13. Security

13.1 General

Crime and the fear of crime are major social problems that affect all areas, and many studies suggest that housing layout design can play a part in minimising risks. Whilst there are many advantages in providing more vehicular access to an estate, and making it more permeable for pedestrians and cyclists, it does however, provide offenders with escape routes and a level of anonymity as they become indistinguishable from legitimate users.

The security of property, private areas, vehicles, and personal movement is now a major issue for residents and must be a primary concern in layout design. Security will be enhanced by:

Figure 25 - Natural surveillance

- Designing to provide 'natural' surveillance of roads, footpaths/cyclepaths play areas and parking areas from adjacent properties

- Providing adequate levels of estate lighting;

- Avoiding enclosed spaces, blind spots' or high-risk areas of shade in the layout;

- Using appropriate landscaping; e.g. thorny/prickly species against walls and fences to deter intruders;

- Include features, at the entrance to estate roads, such as changes in colour, texture, width and materials to create a symbolic barrier giving the area beyond an impression of a neighbourhood environment;

- Designing footpath links that are short and as open as possible with no hidden corners;

- Designing groups of houses as identifiable elements where local access predominates and extraneous movement by vehicle and on foot is minimised or precluded.

The last principle above complements other relating to vehicle flows and speeds. However, it can sometimes conflict with the principle of providing convenient and direct access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists with residential areas.

One common instance of this conflict relates to the practice of connecting cul-de-sac heads with pedestrian/cycle routes. These links can be beneficial to pedestrian and cyclists where the routes along the road network would be indirect and inconvenient. They can also provide for emergency access where appropriate. Such links are sometimes perceived by residents and police as reducing security by providing 'escape routes' and in many areas residents ask for such links to be closed, however where dwellings are orientated to overlook the links these problems can be reduced or eliminated.

Wherever possible car parking should be provided within the curtilages of dwellings, but where this is not practical, they should be close to the owners property and overlooked.

Where communal car parking is provided it must not be remote, unsupervised or out of sight of the building occupiers, otherwise the vehicle owners will not use it. They will choose to park on the access road causing obstruction and probable damage to landscaped areas and verges.

When designing the landscape for communal car parks, care should be taken not to obstruct the natural surveillance from buildings, and public areas.

Early consultation with crime prevention officers of the police will identify the crime potential with regard to specific development proposals, and hence the risk associated with this and other layout features. Careful design will be

required to overcome the perceived disbenefits with regard to security and produce safe, convenient and attractive pedestrian and cycle links.

Developers should be aware of the joint 'Secure by Design' initiative by the Local Authority and the Police, and the benefits obtained from it. Details and advice can be obtained from the Police Architectural Liaison Officer.