



Roads: home zones

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This Note describes the introduction of home zones.

Home Zones are a form of shared space scheme. They consist of residential streets in which the road space is shared between motor vehicles and other road users, but with the emphasis on those who walk and cycle and on children. The aim is to change the way that streets are used and to improve the quality of life in residential streets by making them places for people, not just for traffic. Changes to the layout of the street should emphasise this change of use, so that motorists perceive that they should give priority to other road users.

There is a [website](#) that gives information on schemes in England, the Netherlands and Germany. A [list of current schemes](#) is given in Hansard from October 2007.

Information on other roads-related issues can be found on the [Roads Topical Page](#) of the Parliament website.

Contents

1	Background	2
2	Legislation and guidance	2
3	Pilot schemes	4
4	Funding	5

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1 Background

Home zones originated in the Netherlands and are now widespread in many parts of Europe. They aim to improve the quality of life in residential areas in towns and cities by reducing the impact of traffic. They have three particular characteristics: the speed limit is particularly low – 10 mph or less; the streets are specially designed to slow down any traffic; and pedestrians have priority rather than vehicles.

Home zones were first suggested in the UK in the 1980s as a low-cost measure to reduce casualties amongst young children in residential areas and to allow them to play outside in safety. The idea of home zones was backed by the Children's Play Council;¹ Transport 2000;² the [Child Accident Prevention Trust](#); [Friends of the Earth](#); and the [Pedestrians' Association](#).³

The problem with introducing home zones in the UK was that local authorities did not have the power to introduce their particular features. For example, authorities could set up 20 mph traffic zones and install traffic calming measures to reduce the speed of traffic by making a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), but they could not introduce 10 mph speed limits. Further, authorities could not give pedestrians priority on a particular street: pedestrians only have priority on pedestrian crossings.⁴ Pedestrians do enjoy priority on pedestrianised streets but this is not a legal right, merely a consequence of reducing the number of vehicles using the street. The closest equivalent to a home zone in the UK was a 'play street' which could be set up under section 29 of the [Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984](#).

2 Legislation and guidance

In July 1998 the new Labour Government published its first transport White Paper which looked favourably on the idea of extending home zones across the country:

'Home zones' have been developed in a number of European countries and involve even lower traffic speeds, more pedestrianised areas and design features that emphasise the change in priority to pedestrians and cyclists. They could prove to be a valuable tool in improving the places where people live and children play.

With good design many of the objectives of home zones could be achieved within existing legislation. We will welcome proposals by, and work with, local authorities that wish to pilot the idea.⁵

At the time it was not considered that further legislation was necessary to lower speed limits to 10 mph. The Department for Transport (then the DETR) considered that traffic calming measures could be introduced to reduce traffic speeds below 20 mph and to create the change in emphasis that is part of the home zone concept.⁶ Despite this, the government did introduce legislative provisions which became section 268 of the [Transport Act 2000](#). The then Minister for Transport, Keith Hill, said in the House:

Amendment No. 121 will give legal status to the concepts of quiet lanes and home zones, by enabling local traffic authorities to designate them. It will then give the

¹ now the [National Children's Bureau](#)

² now the [Campaign for Better Transport](#)

³ now Living Streets

⁴ Regulations 25 and 26 of the [Zebra, Pelican and Puffin Pedestrian Crossings Regulations and General Directions 1997 \(SI 1997/2400\)](#), as amended

⁵ DETR, [A new deal for transport: better for everyone](#), Cm 3950, July 1998, paras 3.115-3.116

⁶ [HC Deb 11 February 1998, c342](#)

appropriate national authority power to make regulations that, in turn, will enable local traffic authorities to make two new types of order in quiet lanes and home zones: use orders and speed orders. The appropriate national authorities are the Secretary of State in England and the National Assembly for Wales.

Use orders will be particularly valuable in home zones, because they will give legal status to uses of the road for purposes other than the traditional one of "passing and repassing" - for example, purposes such as children's play, or simply standing around and talking. Safeguards will ensure that rights of passage, and access to premises, are protected.

Speed orders will enable the local traffic authority to introduce measures in individual quiet lanes and home zones to reduce traffic speeds below levels specified in the orders.

The amendment does not provide for pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders to be given formal precedence over motor vehicles, which was included in the Liberal Democrat amendment. The Government have thought carefully about that and I am glad to say that we are entirely at one with the Liberal Democrats on the objective, but we believe that it can be achieved within the existing law. We would not want to duplicate existing provisions.⁷

Section 268 of the 2000 Act makes provisions for home zones. Local traffic authorities may designate home zones and make orders about the use of roads and speed reduction measures, subject to regulations made by the Secretary of State.

In August 2001 the government published a consultation paper seeking views on statutory guidance and regulations covering home zones in England,⁸ followed by a further consultation on draft regulations and guidance in August 2004.⁹ The final regulations, the *Quiet Lanes and Home Zones (England) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006/2082)*, came into effect in August 2006. The regulations provide for the making, variation and revocation of designations of roads as quiet lanes or home zones under section 268 of the 2000 Act and of use orders and speed orders in respect of those roads. They require the local traffic authority to give people in the area of the relevant road an opportunity to make representations before a proposal for designation is developed. At least one public meeting must be held. They also require an authority, before designating a road, to consult and to publish details of the designation proposals and consider objections. The regulations also include the power to make use orders and speed orders in respect of designated roads:

- A **use order** permits the road to be used, for as long as may be specified, for a purpose which is communal, social, cultural, spiritual, educational, entertainment or recreational; and
- A **speed order** describes in general terms the measures to be taken to reduce the speed of motor vehicles or cycles below the speed specified in the order.

Several pieces of guidance are also available. The main one is the Department for Transport's circular on the 2006 regulations which explains in more detail how local

⁷ HC Deb 15 November 2000 cc 1039-42

⁸ DTLR, *Home Zones and Quiet Lanes: Consultation on Statutory Guidance and Regulations*, 8 August 2001

⁹ DfT, *Quiet Lanes and Home Zones: Consultation on Draft Statutory Instrument and Statutory Guidance*, 20 August 2004

authorities should go about implementing home zones.¹⁰ There are also traffic advisory leaflets available on public participation in home zones¹¹ and planning and design.¹²

3 Pilot schemes

In January 1999 the Labour Government announced a series of three-year pilot projects. The Transport Minister at the time, Lord Whitty, invited local highway authorities to submit proposals for projects to be included in a three-year monitoring programme to assess which techniques would work best in establishing home zones.¹³ They would be monitored on a 'before and after' basis by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL).¹⁴ Thirty-two bodies, including local authorities, highway authorities and a residents' association, responded with proposals for approximately 50 schemes. Nine sites (eight in England and one in Wales) were selected. These were:

- Ealing, (London), "Five Roads";
- Lambeth, (London), Holmewood;
- Leeds, The Methleys;
- Manchester, Northmoor;
- Monmouthshire, Magor Village;
- Nottingham, Nobel Road;
- Peterborough, New England;
- Plymouth, Morice Town; and
- Sittingbourne, Cavel Way.¹⁵

Examples from Manchester, Monmouthshire, Nottingham and Sittingbourne were used in the traffic advisory leaflets mentioned in the previous section.

In 2006 TRL published its overview of the pilot schemes. Amongst other things, the report concluded that:

On average approximately two thirds of respondents were in favour of home zones; the highest support was in Plymouth where approximately three-quarters approved;

Vehicle speeds were relatively low before the zones were installed and the measures used had the effect of reducing speeds by between 2 and 9 mph to a level acceptable for a 20 mph speed limit; further measures would be required to reduce speeds below 10 mph on all streets;

Traffic flows in the areas were significantly reduced after the introduction of the zones with much of the change attributable to redistribution of traffic;

¹⁰ DfT, *The Quiet Lanes and Home Zones (England) Regulations 2006* (DfT circular 02/06), 9 August 2006

¹¹ DfT, *Home zones – public participation* (Traffic Advisory Leaflet TAL 8/02), December 2002

¹² DfT, *Home zones – planning and design* (Traffic Advisory Leaflet TAL 10/01), December 2001

¹³ DETR press notice, "Whitty monitors local authorities over quality streets", 19 January 1998

¹⁴ DETR press notice, "UK's first home zone study starts", 15 June 1999

¹⁵ DETR press notice, "Lord Whitty announces nine home zone sites", 4 August 1999; there were also four in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland

Respondents in some of the pilot areas (e.g. Manchester, Plymouth, Ealing, Leeds) regarding parking within the zone as a problem; and

Measured traffic noise in Leeds showed a slight reduction (though this was not perceived by residents); air quality data for benzene and nitrogen dioxide showed little change.¹⁶

4 Funding

Home zones are more expensive to introduce than a 20 mph speed limit and no extra funds were originally available to local authorities wishing to introduce such areas. There was no money ring-fenced for the schemes and local authorities had to find the funds themselves; in some cases this was achieved by the inclusion of home zones in Local Transport Plans (LTPs).¹⁷

The then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, announced in April 2001 that the government intended to accelerate the growth of home zones in England, by establishing a £30 million challenge fund. Bids had to be submitted by 3 October 2001 and 61 schemes were accepted, of which 59 were implemented. Agreed expenditure on schemes was disbursed as grants, in arrears, on production of quarterly invoices and funding was available for the three financial years to 2005. Details were given about the performance of the fund in 2006:

Through the one-off Home Zones Challenge programme, a total of £30 million funding was allocated to individual schemes in England for the period 2001–05. This fund was not based on yearly allocations. Of the 61 schemes selected for funding, 59 have been implemented while, as a result of public votes, two were not taken beyond the public consultation stage. Local authorities also implemented a number of other home zones using their own resources or single capital pot resources supported by Government. The Department does not have a comprehensive return listing the number of schemes or their total cost. However, local authority returns indicate that £12.6 million of the capital allocations, made available by the Department for authorities to implement small schemes according to their priorities and policies, has been spent on home zones. The breakdown is £1.9 million in 2001–02, £2.8 million in 2002–03, £2.5 million in 2003–04, £3.6 million in 2004–05 and an estimated £1.8 million in 2005–06.¹⁸

¹⁶ TRL, *Pilot home zone schemes: summary of the schemes* (TRL report 654), 2006, p76

¹⁷ [HC Deb 3 July 2001, cc122-23W](#)

¹⁸ [HC Deb 19 January 2006, cc1477-78W](#)