

# **Streetscape manual**

*Improving the public realm in Hertsmere's  
shopping centres*

Adopted July 2012

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# 1. The purpose of this manual.

The purpose of this manual is to help deliver improvements to the quality of Hertsmere's town, district and shopping centres, by providing practical, local guidance for those responsible for the different parts of the public realm. Improvements to these areas enhance local civic pride and can attract people and new businesses into these centres, therefore helping to improve the overall vitality of the centre.

Hertsmere Borough Council continues to support improvements to its town and district centres and has produced Part F on Shop Fronts of the Planning and Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This Part F aims to improve the overall appearance of shop fronts and associated signage within the Borough and should be read in conjunction with this manual as shop fronts make a significant contribution to improving the overall appearance of the streetscape.

## 1.1 Why is this manual needed?

One of the key objectives in the Council's *Corporate Plan* (2009-2013) is to protect and enhance our street scene. Many different stakeholders manage or influence Hertsmere's town, district and larger neighbourhood shopping centres but no clear guidance exists which focuses on the public realm within commercial centres across the Borough.

Hertsmere's planning department's jurisdiction over the improvement of the town and district centres, through its Local Plan and emerging Local Development Framework is limited to regulating development which requires planning permission or advertisement consent. *Urban Transport Plans*, prepared by Hertfordshire County Council, do not cover all of the borough's towns, and are generally concerned with transport provision and short, medium and long-term strategies to shape travel patterns. The remaining areas are covered by the County Council's planned programme. *Roads in Hertfordshire* provides a framework of technical advice and standards within which alterations and additions to the highway should be constructed. This document encourages an innovative approach to highway design, in line with the principles set out in Hertfordshire's 'Building Futures', to promote sustainable development.

It is therefore important to provide local streetscape guidance which reflects the Council's aspirations for its shopping areas and which can be taken into account when town centre development, improvement and regeneration schemes and associated funding opportunities come forward.

## 1.2 Who should use the manual?

This manual should be read by anyone who has an interest in improving the Borough's town and district centres. In particular this manual should be read by:

- Agencies that undertake works to any part of the streetscape, including Hertsmere Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and various statutory undertakers
- Developers and others involved in the planning process or who are party to S106 and S278 agreements or a future Community Infrastructure Levy involving improvements to the public realm.
- Hertsmere's town and parish councils.
- Local residents who want to shape the way the streetscape looks by reporting unnecessary clutter and making suggestions that would enhance the streetscape.
- Hertsmere's local associations and other community groups who have a valuable contribution to make by promoting and supporting streetscape improvements.

## 1.3 The status of this document

This document is intended to aid and guide the groups listed above, to ensure that proposals which impact on the streetscape reflect the Council's aspirations for improving the public realm and can be delivered in a co-ordinated way.

The Planning and Building Control Unit at Hertsmere Borough Council have prepared this document, in association and cooperation with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) (Hertfordshire Highways, the Highway Authority is part of HCC known as 'Highway Authority' in this document). It is the intention that the manual will be relevant to decisions taken under both planning and highways legislation and that it should be a 'living' document, to be reviewed and updated as regularly as possible. Continued feedback from interested parties will therefore be welcomed by the Council.

The observations and guidance found in this Streetscape Manual should be used to inform improvement schemes designed by agencies affecting the public realm. It should also be regarded as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and consideration of prior notifications and will guide the negotiation and use of S106/S278 funds and any Community Infrastructure Levy collected from developers.

## 1.4 Contact details

Should you have any questions about this document, please contact the Planning Policy and Transport Team at Hertsmere Borough Council on telephone 0208 207 7509, or email [local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk](mailto:local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk).

## 2. Management: Working in partnership

Numerous agencies are responsible for the different parts that make up the streetscape and the Borough's centres are considered to be too small to justify the employment of dedicated town centre managers. This means that close partnership working must be formalised in the future in order to effectively coordinate the future development of the public realm within Hertsmere's town and district centres.

### *2.1 Who exactly is responsible for what in the streetscape?*

Responsibilities for different parts of the public realm vary across the Borough due, in part to the different functions of parish and town councils. The following provides a general indication of roles and responsibilities, which often differ due to ownership and other circumstances. This is also not an exhaustive list and the role of public authorities is generally limited to adopted highway land.

#### **Hertfordshire County Council / Highway Authority**

- Paving
- Lighting columns
- Railings and bollards
- Road and traffic signs
- Street trees
- Cycle parking
- Bus shelters

#### **Hertsmere Borough Council**

- Litter bins
- Benches, depending on the ownership
- Parking control signs, 'finger' posting, and street signs
- Pay and display machines
- Verge maintenance, such as grass cutting
- Public conveniences
- Planters
- Notice boards and information points
- Public art

#### **Parish and Town Councils**

- Hanging baskets
- Benches and some phone boxes
- Village greens
- Notice boards and information points
- Public art
- War memorials

**Private land owners** play a role in contributing to the streetscape including private forecourts fronting shops and other privately owned and maintained outdoor areas used by the general public

**Utility Companies** impact on the streetscape such as when laying cables and pipes and installing street cabinets and payphones. There is also a cost involved with the effects of carrying out work, including maintaining equipment and 'making good'.

**Other private companies** impact on the street scene when installing street furniture, various kiosks and advertising panels

## 2.2 Legislation, regulation and guidance.

Much of the works undertaken within town and district centres, such as the painting of road markings and installation of traffic management signs are subject to legislation or regulation (such as **The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002**). It is beyond the scope of this manual to outline the full legislative context but the **New Roads and Street Works Act, 1991** and the **Traffic Management Act, 2004** gives Hertfordshire County Council and more specifically the Highway Authority (an alliance between the County Council,) and any successor arrangement, have powers to coordinate street works implemented by companies so as to protect the structure of the street and minimise disruption while work is carried out.

This legislation is supported in Hertfordshire by guidance titled 'Roads in Hertfordshire', which is a context-sensitive approach, and is used by the partnership with the County Council to shape improvements to the highway network. The County Council's 'Transport Asset Management Plan' sets out and guides its maintenance strategies and priorities

In addition, legislation such as the **Disability Discrimination Act (1995)** and good practice guidance such as **Secured By Design Principles** and **Safer Places (2004)** have also been used to inform the principles within this manual. Also, Manual for Streets prepared by the Department for Transport provides guidance for stakeholders involved in the planning, design, provision and approval of new residential streets, and improvements to existing ones. The document aims to reduce the impact of vehicles through contextually sensitive design.

## 2.3 Funding streams

Sources of funding for town and district centre improvements are regularly changing. The current economic climate presents a great challenge and will require close partnership working and innovative cost-effective solutions to improve Hertsme's town and district centres. This section may have to be updated regularly, and is not an exhaustive list. Nevertheless, the following potential funding streams have been identified at present:

- Hertfordshire County Council can budget discretionary revenue or capital amounts for minor streetscape improvements;
- Windfall grants such as lottery funding;
- S106 agreements to secure physical improvements can be negotiated by planning officers with developers where appropriate;
- Town centre improvement grants, such as that previously allocated to Potters Bar;
- Hertsme Ward Initiative Improvement Scheme;
- Hertsme town and parish councils;
- Corporate sponsorship of signage for parts of the public realm; and
- Local Transport Plans 'Quality of Life' funding stream, subject to authorisation from HCC and advertising regulations.

# Part A – General principles

# 1. Ground surfaces

## 1.1 Street paving

Street paving is an important feature of any streetscape. Good quality footways can enhance the public realm, rather dramatically in some cases. Poorly laid paving stones and bituminous surfaces that have been scarred through utility company's works are visually unappealing, and can also be potentially dangerous for pedestrians.

- Where footways are wide in Hertsmere's town and district centres, the use of larger (up to 900mm (w) x 600mm (l) x 63mm (d)) concrete paving stones may be preferable over the use of bituminous surfaces. Concrete paving stones can be as visually appealing as stone paving slabs and are relatively inexpensive. Thicker cuts or reinforced concrete can reduce the need for subsequent works to the footway, especially where there is a chance of vehicular traffic run-over. When laying the pavement, great care should be taken to ensure that the paving slabs are supported appropriately in order to reduce instances of cracking. Attention should also be paid to the requirements in the 'footway/footpath and cycle track construction' advice in Section 4 Chapter 11 of 'Road in Hertfordshire'.
- Footway surfaces should be of a different colour and/or material to the road (preferably a lighter colour) in order to create a significant visual distinction between footway and road.
- Although brightly coloured paving stones, like those in figure two (right), can add visual interest to the street scene, this visual interest can often be undermined by poor replacements and colour conflict. In this instance, it is considered that the use of brightly coloured paving stones should be kept to a minimum.
- In conservation areas, any coloured paving stones should be of a neutral or subtle tone, much like those in Radlett so that the footways do not detract from, but complement the historic buildings. It is noted that natural colours tend to fade less over time, compared to brighter colours.
- Footway cleansing should be considered as an easy way to improve the appearance of the footway.
- Care should be taken to ensure that any existing granite kerbs be retained. In conservation areas, standard concrete kerbs should be replaced with granite kerbs when funds permit.

1. Good integration of utility cover into the streetscape. The integration should aim to be as seamless as possible (Borehamwood).



2. Less sympathetic footway repair works (Borehamwood). The use of more colours within paving schemes increases the difficulty of replacing the materials like for like



3. Neutral colours and interesting patterns make a positive contribution (Leeming Road)



4. Poor quality repair works to the cobbled edge of this crossover (Bushey High Street)

## 2. Street furniture



5. Numerous posts result in a proliferation on the footpath (Bushey)

6. Example of where other posts could be used to mount signs (High Street Potters Bar)

7. Good example of dual use of mounting pole (Radlett).



### 2.1 Signage

Whilst providing an important function, the proliferation of signage is a leading cause of visual clutter. Traffic signage is highly regulated meaning that it is not always possible to greatly reduce the number of traffic signs. Therefore, attention should be given to information, direction and temporary signage, such as sales and lettings boards.

Where temporary signs are no longer needed they should be removed as soon as possible. Where there are two or more signs mounted on different poles within close proximity to each other, special consideration should be given to sharing mounting poles or mounting signs on street lighting columns in order to reduce clutter. It may be possible to reduce the number of posts by mounting multiple signs on a single post or lamp-post. HCC should always be consulted before considering this, especially if it involves a lamp post, which may not be strong enough to carry the additional signs when subject to wind loading

- Ongoing and regular audits of the street signage should be undertaken within Hertsmere's town and district centres to ensure that duplication of mounting poles is only used where necessary. Where it is noted that multiple signs could share one mounting pole, effort should be made to reduce the number of mounting poles.
- Where new signs are proposed, care should be taken to ensure that there are no existing poles, or other street furniture that signs could be mounted on before inserting a new mounting pole.
- Where possible, new signs should be of a type that is the least visually intrusive in terms of colour and size where choice is given by the existing regulations. They should also be at least 2.3m above ground level.
- Any mounting poles that are no longer required should be removed and the paving made good.
- In order to enhance local distinctiveness town centre welcome signs, bespoke for particular town or district centres, can make a small but significant improvement to the perception of those entering an area. Currently, many of the Borough's town centre signs are in relatively poor condition and are in need of replacing.
- Information on A-boards that are often erected outside the front of shops and other business units are included in Part F of the Planning and Design Guide on Shop Fronts. The Highway Authority, however, will consider enforcement action where A-boards present a hazard and have the potential to interfere with the safe flow of pedestrians.
- Signage must also comply with all other guidance by the Highway Authority, such as minimum heights for signs to be mounted on poles.



## 2.2 Street lighting

Street lighting is important to ensure the safety of the town or district shopping centre in the evenings, especially during the winter months. However, care should be taken to place lighting columns in a legible and orderly pattern, neatly spaced throughout the town and district centre. Lighting columns should not intrude unnecessarily on pedestrian footways.

Lighting columns can make the town or district centre look unsightly because of their prominence within the street scene due to their height and number. It is also important to note that very bold or bright colour schemes emphasise their visual intrusion and may not always be appropriate. Where lighting columns are required to light both the road and pedestrian footway a multiple headed column should be used in areas other than conservation areas. This minimises the number of lighting columns required.

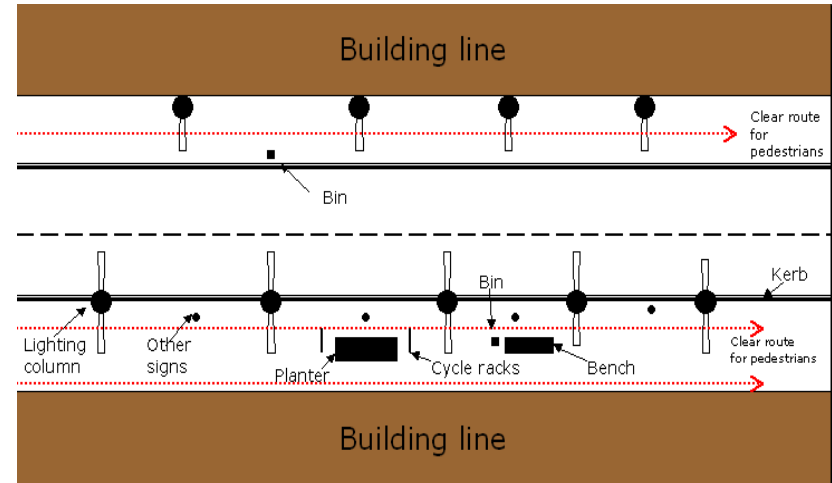
In the Borough's conservation areas, town and district centre lighting schemes should be adapted to respect or enhance the area. Colour schemes, column heights and design should all be considered carefully and standard lighting schemes avoided, in particular on Bushey High Street and Watling Street, Radlett which are both situated within conservation areas.

- Lighting columns that are no longer in use should be removed at the earliest opportunity.
- New and replacement lighting columns should be placed in line with existing lighting columns or lamps can be affixed to buildings where possible although It is important to check if the building is listed or locally listed before affixing lamps and a wayleave agreement is likely to be needed to allow future maintenance
- Replacement lighting columns should match existing lighting columns in terms of design and colouring unless improvements have been agreed with Hertsmere Borough Council.
- Where new lighting schemes are proposed, care should be taken to ensure that the minimum number of lighting columns are used. Lighting design calculations or a light impact assessment can help achieve this.

8. Good example of orderly placement lighting columns near the kerb (in the background). Note the bad placement of a mounting pole in the foreground (Darkes Lane, Potters Bar)

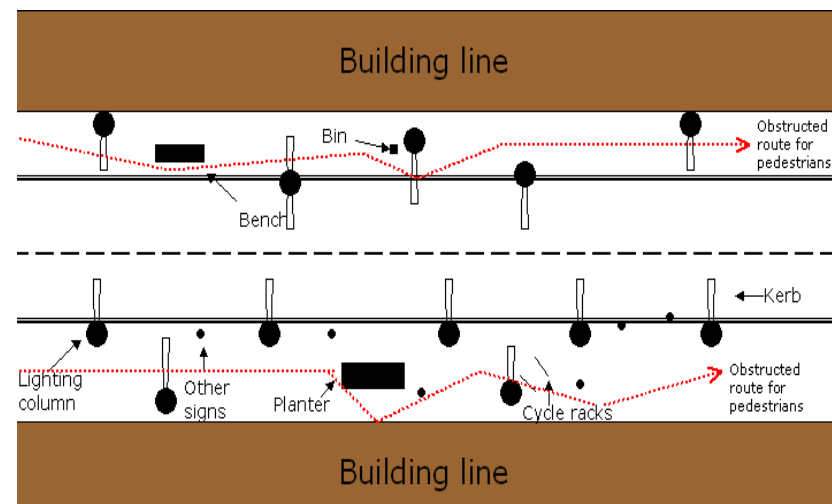


9. Note the unobtrusive lamp affixed to the building (Radlett)



Above: Note the placement of lighting columns at the rear of the narrower footway and the use of double headed lamps on the wider other side. Also note the order pattern.

Below: Note how placement of lighting columns and other street furniture disrupts pedestrian flow.  
(Drawings not to scale, for indicative purposes only)



## 2.3 Bollards

Bollards are sometimes a hindrance to pedestrian movement and can also be visually intrusive in the streetscene, particularly when there are large numbers of them. They are often installed where there is a concern that vehicles will encroach onto pedestrian areas, but they have been over-used as they are considered to provide an 'easy' design solution. Bollards are often necessary to prevent parking on footways.

Where bollards are used, they should be placed in a neat and orderly fashion, taking into account the shape of the road, footway, buildings and existing street furniture in order to avoid a messy, visually illegible streetscape.

- A light coloured band should be added around the top to help the visually impaired identify dark coloured bollards
- In conservation areas bollards should be of a design and finishing that is appropriate to the area in which they are situated. Note should be taken of existing historical bollards.
- In any other areas, simple bollards that are a neutral addition to the street scene will be encouraged.
- Superfluous bollards should be removed and the paving made good.



10. Orderly placement of bollards (background) is undermined by poor placement of parking meters, mounting poles, reducing the width of the pathway (Potters Bar)



11. Good example of orderly placement of bollards (Shenley)

## 2.4 Guardrails

Guardrails are visually intrusive in the street scene and should only be used where areas are considered to be particularly unsafe (i.e. in areas where traffic speeds are excessive). Guardrails can encourage pedestrians to make unsafe crossings by obstructing desire lines. The presence of guardrails can also encourage vehicles to increase speeds due to the segregation of pedestrian and vehicle.

Where guardrail is considered necessary, they should contribute to the streetscape through careful choice of the rail design and material.

- Where guardrail is proposed, they should be kept to a minimum length.
- In conservation areas or areas adjacent to conservation areas, special care should be taken over the detailing, colour and materials of guardrail so as to enhance or preserve the conservation area.
- Where guardrail is no longer considered to be needed, they should be removed.

12. A good example of where guardrail could be considered for removal (Borehamwood).



13. Long guardrail here add to the overall street clutter (High Street Potters Bar)



## 2.5 Litter bins

Bins are an important facility aiding in maintaining a cleaner environment. Litter bins, however should be placed near high flows of pedestrian traffic and near to seating areas, such as bench areas and bus stops. When placing bins within the public realm, care should be taken to note the existing placement of street furniture so as to not place bins in inappropriate locations often irrespective of other pieces of street furniture.

- Where bins are more than **1 metre** away from existing street furniture such as benches and bus shelters, they should be moved.
- Worn bins should be replaced or in cases and where the bin merits retention such as in the cases below in Potters Bar, repainted.
- A brief audit of Hertsmeire's town centres has shown that there are many different bin types within each town centre. It is preferable for the same type of bin to be present throughout each town centre. Black is preferable within the conservation areas (Radlett and Bushey) and either black or green for Borehamwood or black or blue for Potters Bar, consistent with prevailing colour schemes in those areas.
- Where new bins are to be introduced, the Council's Streetscene Services should be consulted to identify if there is a need for bins with separate compartments for recycling.
- Takeaway outlets should take responsibility for waste generated by their customers by paying for/sponsoring a litter bin outside their premises, if there is no existing bin immediately nearby. Where necessary a planning condition will be used to secure the provision of a new bin where a new takeaway requires planning permission.



14. Less appropriate siting of a bin (High Street, Potters Bar).



15. Better siting of a bin (High Street, Potters Bar).

## 2.6 Benches

Appropriately placed and designed street benches add to the character and appearance of a street scene, and are useful to everyone using the public realm. In fact, careful placement of benches can help define particular areas within the streetscape. Street benches are utilised by a wide variety of people, including older people or those with young children in accessing the town or district centre and its facilities, and for the general enjoyment of the area. There is guidance on the most appropriate materials and form of benches by the research consortium Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors. So that benches can make a positive contribution to the street scene:

- Benches should not be placed where they would obstruct pedestrian flow. Where this is proposed, a request will be made to move the bench to a more appropriate position. Dual uses of street furniture are encouraged in order to reduce street clutter such as the informal use of the sides of planters as benches in Shenley Road, Borehamwood.
- Benches should be positioned so as not to cause a hazard by stopping drivers and pedestrians seeing each other
- Regular maintenance of benches should be continued, particularly where benches are often timber and at risk of decay.



16 & 17. Note how the benches and the other pieces of street furniture have been placed in a neat, orderly row. Picture 18. Could the bench be turned 180 degrees to face the shops.



18. Could a bench be placed either side of the tree? (Darkes Lane, Potters Bar)



## 2.7 Cycle stands

Cycle stands are an important and functional part of the street scene. The presence of cycle racks encourages cyclists to access the town or district centre with a greater degree of confidence that they can legally and safely park and lock their bicycles.

Although cycle racks are encouraged within the town and district town centre, poor placement can disrupt pedestrian flow and contribute to a cluttered appearance of the street scene.

- Sheffield style cycle stands are the preferred option within Hertsmere's town centres.
- The placement of Sheffield style cycle stands should not disrupt pedestrian flow.
- The placement of Sheffield style cycle stands should be positioned to allow sufficient space for a cyclist to stand on either side.
- Cycle stands should be finished in either stainless steel or painted to match the colour scheme within each town centre.

The County Council also have guidance on cycle parking provision that can be used for designing and implementing new cycle stands,



19. Good cycle rack colour and placement (Bushey High Street)

## 2.8 Public amenity street furniture and advertisements

There has been a notable increase in public amenity street furniture such as telephone kiosks, cash machines and public notice boards.

- The placement of public amenity street furniture should not block pedestrian desire lines. This is particularly important for those that are partially sighted.
- Where possible, the placement of public amenity street furniture should be lined up with existing street furniture.
- Where advertisements are proposed on street furniture, close attention should be paid as to whether the type of advertisement preserves the small town/suburban character of the shopping centres in Hertsmere. For example, it is unlikely that digitised and electronic advertisements will be appropriate in many areas of the Boroughs centres as these are more often suited to large town and city centres.
- Some cafés and bars may choose to apply to the Licensing, Planning, and Highway Authorities to place tables and chairs on the pavement. Whilst this can increase the overall vitality of a centre, it has the potential to interrupt the safe flow of pedestrian and adds to the level of street furniture. It is recommended that this type of activity is kept as close to the building as possible.

20. Poor placement of public amenity street furniture (Leeming Road)

21. Better placement of public amenity street furniture (Bushey Heath)



### 3 Environmental improvements

As well as the physical presence of street furniture the use of landscaping and natural features also make significant addition to the character and appearance of the street scene and the air quality of the area. Trees, landscaping and water features can all be used to improve the public realm and its sense of place.

#### 3.1 Street trees

Street trees are an important part of any streetscape. Parts of Hertsmere’s town and district centres lack street trees and soft landscaping which is in sharp contrast to softer landscapes that are often found beyond the town centre boundary.

Although the maintenance costs of new street trees needs to be considered, appropriate species of tree can enhance the appearance of the streetscape, especially in areas that do not harbour a significant architectural or historical character. Street trees can contribute to cleaner air and can also provide opportunities for enhancing the Boroughs biodiversity.

- A street tree strategy should be created to enable better coordination between County and Hertsmere Borough Council. S106 monies can be used to improve the quality of the public realm via the planting of trees, subject to the agreement of HCC.



**22** 22. Bushey Heath High Street. The street trees here add to the sense of character. Note how they soften the appearance of the railings.



**23** 23. Trees can soften the street scene (Leeming Road)

#### 3.2 Flowerbeds and hanging baskets

Flowerbeds and hanging baskets can be a simple way of introducing soft landscaping into any streetscape. However, the planting of inappropriate species can detract from the quality of the streetscape.

- Species of plant that are likely to outgrow their planter are not recommended.
- Species of vegetation should be chosen for their long-term visual benefits including schemes that will help to improve the appearance of the streetscape throughout the seasons.
- Care should be taken to ensure that the planters appear full, both in coverage of vegetation across the planter and horizontally, where the planter is large. Smaller planters should maintain a subtler positive appearance within the streetscape.
- It is recommended that the Local Authorities and Hertfordshire County Council should work with traders to ensure that flowerbeds close to fast foot outlets are managed well to prevent littering.
- Any planting at ground level should be designed to deter people from walking through it, and where a walking route is considered this should be designed and managed appropriately.

- 24. Good use of colour (Darkes Lane Potters Bar)
- 25. Some species of vegetation can look incongruous in the street scene (Borehamwood)
- 26. Use of hanging baskets can make a positive contribution to the street scene environment (Radlett)



**24** 24. Good use of colour (Darkes Lane Potters Bar)



**25** 25. Some species of vegetation can look incongruous in the street scene (Borehamwood)



**26** 26. Use of hanging baskets can make a positive contribution to the street scene environment (Radlett)

## 4. Traffic management



27. 100mm wide yellow lines on narrow road can dominate the street scene (Borehamwood).



28. 100mm yellow lines should not be used in conservation areas due to their obtrusive nature (Radlett).



29. Hoop mounted keep left signs are preferred due to the sleek and visually simple appearance. (Image taken from the English Heritage publication 'Streets for all-East of England') / Manual for Streets.

### 4.1 Road markings

Road markings are essential to communicate information to motorists. However, superfluous road markings can contribute to the overall cluttered appearance of the street scene, especially where the high street carriageway is narrow or has been separated into one lane by an island.

- In environmentally sensitive locations such as conservation areas and where double lines are introduced for the first time or roads are being resurfaced, a more subtle approach to road markings is recommended. Double and single yellow lines should be 50mm in width with a 50mm gap (for double yellow lines only). In any case, the colour used should be primrose yellow.
- In other areas double and single yellow lines can be up to 100mm in width (with a 100mm gap for double yellow lines only) although wider yellow lines should only be used where streets are more than one standard carriageway in width from kerb to kerb. The colour used can be canary or standard bright yellow.

### 4.2 Keep left signs

Like many local authorities, the Council wishes to replace internally lit 'keep left' bollard signs with hoop mounted, externally-lit keep left signs. These are more visually appealing due to the reduction in bulk from the existing internally lit plastic keep left signs. The 'bounce-back' style of keep left sign can also be used in accordance with the Manual for Streets, although should be kept to a minimum.

Careful consideration should be given as to whether each keep left sign is strictly necessary, especially in conservation areas where these new additions to the streetscape can add to an overall cluttered appearance.