



SUMMARY LEAFLET

# Designing for a Clean, Safe and Tidy Environment

## A Good Practice Guide



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

# Designing for Clean, Safe and Tidy Environments

## Introduction

This leaflet summarises the key findings from the Good Practice Guide – Designing for a Clean, Safe and Tidy Environment produced by Keep Wales Tidy. A full copy of the guide can be found on Keep Wales Tidy's website:

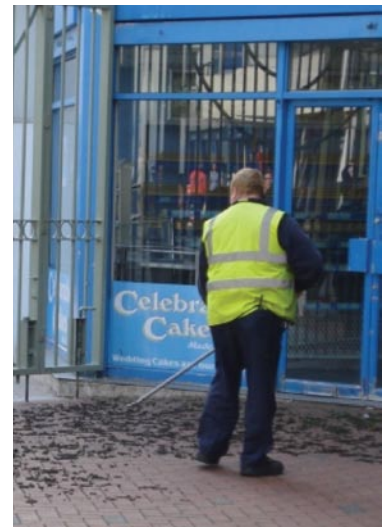
[www.keepwalestidy.org/policy\\_and\\_research](http://www.keepwalestidy.org/policy_and_research)

Keep Wales Tidy have produced this document because the current guidance available on urban and street design, has limited information on the 'after-care' of streets and how to ensure the original quality of the design is retained. The document doesn't argue for bland, sterile streets or loss of aesthetic quality, but instead shows how designs only need minor changes, and what is important is a raised awareness of the consequences of design choices.

It also highlights how the problems observed in the physical environment conceal problems with regard to a lack of communication and cooperation between those involved in the design, construction and upkeep of our streets and public spaces. Part of the solution to this is to raise awareness amongst design professionals about litter, graffiti and vandalism, and to improve knowledge about design amongst those involved in street cleansing and street services.

The production of the guidance involved analysis of the policy context in Wales and the United Kingdom and case studies are included from Wales, other parts of the UK and Europe. A questionnaire survey of Local Authority Cleansing Staff was also undertaken and meetings held with key stakeholders, such as Design Commission Wales, Powell Dobson Consultants and Asset Skills Cymru. The majority of consultees agreed that there was a need for increased attention on the after-care requirements of developments. Some concerns were, however, expressed about how much impact alterations to designs could have without attention being paid to education about, and the enforcement of, local environmental quality issues.

The document concludes by outlining a set of general principles which Keep Wales Tidy hope will aid design professionals, and recommendations for taking the issues raised forward.



Keep Wales Tidy is an independent National Voluntary organisation with Charitable Status working to achieve a Clean Safe and Tidy Wales.

Key elements of our work include:

- Seeking to improve the quality of the environment .
- Tackling anti-social behaviour.
- Developing innovative ways to reduce environmental problems.
- Supporting people to look after their own environment.
- Developing a sense of pride amongst people for their own area.

For more information visit our website; [www.keepwalestidy.org](http://www.keepwalestidy.org)

## Principles

**Co-operation and Collaboration** – between stakeholders to resolve any problems before the development begins and to provide a clear audit trail of decision making.

**Leadership** – from local councillors to push forward local environmental quality issues.

**Whole Life Monitoring** – as those involved in design have a relatively short term interest there needs to be a mechanism for monitoring over a longer timeframe.

**Future Maintenance Needs** – should be taken into account where possible in the design process and designers should consider easing the task of cleansing through their designs.

**Consultation** – informal and formal with those involved in maintaining street cleanliness.

**Community Engagement** – in each stage of the process to raise awareness of local environmental quality whilst fostering a sense of community ownership.

**Improve Skills** – amongst street cleaning professionals to allow them to communicate problems to designers.

## Recommendations

1

Develop a Technical Advice Note on designing the built environment to improve and maintain high standards of local environmental quality.

2

Use existing legislation and other funding mechanisms to tackle problems which affect local environmental quality.

3

Make a 'Litter Appraisal' a requirement for large developments.

4

Create Local Authority Champions to promote local environmental quality issues and encourage better communication and cooperation between departments on design and maintenance issues.

5

Develop a programme of training for design professionals and local councillors to enable them to develop a better understanding of issues regarding the long term care of the built environment.

6

Improve training for street cleansing staff.

7

Provide training for town centre managers.

8

Pilot projects with local authorities using the key principles of layout, street furniture and materials, along with a dedicated cleansing regime.

## Why can design have a negative impact on Local Environmental Quality?

Specific design features and a lack of foresight regarding the maintenance of designs can have a negative impact on local environmental quality. For example, discussions with local authority street cleansing officers has revealed that certain design features are particularly hard to clean. These discussions also revealed that there has been little consultation on issues such as; the choice and location of bins, placement of street furniture and the type of paving materials. Indeed, 70% of respondents to a questionnaire survey stated that they had not been consulted on how proposed

developments would be cleaned and maintained post-completion.

Meanwhile Local Environmental Audit Management System ( LEAMS ) surveys undertaken by Keep Wales Tidy have revealed poorly maintained street furniture, with lampposts, litter-bins, benches and utility cabinets exhibiting signs of vandalism, fly- posting and graffiti and poorly maintained planters containing trapped litter. (For more information visit [www.keepwalestidy.org/our-projects/local-environmental-quality](http://www.keepwalestidy.org/our-projects/local-environmental-quality).)



### Some of the problems highlighted by Local Authority Cleansing Staff

- Paving material exacerbating stains.
- Jet washers and mechanical sweepers removing paving joints, causing litter to be trapped and cracks to slabs.
- Litter trapped beneath street furniture such as tree grilles, utility boxes, bins, and benches.
- Cluttered footways impinging upon mechanical and manual cleansing.
- Too much variation in the type of litterbin provided within an area.
- Indefensible space providing cover for environmental crime.
- Graffiti and fly-posting on utility cabinets and lampposts.
- Right-angled kerb lines making mechanical sweeping difficult.
- Planters overgrown/disused attracting litter.
- Difficulties in accessing drainage channels where road safety measures have been implemented.

## How can design contribute to improved Local Environmental Quality?

Many aspects of urban design can have a positive impact on local environmental quality, from the removal of street clutter to the use of high quality materials and care in the location of trees and shrubbery. Indeed, in many major regeneration projects there is a growing trend for a more rigorous approach to the whole life cost of development.

Most instances of good practice revolve around individual features such as, the use of a simple tree

guards, utilising textured paints on utility cabinets, and sturdy robust bins and benches. These are relatively small-scale amendments and wouldn't negatively impact upon the majority of schemes. Although there are some circumstances where such features are not suitable, such as in Conservation Areas, and in these situations better communication between departments could deliver improvements.



### Examples of Good Practice

- Ground surfaces which can withstand different cleansing methods and avoid highlighting stains.
- The removal of excessive street furniture e.g. signage, utility cabinets and lampposts on the footway and location of bins, benches etc can make cleansing easier.
- Bins made of robust materials, and designed to prevent litter being dislodged by the wind.
- The use of textured paints on utility cabinets, lampposts, traffic lights and highway signage can reduce instances of fly-posting.
- Planters can be carefully located in strategic areas where regular maintenance can be prioritised.
- Shrubs which trap litter should be avoided and landscaping features should not inhibit cleansing where possible with curved edges preferable.
- There should be enough clearance below the benches and bins to allow litter to be removed.
- The use of a resin – based permeable gravel at the base of a tree can aid cleansing .
- Poster towers can provide space for legal advertisement and thereby help control illicit fly-posting, e.g. when combined with effective enforcement.
- Alley gating – Can help once defunct spaces to become clean defensible spaces used by residents.

### How consultation can improve the long term success of designs

Effective consultation between stakeholders is key to the successful development of the streetscape. Existing guidance stresses this point clearly listing a range of stakeholders and relevant parties that must work together as a cohesive unit to create successful streets. Much of this guidance, however, omits those who maintain and enforce local environmental quality once a development is complete.

Indeed there is great variation between local authorities on the level of involvement that has been achieved in recent years, with a heavy reliance on proactive individuals. Ideally

the involvement of those responsible for local environmental quality issues should be sought from the earliest opportunity as there is a significant level of expertise, information and opinion that currently remains untapped.

“Financing the Management and Maintenance of Civic Spaces”, produced by ATCM & One North East, in 2008 highlights the somewhat fragmented approach that often pervades enhancement schemes, with the separate agendas of the various stakeholders becoming evident in mismatched streets.

## Case Study – Camden

Camden London Borough Council has attempted to improve cross-departmental working on street enhancement schemes. The Camden Streetscape Design Manual 21 stresses the importance of designing footways that can be effectively cleaned, and highlights the fact that street enhancement programmes present the ideal opportunity to alter footway widths to allow more progressive cleansing. The guide also stresses the need to record the decision-making process to provide an audit trail detailing why certain design choices were made. According to the guide; 'It is crucial that a 'paper trail' or electronic record is kept of the decision-making process, so that it can be shown that the various conflicts have been considered as part of the design process, and why the final design was chosen'.

According to the Department for Transport the two pilot projects in Kings Cross and Camden Town showed dramatic rises in cleanliness with audits showing 15% and 27% respectively from recordings taken before the improvements were made. Since the initial trials, the project has been rolled out across the whole borough with no plans to limit it to a fixed period of time. As an additional impact, the Health & Safety Executive state that personal injury claims for the first 14 streets to be completed dropped from 152 over the 3 years previous to zero since completion. This highlights the dual benefit of improving cleanliness and creating a safer footway for pedestrians.

### Local Environmental Skills

The street cleansing profession is often seen as the 'Cinderella' service, with little training and skills development opportunities. Improved delivery of services could be facilitated if training was provided on design, including an introduction to current trends in urban design. Work could be done with Asset Skills Cymru along with the related Sector Skills Councils; Construction Skills, Summit Skills and Energy and Utility Skills to develop training opportunities in local environmental quality in Wales.

UDAL's 2002 publication 'Designing Streets for People' proposes two additional measures;

firstly creating an MBA in Street Management to promote a role for an individual with a broad knowledge of how each element of street design should be brought together to shape a particular neighbourhood. The second suggestion calls for renewed focus on 'Streetcraft' skills to improve the standard of improvements made through masonry and the laying of paviers.

### Community Engagement

Community engagement can be one of the best tools for improving local environmental quality.

In residential neighbourhoods community involvement in the design process can boost a sense of ownership where street-scene improvements have been made. Organisations such as Groundwork Cymru champion community engagement in local enhancement schemes and have addressed community environmental design in a number of recent policy initiatives and local projects. The Communities First programme is also a vital tool for community-led regeneration in Wales providing funding and support for small scale improvement projects.

**For further information:**

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