



## City of Westminster

### **PLEASE NOTE**

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies and planning, building control and other legislation and regulations referred to in the text of this guide were current at the time of publication. Because this guidance is an electronic version of the printed guidance as approved and adopted, these references have NOT been changed. For ease of contact; names, telephone numbers and locations have been regarded as non-material editorial changes and have been updated.

As UDP policies and government legislation may have changed over time, before carrying out any work, it is recommended that you consult the current UDP

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/planningandlicensing/udp/index.cfm> for policy revisions and you may wish to check with planning and/or building control officers about your proposals.

## **DESIGNING OUT CRIME IN WESTMINSTER**

# DESIGNING OUT CRIME IN WESTMINSTER



## **A GUIDE TO PLANNING AN ATTRACTIVE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

This leaflet explains how crime prevention measures can be incorporated into a scheme from the start of the design process and the benefits of doing so. It sets out the commitment of the City Council to crime prevention, what to consider during the preparation of a scheme, and how the Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser can help.

This advice is not just applicable to large scale schemes; the basic principles can and should be applied to most developments. Whilst crime prevention is one of many factors which have to be considered in the design process, with careful design an attractive and secure environment can be achieved which also meets other legislative requirements (e.g. fire and building regulations).

### **HOW CAN DESIGN REDUCE CRIME?**

Crime is the product of many factors. However, studies have shown that design is one element which can influence the occurrence of crime - both positively and negatively. The aim of 'Designing Out Crime' is to

reduce the vulnerability of people and property to crime by removing opportunities which may be unwittingly provided by the built environment. It also aims to reduce fear of crime and in doing so, improve people's quality of life.

Designing security into a project need not increase costs, and can work out cheaper in the long term. However, it does require some thought and imagination. The best solutions often result from a co-ordinated approach; bringing together the ideas and experience of the developer, the designer, the local authority, the police and the community.

Government planning guidance stresses the role of design in crime prevention. The Department of the Environment Circular 5/94.

'Planning Out Crime', states that crime prevention is capable of being a material planning consideration for the local authority to take into account when considering planning applications.

Westminster City Council is committed to crime prevention and regards 'Designing Out Crime' to be an important part of its planning function. It is referred to in the Unitary Development Plan and detailed design guidance is given by Council publications on shopfront security, CCTV installations and architectural theft. The City Council has established close liaison procedures with the Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser, whose expert advice is sought on crime related issues arising from development schemes.

***The windows in this building allow for good surveillance over the footpath.***

#### **FINDING A SUITABLE SOLUTION**

Two principles which underlie most measures to design out crime are Natural Surveillance and Defining Public and Private Spaces:

**Natural Surveillance** relies on observation - people and property visible from occupied buildings are less vulnerable than those out of sight. The fear of crime can also be reduced in places which are in continuous occupation and where people are passing or looking on. The orientation of entrances and windows to buildings can encourage surveillance and self-policing. Good lighting is an important tool in this respect.

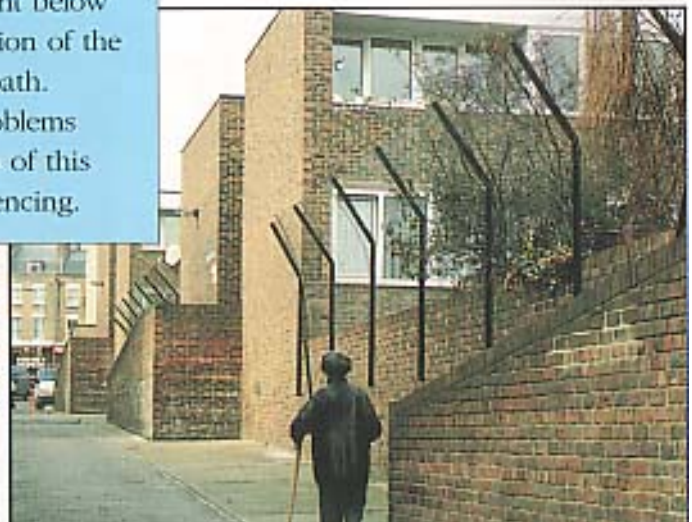
**Public and Private Spaces** should be clearly defined to deter intruders from stepping into clearly private areas. Public and private spaces can be separated by low walls, changes in surfacing materials or other symbolic entrance features. Door entry systems also create areas of defensible space in multi-occupied buildings, and help to restrict unauthorised entry.

The crime prevention measures appropriate for a specific development or building will often depend on the location of the site and local crime patterns, as well as the type of development.

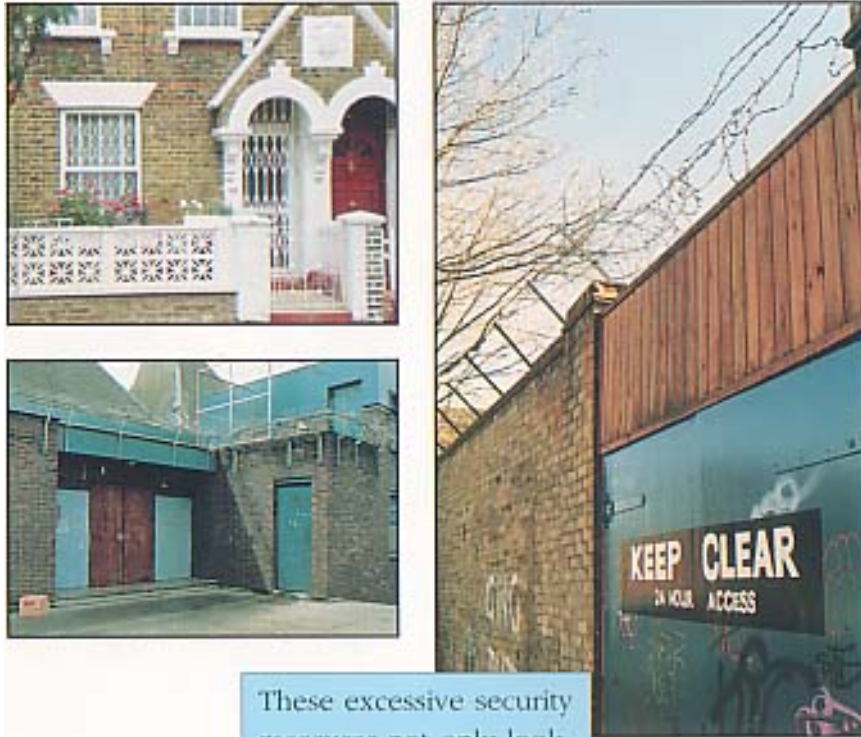
It is also important to consider the effect of crime prevention measures on properties adjacent to a development and on the personal safety of people. A fortress approach is discouraged as it tends to be unattractive and can result in an oppressive environment for both residents and passing pedestrians. A balance has to be struck between maintaining an attractive environment whilst achieving effective crime prevention.



In contrast, the orientation of windows in the development below prevents good observation of the adjacent road and footpath. Subsequent security problems have led to the erection of this fortress - like security fencing.







These excessive security measures not only look unattractive but can also result in graffiti and increased fear of crime.

### **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?**

In every development there are a number of aspects which can be designed to reduce opportunities for crime. At the planning stage the main features to be considered are:-

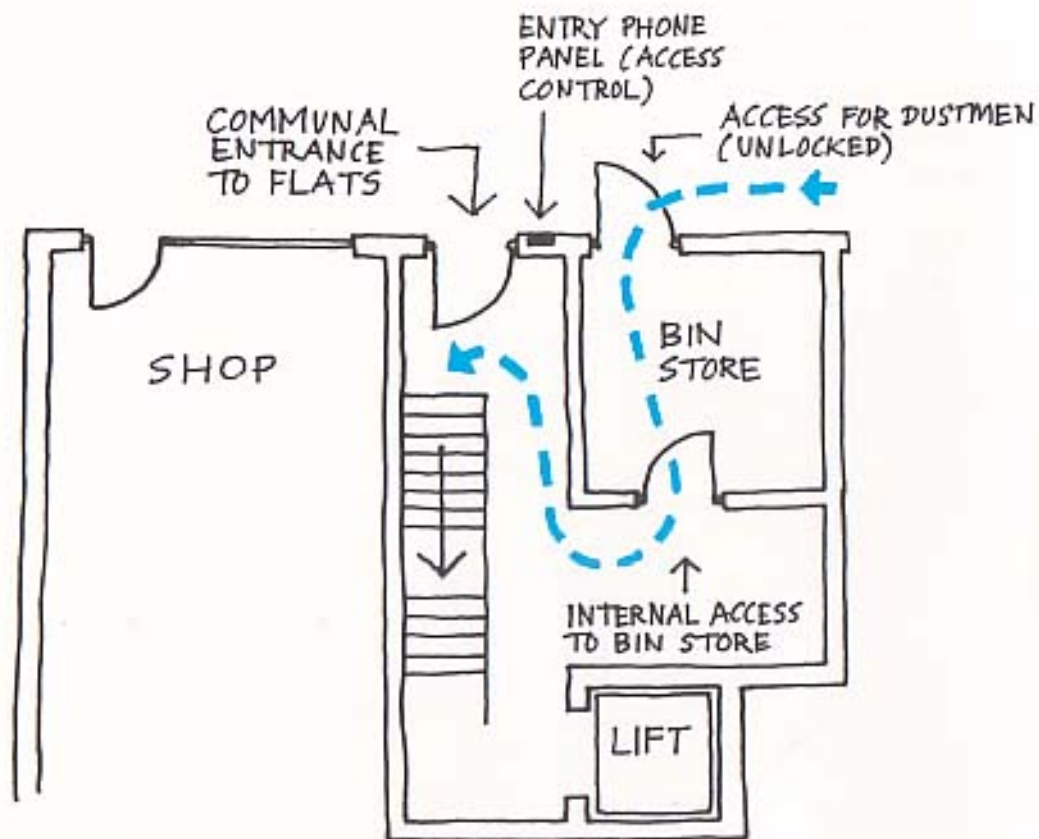
- LAYOUT
- LAND USE
- PARKING
- OPEN SPACES AND LANDSCAPING
- BOUNDARY TREATMENTS
- LIGHTING

Every site is unique and not all features will be relevant in all developments. However, specific advice on planning proposals can be obtained from the Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser (see contacts). Examples of some common design problems are illustrated below.

**CLIMBING OPPORTUNITIES**

The balconies and drainpipes added to this mews house provide a simple climbing frame for burglars.





#### INTERNAL BIN STORE LAYOUTS

The bin store arrangement in this development provides a route for unauthorised access to the flats. This in turn negates the benefits of the access control system.

#### LAYOUT

Layout is the most difficult aspect of a development to correct once built. Designers should consider the following at an early stage in the design process:

Will the development allow adequate natural surveillance of both people and property?

How will the scheme define public and private areas? How will this affect the appearance of the development?

How well will the scheme fit into its surroundings? Will footpaths be convenient, attractive, safe and adjacent to vehicular routes?

#### LAND USE

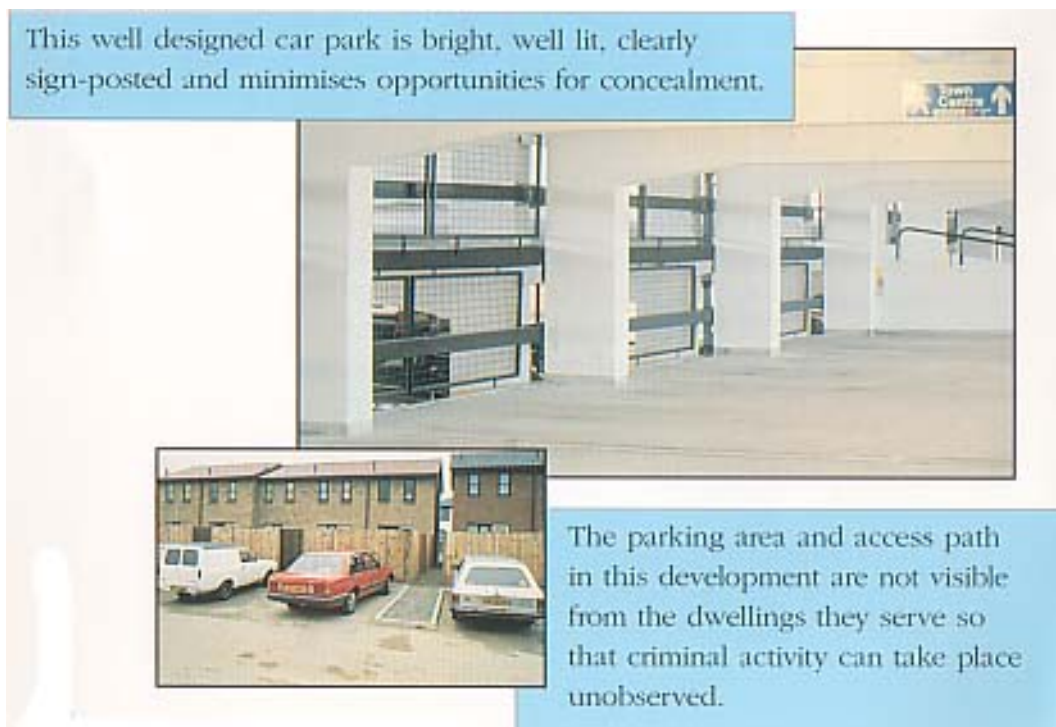
A good mix of uses within a development or a building can be beneficial in crime prevention terms. A mix of commercial and residential type uses (including a mix of housing sizes), is more likely to keep premises constantly occupied, making for better surveillance. However, care should be taken to ensure that entrance and servicing arrangements to each of the uses do not compromise the security of the whole building. For example a poorly controlled communal entrance serving an office and several flats could allow unrestricted access during office hours, so people could enter the whole building unchallenged.

Particular uses may raise specific security issues. Housing, schools, hospitals, community facilities, leisure and entertainment facilities all need to be treated differently.

## **PARKING**

All car parks should be designed for both vehicle and personal safety. They should be well lit; have clear lines of sight; and avoid nooks and crannies which provide opportunities for concealment. Vision splays, mirrors, light coloured wall finishes and good floor to ceiling heights can all help create a safe car park. Closed circuit television may be employed to monitor the car park; but is no substitute for good design.

In private parking areas and dual use car parks, the hours of access for vehicles and pedestrians should be carefully considered, as well as any internal linkages. Provision should also be made for secure cycle storage, in accordance with the City Council's UDP policies.



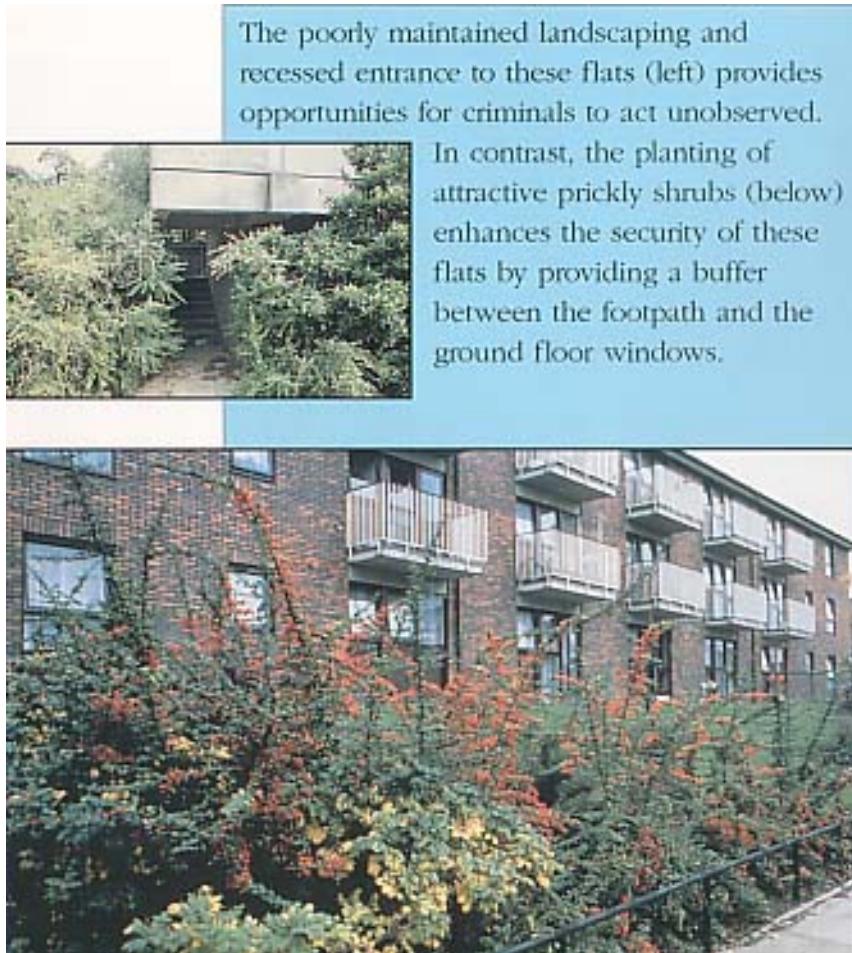
## **OPEN SPACES AND LANDSCAPING**

Open spaces should be designed for maximum surveillance to encourage their use rather than misuse. Pedestrian routes through open spaces should be carefully designed to ensure safety and convenience, and have good overall levels of lighting and clear sign-posting.



Well overlooked play areas are safer for children and less likely to suffer vandalism.

Landscaping can be a useful crime prevention tool. Careful placing of suitable plant and tree species can reduce opportunities for concealment or vandalism and help define public and private spaces. Good deterrent plants such as Berberis, Robinia and Rose varieties can be employed where suitable (see Further Information and Contacts). Conversely, poorly designed, ill maintained landscaping schemes may obscure views and create shadows and places for people to hide; thereby encouraging opportunist criminals and increasing fear of crime.



### **BOUNDARY TREATMENTS**

The treatment of boundaries should be tailored to each site. Tunnel effects created by long expanses of building or high walls should be avoided. Along side and rear boundaries, sturdy fencing or brick walls to a suitable height for the site should normally be used. A landscaped buffer may be an effective deterrent to unauthorised entry, particularly if thorny or prickly shrubs are used. This can also reduce opportunities for graffiti.

### **CCTV**

The use of CCTV in crime prevention is well documented. However, its main role should be to complement good design which itself encourages natural surveillance and the continuous occupation of buildings and spaces. Crime prevention measures incorporated into the design of a development can be cost effective by reducing the need for 'add on' security equipment, such as CCTV, at a later date.

The City Council has produced an advice note for the siting of cameras and other security equipment which aims to highlight conservation and design concerns, whilst acknowledging people's desire for enhanced security in some cases. The City Council has also developed a Code of Practice for the operation of CCTV systems, which follows Home Office advice.

### **REDUCING CRIME DURING DEVELOPMENT WORKS**

Building sites are a frequent target for burglars. Sites can be at risk if adequate security measures are not taken, and scaffolding can make adjacent properties just as vulnerable to attack. Police Crime Prevention Officers can provide site specific advice (see Contacts).

Advice regarding detailed matters such as window and door designs, locking devices or electronic security equipment is also available from Crime Prevention Officers based at local police stations.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **Westminster City Council**

'A Guide to the Siting of Cameras and other Security Equipment', 1995 (Price £2)

'Design Guidelines for Shopfront Security', 1995 (Price £2)

'Westminster's Architectural Heritage - At Risk', Guidance About Architectural Theft, 1991 (free)

'Operational Guidelines for the use of Closed Circuit Television Cameras' (a good practice guide), 1996 (free)

Corporate Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Policy, 1995 (free)

### **Metropolitan Police**

'Communal Entrance Door Security' advice note, 1996 (free).

The Garden Strikes Back. A guide to plants that burglars hate', 1996 (free).

'Crime Prevention for Scaffolding' leaflet (free)

### **British Standards Institute**

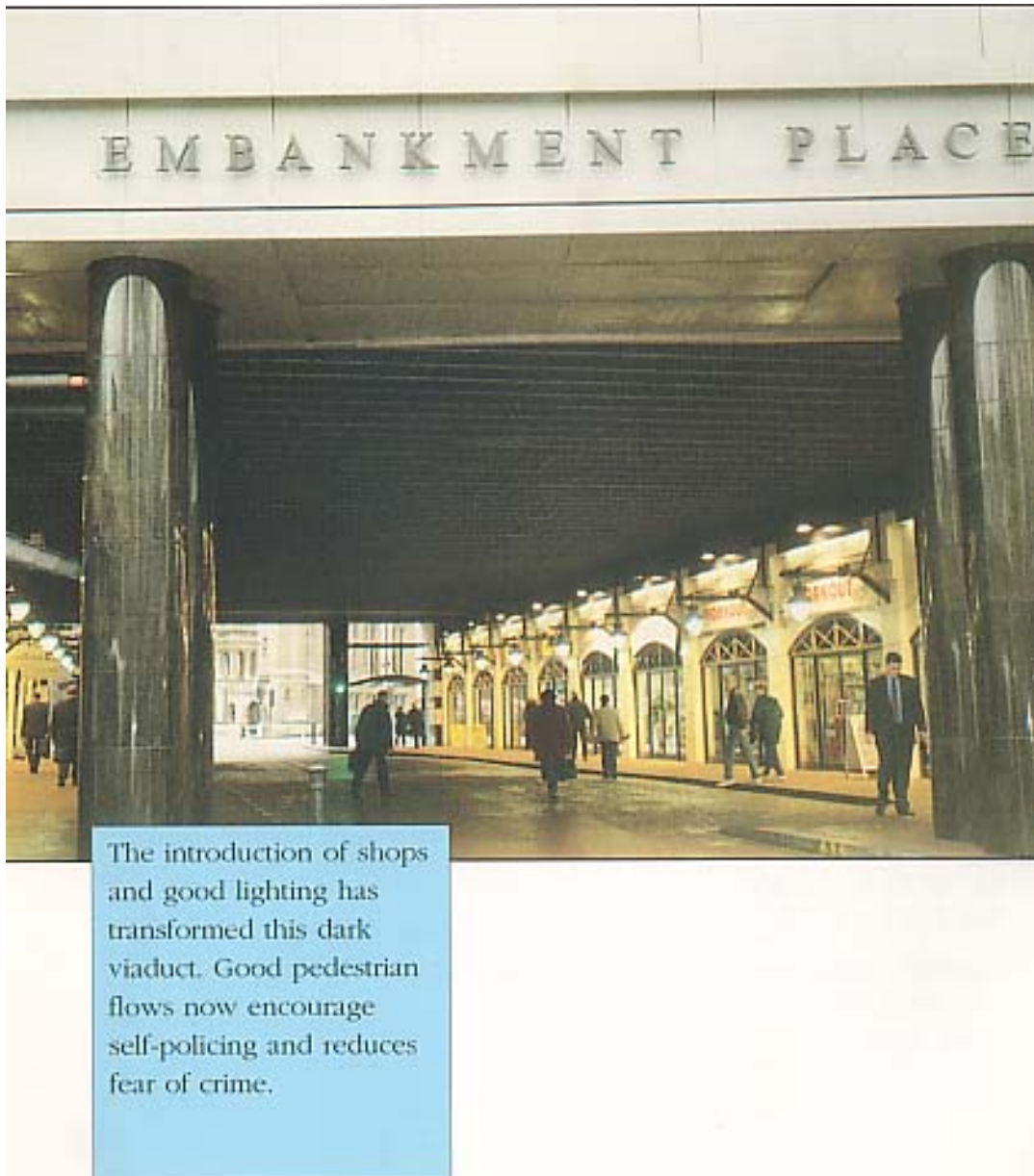
BS 8220, Parts 1, 2 and 3, 1986.

## **CONTACTS**

CLICK HERE FOR LINK TO  
WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL  
CONTACTS LIST

### **Metropolitan Police**

Crime Prevention Officers are located at each Police Station.



The introduction of shops and good lighting has transformed this dark viaduct. Good pedestrian flows now encourage self-policing and reduces fear of crime.

Department of Planning and City Development, Development Planning Services, March 1997