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HOUSE BUILDERS APPROACH TO RESIDENTIAL SHARED OUTDOOR SPACE IN ENGLAND

Elaine Paterson, BA hons, MA, MPhil, MRTPI
School of the Built and Natural Environment,
Northumbria University, Ellison Building, Ellison Place,
Newcastle Upon Tyne, England NE1 8ST
E Mail: elaine.paterson@northumbria.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Shared outdoor space, in the Home Zone sense of including vehicles, pedestrians and leisure use, in new residential development is not common in England. This is despite government guidance encouraging shared space as well as legislation promoting Home Zones. The Netherlands, where the Home Zone concept originated, has demonstrated much success with its application in new development, providing some good precedents. It is not necessarily straightforward, however, to transfer such precedents internationally, even within the European Union, mainly due to cultural and institutional factors.

Home Zones have been applied, often successfully, in established residential streets in some parts of England within the past decade, but only occasionally in new residential. A preference for private outdoor space rather than shared is particularly apparent in the large volume house builder developments that account for the majority of new house building.

This research briefly reviews the literature on shared space and Home Zones before addressing the main research aim through primary data. The main aim is to examine house builders approach to provision of shared and private outdoor space, and particularly what influences their decisions on the balance of such space. Interviews with key players in major house building companies, together with interviews with some government agencies, provide the main primary material. Two case studies in North East England supplement this data, exploring some key issues in further detail.

Conclusions drawn provide an insight to some of the barriers to inclusion of shared space from the house builders' viewpoint, as well as some of the circumstances where shared space might be, or has been, viewed positively by house builders. These conclusions, in turn, may impact on refinement of government policy and negotiating relationships with government agencies.

KEY WORDS: House builders, shared space, home zones, residential layout.

1. INTRODUCTION

Residential layout, particularly external layout and spaces between buildings, is usually the subject of much debate and negotiation at the planning application stage. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) encourage house builders to adhere to the LPA guidance on residential layout and central government guidance, particularly Manual for Streets (DfT, 2007), but Local Highways Authorities (LHA) and house builders may take a different approach for various reasons. Given that most of the relevant government documents are not necessarily part of local Development Plans (the most important consideration in determining planning applications) and have no statutory (legal) force on their own, the outcome of negotiations between LPAs, LHAs and house builders can frequently reflect the house builder view in larger part. Without legal force behind government documents LPAs cannot ultimately enforce them.

Prior to 2000 even LPAs were reluctant to encourage shared space due to LHA liability for accidents involving pedestrians in spaces subsequently adopted by the LHA (the usual process for most developments). However removal of this liability came with the introduction of legislation relating to Home Zones in the Transport Act 2000 (Biddulph, 2008 and 2010). The Home Zone legislation does not extend to a requirement for Home Zones to be included in new residential layout, although it does not exclude new residential development. Emphasis on the value of shared space in external layout by central government (DfT, 2007) and (CABE, 2008) has been influential in signalling a greater government sensitivity to creating a sense of place and inclusiveness in new residential layout, and encouraging LPAs to intervene more strongly. This fits with the wider government objectives over the last decade of better quality urban design, environmental sustainability and social inclusiveness (ODPM, 2003 and DCLG, 2012), in that well designed shared space can deter car dominance and encourage social interaction, walking and cycling. The Coalition government, however, has commissioned a review on the complexity of house building standards (known as the Harman Review) “to ensure necessary housing development is not blocked by unrealistic expectations or policies” (DCLG, 2011a). The outcome of this review is awaited at the time of writing, but at best it may help to focus rather than reduce LPA intervention.

There has been criticism of much recent residential layout and design from CABE (2010), the government (Donnelly, 2011) and some academics such as Biddulph (2006). The lack of innovation, lack of local distinctiveness and lack of a sense of place in many new developments, especially those by volume house builders, are frequent complaints. Such criticisms apply both to design of houses and the spaces between them. CABE (2005) has carried out housing audits against its Building for Life criteria and found 82% of new private housing by volume developers was average or poor. The North of England housing audit found dominance of the car is particularly problematic and lack of integration of new layouts with existing streets and paths was particularly poor. Research to date has focussed on ways in which government (central and local) can respond to this, mainly through new guidance. There has been little attention, however, to the reasons that the house builders themselves give for their approach to external layout, nor to how guidance could relate specifically to house builders concerns. The house builders’ approach is an important part of the decision making process that ought to inform any guidance produced on the topic.

This research attempts to examine the English volume house builders’ attitudes to the guidance and other relevant issues to decision making, and so to reveal their priorities. Clearly profit is the main motivator for house builders but there are many considerations feeding this. The relevant literature on shared outdoor space in residential layout is briefly examined first, and house builders’ attitudes are sought through interviews. Two case studies of Home Zone shared space in new residential development in the North of England are also examined. The methodology is explained under primary data.

This research is timely both in terms of government social and environmental quality objectives (DCLG, 2012), and investigating the under-researched area of house builders and shared space.

2. THE ORIGINS, DEFINITIONS AND DEBATE ON HOME ZONES

It is evident from the literature that the definition of shared outdoor space is problematic in terms of a common understanding. Shared space may be confused with shared surface (which involves no kerb or other

such delineation), and shared space may be perceived as shared between pedestrians and vehicles or in a wider sense to include some leisure activity, usually seating or children's informal play. The latter wider sense equates to the Home Zone concept and is of primary interest in this research. It should be noted that some, but not all, Home Zone shared space includes shared surface.

Home Zones are residential streets designed for very low vehicle speeds that better suits the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. They have been applied extensively in the Netherlands since the 1970s, and to a lesser extent in Denmark and Germany, but only recently in the UK (Quimby and Castle, 2006). They are particularly suited to improving the neighbourhood environment for children and older people in urban areas. The street layout must have the effect of traffic calming through, for example, the placing of parking bays, street furniture, planting or children's play equipment to create indirect routes through the area and shortened driver sightlines. There must also be vehicle speed restrictions – usually 20mph (DfT, 2007). The aim is to change the way that streets are used and to improve the quality of life in residential streets by making them places for people, not just for traffic (DCLG, 2011b).

Mondermon (2007), a Dutch authority on shared space, has examined the relationship between highway engineering, urban design and place making and has driven the agenda on revisiting the traditional approach taken by governments and developers that encourages separation of traffic and people. The traditional approach arose alongside the growth in car ownership in the second half of the twentieth century, primarily for safety reasons, but it is now widely questioned.

Jones (2008) discusses reasons why shared space has been considered more positively in recent years in England. Besides the legislation and guidance already mentioned a government policy focus on brownfield development and higher residential densities in urban areas (DCLG, 2006) has been relevant. Shared space enables more efficient land use compared with a more traditional approach so allowing for greater densities.

The main criteria used to assess the success of shared space, including Home Zones, are safety, visual appearance, sense of place, the number, range and type of users and uses, and the degree of social interaction. The Manual for Streets (DfT, 2007) recognises that a safety audit should be included as part of a wider urban design quality audit – this marks a departure from the previous guidance, Design Bulletin 32 (DoT/DoE, 1992), which focussed almost exclusively on highway safety and supported cul de sacs, excessive carriageway widths and ample visibility splays. These support car use over pedestrian use, and run counter to some well accepted urban design principles such as improving permeability.

The introduction of minimum parking in Planning Policy Guidance 13 (PPG 13) (ODPM,2001) was an attempt to counter the car culture and address the sustainability agenda but the coalition government removed the reference to minimum parking in 2011 as part of its deregulation approach. This appears to be a negative move in the quest to reduce car dependency, and is not a helpful message to house builders concerned about how to accommodate cars in Home Zones.

Biddulph (2010) has evaluated the English Home Zone initiatives using monitoring data from 14 of the 61 schemes in England. These schemes were applied to existing streets, as retrofits, rather than new residential development but the lessons are relevant for new development. The findings showed that the concept had not been fully implemented in some cases, but traffic had been slowed to a safe pace and residents felt that they could let their children play more freely in the streets. Clayden et al (2006) also evaluated retrofit Home Zones as two regeneration case studies. The results demonstrated that the Home Zones achieved their objectives and can be a useful element of regeneration. It is reasonable to speculate that if the Home Zone concept is applied to new residential development the costs could well be less than that for retrofitting, as long as the concept was integrated with the overall design and layout from the outset.

House builders want a product that people will buy, and surveys of what people want (commissioned by house builders primarily) inform them in this respect. Local Authorities have carried out housing needs surveys for many years and more recently housing market assessments (in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS 3), (DCLG 2011c). PPS 3 does not require that surveys be carried out in a uniform manner throughout the country but family houses with private gardens and garages are often stated as a priority, although many surveys do not ask about communal or shared space. Nonetheless house builders are likely to

assume private gardens and parking are a priority over shared space: this is investigated further in the primary data.

Many studies on shared spaces focus on safety despite other criteria for assessment being encouraged more recently by government. There are doubts on the question of safety however, and this may influence house builders to be cautious. Key research demonstrating improved safety in shared space includes a review by Quimby and Castle (2006) of shared space streets and their underlying philosophy together with their applicability in London. Brilon and Blankie (1990) reported that there are 20% fewer accidents in shared space compared with conventionally designed residential streets, and Southworth and Ben-Joseph (2003) made the simple observation that shared streets are safer as the traffic is subordinate.

Biddulph (2006) concludes that Home Zones are not dangerous, and that design features have typically either maintained or improved safety for users of the street. Similarly recent guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT) on shared space, Local Transport Note 1/11 (DfT, 2011) claims to provide evidence based policy on shared space including positive reports on safety issues. However Moody and Melia (2011) question the methodology behind the LTN 1/11 and state that the political desire to “tell a good story” about shared space has distorted the findings in the LTN. Moody and Melia conclude that the LTN contains strong evidence that pedestrianisation, road closures and car-free development all help to reduce car use and traffic volumes, but there is no such evidence for shared space.

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has been influential in the house building industry over the past decade, although less so on the issue of share space. CABE (2008), however, supports shared space as part of best practice in achieving a design revival in cities. CABE stresses that safety is not necessarily the most important concern for house builders, but acknowledges that this raises other questions. For instance if safety is not paramount and should be balanced against other considerations, what level of risk is acceptable? And how should safety be ranked in assessing design objectives? Although these questions remain largely unanswered, overall the research on safety in shared space, including Home Zones, is positive.

Another more specific concern about the safety of Home Zones has centred on the needs of people with visual impairment who often rely on a traditional raised kerb (usually absent in Home Zones and other shared space) for navigation, although careful design and early consultation with relevant groups can assist (DCLG, 2011b). One way to address the concerns of people with disabilities, according to CABE (2008), is to include demarcated shared space areas near building lines thus substituting for kerbs. Any public or communal space must be designed with as many specific users in mind as possible but it may not be possible to design for everyone in every circumstance (Peterson et al, 2011). CABE (2008) notes that a judgement will need to be made that balances the needs of all users, while prioritising the legal requirement to consider the needs of disabled people.

3. PRIMARY DATA: METHOD

3.1 Data collection

Views on shared space and Home Zones were sought from major house building companies, plus three public bodies that have a key role in advising on shared space. 21 semi structured telephone interviews were carried out in total, including four relating to the two case studies. 16 representatives of large house building companies in England were interviewed. The companies were selected mainly on size and national profile but also through reference from early interviewees to companies likely to be receptive to the shared space concept. Half of the interviewees were based in the north of England, as were the case studies. An emphasis on the north was considered of interest given the recent housing audits that indicate car dominance in residential layout in the north being particularly problematic (CABE, 2005). The interviewees were mainly in-house architects or land/planning managers, and were chosen as being the most knowledgeable individuals on the subject within their companies. A senior technical member of the House Builders Federation, as the body representing house builders, was also interviewed.

Three government (or government funded) bodies were interviewed including DfT (the project officer for Manual for Streets), the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the DesignCouncilCABE (a recent merger of the two bodies in 2011). The HCA produce their own guidance on matters relating to residential layout and actively promote shared space and Home Zones. The HCA also engage with large house building companies as development partners. The DesignCouncilCABE provides a design review service on major development schemes to assist design assessment in the planning process, and its predecessor CABE produced much literature on design evaluation of new residential schemes and the value of shared space in layout.

The case study interviews were site specific and probed in more detail on the process of establishing a Home Zone in two new residential developments. These interviews involved planners, traffic engineers and house builder representatives. A literature search on the case studies also yielded useful information.

The interview questions were sent to respondents in advance of the interview to provide time for reflection on the questions, and a more in depth response. A mix of open and closed questions was included in the interview schedule.

3.2 Data Analysis

The interview data was largely qualitative and it was analysed manually. Answers to questions were distilled to key points and compared across all interviewees. Themes arising in responses were grouped under the main areas of investigation, as set out below. The findings are reported with analytical comments added by the author. Recommendations to address the perceived barriers by house builders in providing shared space, including Home Zones, are then set out.

4. HOUSE BUILDER AND GOVERNMENT VIEWS: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Provision of external shared space versus private and whether Home Zones were considered

All respondents said they encouraged both private and shared space but the majority say private space takes precedence. The government bodies, by contrast, emphasize that the balance needs to shift towards more well designed shared space and sometimes Home Zones in larger schemes. House builders generally did not consider the Home Zone concept very useful, although they did understand its purpose.

The type of shared space that most house builders do consider is pedestrian and vehicles sharing (courtyards were sometimes mentioned in this respect) but not the full Home Zone concept. Some would not consider any shared space in rural or suburban areas, particularly where site area is less restricted. Shared space for flats found more favour.

4.2 The significant barriers to providing shared space including Home Zones

The cost of providing shared space (including maintenance payments to the LHA who normally adopt the space) being prohibitive was the most frequently mentioned barrier. Larger sites can sometimes absorb such costs more easily, but if too large (generating over 100 vehicles an hour) then it is harder to achieve successful shared space as cars tend to take over (DfT, 2007). This in turn links to the importance of a minimum parking policy for shared space to work for the benefit of all, and it is therefore regrettable that the Coalition government removed this policy from PPG 13 in 2011 (DCLG, 2011d). Some house builders were explicit in their preference for the cul de sac layout with a private drive as a cheaper option, mainly because small private drives do not have to be adopted by the LHA. This is despite the fact that most LPA design guidance, initiated originally in 1973 by Essex County Council through the Essex design guide, and updated by Essex Planning Officers Association (1998), advises against the cul de sac as an unsympathetic urban form that uses land inefficiently.

Another common reason for house builders resisting shared space is that parking on shared space is hard to sell, largely due to more complicated rights and responsibilities. Some house builders and government bodies say that if a site is well served by public transport, and there is a lack of public open space in the area as well

then these factors weigh more heavily towards inclusion of shared space, and even Home Zones, as there is less need for generous car parking on site and more need for recreation on site. Where this is the case on site car parking on shared space may be a smaller issue.

Although recent literature on lifetime homes (DCLG, 2011b) encourages more shared space as positive for all ages, some house builders are concerned that shared space and security can conflict, particularly as perceived by elderly people, largely due to easier access for strangers.

House builders say their own market research and Local Authority (LA) housing needs surveys show people want houses with private gardens. This appears to weigh particularly strongly in decision making on layout for house builders as compared with the “place making” agenda of the government and even the potential to achieve greater densities with shared space. The latter can be influential for house builders’ decisions however, as in the Gateshead case study below.

Some house builders are concerned about safety when vehicles mix with pedestrians although most are not aware of the literature relating to this. Access for large vehicles such as fire engines is a more pressing concern for most as design measures to slow traffic in shared space frequently include physical barriers such as planting. Again the case studies demonstrate that this concern can be overcome.

Connectivity is another issue mentioned by some house builders. The likelihood in Home Zones of limited direct vehicle connections to surrounding streets is a result of designing for low vehicle speeds. However such design does not need to limit pedestrian or cyclist connectivity or permeability; indeed it should enhance routes for pedestrians and cyclists. If connectivity by car is reduced this may be a negative for some house builders, but a positive for others with place making on the agenda.

There can be conflict between visual impact and use of shared space according to some respondents. As garages are discouraged where they could open onto shared space, the alternative is open car parking which can be visually intrusive. Similarly play equipment in Home Zones can be visually intrusive to some, especially for those without young children. Clearly care needs to be taken here to design with specific users in mind and perhaps limit the mix of house types within smaller schemes, or provide small shared areas serving different purposes within larger schemes to help avoid such conflicts.

A somewhat unexpected relationship between the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) and shared space was raised by some house builders. The issue here appears to be that the CSH is putting pressure on space as the requirement for thicker walls results in a larger footprint but no more floor space, and items such as cycle storage and heat pumps require greater site area. Shared space can be seen as extra demand on space rather than potentially being space efficient through multi purpose use of the same space.

None of the respondents mentioned designing for people with disabilities although the literature has clearly identified this as an issue for shared space. This could indicate either that there is no real problem in most cases, there is limited experience of the issues arising or the available guidance does not pay sufficient attention to the issue. It is probable that limited experience and insufficient guidance are most significant.

4.3 Who makes and influences the layout decisions in the house builder team

The house builder team normally includes an architect, landscape architect and civil engineer. Some acknowledge that an outside catalyst (this could be a designer or public funder) can make a significant difference in decision making (see case studies below).

Views on consultations with local people were mixed. Some considered that they were helpful if carried out early (prior to making the planning application) mainly to stem potential objections, but could generate more complexity and delay if there was conflict. House builder respondents were generally not convinced that consultations with local people would help achieve better shared space, although the government bodies considered shared space may be better used if there was early local involvement and a sense of ownership of the design concept. Some house builders are concerned that the localism agenda of the Coalition government

will mean more “not in my back yard” (NIMBY) attitudes and so curtail house building generally, never mind shared space in the layout.

Planners and highway engineers in local government are much more significant in decision making than local people or other consultees (except where statutory consultees such as English Heritage, Environment Agency or Natural England might be involved). Many commented on differences of opinion between planners and highway engineers and that this caused difficulties. Planners tended to promote or support shared space and sometimes Home Zones. Highway engineers, however, were more reluctant (despite Manual for Streets, DfT, 2007) due to the unfamiliar non standard nature of shared space, and that is especially important for their maintenance role.

It was suggested by some that house builders’ in-house staff are lacking in design expertise and some fail to understand the Home Zone concept. However most house building companies do employ in house architects and most do understand what a Home Zone is, even if they are not familiar with the details.

4.4 The influence of written guidance

Most house builders appear content to follow LA guidance and usually that produced by the LPA in the form of a masterplan, site brief or residential layout guide. Manual for Streets (DfT, 2007) was only referred to if added detail was required in the course of negotiation with the LA. Other written guidance mentioned by house builders as being useful on occasion include By Design (DETR/CABE, 2000), Planning Policy Statement 3 on Planning and Housing (DCLG, 2006) and Building for Life (CABE, 2005). The latter has been endorsed by the House Builders Federation (as well as formally adopted by many LPAs) but it does not appear to be widely used by house builders.

Most considered that the available guidance overall could be vague and conflicting and very little had sufficient weight or status to be relied upon. This was seen as a problem likely to get worse under localism due to the great variety between LAs, together with less national policy detail, and the introduction of another local layer of planning in the form of Neighbourhood Plans produced by local communities. One big picture overview document at national level was favoured by some, although most house builders specifically did not want DesignCouncilCABE involved in this. Some have found CABEs design review service (commenting on large development schemes) unhelpful and lacking in commercial sense.

4.5 Learning from the Netherlands

Most house builders are reluctant to examine the Netherlands experience of Home Zones in detail, despite acknowledging their apparent success in their country of origin. The reasons appear to relate to awareness of cultural differences between the UK and the Netherlands. In particular the more privatised approach to property, as well as more emphasis on car use in the UK, means that Home Zone implementation is harder. House builders believe that people do not want to pay for communal space as they do in the Netherlands. Another factor noted was the greater intensity of urbanisation in the Netherlands, which in turn has meant that the Netherlands has had to address the car use issue more urgently. More efficient and cheaper public transport has of course played a part in reducing car dependency in the Netherlands too.

Dutch law relating to accidents in shared space puts the onus on the driver regardless of the circumstances; this no doubt gives comfort to house builders in the Netherlands who may be concerned about safety and liability issues. The UK Traffic Act, 2000 does not go quite so far in this respect but it does remove liability for the LHA if an accident occurs on adopted shared space.

5. CASE STUDIES

5.1 Case study selection

Hamilton-Baillie (2008) believes that the UK needs more case studies to help facilitate wider implementation of shared space, especially within residential schemes. There are few UK exemplars of application of the Home Zone concept in new residential development. One notable case is Staithes, South Bank in Gateshead and another is Allerton Bywater near Leeds. The former was the first Home Zone applied to new residential in England (Frier, 2010) and the latter is known to be one of the largest in Europe (Scottish Government,

2010). These case studies were mentioned by several interviewees as exemplars and they illustrate a variety of processes and policies which assist in achieving Home Zones. In addition, together, they involve three of the largest house builders in England.

5.2 Staithes, South Bank, Gateshead

This case was the only new build residential amongst the 61 pilot Home Zones that the government initiated in 2001. The majority were Home Zones applied to existing streets and they have been reviewed by Biddulph (2010) (see above). The site is on the south bank of the river Tyne approximately twenty minutes walk from Gateshead and Newcastle city centres, and it had last been used for a major national garden festival in 1990. The new development comprises 743 residential units over 16 hectares (giving a density of 46 dwellings per hectare), including apartments and terraced houses. There is a mix of rent and ownership, and although affordable there is a predominance of young professional residents.

The layout included a Home Zone mainly as a result of a well known designer challenging the house builder involved to create a less standard and more innovative approach. Following a public exchange in a national newspaper the house builder invited the designer to work in partnership. The LPA was very supportive as the approach was seen as sustainable and inclusive with attempts to minimise car parking (there is one space for one unit in line with the LPA standard, although not always located adjacent to a house) and sought to achieve some social inclusion and sense of place. The relationship between planning and highways was helped through the traffic engineers being managed by a planner. This facilitated the adoption process by requiring the engineers to depart from the standards they were used to. The house builder was clearly impressed by the flair of the designer, but another factor that encouraged the house builder was the prospect of a greater housing density with the Home Zone approach compared to their traditional layouts. The Home Zone was put together with a team of diverse backgrounds, although little involvement from local people as there were no existing residents. It encompasses seating, planting, play equipment, a speed limit of 10mph, a minimum pinch point of 3.5m to allow access for emergency vehicles and a striking arched entrance feature.

Key players interviewed are positive concerning the results. Particular benefits noted were the sense of place and community cohesion, as well as the use of bicycles and good use of the play equipment. The nature of the Home Zone layout being divided into areas where around 25 people might share one part of the space was seen as appropriate, as larger areas could be too anonymous to facilitate social interaction and could be perceived as poor from a security viewpoint as strangers could gain access more easily. However it was considered that the quality of materials used could have been better (perhaps more natural materials rather than concrete based) and that central gulleys or drainage channels would be better rather than gulleys either side of the route for vehicles, as the latter tends to delineate a road. The house builder commented that no other Home Zones have been included in schemes they have subsequently developed since this case, although Home Zone elements have sometimes been included. The mindset of highway engineers elsewhere in the North East of England (not wishing to depart from familiar traditional layouts) was seen as an important factor preventing more full Home Zones. Another factor could be finance as the Staithes scheme was supported by a £400,000 grant from the DfT (Art Council England, 2007) as part of its one off Home Zone pilot scheme.

A design review of Staithes, South Bank was carried out by CABI (2011b). CABI consider the Home Zone works well for pedestrians and cyclists, having clear legibility, good street lighting, and careful positioning of tables, seats, play equipment and planting. A progressive series of spaces from public to semi public to private (mainly in the form of front gardens leading to the semi public areas) creates variation as well as meeting a broad range of needs. The predominance of public and semi public space is praised particularly for facilitating social interaction. Special large recycling enclosures avoid the need for multiple wheelie bins and also reduce the number of refuse lorries entering the site.

An Arts Council England (2007) study examined residents' views of the development and concluded that the development had met or exceeded their expectations, with particularly favourable comments regarding the Home Zone aspects.

5.3 Allerton Bywater, Leeds

Unlike Staithes, South Bank the Allerton Bywater site was in public ownership through English Partnerships (EP), (now HCA), following closure of a colliery in 1995, and in 1998 the site became eligible for the Millennium Communities programme funding. £24m public investment was available for the scheme overall but much of this was required for decontaminating the land. There is also 25,000 sqm of commercial space within the development. EP, with place making high on its agenda, commissioned an urban design consultant company to produce a masterplan (indicating a Home Zone) and design code for the entire site to help achieve some coherence and sense of place, as well as a speedier planning process. EP invited bids from developers to create 520 homes on the 23 hectare site (giving a density of around 40 dwellings per hectare). Three house building companies eventually engaged in the process and built mainly family houses with a small number of flats in accordance with the masterplan and design code, including a quarter of the development being social housing dispersed throughout (HCA, 2012).

Leeds City Council was generally supportive of the Home Zone concept although the highway engineers had been wary of the notion of no kerbs, no demarcated carriageways and short forward viewing distances. The council highway engineers initially wanted a bitmac surface for ease of maintenance but eventually better quality block paving was agreed. The Council required two parking spaces per dwelling, and this somewhat generous standard compromised the Home Zone intention as well as the possibility of a slightly higher density. To ensure the shared areas were maintained well EP established the Allerton Bywater Community Partnership (which included local people) as a limited company, so the LHA did not bear sole maintenance responsibility as with the Staithes and most other residential shared space. Similar to Staithes, however, a perimeter block layout made for legibility of the scheme and allowed for doors and windows opening to public spaces, so facilitating social interaction. Also, as for Staithes, the speed limit is 10mph with pedestrians having priority (Scottish Government, 2010).

CABE (2011a) made several design review evaluations of various phases of Allerton Bywater and comments in relation to the Home Zone aspect are favourable, noting particularly the positive contribution that the design code made to achieving a successful Home Zone.

Overall, however, Staithes is closer to the full Home Zone concept than Allerton Bywater, in that the latter did not include play equipment in the Home Zone areas (rather a separate equipped play area was provided) and Allerton catered more for cars in terms of parking as well as some integral garages.

6. CONCLUSIONS

House builders' strong belief in the priority of car parking and private gardens as important in selling houses may be challenged in part through suggestions arising from this research (summarised below), but a longer term culture shift relating to car use and attitudes to private versus shared property in the wider population may also be required for shared space, and particularly Home Zones, to become more common in England.

Training may play a part, in addition to written guidance, especially for highway engineers, house builders and local communities. European Home Zone exemplars provide interesting study visits but require detailed analysis to determine the degree to which they can be transferred internationally. Analysis of relevant institutional and cultural factors in individual nations must play an important part, and this research attempts to investigate some of these in England.

Much can be done to facilitate Home Zone implementation further with a focus on improved guidance particularly linking the benefits of higher density and Home Zones, as well as promoting use of design codes. Home Zones must not be presented as a panacea however; indeed shared space short of a Home Zone may be more appropriate in some cases. In this respect it would help if house builders were guided to appropriate sites for Home Zones, especially extensive urban sites. It would further assist if regimes for maintenance of shared space were reviewed and new solutions sought, as seen in the case studies above. LAs and the HBF must refine their requirements in relevant documentation, and most importantly have a unified clear message for house builders. That message must also accord with national guidance (DfT, 2007 and 2011), and preferably legal weight should be ascribed to either national or local guidance or both, through a link to legislation, to add further clarity and certainty for house builders.

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