



DESIGNING OUT CRIME

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What is meant by “designing out crime?”

The premises of this paper is that there is a link between design and crime and that careful attention to the planning and building of towns, buildings and housing estates can help reduce crime. Design can also help reduce anti-social behaviour, the fear of crime and improve people's quality of life. What the paper seeks to do is to demonstrate the kinds of framework that are shown to work.

What do we mean by “design” and “crime” in this context and why is it so important?

Crime Prevention Thorough Environmental Design (CPTED) or “designing out crime,” means creating and adapting the physical environment so as to make crime less likely to happen. It is important because criminals do not commit crimes at random; rather they choose one target over another. The environment is a major influence on potential offenders' assessments of the risks they take, the effort they have to expend and the rewards they may achieve. These are all factors in their decisions to offend.

The causes of crime are many and complex. However, fundamentally a crime happens when the following three factors occur at the same time:

- There is a predisposed, motivated and resourceful offender
- That person encounters or engineers a situation that is conducive to crime
- The individual identifies a suitable target when there is either no-one present to prevent the crime, or there are people present who could in some way assist in its commission.

Thus is created the “crime triangle” in which: an offender → meets a conducive situation → meets a target.

Poor design and uninformed management of space help create situations and targets. Move to a situation of good design and informed management and the offender will

either not commit the crime, or will go elsewhere.

How is crime “designed out?”

To design out crime and disorder, context is everything. The practitioner must thoroughly understand an area's particular problems. To do this The Home Office in Britain has produced a series of useful toolkits to help in this process¹. What follows is an illustrative example of how that understanding can be reached. The start can be a simple visual audit of one particular street. Find out what crimes or antisocial behaviour are taking place and how often by using local police or council statistics. Then comes the question what makes this street conducive to crime? We have to think like an offender and thus identify the opportunities that they see. We need to understand how offenders might exploit a location. For instance, if there is a problem with drug addicts, we can anticipate that they will be drawn to areas with recessed doorways in which they can loiter, and skips in which they can dump unwanted items. Street drinkers make use of a covered area such as a porch in which to sit down and front basements in which to defecate. Even small signs of disorder can encourage crime. This is called the 'broken window' syndrome. Neglect in an area leads to a spiral of decline that encourages potential offenders to believe that the authorities and residents do not care and will not impede crime. We have to look out for:

- **Signs of social disorder:** begging; groups of youths loitering; loud music and noise coming from private homes; stray dogs; poorly maintained property with overgrown, rubbish strewn gardens; evidence of public urination or defecation; signs of outdoor sexual activity such as used condoms; public prostitution; calling cards in telephone kiosks and shop windows; people sleeping rough.
- **Signs of physical disorder:** broken or poor street lighting; graffiti; vandalised buildings; derelict, empty or boarded up properties; damaged bus shelters and

telephone kiosks; litter, rubbish and dog dirt; fly tipping; broken windows and damaged doors; abandoned or burnt-out vehicles.

- **Signs of drug and substance abuse:** public drug transactions; a constant stream of traffic in and out of non-commercial premises; discarded cans, bottles, foil, zip bags; discarded roaches, syringes, phials; discarded aerosols, gas canisters.
- **Signs of parking and traffic disorder:** broken traffic lights, damaged, broken or missing street signs and bollards, vehicles parked on the pavement or verges, near junctions, illegally parked lorries for several consecutive days, speeding or reckless driving, driving displays or cruises, cars with loud sound systems.

Once we have established what the issues are and the drivers behind those issues, we need to start designing and managing out those problems. What we are trying to do is to break the crime triangle by forcing upon the potential offender the need for increased effort, increasing the risk that the offender faces and reducing the potential reward. Here are some examples:

- In one area a telephone box much frequented by drug users was simply tied shut with a long rope. The perceived effort to commit the crime was increased.
- In another risks were increased by cutting back hedges to increase surveillance and alleys were either gated or blocked off to reduce escape routes.
- In a third case, graffiti was quickly removed so the offender did not get the satisfaction and thus reward of seeing and exhibiting the damage.

Best practice suggests a well-designed environment has:

- Defined routes, spaces and entrances that allow convenient movement without compromising security.
- A balance of different uses. For example, too many bars and pubs will conflict with retail and residential communities.

- Well-designed security features and a level of human activity which also instils a sense of safety.
- Features designed with ease of management in mind.
- Publicly accessible spaces overlooked by someone so that a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community identity are all created.

How is “Designing out crime” delivered in the UK and does it work?

In the UK the concept is applied by both public and private sector CPTED practitioners. The most comprehensive scheme is the Association of Chief Police Officers’ (ACPO) Secured By Design Scheme (SBD)². This scheme works by allowing CPTED trained police officers or staff to vet new and refurbished buildings and plans for security. Certain elements of the build such as doors or windows will need to meet minimum performance criteria and other factors such as estate layout will be assessed and judged by the police ‘expert’. If the project meets the police criteria it is then granted the police SBD award – this effectively certifies that the police have approved the project as being secure.

The SBD scheme has been evaluated a number of times and shown to be effective. For example the author evaluated crime and fear of crime before and after SBD was applied on a large housing estate in England. The results showed:

- 32% reduction in burglary.
- 16% reduction in car crime.
- 8% reduction in assaults.

In reviewing the quality of life the study showed:

- Before SBD was applied 41% of people were unhappy living in the area.
- After SBD was applied 11% of people were unhappy living there.

Another study sponsored by the Home Office states:

- “Secured by Design estates experience between 54% and 67%

- less crime than equivalent non-SBD estates”.

The SBD scheme is clearly effective and shows definitive evidence that designing out crime works. However SBD is primarily focused on medium to small projects and the police do not typically work with a client for the life of a project. Another example of applying designing out crime that compensates for these areas, is the Safe and Secure Factors methodology developed by Perpetuity.³

Major regeneration projects often take many years to complete. One such example exists in East London where the regeneration of the Greenwich peninsula which includes the redevelopment of the ‘Millennium Dome’ has huge potential to apply design principles. “Meridian Delta” the developer of the site is delivering

- 10,000 new homes
- 343,600 square metres of employment and office space
- 33,750 square metres of retail space

Perpetuity was asked to proactively work with the developer to design crime prevention measures from the start and make it an inherent part of the whole process, from the initial building work right through to the management of the Peninsula once homes and businesses are occupied. Perpetuity has developed a framework to deliver a safe environment which places a responsibility in the following areas:

- The Master Developer is providing leadership and establishing an operational structure. This allows the safe and secure environment to be delivered through the design process, the establishment of a framework for the community, building safely and through effective management of the development.
- Designers who provide an effective response to the issues of crime and anti social behaviour and an environment that is safe to build and use.
- A Community Framework where stakeholders are encouraged to take action that provides social cohesion

through such areas as employment and the skills base within the area.

- **Construction** – ensuring that the build process is incident and injury free.
- **Peninsula Management** – providing effective management and surveillance to combating crime and disorder, providing well kept and maintained public spaces, and keeping a dialogue with the community.

The following Table gives more detail of the factors involved in combating crime and anti social behavior and thus creating a “safe and secure Peninsula.”

“Safe and Secure Factors”

- Area of Responsibility
- Factor
- Explanation
- Master Developer
- Leadership

The provision of leadership in all aspects of Peninsula project to deliver a safe and secure environment.

Land Ownership

Ensuring that arrangements are in place for maintaining a safe and secure perimeter, the establishment of appropriate site security and an operational regime that takes crime and disorder reduction into account.

Clients Brief

Ensuring that an appropriate Clients’ Brief is established for all projects on the site so that the notion of being “safe and secure” is owned by each client.

Contracts

Establishment of appropriate contract arrangements to ensure Safe and Secure Factors are delivered through plot sale agreements, consultancy arrangements and construction appointments.

Peninsula Management

Establishment of a Peninsula Management regime to ensure Safe and Secure Factors are delivered in the operating environment and in liaison with existing Management.

- Design
- Access and movement
- Provision of well defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security

Structure

Structuring of development uses so that different uses do not cause conflict

Surveillance

Ensuring that all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked.

Ownership

A quality of design which promotes a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community identity

Physical protection

Places and constituent elements that include necessary, well-designed security features.

Activity

Places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times.

- Community Framework
- Understand the Offender
- Research into the crime baseline, and the employment and skills of the population
- Education and Skills
- Raising the education and skills of the Peninsula community

Employment

Provision of jobs associated with the construction and end uses

Social cohesion

All residents treated in a similar fashion through tenure and equality of access to a quality environment

Facilities for all

Provision of Peninsula facilities for all residents or facilities accessible from the Peninsula

Peninsula Management

Swift and effective maintenance

A maintenance regime that shows that the Peninsula is cared for and crime is not tolerated

Visible and organized

Visible management and an organized presence provide a sense of wellbeing in response to the fear of crime and anti social behaviour

Community consultation

Dialogue with the community to give and receive feedback on crime and disorder issues

Surveillance

Not only surveillance of the community by CCTV but also maintenance / service / security staff.

Engagement of community services

Engagement to achieve the goal of Safe and Secure best practice across all community services and the establishment of a Police Consultation Group.

Monitor, analyse and respond

Monitoring of crime statistics, analysis and appropriate responses initiated to combat issues as they arise.

These factors are only now being implemented but Perpetuity and their clients believe that if they are handled correctly, they will help deliver a vision for the Peninsula in which a sustainable low crime neighbourhood is created. In this environment residents will more likely believe that it will be a place where:

- ‘People want to live’
- ‘People want to work’
- ‘People want to play’

What next?

Having demonstrated how to design out crime and shown that it works, what next?

One area is the further development of the SBD system. This currently applies to how buildings are designed but there is great opportunity to consider how the companies or public bodies who use those buildings actually manage them either through their own offices or via a third party. Perpetuity are now actively working with the ACPO to design a new certification scheme – Safe and Secure Environments – that will review how security is actually managed as an inherent part of the functioning of companies and other organisations. Private and public sector bodies will then be able to evidence that they are meeting the Safe and Secure Environments criteria, and then achieve certification that they do run a secure company. Embracing both environmental design and management into what has been labelled Crime Prevention Thorough Environmental Design and Management (CPTEDM) has the significant potential to reduce the threat of crime and disorder still further.

Author Details

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1. www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits
2. www.securedbydesign.com
3. Further information on this methodology can be obtained from the author at t.pascoe@perpetuitygroup.com.

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