

Crime and security

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The design, layout and location of development can influence the risk, and public perception of crime and threat to personal safety and security. The role planning can play in minimising such risk and attendant fear and anxiety is recognised in PPG1 (DOE) and specifically in Circular 5/94 "Planning Out Crime" (DOE).

1.2 The main principles of good design, including security for the home, are set out below. Details of further guidance and contacts are set out in the bibliography and reference sections of this note.

1.3 The guidelines should be read in conjunction with the following policies within the Council's UDP:

E.1.1: Safety and Security in the Environment; E.2.5: External Space; T.1.2: Location of Development in Relation to Transport Network; T.4.1: Measures for Pedestrians; T.3.1: Safeguarding and Improving the Quality of Public Transport Services and Facilities; C.7.2: Safety and Security; H.1.8: Standards for New Housing.

2 INCREASING OVERLOOKING OF PUBLIC AREAS

2.1 a) Houses and flats should be designed to have habitable rooms overlooking the street;

b) Commercial developments should, where possible, have offices or other rooms regularly occupied facing the street. Solid security shutters are discouraged because of their deadening effect and susceptibility to graffiti;

c) Footpaths and footways bounded only by blank walls should be avoided;

d) Parks, communal gardens, play areas, residential car parking areas and other public open spaces should only be laid out where they are directly overlooked by regularly occupied buildings or supervised by staff and closed when not staffed. Play areas in residential areas should be overlooked by the houses and flats they serve;

e) Large developments in non-residential areas should contain a range of uses at ground level to encourage life and activity throughout the day, weekends and evenings.

3 PREVENTING CREATION OF DARK, SECLUDED OR REMOTE AREAS OR ROUTES

3.1 a) Footways away from busy routes should be wide and have clear visibility without blind corners;

b) Enclosed public areas such as subways or stairwells should be avoided and only allowed where there is guaranteed supervision at all hours;

c) Features such as archway entrances, refuse stores, garage courts and service roads need to be carefully designed to prevent the creation of dark or heavily shaded areas and potential hiding places;

d) Tree and shrub planting schemes should be carefully planned. Trees such as silver birch have a very open branching structure. Dense shrubberies should be set some way from essential access routes. Spiny shrubs [holly, native roses, sloe, hawthorn, teasel and pyracantha] can deter the use of shrubberies as hiding places and provide safe planting;

e) Developments protected from the public area by a blank defensive wall will fail in the requirement to increase overlooking of public areas;

f) Pedestrian access should concentrate pedestrian traffic to increase surveillance and maximise informal policing. Existing footpath networks should be used wherever possible. In all cases, circulation arrangements for pedestrians should be clear, direct, limited in number, well signposted and ideally at ground level. Design of buildings should be legible to minimise risk of confusion for users/ visitors.

4 MAKING A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACE PROVIDING "DEFENSIBLE SPACE"

4.1 a) In residential developments access to communal open space should be controlled, i.e. it should be fenced, gated and overlooked;

b) Residents should be able to watch over the approach to the entrance to their house or flat;

c) "Defensible space", i.e. a walled or fenced area, should separate the public footway from the frontage [for any facade with a door or window at ground floor level] of any residential building;

d) Private rear gardens should be protected from easy access or overlooking from public areas. Situations where access to houses or blocks of flats is gained through another block of flats should be avoided.

5 LIGHTING

- 5.1 a) Proposals for lighting will be checked with the street lighting section and of the Department of Regeneration and Environment;
- b) In general lighting should be of a standard that prevents the creation of dark, shadowed areas and would allow the positive recognition of a person's facial features at a distance of 4m;
- c) Lighting in public areas should be especially well lit, preferably during all hours of darkness, taking care not to disturb homes or other sensitive uses;
- c) Types and locations of fitting should be selected for ease of maintenance and replacement of bulb. Care should be taken to avoid unnecessary light pollution of the sky. Low level/bollard lighting should be considered.

6 MAKING HOMES AND FLATS SECURE

6.1 Porches

A weather protected front entrance is desirable and can either be a draught proof lobby behind the front door or some form of enclosed porch;

A porch should not be in the form of a recessed entrance but a projection glazed porch with inner and outer doors;

All porches should have an electric light with a switch operated from within the home. The dimensions should be large enough to allow in a pram or shopping trolley;

Porches and ground floor extensions should have pitched roofs so as not to become platforms from which to enter upper floor windows.

6.2 Doors

Security is dependent upon:

- the type and construction
- strength and reliability of hardware
- strength and fixing of door frame
- the adequacy of any glazing
- location and degree of overlooking

Account must be taken of the need for escape in case of fire.

6.2.1 The door leaf and frame should be strong enough to withstand body pressure. Adequate fixing of the frame to the surrounding structure is vital.

6.2.2 Door stiles should be wide enough to take a good quality mortice lock. Preferably doors should be solid. If panelled, doors should have a lock rail deep enough to take a mortice lock. Glass panes in doors should be set in rebates in solid timber. Access doors should not have large glass panels. Glazed side lights should always be on the hinge side of the door, so they do not permit access to locks if broken.

6.2.3 Doors into rear gardens should be to the same standard as first doors.. They should open outward for greater security.

6.2.4 French windows, whilst not desirable, should where fitted be equipped with flush bolts.

6.2.5 Ideally, access doors should be fitted with mortice deadlocks. Locks should provide a minimum of 1,000 differs [i.e. every set of locks to the access doors of the dwelling should be unique to that dwelling in relation to at least 1,000 other dwellings in the same housing site]. Locks should comply with BS 3621 or an equivalent standard.

6.2.6 In addition to mortice locks, morticed or surface internal security devices such as bolts and night latches should be fitted to the door, bolts being placed in the upper and lower thirds of the door, minimising the possibility of levering the door open. Mortice deadlocks on front or back doors are a hazard when escaping if there is a fire, but should be used when the dwelling is empty. Safety chains are additionally useful. If a door is of solid construction it should be fitted with a door viewer.

6.2.7 Doors should be fitted with three substantial hinges.

6.2.8 Letter boxes should be positioned at least 400mm from the door lock. A cover plate provides additional security, as does a letter basket deep enough to prevent mail being stolen.

6.3 Windows

6.3.1 A high security standard for windows requires the use of expensive glazing materials and

techniques and special fittings. The use of such measures may be ineffective as an intruder can always break the glass to gain entry, either by reaching internal fittings, or climbing through the broken pane.

6.3.2 The security risk is higher where access is easier, i.e. ground floor, an access balcony, or a flat roof.

6.3.3 Window frames should be robust with securely made joints. Glass should be set in rebates framed out of solid timber. Side hung casement windows with external hinges should have hinge pins well secured and be fitted with cockspur locking handles. Sliding sash windows should be fitted with locking devices and be checked to ensure they cannot be removed from their channels. All windows of whatever construction should not have external glazing beads.

6.3.4 Louvre windows should be avoided or restricted to narrow fanlights. Louvre blades should be secured so that it is not possible to bend or pull out glass seatings, clips or glazing beads; they should have effective locking devices.

6.3.5 Pivoting windows should not be capable of lifting out of their frames.

6.3.6 Small ventilating lights should not be placed to permit access to fasteners on larger opening lights.

6.3.7 Extractor fans and spinnair type window vents set into glass can often be pushed or pulled through windows giving access to fastenings. They should only be used as a last resort and certainly not at ground level. Slot vents through window frames provide a better solution. Extractor fans should be set in brick or concrete.

6.3.8 Fastenings should be fixed so that they are difficult to force; lockable fastenings should be considered, subject to them not being hazards to escape in case of fire.

6.3.9 Roof lights should be avoided wherever possible as they can be bent or broken or removed, or may be pulled away from the roof construction. Security is difficult to achieve and is reliant upon strong construction and some form of alarm.

6.4 Footpaths, Buffer Areas and Fencing

6.4.1 Footpaths should always be wide, well lit and preferably overlooked from nearby buildings. They should also be without blind bends or corners, with clear views out at either end. Where there are narrow paths with high walls or fences, there should be an alternative, more open route for the pedestrian.

6.4.2 Similarly, there should not be any rear or concealed alleyways for dwellings as they offer easy access and hiding places.

6.4.3 All ground floor dwellings should have a 'buffer area' i.e. an area of well defined private defensible space between the dwelling and public areas. This area could be fenced or open and could contain parking space, planting or be a garden. The buffer area should be within the control of the residents. Planting and fences should not obscure views of the entrance doors and windows.

6.4.4 Rear boundaries to back gardens should have strong fences, approximately 1.8m high, to deter intruders.

6.4.5 Side boundaries between private gardens could have high fences for the initial 2m or 3m nearest the house. This will give privacy to the ground floor. The remaining length of the side fence could be lower to allow a view of the adjoining dwelling.

6.5 Parking

6.5.1 Parking within the curtilage of the dwelling should be provided wherever feasible. Where individual parking or garaging is not possible, parking spaces or garage blocks should be provided in a well lit area directly visible from the dwellings.

6.5.2 Existing parking floors or underground garages within flat blocks can be made more acceptable and manageable by installing individual lock up garages. Security is greatest where there is only one entrance to communal garages and this is lock controlled.

6.5.3 The most secure type of garage door is metal framed with a metal up and over door. The door should be designed to be secured by a substantial close shackle padlock.

6.6 Communal Areas

6.6.1 The number of entrances to a block of flats should be kept to a minimum. An entrance to a particular block should not also give access to other parts of an estate or be a through way to other areas.

6.6.2 Common entrance halls should not have corners or recesses, e.g. under staircases, which could be hiding places. These areas should be well lit, controlled by a time switch or photo-electric cell.

6.6.3 Entry phones should be installed to control access to non-residents, provided:

- i) flat residents have been consulted about the installation;
- ii) there is a definite need for an entry phone;
- iii) the mechanism can be kept in good repair.

6.6.4 Where there is access to a roof space from a common stairway, the roof space should be securely locked. The space in the roof should be partitioned so as to prevent access from communal areas to the spaces above individual flats, or from the space over one flat to that over another flat.

6.6.5 Meters should be so placed as to avoid the need for meter readers to enter the dwelling. They should be fixed internally so that the meter can be read from outside the home through a special glazed cover, or fixed in a secure box to the outside of the dwelling. Care should be taken with design, particularly when being added to an existing dwelling. Outside meter cupboards should be constructed so that it is not possible to enter the dwelling if the cupboard door is removed. Where possible storage cupboards should not be located in communal areas. If this cannot be avoided, doors to the stores should be constructed similar to front doors.

6.7 Other Considerations

6.7.1 If lightweight cladding is used on buildings it should be strong enough to resist breakage by impact. All cladding should be secured to the adjacent structure so fixings cannot be tampered with from the outside.

6.7.2 Alarm systems are not substitutes for physical security but a well maintained system, approved by a local crime prevention officer and insurance companies, can improve the efficiency of physical protective measures at weak points. Alarm systems should comply with BS 4737 or an equivalent standard.

6.7.3 Where possible drainpipes should be sited within the structure of the building. External pipes which are likely to provide access for intruders should be treated with anti-climb paint.

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