

LEICESTER
WORTHINGTON STREET

CONTEXT

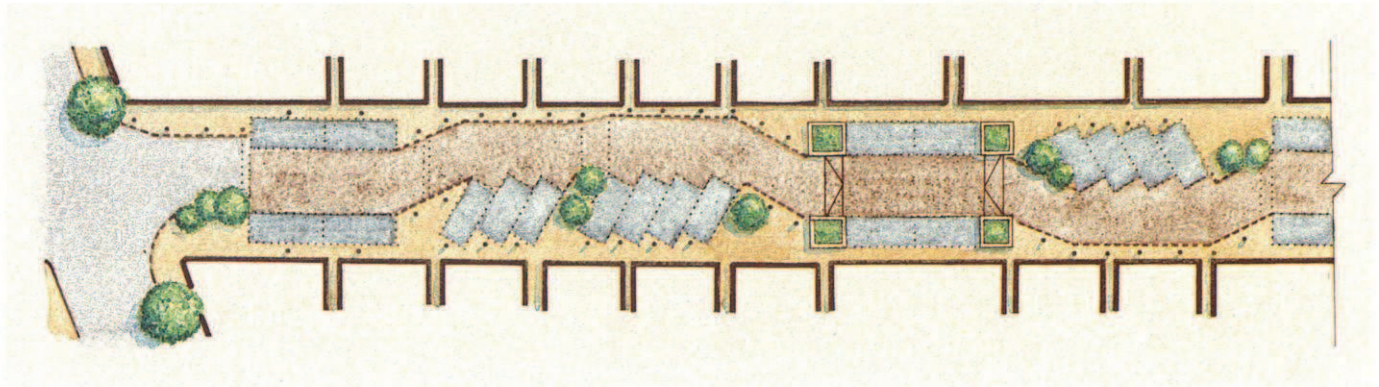
A combination of circumstances led Leicester City Council to create a “Woonerf” type scheme for Worthington Street in 1985/6. Worthington Street is lined with 80 terraced houses fronting directly onto the street. Of several streets in the area linking two heavily trafficked roads, Worthington Street was the only one remaining open to through traffic, with a peak flow of about 130 vehicles per hour. The availability of



28: Shared surface showing street furniture and coloured pavers. (Photo: Leicester City Council)

Urban Programme funds allowed a comprehensive environmental traffic scheme to be implemented, and the City Council was keen to apply the principles





29: Lateral shift in the carriageway formed by angled parking bays defined with planting and cast iron bollards. (Photo: Leicester City Council)

established by the Dutch “Woonerf” schemes (see section on “shared surfaces”).

OBJECTIVES

The aim was to transform Worthington Street into an area principally for the relaxation and enjoyment of its residents through the creation of an open space

environment, but, without closing it to traffic. Two principal objectives were: to deter unnecessary through traffic and encourage vehicles using the street to travel slowly and carefully; and radically to improve the environment for the benefit of residents and pedestrians.

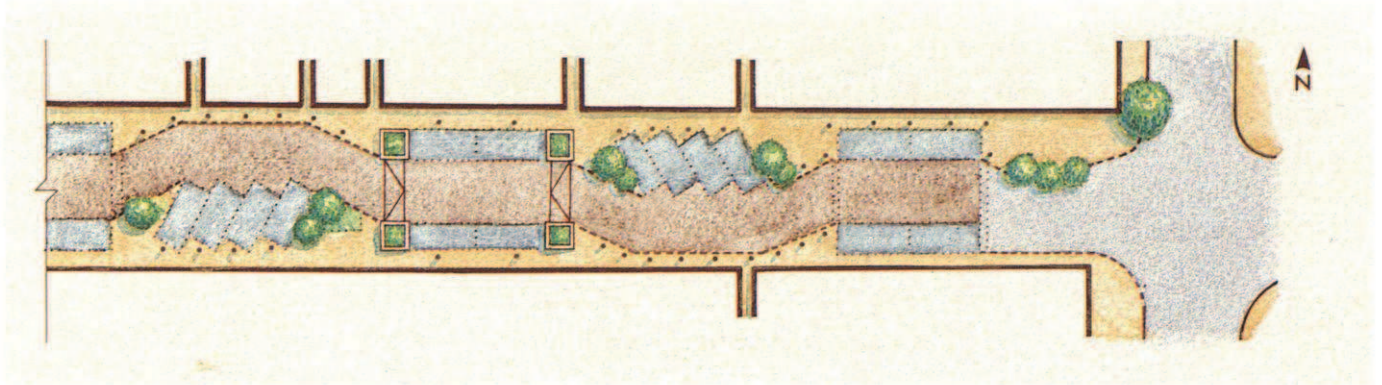
DESCRIPTION

The traditional carriageway and kerb-defined footways were replaced with a new surface, and a range of different colours were used to define, in particular, areas to which vehicles are restricted. Speed restraint was achieved with a narrow carriageway incorporating lateral shifts and a flat top hump. The ramps are provided at strategic locations and marked by brick planters decorated with fleurs-de-lys and rosette embossed brick courses. These complement decorative brickwork in adjacent buildings.

Clay pavers bordered with soldier courses of red brick form the road-way and the 39 parking bays are picked out in dark brown paving with cast iron bollards and railings. Alternate angled parking is



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provided together with some lateral parking. Distinct buff-coloured pavers create forecourts contiguous to the houses.

Victorian style street lighting was installed, and trees and shrubs planted to soften the overall design. Hanging baskets and window boxes are mounted on house fronts where owners have agreed to maintain them.

Residents' participation in the scheme was both extensive and productive. They requested (and got) more parking spaces incorporated into the scheme, and they made the final choice between two alternative detailed designs. A street committee was taken on a tour of the City Council's other street improvement works to help them select appropriate street furniture. A survey of residents at that time revealed that two thirds were in favour of the scheme.

COST

The total cost including professional fees was about £180,000, met partly from Urban Programme grants.

ASSESSMENT

The introduction of more attractive paving and street furniture has produced a pleasant residential environment. Traffic speeds and volumes have been reduced, though some cars still travel too fast. Some maintenance problems have arisen from petty vandalism and litter. Although refuse

30: Speed reduction ramp between brick planters.
(Photo: Leicester City Council)



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31: Parking bays defined with dark brown pavers and cast iron bollards. Railings also add interest to the street scene outside a local shop.
(Photo: Leicester City Council)

and cleaning services have not experienced any problems, the lack of storage for “wheely bins” tends to spoil the street scene.

Integral to the scheme, underground services were renewed and this accounted for one sixth of the total cost. It is thus hoped to reduce the potential for unsympathetic remedial works by statutory undertakers.

No systematic evaluation of the scheme has been carried out, partly because the scheme was seen as being specific to the circumstances of Worthington Street and partly because grant funds are no longer available to allow replication of the solution elsewhere.

An attempt was made to introduce supporting legislation, akin to that which exists in the Netherlands for “Woonerf” schemes, in the Leicestershire Act of 1984, but without success. The inherent emphasis on pedestrian priority over vehicles

therefore had to be achieved through design measures under existing legislative provision. The main problems related to parking (allowed only in the defined bays, rather than restricted elsewhere) and the legal status of pedestrians once the defined footway had been removed.

Worthington Street now falls within a wider area (with about 4,500 households) identified for a demonstration scheme to improve facilities for pedestrians and the environment. This will be carried out as part of the “feet first” initiative promoted by the Local Authority Associations and Transport 2000.