



Co-ordinated street furniture on London's South Bank



Street furniture is not always used for the intended purpose!



Clutter undermines the quality of spaces

### 5.5.3 STREET FURNITURE

Public space is occupied by a host of components, whether seats, fences, shelters, boxes, poles, lights, bollards or signs. All these need careful attention.

#### Clean up the clutter

The public realm is frequently characterised by clutter. Roads and streets are often dominated by ugly and sloppily applied white and yellow paint and littered with so-called 'street furniture', which includes anything from grit bins, benches, bollards, railings, lighting, signposts, CCTV and substations to cycle stands and phone boxes.

This panoply is generally owned and managed by different bodies. At worst, there is no co-ordination and the only functional considerations are engineering-led and car-orientated. The pedestrian is ignored or marginalised. Some of these items are introduced on grounds of 'pedestrian improvements', yet the 'sheep-pen' staggered pedestrian crossings and guard rails impede pedestrian movement while allowing a free run for the car. A more sophisticated approach is achieved through a co-ordinated design, installation, management and maintenance strategy - ensuring a consistency of style and colour. This should involve a partnership with key stakeholders, such as highways agencies, local authorities and utility companies. Guidelines for design include:

- removing the superfluous and obsolete; establishing a visual logic, with clear messages for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers;
- designing the space so that the functions of its parts are clear and the need for signs, barriers and the like is minimised;
- either hiding it or flaunting it. Certain elements, such as service inspection boxes, are unavoidable but visually dull and frequently located where they impede the pedestrian. They are best hidden in the landscape or building edge. If it is essential that it be positioned in the open, the lamppost for example, then its design, height and level of illumination should be selected carefully for the particular space. Treat the artefact as art;
- producing a comprehensive and co-ordinated strategy of elements for each space; carefully selecting them according to context - the landscape, buildings and floorscape. Both 'special' and 'off-the-shelf' designs are possible. We should encourage designers to use the best of modern design rather than the continuing reliance upon the 'heritage' range, which all too often equals pastiche.



A veritable forest of signs, barriers and lights