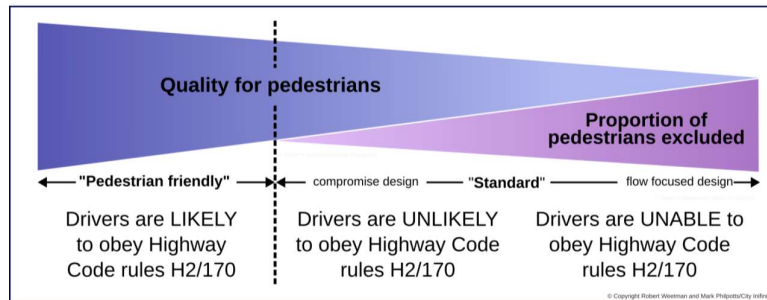




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Getting Serious About Side Road Junctions: From Network Planning to Vision Zero



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I was pleased to present at the London Walking, Wheeling & Cycling Conference on Thursday 17th September 2026, highlighting the work that Robert Weetman and I have been involved with over the last 18-months. This article is what I said with a series of slides used as a backdrop.



Getting Serious About Side Road Junctions: From Network Planning to Vision Zero

Mark Philpotts (presenter)
Robert Weetman



It's great to be speaking at the London Walking, Wheeling & Cycling conference and even better, I'm in my home city.

I'm a middle aged man, about 1.8 metres tall. I have short dark hair and my beard is more grey than dark. I'm wearing green trousers and a brown flowery shirt.

Robert Weetman and I have been immersed in the subject of side road junctions for well over 18 months.

Side road junctions is shorthand for the thousands and thousands of basic junctions out there which aren't controlled by traffic signals and which aren't roundabouts, but which are not being talked very much about.

It started with us developing a side road junction design framework for Manchester City Council last summer, which is being implemented in the city as I speak.



Here's an anecdote. It may be true.

A ward councillor asked the cabinet member for one of their local side road junctions to be made safer.

The cabinet member asked the Head of Highways to make the junction safer.



The Head of Highways asked one of the principal engineers to get it done.

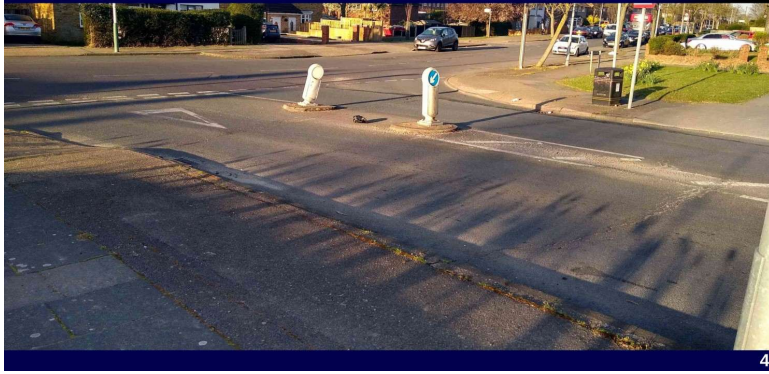
The engineer got the kerb-lines tightened, a raised table put in and the tactile paving renewed.

A couple of weeks later, the Head of Transport Planning got a complaint from the ward councillor that the new junction was being overrun by lorries, the tactile paving was collapsing and someone nearly got hit while crossing.

The Chief Executive's office got involved and the blame-storming started.

Actually, the operation of the junction was incompatible with its network status and it was never going to work just left as a side road junction.

Our system is broken



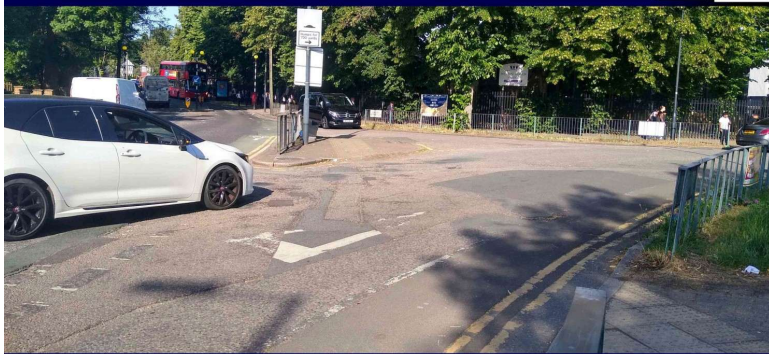
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Robert and I think that pedestrian-friendly side road junctions are absolutely core to delivering Vision Zero and decent streets.

But my anecdote belies a profoundly broken system as you can see in the wondrous variety of layouts you're seeing on my slides.

The broken system keeps leaving designers trying to solve strategic issues that they have no control over and this often leads to disjointed experimentation.

Our system is broken

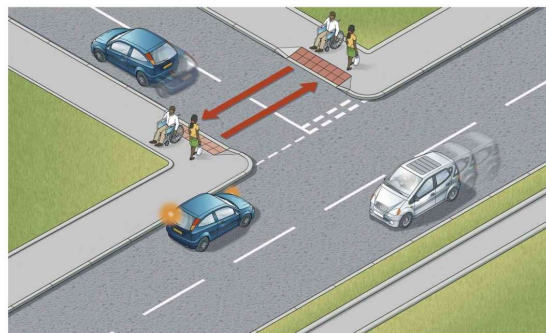


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So how do we deliver side road junctions which are safe and accessible?

I'll come back to that in a couple of minutes.

A little inspiration



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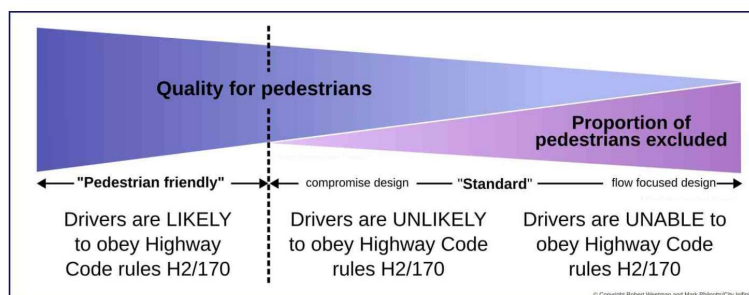
Rule H2 of the Highway Code says:

"At a junction you should give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross a road into which or from which you are turning".

This is actually a good outcome for pedestrians – it's pretty good piece of vision-setting and the behaviour we want to see for pedestrian-friendly side road junctions.

The problem is, having a rule doesn't really work, but it inspired our thinking.

The wedge diagram



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This looks simple, but it takes longer than 7 minutes to explain in detail, so grab me later if you want to know more, or read our blog posts.

What I will say, is a pedestrian-friendly side road junction where drivers will actually let you cross cannot be delivered in isolation, so we always end up with compromises which exclude people.

We shouldn't be starting at the ward councillor's junction at all if we are serious about this.

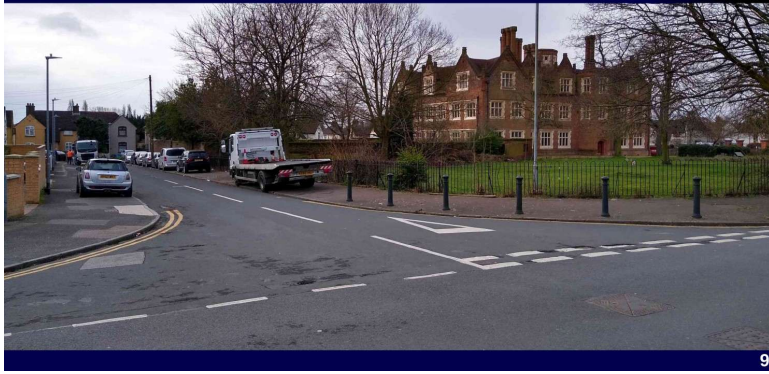
We need a network plan



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We need to be starting with the cabinet member and the service heads because they, with plenty of help, need to agree a network plan.

With a network plan we can get the people system in place with responsibility properly allocated to right people.



Designers are responsible local junction **features**.

Strategic planning staff are responsible for network **factors**.

Councillors are responsible for taking strategic **decisions**.

Without a network plan, we can't get the people system work. Without the people system working, we can't get the physical system working.



Of course, this cannot be delivered overnight.

Interim solutions are fine, but we should be honest about their limitations and their compromises.

But even interim solutions cannot be delivered without a network plan.

Some junctions will need more serious redesigns once we get the network plan decided. This might require different forms of control such as zebra crossings or traffic signals.



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And that's our call to action – we need a network plan to avoid anecdotes like the one I started with!

This is how we deliver side road junctions which are safe and accessible.

We're both on LinkedIn and other platforms

Look out for our blog posts and workshops

Mark: www.cityinfinity.co.uk
Robert: www.robertweetman.net

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And that's us, we'd love to talk further!

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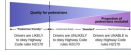
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