own right, particularly among those in the more vulnerable sectors of society, such as the elderly, women and ethnic minorities. Whilst the reduction of such fear clearly depends on reducing the risk of crime itself, much can be done through the management of public spaces to change the ways certain environments are perceived, by the public and potential criminals alike. As mentioned in paragraph 16 of this Circular, local authorities are well placed to adopt a strategic, co-ordinating role in crime prevention. By demonstrating that a public space is "owned" and is cared for and maintained—for example, by taking steps to reduce litter and graffiti, and by giving clear signals to users that an environment is under control and that help is not far away—local authorities can help to discourage crime and to reduce fear of it occurring. Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 "Town Centres and Retail Developments" advocates the introduction of effective management and promotion of town centres as a way of assisting crime prevention and safety improvements. As paragraphs 18 and 19 of PPG6 explain, the appointment of town centre managers—funded jointly by the public and private sectors—can help to improve links between local authorities, business interests and the local community on a wide range of issues, including crime prevention.

### *Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)*

A2. There is a growing interest in the use of CCTV in public places to deter and help detect crime. However, the Government is aware that there is some uncertainty as to the circumstances in which the installation of CCTV cameras constitutes 'development' requiring planning permission. In many cases, much would depend on the degree to which the installation of cameras would materially affect the external appearance of a building. To help clarify the position, the Government will be bringing forward proposals to amend the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 (SI 1988/1813) (subsequently amended) to introduce appropriate permitted development rights for CCTV cameras. This will mean that even where cameras do constitute 'development', it will not usually be necessary to submit a planning application. Proposals to fix CCTV cameras on premises which are included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, almost certainly require listed building consent; these requirements will remain unchanged.

A3. Local authorities are well placed to co-ordinate the use of CCTV to monitor urban centres, and may wish to take the initiative in discussing such matters with local traders' associations. Prior to the development of a CCTV scheme, there should be consultation with the police, community groups,

business people and (if the installation is by a private developer) the local authority. Consultation should focus on the position of cameras, operating safeguards, responsibility for monitoring transmissions, and how to provide information which will maximise the benefits of CCTV.

#### *Strengthening Shop Fronts*

A4. Authorities may wish to draw shopkeepers' attention to the possibility of incorporating security measures into the design of their shop fronts to counter theft, vandalism and ram-raiding. For example, stall risers built in brick or concrete, and concealed by exterior panels to improve their appearance, can help to provide protection against ram-raiding, as can steel-framing the shop front structure. Laminated glass of a sufficient thickness can help to safeguard against "smash and grab" attacks.

#### *Street Furniture*

A5. Where appropriate, the siting of substantial tubs or planters, or other street furniture such as benches, in front of shop premises can help to deter ram-raiding. Local authorities have wide powers under the Highways Act 1980 to plant trees and shrubs and to take measures to protect and maintain such planting, including the erection of guards or fences on the footway. In addition, authorities may grant licences to the occupiers of properties adjoining the highway to undertake such planting themselves, or to take over responsibility for maintaining planting carried out by the authority.

A6. When proposals arise for the installation of street furniture, planning authorities and applicants are recommended to liaise closely with local crime prevention officers at an early stage to ensure that the proposals are likely to be effective. The installation of street furniture needs to be handled sensitively. Among other things, careful consideration should be given to the need to avoid creating difficulties for the visually impaired or people with disabilities. There is also a need to avoid undesirable visual clutter and inadvertently providing hiding places for muggers.

#### *Common Entrances*

A7. Access to residential blocks with common entrances serving a number of dwellings is often beneficially restricted by controlled entry systems. These may involve audio or closed circuit television links, sometimes backed up by a receptionist or concierge.

#### *Security Lighting*

A8. A decision on whether the installation of lights on a building for security purposes constitutes "development" requiring planning permission would depend in most cases on the degree to which the light fittings materially affected the external appearance of the building. In some cases a lighting fixture may be permitted development under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 (SI 1988/1813) (subsequently amended), and planning permission will be granted by that Order. Listed building consent may be needed for the installation of security or lighting equipment where this is attached to a listed building.

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