



Sustrans and Bristol City Council, alongside the residents in the Dings, are creating a home zone that is redefining this “village in the city”.

The Dings is in central Bristol, in an area of high social deprivation. It consists of seven streets, 120 households and 12 small businesses, surrounded by light industry and brownfield land. A severe commuter-parking problem, rat-running, and long-term decline in the quiet residential streets motivated residents and the council to look for an innovative solution, and a home zone was proposed. The city council included the Dings home zone in its successful VIVALDI project bid to the EU CIVITAS programme.

### Community Involvement

The VIVALDI project aimed to demonstrate exemplary community involvement in a transport project and two part time Community Travel

Workers (CTWs) were employed by Sustrans to lead this process.

Residents of the Dings had already been very active for a number of years in trying to improve their community. An active Neighbourhood Watch committee made up of about 15 residents was Sustrans' first point of contact, many of whom became “street representatives” in order to assist communication throughout the project.

Meetings and special events were held on a regular basis in the local family club and in the streets of the Dings, and regular newsletters were distributed to all households. As many residents do not attend meetings or events, contacting residents at home was a key activity to ensure high participation rates. The CTWs carried out four comprehensive door to door surveys (revisiting households on as many as four occasions to try to make contact), providing an important opportunity to have detailed and open discussions with residents.

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A **home zone** is a street or group of streets where pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles share the space on equal terms, with cars travelling at little more than walking pace. Home zones challenge the traditional distinction between carriageway and footway in order to redefine the street as a valuable part of the local community's **living space**.

**CIVITAS** is a stream of EC funds for ambitious projects that aim to create cleaner, better, integrated transport in cities whilst promoting economic and social vitality. Supported by CIVITAS, VIVALDI ([www.vivaldiproject.org](http://www.vivaldiproject.org)) is a €40 million, four-year project that started in February 2002. It involves five European cities: Bristol; Bremen (Germany); Nantes (France); Aalborg (Denmark) and Kaunas (Lithuania).

Above right: Residents of the Dings, Sustrans and Bristol City Council celebrate start of construction of the home zone



Sustrans' Liveable Neighbourhoods programme works with local residents and other partners to create high quality urban environments which promote sustainable travel behaviour and are safe, pleasant places to live in and visit. Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity and works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport to benefit health and the environment.

National Cycle Network Centre, 2 Cathedral Square, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5DD



# The Dings Home Zone

The informal and conversational quality of this contact was key to helping establish trust as well as allowing the CTWs to develop a thorough understanding of the needs and desires of the community.

In order to encourage discussion between residents, events were held in the streets in the evening or at weekends so that residents could drop by and chat informally about issues such as parking, materials, and possible street layouts. In some cases a free barbecue and live music were arranged to attract attention and entertain.

A survey of the 12 local businesses showed that they all welcomed the proposed improvement. Some apparently small (but to them crucial) details about their needs such as parking for deliveries and customers could be fed into early stages of the design process.

## The Design

The following design principles were explored with residents and adopted in the final design of the Dings' streets:

- Creating a shared surface (block paving) in many areas to eliminate traditional distinction between pedestrian and car space, encouraging interaction between all users to bring vehicle speeds to walking pace
- Breaking up clear sight lines in order to lower speeds through different parking arrangements, planters and trees in the street
- Establishing slow but guaranteed access for large vehicles, where previously refuse and emergency vehicles had been unable to travel
- Evaluating parking needs and making appropriate provision, with enforcement through a resident's parking scheme
- Providing clear gateways to the home zone to indicate to drivers that

they are entering a different environment

- Providing access and parking facilities for all disabled people
- Limiting passing spaces for vehicles
- Establishing 20mph zone in surrounding areas
- Using attractive but durable and maintainable materials for road surface and other street furniture
- Incorporating trees and other planting
- Installing new lighting with attractive columns
- Working with utilities and phone company to bury many of the overhead cables in order to open up the street space further
- Creating distinctive features reflecting local events/history
- Providing places for bins where necessary



An early street event to test parking layouts and discuss other design features



Residents test potential new road layouts and observed driver behaviour

### *Innovative technical solutions*

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) were introduced in three of the streets in order to manage rainwater, reduce the risk of flooding and improve water quality in local watercourses. In the Dings this has involved laying permeable paving construction which completes the shared surface and removes the need for traditional drainage channels which can form a barrier to mobility impaired people and are one of the ways that the traditional highway delineates between car and pedestrian space. The Dings Home Zone is the first area of SUDS permeable paving to be laid as adopted highway in Bristol and is one of the largest areas in Britain to date.

The Council landscape team and Sustrans arranged a programme of tree and shrub planting within front gardens to enhance the home zone. Following the same principles of community involvement used throughout the design process, residents assisted in choosing the plants and helping to plant the soft landscape areas.

The Avon and Somerset Police architectural liaison officer and City Council Public Lighting team have contributed significantly towards the design of the new streetscape. Residents participated in the choice of new lighting columns and lanterns which have been fitted with lamps producing white light, recommended for visibility.

The new layout included a row of trees in the centre of what had previously been carriageway, providing an attractive way to break sight lines and lower driving speeds. When the Police expressed some concern about the trees affecting visibility the project team adapted the design to include low power up-lighters in the highway surface. In addition to providing a safer environment, they also assist drivers at night by highlighting the trees and hence reducing the risk of collision.

The project team worked closely with the numerous public utilities that inhabit the existing highway network of the

Dings in order to ensure their participation at necessary points in the design and construction phases. Overhead electricity cables that previously dominated the skyline of the Dings have now been put underground. This was undertaken in partnership with Western Power who absorbed some of the costs of the works.

The first phase of construction, three of the streets and a major junction, was completed in May 2005, with the second due for completion in December 2005.

## Arts Programme

An important feature of the Dings home zone design is the artworks, included both to enhance the street design and to give another opportunity for residents to participate. Artists made proposals that were reviewed by a working group made up of residents and Sustrans' Arts Programme Director, with two proposals chosen. Two artists worked with residents and the project team to identify and design items which would help to enhance the street environment and bring some of the 'old' community identity into the new streets. New 'gateways' for the three entrances to the Dings will be created along with the 'Words' project that has built the history of the Dings into the fabric of street, including surfaces, walls, seats and gateways.



Residents planting up the street flower beds

### Accessibility

The design team sought the advice of both the Council's Walking and Cycling team and the Strategic Access Officer. Their guidance helped shape the streetscape with minimal use of bollards and other obstacles that could impair pedestrian movement. A review of early phases of the scheme was undertaken by members of Bristol Physical Access Chain (BPAC) who are the Council's advisory group on access. Where suggested, the design was altered and refined. The home zone has also been visited by Guide Dogs for the Blind in order to assist in training of navigating an unfamiliar street design.



Artist: Teucer Wilson

Artwork is placed in the road surface and on walls throughout the home zone

## Private Sector Involvement

An additional element of the home zone concerned the development of adjacent land for new residential dwellings (by Barratt Homes). Planning permission was granted to Barratt on condition of their fully incorporating the new streets serving these dwellings into the overall home zone design.

By creating a single design and palette of materials across the public domain space in the Barratt development and the Dings home zone, the old and new communities are given a nudge towards becoming a single, larger community.

Barratt held consultation events with Dings residents on all aspects of the development. Residents were supported in making comments on the design of the housing itself, as well as having input into naming new streets (using local history uncovered through research for the arts programme) and street design. This high level of local community involvement in a new-build development is unusual, and has been successful due to the enthusiasm and encouragement of the project team at Barratt Homes, the Council planning department as well as the residents.

Barratt Homes has also undertaken the design of the home zone works and will contribute to the construction costs for Barton Road (which runs between the existing and new communities) as part of its planning agreement.

## Sustainable Transport

The home zone team have worked to address wider accessibility concerns in the Dings, which had no local bus route and only limited safe walking and cycling routes. Two new traffic-free cycle/walkways (one linking to local

green spaces and one that links to local rail and bus services and to the National Cycle Network) have been completed alongside the home zone works. Residents have also been offered information leaflets and maps on walking, cycling, local taxi sharing and ferry services, and the second phase of the home zone will introduce a local car club scheme. A “barmy bikes” event for younger residents offered bike check ups, a cycling obstacle course, road safety advice and a chance to sign up for cycle training.

Sustrans has also been working with the local primary school to help secure funding to provide a safe route between the new cycle/walkway and the school.

## Delivery in Partnership

The Dings home zone could not have been achieved without the effective working partnership between Sustrans, Bristol City Council and the residents of the Dings. Sustrans provided sustainable transport planning, home zone design and community involvement expertise, and played a pivotal role as the independent third party between local residents and the council. Twenty different Council teams participated in the Steering Group of the home zone, with the particular efforts of the Transport Initiatives team and the Engineering Consultancy. Many other organisations, funders (particularly significant funding made available by Bristol’s “New Deal for Communities” Community at Heart), and individuals also offered expertise through the steering group, ensuring that creative and appropriate solutions could be found to each challenge presented by the project.



The community post box has been placed in the existing streets, meaning that residents in the adjacent new development will have a reason to meet their neighbours

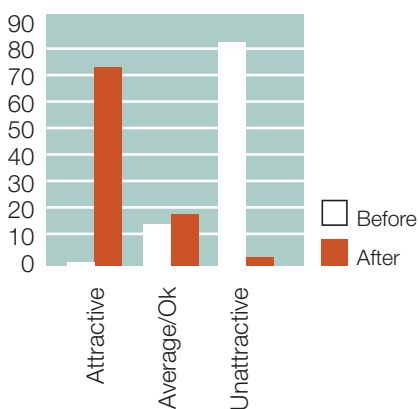


Many residents have signed a “Safe Car” pledge, displaying a sticker and agreeing to drive safely in the home zone and encourage others to do so as well

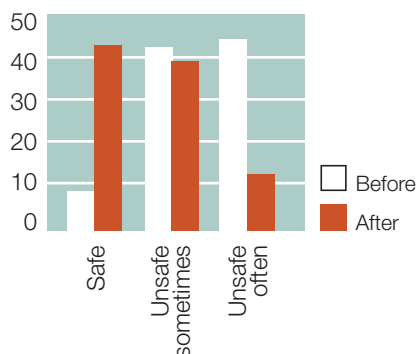
## Evaluation

The home zone has created a safer and more pleasant environment and has encouraged residents to use their streets more for social gatherings and play. Door to door surveys of residents (carried out by the CTWs and with a contact rate of 70%) and local businesses suggest a very high level of satisfaction with the new home zone. After the first phase of development, 96% of residents surveyed felt they had been given enough information by Sustrans over the course of the project, and 88% felt that the home zone was a good idea for the Dings (9% were undecided and 3% thought it was a bad idea). Many perceptions about the streets, from attractiveness to safety have been improved since the home zone was implemented.

### How do you think your street looks?



### How safe do you feel your street is?



### Health evaluation of the built environment

Recent high profile debates about health have highlighted that as many as two thirds of men and three quarters of women in the UK are not physically active enough to protect their health. Inactivity is leading to rising rates of obesity, increasing the risk of chronic diseases in later life including coronary heart disease and diabetes.

Traditional attempts to increase physical activity levels generally involve interventions aimed at changing individual behaviour, with little emphasis on changing the physical environment. Environmental factors can influence how much activity individuals can build into their lives and it is logical to address this root cause of sedentary living, rather than attempt to compensate for it.

University of Bristol researchers, funded by the British Heart Foundation are using the Dings home zone as a case study in order to develop research methods that assess the effects of environmental change on physical activity and health. They are evaluating the impact on the health of residents and local school children of both the improvements to the streets in the home zone and the new cycle/walkway that runs through the community.



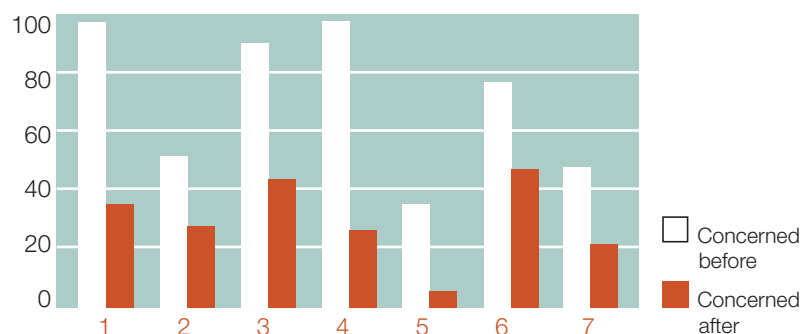
Birkin Street before and after



### Are you concerned about these issues?

- 1 Unsafe nuisance parking
- 2 Fast traffic
- 3 Unsafe for children to play in the street

- 4 Poor access for delivery & emergency vehicles
- 5 Noise from traffic
- 6 Anti social behaviour and vandalism
- 7 Lack of personal safety



## Lessons Learned

The experience gained from the Dings home zone offers valuable lessons for the development of future home zone and urban design interventions. These include key factors contributing to the success of this home zone, together with insights into areas of project planning and delivery in need of development.

Key success factors included:

- Acceptance at the outset by project partners that residents would have final say on the design of their own streets (within budget and engineering constraints)
- An active community with enthusiastic residents who were willing to try out an innovative concept
- An effective community involvement process with dedicated staff and a wide range of engagement methods has fostered increased social capital, local skills development and greater understanding and respect between residents and local authority and other organisations
- Intensive communication, with regular steering group meetings, community meetings, newsletters as well as informal reporting between the large and diverse range of organisations
- Experienced and committed “champions” in each of the key partner organisations who have ensured that the project progressed past all obstacles that were presented
- A wide-ranging skill set across the partners enabling much design work and technical consultation to be done “in house”

Areas for development:

- New projects should examine the potential for lower capital spend on physical interventions that could still generate a similar effect on traffic speeds and levels of social interaction
- Safety concerns regarding children playing in the street remain fairly high even with new layouts. Longer term evaluation of home zones should be carried out to see if these concerns decrease over time (once the home zone has “bedded in”), and further innovation is required to develop physical changes that encourage fun and play
- Pending results from the University of Bristol research (see Health evaluation above), new projects should ensure that designs maximise opportunities for physical activity
- Effort should be made to incorporate not just transport, health and social inclusion objectives but also those for air quality and mitigating climate change
- Development of local skills should be an explicit focus for future projects, including a mechanism for evaluating the resulting improvements

Successful home zones can make a massive contribution to delivering a wide range of Government policies across different areas, including transport, planning, sustainable communities, environment and health. They can help to overcome problems in these fields by enabling local communities to work with local authorities to reclaim control over their streets and create welcoming and safe social spaces.



The hub stone artwork feature which sits in the central meeting point of the home zone



### Further information

For further information on the **Dings Home Zone** visit [www.sustrans.org.uk/liveableneighbourhoods](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/liveableneighbourhoods), email [liveableneighbourhoods@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:liveableneighbourhoods@sustrans.org.uk) or call **0117 926 8893**.