

Home Zones Proposal

Currently, Government policy does not allow speed limits to be set below 20mph, and as a result, despite new housing in Yate being tightly packed together, there continues to be a culture of planners and developers trying to fit in pavements wherever they possibly can. The pavements create danger by further limiting the width of the road, and cars are forced to park on the pavements. Access may be impossible for typical emergency vehicles, and 20 mph is far too fast when pedestrians and cyclists are using the road. There continue to be a considerable number of near misses involving pedestrians and cars in residential areas of Yate.

The concept of "Woonerf" has been a massive success in the Netherlands for over 100 years, and Woonerf are called Spielstrasse (Play Streets) in Germany. The US has cooperative housing developments (condominiums) where the roads on the development are intended for use by cars and pedestrians. 10 mph speed limits are in force. Developers in the US are increasingly adopting the Woonerf principle. Here, the Woonerf concept is called "Home Zones". The Transport Act 2000 makes provision for home zones in England and Wales. Feedback and research on the limited number of Home Zones in UK, show that they work well here too.

In Home Zones, developers actually save the cost of creating curbed pavements, pedestrians and cyclists have priority over vehicles in moving through the space, and as a result, vehicles are travelling at a sensible speed in these areas. With lower vehicle speeds, there is far greater safety for children, pedestrians, the elderly, cyclists, and cars. Home Zones are essential to ensure the safety of those continuing to live in the community with dementia. Add seating and vegetation, and the area not only becomes a safer, more pleasant place to live, residents leave their homes to chat and play, and a real community spirit forms. A natural result of community spirit is that people look out for their neighbours, and those who may otherwise need the support of Social Services, will receive, at least, some support from within their community.

Government policy has changed to high density housing, and I would like Government policy to change so that high density housing is built as Home Zones. Developers should have to present a case not to use the Home Zone concept in their developments. As an example, access roads that have two full lane widths could be exempt from the Home Zone requirement.



Woonerf is the Netherlands word for a shared space in a residential area. Under Article 44 of the Dutch traffic code, motorised traffic in a Woonerf or "recreation area" is restricted to walking pace (Wikipedia).



Germany has spielstrasse (play streets).
The spielstrasse have special signs giving priority to pedestrians, and the speed limit is 10 kmh (less than 7mph).



Example of a Home Zone converted from an existing street in Bristol. The project has been a real success in redressing the balance between cars and other users of the residential space.



This is the entrance to Normandy Drive in Yate. This complies with the current Government expectation of a 20 mph speed limit.

The road tapers to being little more than a single track road just after the van.



This is Normandy Drive, a new development in Yate.

Vehicles have to park on the pavement, and pedestrians must walk down the centre of the road. I slowed to 10 mph when I saw legs sticking out between the parked cars.

Young people were sat on the curbs.



More Normandy Drive...

Emergency vehicles have real difficulty getting through here, and there is nowhere to park outside Normandy Drive.

Would you rather live here, or in the modern German Spielstrasse pictured above?



Dingley Lane, North Yate. The pavements make the road very narrow, forcing cars to be parked on the pavement. The sharp bend complies with current Government expectation on controlling vehicle speed, but is not effective in doing that. Children were very close to being run over on this bend.

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Councillor John Emms, Yate Town Council, 17 July 2019