

Why are courtesy crossings not more widespread? This month we look at those in Shrewsbury, where physical alterations to the carriageway, instead of traffic orders, have encouraged people to drive with consideration.

Design notes

Consider the normal paraphernalia associated with a simple controlled pedestrian crossing. There are regulatory signs to enforce the traffic regulation orders, with zig-zag lines, pedestrian signals and associated traffic signals, signal control boxes poised as an obstruction to pedestrians – plus ugly guard rails.

Then reflect on the measures taken in Shrewsbury and a few other locations that achieve the same objective – allowing people to cross a road in safety – but with a series of informal crossings. These can be put in place without traffic orders and, therefore, without all the regulatory signs, lines and equipment needed to enforce them.

Shrewsbury's scheme came about 10 years ago, when it was selected

ticular pedestrian desire line and/or significant architectural feature so, for example, a crossing will be aligned with the entrance doors of an important building. The total effect is one of harmony. It also demonstrates that a traffic scheme can embrace local architectural character and reinforce it, rather than merely paying lip service to it.

The crossing places have a simple design of York stone sets extending between the footway's tactile paving. Tactile surfaces are restricted to the paving at the edge of the footway, and are cut out in a matching York stone. Such attention to detail is of benefit to people with disabilities, and the absence of zig-zag lines appears to make no difference to safety. Neither does the absence of guard railing, leading one to ques-



Shrewd Shrewsbury: The town was chosen to take part in a 'historic core pilot' scheme, and *right*, the crossings have been created using unobtrusive materials and are popular with locals

to participate in the 'historic core zone' pilot promoted by the English Historic Towns Forum, with support from the Department for Transport, English Heritage and the Civic Trust. This experimental scheme was promoted by Shropshire County Council and carried out with the full co-operation of the DfT. Its purpose was to reduce street clutter and improve the environment for pedestrians, without reducing safety.

The one-way road chosen lies at the centre of the historic town and is used predominantly by buses during the day.

Key to the scheme's success is that traffic speeds are kept below 20mph by the informal crossings. Drivers have become used to stopping for pedestrians.

The single-direction carriageway was narrowed to a minimum of 3.5 metres by widening the footways. It was surfaced with black basalt sets to act as a continuous 'rumble strip', and footways were surfaced with York stone flags, to echo traditional materials used in the town.

An innovative feature was the integration of pedestrian 'courtesy' crossings with the surrounding streetscene. Unlike most traffic schemes, it was not designed in isolation.

Each of the crossing places has been carefully located to serve a par-

tion it elsewhere. Yellow lines are also absent. The whole street was made a parking restricted zone, so they were not needed.

However, it was still necessary to indicate parking, loading bays and bus stopping places. Changes in materials are used, terminating at informal pedestrian crossings. The necessary statutory signs with loading and parking restrictions are smaller than the normal minimum, but with authorisation from the DfT. They sit on stout oak posts, which also act as guidance and reassurance to pedestrians at the crossings.

This scheme has proved popular, with 57% of those surveyed keen to see further restraint. It has led to a 34% reduction in traffic volume and a 22% reduction in speed and shows that it is possible to improve safety through physical enhancement, rather than Traffic Regulation Orders.

The surprising thing is that, although the scheme has been in existence for some 10 years – and has certainly achieved its environmental objectives, as well as traffic and safety functions – its concepts have not been widely copied.

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