



Can I play out...?

Lessons from London Play's Home Zones project
report by Tim Gill



London Play

London Play is a children's charity working for a capital where all children and young people can play, both in supervised play settings and in the wider public realm. Created in 1998 as a pan-London, strategic play support service, it

- provides information, ideas and expertise
- raises awareness of the need for play
- promotes children's right to inclusive play
- improves the quality of play services
- works with partners to develop play spaces
- supports local play strategies and play associations.

About the author

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In 2002, while director of the Children's Play Council, Tim was seconded to Whitehall to lead the first ever Government-sponsored review of children's play under the chairmanship of the Rt Hon Frank Dobson MP. The review shaped the Big Lottery Fund's £155 million Children's Play Initiative launched in March 2006.

Find out more about Tim's work from his website www.rethinkingchildhood.com.

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Home Zones for London is a London Play project helping communities across the capital develop child friendly streets.

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Forewords

This evaluation of the London Play Home Zones Project highlights some important issues, explains the opportunities and challenges and describes the benefits of developing home zones where children can play. The report identifies advantages for the local community - improved interaction between adults, greater social cohesion, making housing estates better places to live.

Children prefer to play near home and have traditionally done so. Many still do but streets are not seen as safe as they once were. It is true that some adults, though not their parents, would prefer them to play somewhere else. However when schemes are completed, residents acknowledge the success of such changes. Children play out more, and traffic is reduced. Streets become more pleasant places to be. Public support is certainly there but there needs to be greater understanding among professionals about how to provide child-friendly streets.

"The vision is simple to grasp but harder to achieve in practice". It is still a "novel concept for many of those involved in highways, street design and maintenance".

Home zones lead to healthier lifestyles - more physical activity for children, less dependence on the car by adults. Examples of successful schemes are described in the report. We need to be looking at more low cost schemes. Maybe we should also be looking to Europe - to countries where urban planning is effective in providing child- and family-friendly local areas and where children's views are seen as central to such development.

I would like to thank all the London Play staff who worked on the project, especially Project Manager Anna Gilmour and Support Worker Nanette Daniels who so ably built on the work of their predecessors Paul Durr and Glenys Tolley. I am delighted that we could commission Tim Gill to conduct this evaluation who managed to place it so well within a broader context.

Melian Mansfield, Chair of Trustees, London Play

When a UNICEF report in early 2007 put the United Kingdom bottom of the list of countries regarding children and young people's health and well-being, it served again as a timely reminder that we as a society do not value our young citizens very highly. 'No ball games' and 'keep off the grass' signs act as a permanent reminder that children are not made very welcome in our neighbourhoods. Yet it does not have to be like that.

London Play was keen to take on the Home Zones for London project, as a practical way of implementing the child's right to play. Our work demonstrates that home zones could become common practice in urban design, be an integral part of the residential environment and contribute to a change in culture. By bringing together all generations of local residents, and working with local authorities, home zones can lead to stronger communities and shared safe, social spaces where people can relax and children can play.

It has been an arduous and occasionally bumpy road to get here, yet the journey has been worthwhile. It has opened up many people's eyes to what their environment could be like, and identified and brought down barriers. The Home Zones for London project was made possible by funding from London Councils (formerly known as Association of London Government) and had a strong advocate in Cllr Raj Chandarana. We are deeply grateful to them and the Advisory Group who guided the work through its ups and downs, in particular Safia Noor, Amy Erickson, Robin Russell-Pavier and Alan Sutton. Tim, Melian and I would also like to thank all the participants in the project, and the interviewees, for their time and contributions, in particular Dr Graham Parkhurst from the University of the West of England. Last but not least, I would like to thank trustees and staff at London Play, especially Anne McLaughlin who designed this publication, for the support they gave throughout to the Home Zones for London team.

Dr Ute Navidi, Director, London Play

Executive summary

This report is an evaluation of the work of London Play's Home Zones for London (HZfL) project. This project aims to promote and develop proposals for home zone schemes in five London boroughs, by building partnerships with residents, community groups, local authorities and other agencies.

In two boroughs, the project has made real progress, supporting resident-based groups in learning about home zones, promoting the idea locally and developing proposals. In one of these (Brent) the group has succeeded in raising external funds to progress their ideas, while in the other (Westminster) transport consultants are undertaking a feasibility study and consultation using HZfL funding. Progress in the other three boroughs (Lewisham, Hillingdon and Sutton) has been more limited, mainly because of the staggered start of the project in the different pilot areas, difficulties in identifying sources of funding that might make schemes viable and the time commitment that is needed to take forward schemes from scratch. For this reason, London Play decided that this evaluation should also take a wider look at home zones in London and elsewhere in England. This report therefore draws on the experience of both the HZfL project and other home zone schemes. It examines the difference completed schemes have made to children's lives, what they show about public attitudes to children, the barriers they reveal, how they have engaged children and the longer-term prospects for more child-friendly streets.

There are six key findings from the HZfL project and the other schemes that were examined in this evaluation.

1 Home zones make a real difference to children's outdoor play (see below p22). Children play in the street more, and adults say streets are safer for children's play. What is more, levels of contact and interaction between adults increase, creating a stronger sense of community and making it more likely that parents will feel happy about giving their children greater freedom outside the home as they grow up.

2 The home zone vision is very popular amongst the public - but not universally so (p22). The prospect of increased street activity - by children and by others - is widely welcomed, but does not meet with universal support. Objections remain once schemes have been completed, although some doubters are won over.

3 Prospects for taking forward retrofit home zone schemes are limited (p23). Local authorities have become much more strategic - and cautious - in how they plan to take forward schemes. The very success of retrofit schemes creates problems for public policy on cost-benefit grounds. However, schemes in regeneration and renewal contexts have shown measurable and sometimes striking impacts. Also, projects such as Sustrans' 'DIY Streets' initiative are exploring how the home zone idea might be taken forward in a more modest, low-tech and low-budget form.

4 Policy support for home zones is adequate, but more research and good practice support is needed on effective designs (p25). The organisational blocks to developing home zones lie with lack of knowledge, not with poor policy. Professionals may not be adequately equipped to deliver more child-friendly residential streets. It is not yet clear how successfully DIY Streets and other 'watered-down' home zones will be in opening up street space for social use. A holistic approach to neighbourhood design may provide another way forward.

5 Children's policy and public health policy are not yet major influences on activity (p26). There was no evidence of significant links with children's policy or public health policy on the development of child-friendly streets. The Mayor of London's (GLA) Children and Young People's Unit has developed public realm initiatives, although even here the work has yet to engage strongly with highways issues.

6 The impact of involving children is not yet clear, but there are clear benefits when adults act effectively on their behalf (p26). All those promoting home zones emphasise the value of involving children and young people. There are good reasons for thinking that involving children and young people will raise adults' awareness and lead to greater levels of ownership and better community relations. However, there was no evidence either way about the impact of children's involvement on schemes. Children do not take part in the most influential consultation processes for schemes, and children's views - like those of adults - are limited by their life experiences. What is clear is that adult advocacy and expertise grounded in good evidence about what works in making streets more child-friendly has been shown to be effective.

In conclusion, home zones enjoy support across many public policy areas, and completed schemes are proving popular. The experience of those residents and local advocates involved in the HZfL project shows that the home zone vision remains popular as well as relevant to public policy. The home zone model is also a proven tool for tackling neighbourhood blight, building cohesive communities and making housing estates into places where families want to live. New developments show that the vision of more child-friendly streets is attractive enough to survive market pressures.

This report concludes that the home zone idea is entering a second phase with potential 'growth areas' in new developments, regeneration areas and 'DIY streets'. Deregulation of certain parts of the street network, linked to the adoption of more sustainable transport choices, might open up new possibilities. There are opportunities to learn lessons about mainstreaming from some European countries, where the planning system has been more successful in delivering a child-friendly public realm. The special circumstances of London as a region present both opportunities and challenges, but overall there are grounds for optimism, given the Mayor's strong regional planning function with its Children and Young People's Unit acting as an influential advocate.

There are clear connections between home zones and the promotion of healthier, more sustainable lifestyles and more cohesive communities. The housing that we are building now will remain in place for the foreseeable future. Hence home zones and child-friendly streets are the best prospect that children and young people will be offered the kind of neighbourhoods that will encourage them to be healthy, responsible, environmentally aware citizens of towns and cities, now and in the future.

Introduction

Background to the project

The starting point for this report is an evaluation of the work of London Play's Home Zones for London (HZfL) project. London Play is committed to working to make the public realm more child- and play- friendly. Like the Children's Play Council (now Play England) at the national level, it recognised the importance and potential of residential streets in children's lives, and saw the emergence of home zones as a key development. The HZfL project was developed as part of London Play's wider development work, with the objective of demonstrating a creative approach to promoting children's right to play by working with whole communities.

The HZfL project was funded by the Association of London Government (now renamed London Councils) in 2003. Work began some months later and is set to continue until the summer of 2007. HZfL aimed to work in one designated neighbourhood in each of five London boroughs, chosen for their diversity and geographical spread (Brent, Hillingdon, Lewisham, Sutton and Westminster) in order to promote and develop proposals for schemes which will:

- Create safer, cleaner, greener living environments with the appropriate level of capital investment
- Broaden and strengthen the participation of local communities in the design of their neighbourhood environments
- Enable children to access safe play areas in their own neighbourhoods
- Reduce road traffic accidents, particularly involving children
- Influence public policy and urban planning to increase the development of home zones across London.

The project aimed to do this by building partnerships and other collaborative activity involving residents, community groups, local authorities and other development agencies in each of the target boroughs.

For reasons outlined later in this report, the HZfL project has made limited progress so far in supporting and taking forward home zone schemes. This fact, and time and resource constraints, meant that it was not feasible or sensible to conduct new quantitative surveys or research as part of this evaluation. These factors also meant that a mechanistic review of progress against objectives identified at the start of the project would have revealed little of value, and would have been a missed opportunity to look at some broader questions. London Play therefore decided that its evaluation should also look beyond the experiences and lessons of the projects it supported. Hence this report is more far-reaching, seeking to encompass both home zones and other approaches to creating more child-friendly streets - in London and also elsewhere in England.

Some ten years or so after the concept of a home zone first gained currency, there is a solid body of work on good practice in taking forward schemes in both existing streets and new developments. This report does not go over that work in any detail. Rather, it aims to answer some emerging questions about children and young people. What difference have the completed schemes made to their lives? What do schemes reveal about the views of residents, communities and others on the very idea that streets should be places where children can spend time, meet with their friends and play? What resistance is there to making that idea a reality? How have those taking schemes forward engaged children? Finally, what are the longer-term prospects for streets to be places where children's wishes are given as much weight as those of car owners and drivers?

This report therefore aims to set out the 'state of play' for home zones, with a particular emphasis on children: as beneficiaries, as participants, and as citizens whose stake in the concept is mediated so strongly by the views and beliefs of adults. It focuses on gaining the perspectives of many of those adults involved in taking forward - and trying

to take forward - home zones, primarily in London but also in some other parts of the country. Twenty-two interviews were conducted, just over half by telephone and the rest face-to-face, and selected sites were visited (all those interviewed are listed on page 31). All quotes given are from these interviews, unless stated otherwise. Alongside this, data and findings from other evaluations and studies was gathered. Material from the Department for Transport (DfT), Mayor of London, Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), local authorities and other sources was brought together to flesh out the policy and practice context.

Children and streets

For many years, even up to the 1970s and beyond, the street was a popular and significant place to play for most children. It is still a key play space for many. A 2001 survey of 800 children in Easter playschemes found that the street was the most common outdoor space for play, with 27 per cent saying it was where they played most often

(Children's Play Council 2001). A 2003 Home Office survey showed that two-thirds of 8 - 10 year olds felt safe walking or playing in their street or block (Farmer 2005). Although hard data is not available, it is almost certain that fewer children play in the street today, and that they do so for a shorter time and in more limited ways, than in previous generations.

Children play out quite a lot in little pockets - always have done. Anywhere that's cut off where the traffic can't get through.

Josie Warshaw, Brent Eleven Streets

The home street was, and is, a significant play space for a number of reasons. It is literally outside children's front doors, allowing children the chance to play semi-independently near their homes. When children are close to home, adults are able to do other things at the same time as their children play out - something that is not possible if they have to accompany children to a park or play area. If a child needs a drink, snack or visit to the toilet, these are close at hand.

Chalk drawing competition during a street party in Ealing



Streets close to home are natural meeting places, and generally places where most children feel - and are - safe from harm (assuming traffic poses no threat). The home street is also the starting point for all the journeys and trips that children make: a springboard for travelling around their 'home territory' - the area they are allowed to move around on their own.

Children's mobility is much more limited today. Statistics suggest that in a single generation, for eight-year-olds it has shrunk to just one ninth of its previous size (Hillman, Adams and Whitelegg 1990; Wheway and Millward 1997). Nonetheless children today still gradually expand their home territory as they grow up and are given ever more 'license' by their parents.

What makes a street good for play? The key feature is the absence - or at least the comparative lack - of cars. Playable streets are first and foremost streets that are not dominated by moving cars. It is for this reason that Government regulations on home zones suggest that the model is only suitable where traffic flows are less than 100 vehicles per hour during peak times (DfT 2006). Even the presence of high numbers of parked cars does not stop a street from being playable - though it may well limit the activities (Wheway and Millward 1997).

However, it is not enough for a street to have low traffic levels in order to become a space where children can play. The key additional factor that is needed is that local children are allowed to play in the street. Unless parents give their children permission to play in the street, it will not happen. Parents' attitudes and decisions - crucially, the 'licence' they give their children - is probably most strongly influenced by traffic levels. But it may also be influenced by other things, including their fears about other threats, and their views about what is acceptable parenting behaviour - in other words the local cultural norms about letting children out to play (Wheway and Millward 1997).

These two ingredients - lack of traffic danger, and adult 'permission' or tolerance, are all that is needed for streets to become viable places to play. Formal play equipment or objects like boulders,

hard landscaping or other playful features in a street can be a valuable signal to children, parents and other road users that a street is indeed a place where children's play is normal and accepted. But they are not a necessity.

Streets that feel safe will also encourage parents to allow their children to make short trips on their own: to friends' houses, to local shops or to school. Thus they help promote children's independence, as well as having a potential role in reducing car dependence.

The presence of children in the street also means that parents, carers and other adults tend to spend more time in the street and are more aware of what is happening in the street. Research shows that regular spontaneous contact between adults in a neighbourhood builds up levels of familiarity and trust, making people feel better about their community and their place in it, and leading to the growth of what sociologists call 'social capital:' a community's willingness to work together, support each other and deal effectively with issues and problems (Appleyard 1981).

In this sense the presence of children playing in the street can be seen as a litmus test of the level of community cohesiveness in a neighbourhood: if significant numbers of parents feel it is safe enough to let children of different ages play out, that is a good sign that the street and the neighbourhood as a whole is a place where children will be watched over and cared for, and where residents feel a sense of belonging. This is not to say that everyone is unconditionally positive about children playing in the street, or that problems will never arise. Indeed low-level conflict between children and adult residents is quite likely to occur, just as it has in the past.

A neighbour did come and complain to me. She said 'I don't want them playing here, they are going to dent my car.' So I said fine, why don't we move them down a bit. I knew her and I was really pleased that she was able to come and complain to me rather than shout at the kids or call the police.

Charmian Boyd, Ealing Five Roads Forum.

A brief history of home zones

The term 'home zone' was first coined in the early 1990s in a proposal from UK road safety campaigners for new laws to create residential streets in which "child pedestrians should have priority and any driver who injures a child should be presumed negligent" (Preston 1995). Alongside this purely legislative proposal, which was never adopted, some local authorities and housing bodies in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s completed designed projects using street designs that were inspired by, and to a greater or lesser extent consciously followed, the Dutch 'woonerf' (literally 'living yard') model. This model - which also originated in the 1970s and is now widespread in many European countries - has at its heart the idea of the street as a shared public space in which "the living environment clearly predominates over any provision for traffic" (Biddulph 2001). The key design features of a woonerf include level carriageways and shared surfaces. Alongside other landscaping and traffic calming measures, these serve to slow down vehicles, open up road space and create a place suitable for social uses in which the driver feels like a guest.

The term 'home zone' gained ground in the late 1990s with its adoption and promotion as an English-language equivalent of 'woonerf,' describing a street in which design and other measures come together to create streetspace where social uses are primary and car uses secondary. Decision makers steadily took up the idea. In 1999 the Government announced a pilot programme of nine schemes across England and Wales. In 2001 it launched a £30 million 'Home Zone Challenge' programme in England, which led to funding for 59 schemes. Around the same time the English and Scottish parliaments placed home zones on a clearer legal footing. In addition to the pilot and Challenge schemes, a small number of home zones have been developed independently by local authorities, housing bodies and other agencies.

At a very rough estimate there may be around 100 completed schemes in the UK. Nearly all have involved changing the design and layout of existing streets, sometimes called retrofitting. However,

there is no central database, and the application of the term is a matter of debate in some schemes. The process of legally defining a street as a home zone was finalized in 2006, meaning that some streets intended to be home zones have yet to be designated (DfT 2006). Definitional issues are further complicated by the fact that the designation criteria do not cover design in any detail (unlike those in some other European countries) raising the prospect that streets with very conventional designs will be designated as home zones.

The physical design of UK home zones has varied more than in some other countries. Designs tend to lie somewhere along a continuum from - at one end - a woonerf-style treatment involving level carriageways, shared surfaces and widespread use of visual and physical elements that break up drivers' sight lines, to - at the other - conventional traffic calming, though with higher quality materials and greater use of soft landscaping than is usual in the UK (Gill 2006).

Home zone schemes can take four years or more to complete, and taking forward projects is time-consuming and resource-intensive for all stakeholders. The issues raised by these time and resource considerations - which clearly affected the HZfL project - are discussed later in this report.

Home zones are a radical idea for many. The vision is simple to grasp, but harder to achieve in practice. Although many adults can recall playing in the streets in their own childhood, such memories are now generally regarded with nostalgia as something from a bygone world before so many streets became the sole preserve of the car. The idea of deliberately designing streets for children to play and other social uses is one that most of the public are unfamiliar with, and is still a challenging and novel concept for many of those involved in highways, street design and maintenance.

Policy context

Home zones go with the grain of many public policy objectives (DfT 2006). They demonstrably promote health and build safer, more cohesive communities. They make residential streets into distinctive parts of local neighbourhoods with a strong sense of place. They have a proven track record in sup-

porting neighbourhood renewal and regeneration objectives. They have the potential to contribute towards sustainable transport choices.

When the HZfL project began in 2004, national policy support for home zones was supportive, with enabling legislation in place, but with the Challenge programme closed for bids and underway, no dedicated funding was available from central Government. This meant that local authorities or other public agencies wanting to take forward schemes would need to identify other sources of funding, and/or use their powers under the planning system to stimulate new build schemes. This policy context is still relevant, although the degree of official support for mixed use streets has increased with the publication of the DfT's draft Manual for Streets in 2006 (the final version is due out in spring 2007).

In London too, home zones are recognised in planning guidance, but there is no strong push to take them forward. The Mayor's Children and Young People's Strategy states that "neighbourhoods should be recognisably designed, maintained and managed in children's interests and should include the principles contained in the Department for Transport's Home Zone programme" (Greater London Authority 2004 p36). This position is also set out in the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy, which states that "the London boroughs are also encouraged to consider the use of Safer Routes to Schools and Home Zones to complement 20mph speed limits" (Greater London Authority 2001 p209).

The demographics and characteristics of London are relevant to the policy context. Although levels of car ownership are lower than in most other regions, London's residential streets are arguably the most car-dominated of any in the UK. National statistics for on-street parking supply are not available, but controlled parking zones (CPZs) - a good indicator of parking pressure - cover a far greater proportion of London's streets than in any other city (for instance CPZs cover the whole of the London Borough of Camden's road network). Rearranging parking is a key tool in home zone design. So there is more potential for conflict between parking and other uses of streetspace in

London than in other cities (though conditions will vary locally). However, public transport in the capital is arguably better - or at least more accessible - than in many other big cities. London's child population is comparable to other UK cities, but it is set to rise substantially in future: 10 per cent between 2004 and 2016 (GLA 2004), bringing it close to two million under 18-year-olds. This growth increases the policy case for child-friendly streets. Perhaps the most critical regional factor is that the Mayor of London's strong regional planning powers, coupled with the influence that is provided by the Mayor's Office's Children and Young People's Unit and promotion at regional level and borough level implementation through London Councils (which funded the HZfL project), makes it more likely that children's needs in the public realm will be recognized and acted upon.

Progress with the Home Zones for London project

The HZfL project was developed as part of London Play's wider development work, with the objective of demonstrating a creative approach to promoting children's right to play by working with whole communities.

As stated, the project aimed to support the development of home zones in five London boroughs: Brent, Hillingdon, Lewisham, Sutton and Westminster. London Play took a 'broad brush' approach to identifying the target boroughs based on the following criteria: where no existing or developing home zones projects could be identified; and where it had existing links through its core work of play development.

In recognition of the need to involve residents in the process of developing successful home zones, the HZfL project raised awareness through local community groups. However, responses varied from borough to borough, including from interested residents, the play sector, borough officials and local authority transport/planning personnel. In this, as with other aspects of the 'process', the pilot projects showed that there was no one, fixed approach or process for developing home zones, but rather that common themes or issues arise. Similarly, the motivation or catalyst for developing a scheme in each borough differed, as is demonstrated below.

The project offered two forms of support. First, project staff provided practical support to help communities explore and discuss the idea of a home zone, to raise local concerns and decide if they were interested in trying to create a home zone in their area, and to develop more detailed proposals. Second, the project had funds available for undertaking feasibility studies and more in-depth community consultation.

In each borough, there were areas of disagreement or concerns about progressing with a scheme, from residents and borough officials alike. However, these can broadly be summarised as a general agreement about what the issues in each area to be addressed were, with conflict arising in trying to agree on the best solution. In other words,

not all residents were persuaded of the value of home zones as solutions.

The processes and lessons learned through the development of the pilot projects clearly resonate with those learned in the wider development of home zones and child-friendly streets. The following sections describe progress to date in each of the five boroughs.

Brent

In Brent, a local resident who had heard about the project contacted the HZfL team. In her area, a relatively self-contained group of eleven streets largely made up of Victorian terraced housing, the residents were concerned about traffic and the environment, and residents and groups had tried to address this through letter writing and petitions to the local authority. HZfL provided advice and information about funding and suggested that residents organise themselves into a representative group. BEST (or Brent Eleven Streets Association) was duly formed, and the birth of the organisation was marked by a successful street party in the autumn of 2005. This street party involved both road closures and the use of turf to create a temporary 'village green' on a very small, neglected public space in the area, now known as Postbox Square.



A street party in Brent

At that event, HZfL staff supported BEST to carry out a survey to find out residents' views and concerns. This survey, which generated 134 responses, showed that lack of 'greenery' and public community space in the area was a major concern. There was some concern about the level of activities available for children and young people, and a little concern about road safety. There were conflicting views on the presence of children and young people in public space: 13 respondents mentioned it as a negative factor, while 16 said there should be more provision. By comparison, over 50 wanted more trees or greenery and over 30 desired more communal open space. The BEST survey showed some familiarity with the idea of home zones: 51 per cent had heard about them, and could see more advantages than disadvantages.

Based on the results of this survey, the London Borough of Brent submitted a bid to Transport for London's Area-Based Schemes funding-programme, and has received funding from TfL to undertake a feasibility study in the area. At the same time, the community has developed ideas to improve Postbox Square. This process has raised issues reflected frequently in the development of home zones, namely the idea that it may be made a focus for children's play is controversial. Another contentious issue emerged in 2006 about children playing in existing dead-end streets; the local authority put up a 'no ball games' sign in one street after some objections.

Whatever the outcome of the TfL bid and the public space project, the support given by the HZfL project was highly valued. One active resident said that "Brent Eleven Streets could not have got this far without the help and support of the HZfL team. Their assistance has added essential impetus to our efforts," while another - with different views on some of the issues - said that staff had been "very supportive," providing a "sense check" and being "great champions of consultation".

Hillingdon

Progress in Hillingdon has been staggered and it has proved challenging to identify both the 'right' area for a potential scheme, and active residents to

take the process forward. After initial local publicity by the project, the team worked with elected members to identify areas that might be appropriate for a home zone or similar treatment. The HZfL team attended a public meeting organised by the local MP and a ward Councillor, to provide information about the home zone concept. The original street identified was part of proposed wider redevelopment work; however residents and councillors representing the estate felt that another street was more 'deserving'.

The HZfL team is now working with residents on one street - a fairly busy street with a primary and secondary school on it - to explore ideas and possibly developing a proposal. Residents on the street have been given leaflets produced by HZfL about home zones, and attended an initial meeting to discuss the concept. A wider public meeting is planned to carry out initial awareness raising and closer exploration of the local concerns. Councillors have stated that there may be some funding available for implementation.

Work in Hillingdon shows that the process can be very stop-and-start, and is affected by other regeneration projects taking place. It also shows that there can be heated discussions around what makes one street more suitable than another.

As with each of the pilot schemes, barriers have arisen. The Ward Councillor leading on the project has over eight years' experience in local politics. She says that in her experience, local people hold mixed views on the desirability of children playing out: "it varies a lot depending on who you talk to. Obviously families want their kids to be able to go out to play, but at the other extreme you've got the elderly people who don't like kids playing outside their houses. They especially don't like ball games."

Lewisham

Work in Lewisham has been with the both the local authority and the New Cross New Deal for Communities (NDC) partnership, exploring the possibility of developing a home zone as part of a wider strategic traffic and regeneration project. This wider project involves strategic roads that are the responsibility of Transport for London and

progress with this scheme has been tied to these wider decisions for the area. Therefore, this pilot has not progressed as quickly as had been hoped. This has held up discussion of what might happen in the streets that might become quieter as a result of changes to the strategic roads. However, the project is embarking on a programme of public consultation with residents and the local school on the proposed affected streets.

Sutton

In Sutton, the proposal to develop a home zone initially caught the interest of the Play Network, which has close links to the community and is in a good vantage point from which to identify possible suitable areas. Publicity was also made available through community and interest groups and the project was contacted by a resident of south Sutton, with an interest in transport and air quality. This resident, also chair of the local residents association, is keen on the idea of a home zone, preferring it to conventional traffic calming. He points to the lack of open space in the area, and also the

need for children to “learn to be sociable with each other”.

However, the process is always dependent on local authority approval, and as in Lewisham, Sutton is exploring wider initiatives. As part of a TfL pilot, the borough has received a significant grant to undertake a range of measures to reduce car dependence. This makes the climate for considering home zones a positive one and officers have held internal discussions about the possibility of developing a home zone as a lasting legacy of the TfL sustainable town centre scheme. Sutton is taking the innovative approach of developing criteria for assessing which streets will make a suitable home zone. To date, there has been no public discussion or consultation about a possible home zone and no wider consideration of issues around children.

Westminster

Significant progress has been made in Westminster in discussing the home zones at the community level, although interest so far from the

Dart Street showing possible area to be treated



local authority has been limited. The HZfL project has established a good working relationship with the Queens Park Neighbourhood Forum, which provides close links to the community's residents. Discussions have focused on one stretch of Dart Street, which runs through the middle of a largely residential area that includes both Victorian terraced housing and more modern low-rise blocks of social housing. Children currently play habitually in some of the side streets, though not Dart Street itself.

Initial consultation with local people has taken place through public meetings, at the Queen's Park festival and via an on-street survey to establish the issues for the area (conducted by local residents). This survey - of 114 people - showed that 80 per cent of respondents (and 84 per cent of children and young people) were concerned or very concerned about traffic speeds in Dart Street. When asked about general safety two thirds felt unsafe or very unsafe. Top priorities for change included greening, play opportunities, road crossings and policing/wardens.

Following this activity, the HZfL team organised a visit of around 25 residents - including 15 children - to the Dings in Bristol, enabling residents to experience first-hand how a completed home zone looks and feels. Responses were largely positive.

The trip to the Dings was really beneficial - there was kind of a buzz about it. When they came back they were able to tell their neighbours 'this is what a home zone looks like'. Because although you see pictures, it's really difficult to get an idea of what it is.

Noreen O'Neill, Resident, Queen's Park.

In depth community consultation is underway, including an art competition involving children at a local primary school, depicting their vision of their streets. This is taking place alongside an on-street exhibition and residents' survey. HZfL staff have held a consultation with members of the school council, which is made up of 18 children aged from five to 11 years, elected by their peers. When asked what children would like in their streets they identified four priorities: slower traffic; places to

skate and cycle safely; places to sit and chat; and trees, grass and flowers.

This borough is the only one that has been able to make use of HZfL's consultancy funding. This has been used to commission some consultation and a feasibility study into measures for Dart Street. At the time of writing this work is in progress. However, the prospects for any proposals developed are in the balance and critically depend upon a positive response from the local authority.

Other activities

As well as supporting activity in each of the five pilot areas, HZfL organised a day-long tour of London home zones in 2005. Representatives from several of the supported boroughs took part, along with others interested in seeing how home zones have been implemented in the capital. The project has also produced a number of reports and leaflets, including one information leaflet aimed at the public.

To monitor the development of home zones across the capital, the project 'mapped' the original pilot and Challenge schemes, and made contact with each of the London boroughs during the course of the project to develop a complete picture of where schemes exist, are being developed or are planned. Information gathered at the time of writing suggests that there are now only 10 London boroughs with no home zone schemes at all. Most schemes in London (after the Challenge and pilot schemes) have been retrofit and have been funded with Streets for People funding (from TfL). It was beyond the scope of the project to make a value judgement on the success of these schemes, and no agreed criteria prescribes what features a home zone should have or what makes it 'work' for children and the wider community.

A conference has been arranged to share learning and explore children's access to their streets and the wider public realm, with the aim of reaching decision makers and planners.

Overall outcomes of the HZfL project

Progress has varied across the five boroughs, and none have yet reached the stage where any

physical changes have taken place. While the project has levered in new funding for a feasibility study in Brent, it has not achieved its objectives around triggering capital investment, and so has not yet succeeded in stimulating any concrete measures that might improve children's road safety or play opportunities over the long term. This might seem to imply that the project has been less successful than it could have been. However, the project also aimed to promote and develop proposals, and progress has been made towards fulfilling this to varying degrees in at least two pilot areas. As has been demonstrated, there is some intrinsic value for community groups in going through the 'process'.

Where progress has been slow, there are understandable reasons, and good arguments for thinking that the original objectives were overly ambitious. The development of home zones - as shown by the HZfL pilots and other schemes - is a lengthy process; addressing preconceptions about being anti-car and concerns about children and young people in the public realm present real challenges. Transport planners and highways engineers sometimes need to be reassured that schemes are not just traffic calming initiatives. These conclusions are based in part on the lessons learnt from other home zone projects that have succeeded in being taken to completion, so it is to some examples of these projects that we now turn.

Outcomes and lessons from other home zone schemes

The experiences and lessons in taking forward home zone projects to completion are gathered in various reports and evaluations. The most comprehensive is the Government report of the Home Zone Challenge programme, entitled *Home Zones: Challenging the future of our streets* (DfT 2006). The experiences of the earlier pilots are described in seven Government-funded evaluation reports, all undertaken and published by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), (Layfield, Chinn and Nicholls 2003; Tilly, Webster and Buttress 2005; Tilly et al. 2005; Layfield, Webster and Buttress 2005; Webster, Tilly and Buttress 2005; Wheeler et al. 2005a; Wheeler et al. 2005b). Other evaluations have also been carried out.

These reports show that home zones have been valued and welcomed by residents, and many have made a significant difference to neighbourhoods. Residents tended to welcome the changes and to feel the schemes had made their streets more attractive and safer. The DfT report states "the main outcome of successful home zones has been the development of stronger and more integrated local communities" - in other words, an increase in social capital. This outcome is clearly likely to benefit children, since almost by definition such communities will take a greater interest in the safety and well-being of their younger members.

The traffic impacts of home zones have also been significant. All seven of the TRL evaluations already mentioned found that traffic speeds and volumes had gone down after implementing schemes. Of the 39 Challenge schemes that have surveyed vehicle speeds, over half estimate that speeds have reduced to between 10 and 15 mph, while three achieved mean speeds of below 10 mph (DfT 2006 p80). Fewer Challenge authorities have surveyed traffic volumes, but here too the evidence is that these have reduced: for instance both Camden (Lupton Street) and Manchester (Northmoor) have reported reductions of around 60 per cent. (The former involved a road closure, though the latter did not.)

These traffic impacts show that the schemes have succeeded in changing the street so that it is more likely to be used by children for play. In fact, five out of the seven TRL evaluations provide attitudinal evidence that schemes have had a measurable impact on the play opportunities and independent mobility of children and young people (Gill 2006). On top of this, a 2005 survey of the lead officers involved in 41 home zones showed that over half of respondents felt the scheme had led to an increase in children's outdoor activity (Gill 2006). So there are good grounds for the view that successful home zones do open up street space for children to make use of.

A systematic look at completed schemes was beyond the scope of this evaluation. It was decided to look in a little more detail at a small number of schemes that might shed further light on some of the issues raised by the HZFL project. These were about adult attitudes regarding the desirability and viability of opening up streets for children's use, outcomes for children and their involvement in the process. Schemes that were the subject of independent evaluations were of particular interest, as they offered the potential to draw more robust conclusions.

The schemes examined include three that were independently evaluated: Ealing Five Roads Forum, Bristol Southville and Gateshead Staiths. In addition, five London schemes were included that have not been independently evaluated: Camden Lupton Street, Hackney Windus Streets for People, Lambeth Holmewood, Kingston (comprising two schemes, Manorgate Road/Wolverton Avenue and Cavendish Road) and Kings Cross Central (which is still at the masterplan stage). Only one interview was carried out for each of these schemes, and in most cases there was little or no independent data that might expand on - or challenge - the views of interviewees. So the findings and conclusions from these five latter schemes are more tentative than for the three more extensively researched ones.

Independently evaluated schemes

Ealing Five Roads Forum

The Ealing home zone was one of the earliest to be completed. As one of the original pilots, it was the subject of a TRL evaluation (Wheeler et al 2005b). The area is relatively self-contained and has a mix of terraced and semi-detached houses (mostly owner-occupied) and low-rise apartment blocks. Some of the streets in the area had for some years suffered from rat-running, especially during the rush hour.

The scheme came about largely through the efforts of a small number of local residents, supported by LB Ealing. In 1998 two mothers with primary school-age children heard about the concept of a home zone, as a result of the national campaigning that was taking place at that time. They helped to set up a residents' association that approached the local authority who worked with them to put forward a scheme for the pilot programme. As with some other pre-Challenge schemes progress was slow, but it was more or less completed by 2003. The area also became a controlled parking zone (CPZ) in 2002. Children were involved in creating mosaics for the entry features, and also took part in a consultation exercise facilitated by a local Groundwork Trust.

We did a lot on the mosaics, then we did this photographic exercise, with little disposable cameras. The kids loved it, they raced around with these cameras. I'm not sure the results were that productive, but it involved them. They came up with things they liked and things they disliked. Did it make a difference? Well I suppose they knew what the home zone was and I think that's quite important.

Charmian Boyd, Ealing Five Roads Forum.

The engineering changes go beyond those used in conventional traffic calming, though they are modest compared to the Dutch 'woonerf' model. Measures include a road closure that removed much of the rat-running traffic, gateway features, junction treatments and modest amounts of shared surfacing and parking reconfiguration. The area has a very small publicly-owned piece of land by a

car park that was intended to be converted to a playground. At a late stage - after consultation with children and design proposals - it was discovered that a lease on the land prevented this change of use. However, residents report that the space is nonetheless used by children and young people on an informal basis, and is even periodically maintained by them.

The home zone resulted in dramatic falls in traffic flows: in some streets they fell from 2400 to 400 vehicles per day. Average speeds were also reduced by about 6 - 8 mph to around 15 - 18 mph.

The TRL evaluation shows that the changes were welcomed by both adults and children, with three-quarters of adults and over 80 per cent of children saying the home zone was better than before. There were slight increases in the number of adults who said their children played in the street (64 per cent, up from 55 per cent). 30 per cent of parents



Entry feature and part of Ealing home zone

said their children spent more time in the street, while 53 per cent said it had made no difference. Surveys of children themselves showed a slight increase in street play, though numbers are low and this result may have been due to the children growing up and being allowed more freedom. Adult views were mixed about whether children should play in the street, both before and after the scheme had been completed.

The TRL survey also points to an increase in social capital and community spirit. It showed the respondents on the whole knew more people by name after completion, and 42 per cent said that people on their street were more friendly (as against 58 per cent who saw no change).

It's caused a community in the area and that was a really unexpected bonus of the home zone. People know each other, if not by name then at least by sight.

Charmian Boyd, Ealing Five Roads Forum.

I like to think that they [the children who live in the home zone] are going to grow up and have a bit more of a sense of social responsibility as a result of having seen other people and met other people.

Lisa Hall, Ealing Five Roads Forum.

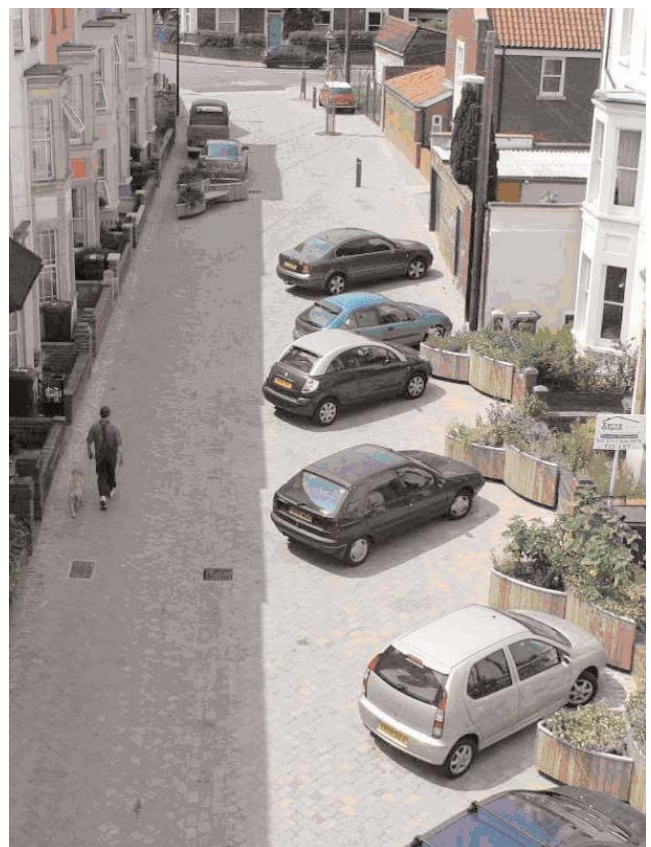
Bristol Southville

Bristol City Council is recognised as a pioneering local authority in relation to home zones, and has taken forward a number of both retrofit and newbuild schemes. This retrofit Challenge scheme resulted in intensive woonerf-style measures (including bespoke bench-planters) in one entire street and shorter sections of two other streets.

It was the subject of an independent evaluation commissioned by the City Council and carried out by the Centre for Transport & Society at the University of the West of England (UWE) (Centre for Transport & Society 2006).



Milford Street, Southville, Bristol, before and after treatment



The scheme was very well received by residents, and there was clear evidence that children's play opportunities had improved: out of 34 households who replied, all but four said that more played in the street, and the same number thought that the street was safer for play. The survey also showed that residents felt that they were spending more time out in the street, and that there was more street activity (Centre for Transport & Society 2006 p3 and pp62-64).

Quieter, slower traffic, more child-friendly, looks more attractive, more socializing amongst neighbours.

Southville resident (Centre for Transport & Society 2006 p60)

One valuable feature of the UWE evaluation is that it analysed information from nearby streets that were involved in the consultation process but did not receive any physical changes, as well as the eventual home zone streets. This in effect provided a 'control group' that gave clues to the relative importance of the changes themselves compared

to mere involvement in the process. Being in the home zone led to greater contact between neighbours (as measured by asking people if they spoke to their neighbours more) whereas no such effect was found in the near-home zone streets (Centre for Transport & Society 2006 p63). This finding reinforces the view that it is actual physical changes to the street, not just processes, which make the difference to people's behaviour and views.

Another clear finding is that in the area identified for treatment there were varying amounts of support for, and conflicting views on, the idea of creating a home zone. While there was support - in some cases strong support - for the scheme, a minority were opposed. This lack of complete consensus remains even after the scheme's completion.

Gateshead Staiths South Bank

Staiths South Bank in Gateshead is a newbuild home zone. It was the only such scheme in the Challenge programme, and is one of the biggest newbuild UK home zone schemes so far. The development has received a great deal of profes-

Staiths South Bank, Gateshead: a newbuild home zone



sional and media attention and has received several design awards. It is also the subject of an independent Arts Council evaluation (Arts Council 2006).

The scheme was the result of a partnership between the design consultancy hemingwaydesign and the housebuilders George Wimpey. This partnership came about after designer Wayne Hemingway wrote a highly critical article about the quality of new housing in the UK compared to many other countries.

Creating a more child- and family- friendly environment has been central to the scheme from the outset. Having seen examples of home zones in other European countries, Hemingway was determined to incorporate the concept at Staiths. In his words, it aimed to provide affordable private sector family housing that created “a place where kids can get out and play”. According to the Arts Council evaluation:

Each phase of the project has its own play strategy, extended to both children and adults by incorporating unusual equipment within the streetscape as well as benches using reclaimed timber where residents can meet. The streets gradually become narrower towards the centre of the estate and the pavements wider.

(Arts Council 2006 p13)

Hemingway's ideas were supported by Gateshead Council, but the developers needed more persuading. They were particularly worried that potential buyers might be put off by the home zone design, in which car parking space was relegated and moved away from people's front doors.

Wayne Hemingway: “You're not just driving to your front door, opening the door, getting under your porch, getting inside and shutting the world away. It's about just having a chance that you and your kids can interact. So we thought: What do you do to increase the chances of you actually meeting your neighbours and social interaction? Number one, you take away the idea that you drive up to your front door.”

As it turned out the development has proved very popular, with the first phase of housing sold within

hours of being put on the market. The Arts Council evaluation states that “prices at Staiths South Bank have risen with the market, suggesting that a home there is as good an investment as comparable properties” (p39).

It is harder to tell what impact the development is having on children's play and independent mobility, for the simple reason that few families with children have moved in so far. Sixty per cent of the first wave of properties were purchased by investors: a common outcome with new housing, especially in or near city centres. Staiths has largely attracted young middle class professionals (single and couples) with only one in eight homes containing children. However, Hemingway (who has a house in the estate himself) says things are changing.

Hardly any families moved in with their kids. People were buying it thinking ‘this is a great place to start a family’ rather than ‘let's move here as a family’. Also it would tend to appeal to the younger designer end of things. Now there are a lot more kids and it does feel like a family environment.

Wayne Hemingway

As the Arts Council evaluation highlights, not everyone is initially attracted by the vision of community embodied in the design of Staiths. Focus groups before the scheme was built showed that “people resist enforced communities, even though they are wistful about strongly bonded communities. Shared resources such as gardens and barbecues sound big warning bells (p9).” People in these focus groups were “largely unconvinced about the Hemingways' plans for Staiths South Bank. They were uncertain about the benefits of the main features around community and design (p34).”

However, it appears that the views of at least some have changed as a result of seeing the estate in reality. Market researchers re-contacted some of those who had taken part in the ‘before’ focus groups and arranged a site visit. The Arts Council report states that “the shared facilities encouraging contact between people were seen as a great success.”

London schemes that were not independently evaluated

Camden Lupton Street

This scheme was funded under the Challenge programme and completed in 2004. It focused on around 100m of shared surface layout outside the gates of a primary school, with a road closure and other more conventional measures elsewhere.

Resident surveys show the scheme was popular, with 55 per cent saying it had had a positive impact on the area. 51 per cent of respondents said there was more street play, and on balance people felt that levels of anti-social behaviour had not increased. However, as with other schemes, a minority were opposed to the idea and unhappy with the results.

Kids love playing by school. Great place for children to play and meet, and also for adults.

Quote from resident, taken from LB Camden consultation report.

Hackney Windus Streets for People

This scheme, mostly complete by 2005, covers a few streets of Victorian terraced housing in Stamford Hill, a highly culturally diverse part of North London. Treated streets include parts of Filey Avenue, Kyverdale Road and Lampard Grove, and nine schools ring the treated area.

The scheme was almost entirely resident-led: residents carried out the initial consultations and developed the proposals independently of LB

Hackney, then bid to Transport for London's Streets for People fund with the local authority's agreement. Children and young people were not formally involved in the process, except that their work provided the basis for some public art.

Children were never included in the consultation - except in these art days. They came out in droves then when it came to the designs of the etched granite. In that way they have a stake, but that is the only way.

Amy Erickson, Windus Streets for People.

Windus Streets for People is made up largely of conventional traffic calming along with some incidental hard landscaping such as boulders and etched granite artworks set into the pavement (created with local children) and some new trees.

It does not include any shared surfaces or other woonerf-style features, although improvements (including a permanent hopscotch grid, also of etched granite) were made to Windus Walk, a pedestrian-only route through the scheme.

After strong representations from drivers pointing to such issues as driver conflict, some traffic calming measures were 'watered down' and other traffic management measures like one-way streets were included that were not part of the initial proposals. The scheme has not been evaluated, although local resident activists feel it has led to more children playing out.

People enjoying a chat, Lupton Street home zone



part Windus Streets for People scheme

We had the usual 'everybody wanted somewhere for the children to play but just not in front of their house'.

We do see a marked difference in pedestrian behaviour in both adults and children. Children as well as adults are much more likely to be assertive in crossing the road. You do see a lot more children playing out - and that's without adults. Though that's only my perception.

Amy Erickson, Windus Streets for People.

Lambeth Holmewood

The Holmewood home zone surrounds Holmewood Gardens, a public green space including a children's play area. It was originally selected to be one of the pilot schemes, but delays and problems with design and construction meant that it was not completed in time for to be included in the TRL evaluation programme. The scheme was finished in 2005 and features a road closure and modest amounts of shared surface alongside more conventional traffic calming.

Those with children had no other focus, those without had no interest. The reality is that there has to be a happy medium.

Robin Russell-Pavier,
Holmewood Neighbourhood Association.

Kingston

The Royal Borough of Kingston has completed two home zones: Manorgate Road/Wolverton Avenue

in Kingston, and Cavendish Road and the surrounding streets in New Malden. Funding for the schemes came from the Challenge programme and other sources, and initial engineering measures were completed by 2003/4.

Both schemes feature extensive use of shared surfaces. On completion of the Manorgate scheme, average traffic speeds are between 22 and 26mph, and traffic flows are around 370 vehicles per hour at the afternoon peak: much higher than the 100 vehicles per hour proposed in the Government regulations. Average speeds in the Cavendish Road scheme are around 19 - 22mph, again higher than proposed in Government regulations. Both schemes are the focus of continuing consultation with a view to resolving outstanding issues.

King's Cross Central

King's Cross Central is one of the biggest development projects in London and brings together retail, residential, business, cultural, social infrastructure, public open space and transport uses.

The masterplan includes proposals for home zone streets as part of the residential elements of the project. The scheme has received outline planning permission and will take a number of years to complete.

The public realm strategy includes taking home zone principles and applying them to a high density urban development.

Lucy Musgrave, General Public Agency.



Shared surface area in Holmewood home zone



Part of Kingston's Cavendish Road scheme

Lessons learnt

The experience of the HZfL project, combined with those of the other home zone schemes examined, reveals valuable lessons about the prospects for creating more child-friendly streets. The lessons cover a broad set of issues around social and cultural attitudes, policy and practice.

Home zones make a real difference to children's lives

Findings from completed schemes show consistent positive outcomes for children and for communities. Almost all schemes are popular and lead to a stronger sense of community, making it more likely that parents will feel happy about giving their children greater freedom outside the home as they grow up. What is more, schemes also show greater levels of contact and interaction between residents, a finding which goes a long way to explaining why home zones have been received so positively. In some schemes there is direct evidence that children play in the street more, with adults saying streets are safer for children's play.

Now, I know that people really enjoy seeing young people and talking to them, but at the time [before the home zone] you would have thought they were a different species. For example we had some neighbours who were always asking after our children, and we wouldn't have got to know them otherwise.

Charmian Boyd, Ealing Five Roads Forum.

The home zone vision is very popular amongst the public - but not universally so

As has already been noted, even where home zones have led to improvements in children's opportunities for play and their independent mobility, these outcomes have not been universally supported. As the DfT Challenge report states, "concerns about children playing in the street can cause tensions within a community". Most people are positive about the idea of children being visible and active in their neighbourhoods, but some are not.

These observations are borne out by market research and opinion polls. A DfT report of a 2004

Office for National Statistics survey showed that 85 per cent of people agreed that it was important that children should be able to play safely in the road or street where they live. Even amongst those without children the figure was 80 per cent (DfT 2005a). Inevitably objections are stronger - for those people already minded to object - if there is the prospect of play directly outside their houses: especially if this involves physical measures that might be a focus, such as play equipment or places to sit.

As the DfT Challenge report comments, almost every home zone scheme has its 'Mr or Mrs Angry' (DfT 2006 p47). In many cases objections were resolved - or at least their impact mitigated - by intensive discussions. Now that more schemes have been completed, and their positive impact shown, one might reasonably expect fewer objections, since some would undoubtedly have been based on unwarranted fears. Where this does not happen, it is tempting to suggest that those implacably opposed to home zones should be obliged to put aside their objections and accept the majority point of view.

However, in Southville, the scope of the final scheme shrank significantly compared to the original proposals, precisely because in some streets or sections of street, it was not possible to reach consensus. As the evaluation points out, the lack of complete agreement raises serious issues in retrofit schemes that cannot be wished away by a plea for those opposed simply to be more tolerant. Lack of a strong consensus also casts doubt over the prospects that residents will show the degree of tolerance of children's presence that is needed for street space to become a viable place for play.

In the final analysis, the issue of what level of support is taken as a 'consensus' will remain an important constraint on the success of home zones... If a home zone is found to be inconvenient, the ultimate recourse of the dissatisfied resident is drastic - to move home - which suggests a high social cost, even if only a small number of people are affected. (Centre for Transport & Society 2006 p83).

Most home zone designs aim to make parked cars less dominant in streetscapes. Some developers, planners and other public realm professionals believe that car-owning residents place an overriding importance on having a parking place outside their homes: a view that Wayne Hemingway initially observed in respect of George Wimpey plc. In fact, the popularity of Staiths shows that many people are prepared to trade car parking convenience against other benefits, such as opening up street space for social use. The DfT opinion poll supports this observation. It states: "people were asked which uses should have priority in their street or road if it were to be redesigned. Parking for residents (46 per cent), children playing (43 per cent) and walking (42 per cent) were the three most popular responses". While around half of respondents said they would not be prepared to walk an extra 50 metres in order to allow the street to be used for other purposes, this still leaves a substantial minority who would (DfT 2005a).

Prospects for taking forward retrofit schemes are limited

The outcomes of the home zone schemes completed so far have been uniformly positive and officially endorsed by Government. However, Government has shown no inclination to target further funding specifically at home zones. In the meantime, devoting general public funds to the widespread retrofitting of home zones is not a policy that enjoys great support. Retrofitting home zones needs significant funding (in Southville, estimated to equate to around £10,000 per house) and is time-consuming and demanding of staff resources. Politicians face legitimate questions about fairness in allocating public funding to measures that directly benefit a comparatively small number of people - especially where they involve displacing car parking or traffic from one street to another - as the Southville evaluation points out:

The response from the wider community showed that such a demonstration project can be divisive in that people want the same treatment for their street, wondering 'why

should children in neighbouring streets be safer than ours?' Others even raised the issue as to 'why Southville?' noting that it isn't a regeneration neighbourhood, and hence not particularly deserving of high levels of public funding. (Centre for Transport & Society 2006 p91).

The equity issue is made sharper because some residents may gain directly in financial terms. The Southville evaluation suggests that being in a home zone can add up to £5,000 onto property values (Centre for Transport & Society 2006 p91). This means that publicly funded schemes that include privately owned properties have the side effect of redistributing wealth in a regressive way, increasing the wealth of those who are already comparatively wealthy.

It is important to remember that the earlier schemes under the pilot and Challenge programmes were precisely that: pilots. They were tests of the home zone concept, and quite rightly authorities and others were prepared to devote significant resources to try out new approaches. The difficulties faced by those involved in these schemes should not be understated. Taking forward projects was time-consuming and resource-intensive for both professionals and residents. It demanded of professionals a willingness to take risks. Effective cross-disciplinary working was essential for success, as were good 'process skills'. Some of the 'lessons learnt' stated in the DfT Challenge report - which were clearly factors in the slow progress with the HZfL project - flesh out these observations:

- Schemes always take longer than anticipated. This needs to be planned for and communicated at the start in order to get the widest support. (p19)
- Allow an extensive period to involve the community and build that into a realistic timetable. (p35)
- It is extremely resource intensive to fully engage the community in the process but is absolutely necessary to achieve a successful scheme. (p35)

- The local community must be demonstrably keen, even desperate, for the investment. (p58)
- It is not easy to get a consensus regarding scheme design when dealing with a diverse range of people. (p59)
- Be prepared for difficult times. Sometimes people resist change and are often only concerned with single issues such as parking or access. (p59)

Based on this experience, local authorities have become much more strategic - and cautious - in how they plan to take forward home zones and similar schemes. Camden reviewed its attitudes to home zones in the light of its experience at Lupton Street, and came to the following conclusions:

Camden believes that this is an important pilot project, exploring how residents and the local authority can work in a strong partnership to transform local streets and how they are used. The process is very resource intensive, both in financial terms and in terms of skilled staff resources - which are at a premium... We do not have significant resources to invest in a home zones programme... Instead, Camden is promoting the Streets for People approach, which spreads resources more thinly over a wider area but which is paying some rich dividends... The Streets for People approach - aimed squarely at the neighbourhood renewal areas - looks to adopt some of the Home Zone approach, through a holistic view of the development of public space proposals as well as more traditional traffic engineering interventions. (Camden LB 2005 p338).

The evaluation of the Southville in Bristol came to similar conclusions, as has already been noted. It said that the very success of schemes “creates a problem for public policy, as even modest demand for the schemes is unlikely to be met by current funding arrangements” (Centre for Transport & Society 2006 p94).

The HZfL project's slow progress in triggering home zone schemes is almost entirely down to this changed funding and policy climate, which adds greatly to the challenges already discussed in taking forward schemes. This climate has made

funding for retrofit schemes much harder to secure and made the process of taking forward schemes much slower.

A weakness in the process [of bidding for funding] is the long delay between stages.

Richard Lewis, LB Brent.

However, it would be wrong to generalise from this experience and conclude that home zones no longer make sense in public policy terms. Schemes in regeneration and renewal contexts have shown measurable and sometimes striking impacts, as reported in the DfT Challenge report (see especially the Plymouth Morice Town, Kirklees Moorside and Manchester Northmoor schemes, which have all been highly praised).

The home zone concept also has a future in existing streets that lie outside areas of social need. As the Southville evaluation argues, it may be possible to create new more equitable funding arrangements from residents themselves, such as through the council tax mechanism or resident permit parking schemes, in situations where there is a “complete consensus” on street redesign (Centre for Transport & Society 2006 p94). Most home zone schemes so far have been delivered in disadvantaged areas. This has had the effect of implying that they might only be appropriate in such areas. However, the schemes like Southville in Bristol and Ealing's Five Roads Forum show that the home zone vision has wider appeal.

Given the capital costs of full home zones treatment, future retrofits outside targeted areas of deprivation will almost certainly take a more modest, low-tech and low-budget form. The sustainable transport charity Sustrans has been involved in taking forward a number of home zone schemes, including the Dings in Bristol (the scheme visited by the Westminster residents.) Based on its experiences, it has echoed the views of others in concluding that “with the ending of the Challenge fund, it is unlikely that such large-scale budgets will continue to be available on a wide scale, to retrofit existing streets”. It has therefore launched a new project to work with partners to create what it calls ‘DIY streets’. It describes DIY streets as “affordable home zone type areas (but

not home zones)". The project aims to "work with local communities to develop low-cost capital works that make their streets safer and more attractive, aiming to find simple interventions and materials which can be both effective and durable".

One DIY street has already been completed, in Ashley Vale in Bristol. The scheme, which came about because residents were not selected for a Challenge scheme, involved rearranged parking, narrower running tracks with passing space and pavement widening using a dropped kerb construction of large planters and build-outs.

Funding for retrofit home zones is now likely to be available only in regeneration or renewal areas. However, we think that it should be possible that communities can create safer and more attractive streets at a fraction of the cost of full home zone treatments.

Peter Lipman, Sustrans.

Policy support for home zones is adequate, but more research and good practice support is needed on effective designs

This evaluation found that those professionals involved in taking forward home zones generally felt that the policy context was broadly appropriate and adequate. (This issue was not explored in detail, and it may be that some policy developments are warranted.) The organisational blocks to developing home zones lie with lack of knowledge, not with poor policy.

Even after the pilot and Challenge schemes, doubts remain about whether professionals are equipped to deliver more child-friendly residential streets. A recent CABI report on new housing found that new build home zones were not always well designed, saying of one scheme in Bristol that "a lack of experience in the detailed design of home zones has resulted in shared spaces that do not function entirely successfully to slow traffic down" (CABI 2007). CABI has for some years been calling for a greater emphasis on urban design in the professional training and development of those involved in streetscape and highways, and has taken forward work to address this (CABI 2002, CABI 2006). But more may

need to be done. The lead traffic engineer taking forward home zones in Kingston stated in a revealing comment that "in engineering, we are not always pro children and young people".

One urgent and important urban design question that needs to be answered is how successful the various 'watered-down' versions of home zones are in opening up street space for social use. The Mayor of London's Tomorrow's Suburbs Best Practice Guide discusses both home zones and 'Streets-for-People,' which it says is a "broader approach". Having described both home zones and Streets-for-People as "ways of 'reclaiming' local streets from domination by traffic, and of restoring safety and peace to residential areas", it states that "Streets-for-People schemes are less intensive than Home Zones, but aim to cover wider areas and create networks of safe and convenient pedestrian routes. They may be more appropriate in many suburban areas" (GLA 2006a). However, evidence is mixed about the impact of conventional 20mph zones on children's mobility and street



A DIY street: Mina Road, Ashley Vale, Bristol

activity (Children & Traffic Coalition 2002). Outdoor play expert Rob Wheway, a longstanding advocate of the benefits of tackling residential traffic, believes that vehicle speeds need to be much lower than 20mph before street play is viable - perhaps as low as 8mph (The Guardian, 6 December 2006; see also Wheway and Millward 1997). The speeds achieved by Challenge schemes suggest this may be a tall order: to recap, while around half reduced average speeds to between 10 and 15mph, only three managed to get speeds below this.

Another way forward is literally to look beyond the street for opportunities to open up nearby space for play. Many neighbourhoods have pockets of public space that might well be reclaimed for play on a formal or informal basis, as Windus Walk and Ealing's small public space show. In the report reviewing its experience with Lupton Street, Camden talks of the value of taking "a holistic view and the development of public space proposals as well as more conventional traffic engineering solutions" (Camden LB 2005 p338). This move is attractive, but not without its downside. One of the most valuable assets of the home street as a play space is its proximity to home, a characteristic that is quickly lost even over distances of a few metres. Likewise, one of the challenges in taking forward highways projects is the large number of public agencies who need to be involved, so introducing yet more departments to the process is not going to make progress any easier. Finally, as Postbox Square in Brent shows, proposals to change neighbourhood amenity spaces can be just as controversial and problematic as proposals to redesign streets themselves.

Children's policy and public health policy are not yet major influences on activity

Recent years have seen a radical restructuring of children's services through the Government's Every Child Matters agenda, which places great emphasis on a holistic approach to outcomes for children. At the same time there has been a growing focus on child health and especially child obesity. However, this evaluation found no evidence from any schemes of significant links with children's policy or public health policy.

Given the long gestation periods of street projects, it may be too soon for this to appear. Nonetheless the absence of any evidence of an influence even from the HZfL schemes shows the problems in turning aspirational statements of policy into meaningful change on the ground in the built environment. The work of the Mayor's Office's Children and Young People's Unit shows the potential for a child-focused agency to develop child-friendly initiatives in the public realm, although even here the work so far has focused on play areas, parks and other open spaces (GLA 2006b) and has yet to engage strongly with highways issues.

The impact of involving children is not yet clear, but there are clear benefits when adults act effectively on their behalf. Those supporting the development of home zones emphasise the value of involving children and young people alongside others as part of a sound participative process. For instance, a DfT good practice leaflet states that children and young people need to be involved, saying that they "can bring an entirely different perspective to a project. They give an insight into what is important for young people. They are key users of new facilities, and their wishes need to be addressed. Their direct involvement can also help them to develop a sense of ownership of the scheme" (DfT 2002).

Children and young people's participation has been a firm principle for those advocating for children's needs, rights and entitlements in a range of service contexts. However, this evaluation has not found good evidence either way about the impact of children's involvement on completed schemes.

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the extent and impact of children's participation from the published reports and evaluations, due to the small number of schemes examined and the limitations on this evaluation. As the DfT good practice leaflet cited above argues, it is likely that involving children and young people will help adults to see why opening up streets for social use might matter to them. Surveys and consultations consistently show that most children are keen to play out more (Cole-Hamilton et al 2002; Children's Society 2006). Where children and young people play a part, they are likely to feel more ownership in the

outcomes. Their involvement should also help to lay the foundations for the good community relations that are a feature of successful home zones, and to dispel adult fears and anxieties about them.

Equally, it is clear that children do not take part in the most influential consultation processes for schemes, such as the residents' consultations that typically decide whether or not schemes go forward and the design decisions about such issues as the siting of shared surface areas, road closures or traffic calming measures. What is more, children's views - like those of adults - are limited by their life experiences. If those experiences do not extend to playing in the street they may find it hard to do more than express a general wish for this. Adult advocacy and expertise grounded in good evidence about what works in making streets more child-friendly has been shown to be effective.

This is most evident in new housing developments, where typically there is no one to involve.

This evaluation has had limited opportunity to explore the value of involving children in symbolic projects like posters, mosaics and other works of public art. The DfT Challenge report states that "the provision of art and facilities for children, women and older people has been particularly successful in support of the physical changes. Authorities need to consider the opportunities for such initiatives." The Ealing and Windus schemes illustrate the value of artwork (by children or otherwise) in creating a sense of place in a neighbourhood.

However, questions remain about how central such projects are to the creation of more child-friendly streets. It is noteworthy that public artwork is by no means a universal feature of continental home zones.



Hopscotch artwork in Windus Walk

Conclusions

This evaluation has found that home zones enjoy support across many public policy areas, and completed schemes are proving popular. The experience of those residents and local advocates involved in the HZfL project shows that the home zone vision remains popular as well as relevant to public policy. The home zone model is also a proven tool for tackling neighbourhood blight, building cohesive communities and making housing estates into places where families want to live. New developments like Staiths show that the vision of more child-friendly streets is attractive enough to survive market pressures. Nonetheless there is a view amongst some public realm professionals that the idea has had its time in the spotlight, and has now been shown not to be viable or cost-effective.

Two old myths about home zones - they are anti-car, and that street play and cars do not mix - have long been refuted by experiences from Europe, and from the pilot and Challenge schemes (DfT 2006). But two new myths have replaced these: that street play is not wanted in communities, and that people are growing too car-dependent to allow for more flexible street uses. This evaluation shows that these myths too can be rejected.

Other views about the barriers to creating home zones have more substance. Home zone schemes in existing streets are expensive and time-consuming, and make heavy demands on staff resources. What is more, now that their 'experimental phase' is over, rolling them out raises difficult equity and public policy issues.

At first sight, this evaluation would reinforce the assessment the home zones are now past their sell-by date, given the great difficulties the HZfL project found in progressing schemes. However, if the project's work is placed in a wider context provided by the experience of other home zone schemes, that position looks both partial and premature.

Home zones: the second phase

In a lecture organised by the Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Transport Safety in 2006,

Phil Goodwin (Professor of Transport Policy at UWE's Centre for Transport and Society, coincidentally the same agency that carried out the Southville Bristol evaluation) looked at the way that innovative, radical transport policies sometimes evolve over time. He argued that they follow a path that starts with a rapid build-up of support for the general idea until it is strong enough for it to go ahead. Support then falls off as the detail emerges and the downsides become apparent, before rising again as the benefits appear (Goodwin 2006). Goodwin's examples were road pricing and speed cameras, but this evaluation suggests that the story may be similar for home zones and child-friendly streets.

Adopting Goodwin's story, it might be that we are emerging from the 'difficult years' and beginning to enter a second phase in the development of home zones. The future originally imagined by early champions - of progressive roll-out over much of the existing road network - looks unlikely, at least while something like the current public policy and finance frameworks remain in place. But as that path for making street space more child-friendly closes down, others are opening up.

This evaluation has highlighted three potential 'growth areas' for child-friendly streets: new developments, regeneration areas and 'DIY streets'. Practice is evolving in these first two areas, and the Sustrans project should reveal more about the long-term prospects of low-tech, low-cost street reclaiming initiatives. This project may also point to ways that highway regulatory and maintenance regimes might in effect deregulate certain parts of the existing street network, allowing more flexible uses and changes of use over time. If this deregulation could come about alongside solutions to the equity and funding issues discussed above, and linked to the adoption of more sustainable transport choices, the result could be a powerful bottom-up mechanism for encouraging neighbourhoods to become healthier, stronger and more environmentally responsible: the vision promoted internationally under the banner of 'street reclaiming' (Engwicht 1999).

Were the equity and consensus issues resolved, the door might be opened to much wider adoption

of the home zone vision. Arguing from his experience in marketing and sales, Wayne Hemingway claims that this is desirable if not essential if the goal of creating more child-friendly neighbourhoods is to spread:

What's tended to happen is they've done home zones on streets that are quite lower end. And I always believe that if you want to market something you go to the high end.

It's very hard for Councils to take it on because it goes against the principles of what the whole thing's about. It's very difficult. But it's one of the things that I just know: you start with aspiration and it gradually comes down.

Wayne Hemingway

Learning from Europe (again)

The original inspiration for home zones came from the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and other largely Northern European countries. These countries have most strongly influenced our practical ideas about design and implementation. The popularity of the Staiths scheme and its success in the market shows that the cultural attitudes between the UK and some other European countries may be more similar than we think. Which means those countries may have a lot to teach the UK, in street design and beyond.

Why do the planning systems in these countries appear to be more effective in producing child- and family- friendly residential neighbourhoods? Wayne Hemingway argues that planners in many countries are better equipped in urban design and thus able to have a greater impact on housing.

They've also got a powerful design-led planning system [in some European countries]. They've got the idea of visual beauty and life. They've got good designers working in planning departments.

Wayne Hemingway.

It may be that structural and policy differences play a part, as well as differences in professional competences and training. It would be valuable to explore the extent to which planning systems,

structures and processes in other countries explicitly address child-friendliness in the public realm. For instance in Norway, municipalities are required to have in post an official who advocates for children and young people in planning matters (Wilhjelm 1995). In the UK, it is striking that the list of statutory consultees for planning purposes embraces a large number of stakeholder groups and vested interests, including those representing the natural environment, heritage, sport and business - yet no-one speaks on behalf on children and families.

Prospects for home zones in London

The special circumstances of London as a region present both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, streetspace is at a premium compared to almost anywhere else in the UK. On the other, the child population is growing and public transport is improving. Overall there are grounds for optimism.

The Mayor of London's strong regional planning function, with the Children and Young People's Unit acting as an influential advocate, has already influenced the capital's planning policies on public space through its draft supplementary planning guidance on play and informal recreation (GLA 2006b) and there is no reason why this should not extend to streetspace in future.

Home zones, health, sustainability and community cohesion: a long-term perspective

In theory, there are natural connections between home zones and the promotion of healthier, more sustainable lifestyles. In practice there has been little evidence that schemes have dramatically reduced levels of car use or ownership, or promoted walking or cycling, except possibly at the margins (Centre for Transport & Society 2006 p3). However, this conclusion may be premature: home zones may well support physical activity and sustainability most effectively through influencing the travel choices and habits of children for the rest of their lives, rather than those of the adults currently living in them. The argument is speculative, but compelling, and is perhaps best put in its negative

form: how likely is it that children with no experience of walking or cycling independently will choose to do so when they grow up? A similar argument can be run in respect of the links between physical activity, or neighbourliness, and children's experiences in their everyday lives.

The housing that we are building now will remain in place for the foreseeable future. Taking the long-term perspective implied by policy considerations like climate change and public health, home zones and child-friendly streets remain the best prospect that today's children and young people will be offered the kind of neighbourhoods that will encourage them to be healthy, responsible, environmentally aware citizens of towns and cities, now and in the future.



Lupton Street, Camden, before and after implementation of the home zone



Interviewees

HZfL project

Brent	Josie Warshaw	Brent Eleven Streets
Brent	David Booth	Brent Eleven Streets
Brent	Richard Lewis	LB Brent
Hillingdon	Lindsay Bliss	LB Hillingdon
Lewisham	Ian Plowright	LB Lewisham
Lewisham	Julia Farr	New Cross New Deal for Communities
Lewisham	Tim Hogan	LB Lewisham
Sutton	Jack Hamilton	South Sutton Neighbourhood Association
Westminster	Manny Hothi	Queen's Park Neighbourhood Forum
Westminster	Noreen O'Neill	Queen's Park Neighbourhood Forum
Westminster	Bob Jackson	Peter Brett Associates
Westminster	Salim Vohra	Peter Brett Associates

Other home zones

Ealing	Lisa Hall	Five Roads Forum, Ealing
Ealing	Charmian Boyd	Five Roads Forum, Ealing
Ealing	Kim Tompsett	Five Roads Forum, Ealing
Gateshead Staiths	Wayne Hemingway	hemingwaydesign
Hackney Windus	Amy Erickson	Windus Streets for People
Kingston	Jalal Sobbohi	RB Kingston upon Thames
Lambeth Holmewood	Robin Russell-Pavier	Holmewood Neighbourhood Association
Kings Cross Central	Lucy Musgrave	General Public Agency

Other interviewees

John Barrell	Jacobs Consultancy
Mike Biddulph	Cardiff University
Phil Jones	Phil Jones Associates
Peter Lipman	Sustrans
Jonathon Sawyer	Bristol City Council

HZfL advisory group members

Linda Beard	Transport 2000
Hester Brown	Living Streets
Adrian Voce	Children's Play Council / Play England
Sarah Parry-Jones	Sustrans
Clive Fox	Groundwork
Safia Noor	GLA Children & Young People's Unit
Alan Sutton	Playing-Up Consultancy
Amy Erickson	Windus Streets for People
Robin Russell-Pavier	Holmewood Neighbourhood Association
Lisa Hall	Five Roads Forum

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www.londonplay.org.uk

Home Zones for London is a London Play project helping communities across the capital develop child friendly streets.

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