



Naked Streets

Introduction

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If you Google Naked Streets there are some surprising results!
Hopefully you would navigate to the engineering content and in which case a recurring name appears – Hans Monderman and Drachten in the Netherlands

Concept

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Monderman observed that “behaviour in traffic is more positively affected by the built environment of the public space than it is by conventional traffic control devices and regulations.”

The solution gets rid of traffic restrictions, traffic signs, pedestrian guard railings and create a shared space for pedestrians and motorists. Or as one commentator put it ‘by removing them and creating a situation that feels “unsafe” people are more alert and there are fewer accidents.’

First UK example

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Kensington High Street was the first major example in the UK where Monderman’s principles were put into effect but as a Streetscape enhancement.

One of its most contentious features at the time was also its most successful.



Crossing detail b4

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Getting rid of almost all pedestrian guard railings and the cattle corrals on central islands was considered madness by some, risky by many and there were predictions of increased accidents.

Crossing detail after

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The result was a tour de force where less is more and the pedestrian and the motorist are both winners. The Sunday Times reported 'accidents falling by 44% over two years'.

The latest iteration at Oxford Circus

Oxford Circus - London

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has seen one of the nastiest pedestrian experiences in Europe been transformed by the removal of all guard rails and the introduction of a 'Tokyo' style diagonal crossing pattern.

In reality, neither Kensington High Street nor Oxford Circus are true examples of naked streets. For this we need to look to the south coast and Brighton.

New Road Brighton

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The Brighton scheme is a shared surface where the boundaries between road and pedestrian walkways are blurred, signs and lines in the main are removed yet traffic, parking and pedestrian activity is all taking place as normal.



Ashford in Kent has also introduced Naked Streets which the press reported as 'council to cut crashes with naked streets' and back in London,

Exhibition Road

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work is progressing on the £25M project to transform Exhibition Road into a naked street.

As this is Parkex and we are interested in parking, we need to understand how parking control and enforcement sits alongside such schemes.

Exhibition Road - parking

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Both at Brighton and in London, parking is an integral part of the plan. The roads have a restricted zone status with special signs approval from the DfT to dispense with conventional lines and to use minimal signage. It works.

This principle is not just restricted to high profile civic enhancements but can be seen in ordinary streets the length and breadth of the country. In Glasgow for example the western part of the inner city is a restricted zone.

Leeds - restricted zone sign

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It seems these schemes work in practice – perhaps then it is time to reconsider our 50 year experiment of using coloured road markings to indicate parking, waiting and loading restrictions?

It seems to work in Europe and America and there is no evidence that their motorists are any better or more law abiding than those in the UK.



USA sign

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The increase in restricted zones and naked streets must call into question our long term reliance on the yellow line and parking place marking. Does it have a long term future?

Huge amounts of money could be saved from council budgets if the use of lining was reduced or eliminated altogether.

Parking adjudications might be easier – certainly less technicalities to get right or wrong.

From this

K&C DYL

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To this

Lewes bollard

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Is it time for the radical review of established traffic and parking engineering thinking by local authorities and to put into wider practice the concept of naked streets?

Is it also time for the DfT to implement the radical review of the TSRGD which has long been awaited and to revisit the need for lining restriction in the UK particularly in the light of the need to cut the national deficit?
