

## Policy D8 Public realm

Development Plans and development proposals should:

- A encourage and explore opportunities to create new public realm where appropriate
- B ensure the public realm is well-designed, safe, accessible, inclusive, attractive, well-connected, related to the local and historic context, and easy to understand, service and maintain. Landscape treatment, planting, street furniture and surface materials should be of good quality, fit-for-purpose, durable and sustainable. Lighting, including for advertisements, should be carefully considered and well-designed in order to minimise intrusive lighting infrastructure and reduce light pollution
- C maximise the contribution that the public realm makes to encourage active travel and ensure its design discourages travel by car and excessive on-street parking, which can obstruct people's safe enjoyment of the space. This includes design that reduces the impact of traffic noise and encourages appropriate vehicle speeds
- D be based on an understanding of how the public realm in an area functions and creates a sense of place during different times of the day and night, days of the week and times of the year. In particular, they should demonstrate an understanding of how people use the public realm, and the types, location and relationship between public spaces in an area, identifying where there are deficits for certain activities, or barriers to movement that create severance for pedestrians and cyclists
- E ensure both the movement function of the public realm and its function as a place are provided for and that the balance of space and time given to each reflects the individual characteristics of the area. The priority modes of travel for the area should be identified and catered for, as appropriate. Desire lines for people walking and cycling should be a particular focus, including the placement of street crossings, which should be regular, convenient and accessible
- F ensure there is a mutually supportive relationship between the space, surrounding buildings and their uses, so that the public realm enhances the amenity and function of buildings and the design of buildings contributes to a vibrant public realm

- G ensure buildings are of a design that activates and defines the public realm, and provides natural surveillance. Consideration should also be given to the local microclimate created by buildings, and the impact of service entrances and facades on the public realm
- H ensure appropriate management and maintenance arrangements are in place for the public realm, which maximise public access and minimise rules governing the space to those required for its safe management in accordance with the Public London Charter
- I incorporate green infrastructure such as street trees and other vegetation into the public realm to support rainwater management through sustainable drainage, reduce exposure to air pollution, moderate surface and air temperature and increase biodiversity
- J ensure that appropriate shade, shelter, seating and, where possible, areas of direct sunlight are provided, with other microclimatic considerations, including temperature and wind, taken into account in order to encourage people to spend time in a place
- K ensure that street clutter, including street furniture that is poorly located, unsightly, in poor condition or without a clear function is removed, to ensure that pedestrian amenity is improved. Consideration should be given to the use, design and location of street furniture so that it complements the use and function of the space. Applications which seek to introduce unnecessary street furniture should be refused
- L explore opportunities for innovative approaches to improving the public realm such as open street events and Play Streets
- M create an engaging public realm for people of all ages, with opportunities for social activities, formal and informal play and social interaction during the daytime, evening and at night. This should include identifying opportunities for the meanwhile use of sites in early phases of development to create temporary public realm
- N ensure that any on-street parking is designed so that it is not dominant or continuous, and that there is space for green infrastructure as well as cycle parking in the carriageway. Parking should not obstruct pedestrian lines
- O ensure the provision and future management of free drinking water at appropriate locations in the new or redeveloped public realm.

- 3.8.1 The **public realm** includes all the publicly-accessible space between buildings, whether public or privately owned, from alleyways and streets to squares and open spaces, including the Thames and London's waterways. Some internal or elevated spaces can also be considered as part of the public realm, such as markets, shopping malls, sky gardens, viewing platforms, museums or station concourses. Such forms of public realm are particularly relevant in areas of higher density.
- 3.8.2 The quality of the public realm has a significant influence on quality of life because it affects people's sense of place, security and belonging, as well as having an influence on a range of health and social factors. For this reason, the public realm, and the buildings that frame those spaces, should be attractive, accessible, designed for people and contribute to the highest possible standards of comfort, good acoustic design, security and ease of movement. Higher levels of comfort should be sought in places where people will wish to sit, play, relax, meet, and dwell outside compared to other parts of the public realm that are primarily used for movement. As London's population grows, the demands on London's public realm to accommodate a greater **variety and intensity of uses** will increase. It is particularly important to recognise these demands in higher density development.
- 3.8.3 The public realm should be seen as a series of **connected routes and spaces** that help to define the character of a place. Around eighty per cent of public realm in London is in the form of streets and roads. A small proportion (less than eight per cent) of these have the primary purpose of moving large numbers of vehicles through them, while most are intended to be quiet residential streets used for play, recreation and local access. The remaining streets are places which function as key centres for leisure, shopping, culture, social interaction and accessing services and employment, such as high streets or public squares.
- 3.8.4 The specific balance between the different functions of any one space, such as its place-based activities, its function to facilitate movement and its ability to accommodate different uses of the kerbside, should be at the heart of how the space is designed and managed. The Mayor's **Healthy Streets Approach** explains how the design and management of streets can support a wide range of activities in the public realm as well as encourage and facilitate a shift to active travel.
- 3.8.5 **Pedestrian crossings** should be accessible and provide tactile paving and associated dropped kerbs or level access in accordance with national guidance.
- 3.8.6 Places should be distinctive, attractive and of the highest quality, allowing people to meet, congregate and socialise, as well as providing opportunity for quiet enjoyment. Public realm is **valuable for London's cultural activity**,

providing a stage for informal and everyday culture and for organised cultural activity. The opportunity to incorporate these uses should be identified and facilitated through community engagement, careful design and good acoustic design. Careful consideration is needed of the benefits of using the public realm for particular events and the impact of the events on the use and enjoyment of the space by the public.

- 3.8.7 **Legibility and signposting** make an important contribution to whether people feel comfortable in a place, and are able to understand it and navigate their way around. Transport for London's Streets Toolkit provides detailed design guidance for creating high quality streets and public spaces.
- 3.8.8 Even when a development does not include the creation of new public realm it will have an **impact on neighbouring public realm**. Therefore, any impact or change to the conditions, use or nature of existing public space brought about by a development should meet the requirements of this policy.
- 3.8.9 The effective **management and ongoing maintenance** of public realm should be a key consideration in the design of places and secured through the planning system where appropriate. Whether publicly or privately owned, public realm should be open, free to use and offer the highest level of public access. These spaces should only have rules restricting the behaviour of the public that are considered essential for safe management of the space. The Mayor will develop a 'Public London Charter' which will set out the rights and responsibilities for the users, owners and managers of public spaces irrespective of land ownership. The rules and restrictions on public access and behaviour covering all new or redeveloped public space and its management should be in accordance with the Public London Charter, and this requirement should be secured through legal agreement or planning condition.
- 3.8.10 The **lighting** of the public realm needs careful consideration to ensure it is appropriate to address safety and security issues, and make night-time activity areas and access routes welcoming and safe, while also minimising light pollution.
- 3.8.11 The provision of accessible **free drinking water** fountains helps improve public health, reduces waste from single-use plastic bottles and supports the circular economy through the use of reusable water bottles. Free drinking water fountains that can both refill water bottles directly and be drunk from should be provided in appropriate locations in new or redeveloped public realm. Appropriate locations for these water fountains should be identified by boroughs during the planning process. These locations include areas with high levels of pedestrian activity, such as in town centres and inside shopping malls, as well as areas of the public realm used for play, exercise and relaxing, such