

designing out crime



*Parks and  
Public Open Spaces*

*Architectural Liaison Unit  
Community Affairs Branch*



Greater Manchester  
**POLICE**

# *Parks and Public Open Spaces*

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These guidelines identify the principle features to be considered when attempting to reduce opportunities for crime and disorder. These features will be developed into detailed recommendations for specific locations based on a risk analysis. The level of risk will vary depending upon a number of factors, including local crime patterns: urban or rural locations; economic and social issues; local infrastructure; land and environmental features and management practices.

Reference to these guidelines can be made when considering, municipal parks, public open spaces, urban and linear parks, bridleways, inner city parks and private developments.

Should any conflict arise between statutory provisions and these guidelines, then the statutory provisions will prevail. It is also recognised that designers of the built environment should not be inhibited by the criteria in these guidelines, but should consider the issues as additional and complimentary.

## **THE SITE MASTERPLAN**

Parks and open spaces should be carefully planned to reduce the opportunities for crime and disorder. The following are examples of “good practice”:

- (i) Access points to parks should, if possible be well overlooked by adjacent buildings.
- (ii) Core facilities should be positioned to promote community interaction and reduce the fear of crime.
- (iii) Detailed master planning can result in more effective economical security and management practices.

## **GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The public’s perception of crime is an important factor in the design of any park or public open space.

- What do people fear and how can this be addressed?
- How does crime and disorder impact upon the use of parks and what measures can be introduced to mitigate this effect?
- Parks and public open spaces provide a number of social amenities and in some instances, conditions may prevail which could generate crime and disorder.
- Imbalances may exist which could generate conflict and competition for the use of space. eg juveniles taking over toddlers play areas.

Parks and public open spaces may, become generators of crime. Such situations can be reduced through initial design and subsequent maintenance to minimise the risk and fear of crime and disorder, in the following ways:-

## **ACCESS AND CIRCULATION MANAGEMENT**

In order to achieve optimum security in parks and open spaces it is important to control access and circulation of pedestrians and vehicles around the parks.

- Pedestrian and vehicular access points should be kept to a minimum in order to limit unauthorised use.
- Consider gates to maintain control of unauthorised and “after hours” pedestrian and vehicular access onto parks.
- Consider the provision of dedicated service routes to parks for emergency and maintenance vehicles.
- Pedestrian and vehicular access to parks and internal pedestrian circulation routes

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should be designed to benefit from maximum natural surveillance.

- To minimise misuse by motor cycles and vehicles, consider introducing at selected locations within the park, controlled access routes or 'pinch points', which provide access for pedestrians and cycle users only.
- 'Pinch points' can be designed with barriers and railings or robust furniture including metal or concrete features, but may also use natural materials, such as logs; tree stumps; mounding and ditching.

## BOUNDARY TREATMENT

The importance of defining a boundary is to clearly identify an area or territory in which legitimate users can maintain an element of control.

Clear definition can:

- Minimise misuse.
- Discourage unauthorised access.
- Define private and public space.
- Direct the public to authorised access and egress points.

Boundaries may be defined as either psychological or physical and can be employed in the following ways:

### Boundary Design

Boundaries should, where possible, be clearly defined.

Physical boundaries may be required in some locations, but elsewhere they may be undesirable, in such locations it may be appropriate to introducing psychological barriers to restrict movement onto or across a park.

### Psychological or Symbolic Features

Definition of such features may be achieved by:

- Symbolic gate posts at access points.
- Changes of surface materials, colour and texture at entrances/exits.



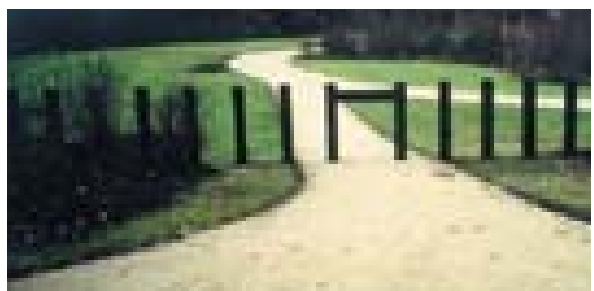
*mounding and ditching minimises vehicular access'*

- Raised areas on the road surface - i.e. rumble strips or tables.
- Rockery boulders, landscaping or street furniture to boundaries.
- Ditching and mounding.

### Physical Features

In certain locations physical features may be necessary, which could include:

- Fencing, walls and hostile landscaping or hedging.
- Lockable gates.



*bollards can manage vehicular access onto parks'*

- Bollards and other vehicle restrictors.

### Conflicting Use

Parks should, minimise the conflict between cars, other vehicles and pedestrians. However it is important not to restrict community interaction.

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## **LIGHTING**

A well designed lighting system can greatly assist the opportunities for good surveillance and help to alleviate the fear of crime.

Consider the provision of lighting to:

- Entrances and exits to the parks.
- Park buildings.
- Car parks.
- Principal circulatory routes.
- Key public zones.

In certain situations, lighting may aid or encourage congregation, crime and disorder.

Consideration should be given to:

- Avoiding lighting in remote locations under minimal surveillance.
- Maintaining lighting to car parks and buildings, only during periods when authorised staff retain a site presence.
- Providing lighting with vandal resistant covers and fittings.

## **PARKING FACILITIES**

Where car parking is provided to parks and open spaces, reference should be made to the Secured Car Park award scheme guidelines. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Car parks should be located to provide maximum opportunities for surveillance.
- Vehicle restriction barriers should be considered at the boundary of the car parks to minimise the risk of vehicles being driven onto open park land.
- Vehicular entry barriers should be, where possible controlled by authorised staff to facilitate the closing of the car park after hours.
- Establish dedicated pedestrian access points into enclosed car parks.

- Provide good signage and information boards.
- Pay meter car parks should be patrolled by security staff and meters should be emptied at regular periods.
- Loose materials and furniture can provide the vandal with the ammunition and opportunity to damage vehicles and harm pedestrians.
- Landscaping features can be designed to manage traffic flow, parking and access and entry to the car park and indicate a flow direction system within the car park.

## **PLAY SPACES**

### **Nuisance and Anti-social Behaviour.**

Play areas are a vital resource for young children and features should be incorporated to discourage misuse of the facilities and reduce the risk of crime and disorder. Consider the following:

### **Design and Location**

It is necessary to introduce measures which enhance community interaction and minimise conflict of use between age groups who may require different facilities. These requirements should meet the aspirations of:

- Toddlers - who need a safe environment under the careful control of parents and other adults.
- Infants - requiring more lively play areas whilst retaining the facilities for parental control.
- Children - permitted to roam more freely in an open but secure environment.
- Youths - seeking ownership and control of their own environment.

The siting of play areas is critical in maintaining a balance between good natural surveillance and noise disturbance to adjacent properties.

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## Enclosures

Toddler and infant play spaces may benefit from a defined enclosure in order to maintain a safe and manageable environment.

Enclosures may be provided with psychological or physical perimeter boundary treatments.

Enclosures should not restrict natural surveillance.



*maintain good surveillance opportunities*

- Additional perimeter protection from vehicles may be appropriate where cars have access adjacent to play areas.
- Minimise the number of entrances into play areas.
- The design of entrances should restrict access to motor cycles; dogs etc.
- Where openings from play areas lead directly onto the public highway, the installation of children's safety protection railings should be carefully considered.

## Facilities for Youths

Focal points especially designed for youths, provide the opportunity for groups to congregate and take 'ownership' of a designated area. This may deflect young people away from other facilities which could otherwise become vandalised. Youth facilities may include;

- Walls for games.

- Seating areas.
- Partial enclosures.
- Youth shelters.

## PARK BUILDINGS

Buildings in parks may provide the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour, however measures can be introduced to minimise this risk.

- Avoid remote buildings wherever possible.
- Buildings should where possible be located adjacent to entrances and close to places of natural surveillance e.g. main roads etc..

## Design

Careful design of park buildings can reduce the risk of crime and damage. Consider the following:

- Avoid deep recesses to external walls.
- Where recesses are unavoidable they should be designed to inhibit or discourage access or congregation within the recess, through the use of hostile planting, fencing, pyramid pavers etc.

## Roofs

Accessible roofs to can be vulnerable to attack. This may be prevented by:

- The provision of deep overhangs to the eaves.
- Roofs which provide a steep pitch in order to minimise access across the roof.
- Internally installed rain waterpipes, soil pipes etc., or fixing down pipes directly onto backing brickwork with no stand off bracket

Where roof lights are required these should be double skin and incorporate security features such as polycarbonate panels and non-removable fixings.

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## Glazing

Large panels of glazing should be avoided.

Where possible, vulnerable or ground floor windows should be none opening and glazed with laminate glass.

Where opening windows are a necessity limiter stays to inhibit access must be fitted.

## Building Services

Provide protection to gas, water, electricity and telephone services. Access points, service ducts and chambers should be securely sealed and where possible be located in secure areas as follows:

- Within the building.
- In highly visible locations.
- Underground, enclosed or positioned on inaccessible areas of the building fabric.

## Security Systems

In order to minimise opportunities for unauthorised access to a park building, the careful selection of security products is necessary. Consider:

- Buildings may benefit from a comprehensive alarm system to the National Approval Council for Security Systems (NACOSS) approved standards.
- A Closed Circuit Television system to monitor remote buildings and internal areas of buildings.
- 'Dusk to dawn' or P.I.R. controlled security lighting.

## LANDSCAPING

Careful selection and maintenance of plants can help to deter crime and disorder:

- Trees located in areas where natural surveillance is required, should be clean trunked to provide a band of vision up to two metres above ground.
- Provide dense planting close to buildings to



*maintain low growing characteristics at verges to paths*

minimise unauthorised access to the building fabric.

- Where footpaths are located alongside shrubbed and planted areas a clear verge distance of approximately one and a half metres, should be maintained.
- Dedicated pedestrian routes should avoid sudden (blind) bends or changes in direction which may provide hiding places.
- Avoid planting which might assist access across boundary fencing.
- Dense planting can be used to reinforce the physical nature of fencing or walling.
- Hard landscaping features including coping stones, pavers and street furniture should be securely fixed to prevent removal and vandalism.

## Psychological Design Features

Wooded areas and forests in parks are potentially areas of concern to the public and unless carefully controlled may instill a fear of crime. A careful balance must be drawn between the enhancement of the natural environment and the possible creation of an area of crime generation.

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*well utilised path with clear lines of sight*

Park land is usually laid out in areas which provide variable use zones, including flat lawned spaces, areas of dense planting and zones of woodland. The design of these mixed areas should be carefully undertaken to minimise the fear of crime. Consider the following:

- Careful design of planting to reduce the effect it may have on peoples fear of being trapped or blocked without an escape.
- Provide alternative pedestrian routes that circumvent dense wooded areas.
- Ensure where possible uninterrupted lines of sight along footpaths.
- The concern and fear that may be generated by persons in densely wooded areas.

### **SIGNAGE**

Well defined information points and other signage should be introduced to allay concerns and fears.

Dedicated footpaths should be well sign posted at regular intervals, with exit distances and directions clearly shown.

### **PARK MAINTENANCE**

Well maintained parks give an impression of ownership, community concern, indicate a well controlled management system and is a major factor in the reduction of crime and disorder and the fear of crime. Measures should be considered to ensure a rapid and consistent response to the:

- Repair of damaged facilities and signage.
  - Removal of graffiti to avoid repetitious misuse.
  - Removal of stolen and abandoned vehicles.
  - Clearing and removal of fly-tipping.
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