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Local authorities simply cannot deliver successful shared space schemes if major divisions between internal departments – highways, landscape and maintenance – involved in the public realm remain. Directors and politicians must learn, as in Ashford, how to overcome these boundaries. When collaborative working takes place, true placemaking happens

has mixed traffic management and highway engineering with place-making. We didn't get it right, and the result is confusing for drivers.' Minor design changes to this area are now underway – but many local drivers are resistant to change, and some perceptual damage, however easy to fix, has been done.

'One danger with the shared space approach comes of trying to mix and confuse segregation with integration,' suggests Hamilton Baillie. 'You can't do that. The underpinning philosophy must always be clear. We will continue to need highways, motorways and trunk roads, and they need to be segregated as they're single purpose.' Public space and the public realm, however, is opposite in every respect. 'At the outset of any project, we need to be very clear about whether the space is highway, or whether it's public space. In the middle of a town like Ashford, the arguments are clear that it's public realm.'

The Ashford scheme, conceived as a shared space exemplar for the UK on a grand scale, was undoubtedly at the more expensive end of the scale at £15.8 million, including off site works, junction improvements, decluttering and the reconfiguration of the ring road to two-way traffic. Although the entire ring road was converted to two-way traffic, just under half was 'designed' as shared space. The remainder was decluttered, with underpasses and obstructions (guard railing) removed. The cost for 1.1 km of designed shared space was £9m. The majority of funding came from DCLG, supplemented with a mixture of European, Ashford County Council and Kent County Council funding, section 106 agreements and local stakeholder contributions. But both client and designers are quick to point out that Ashford is a shared space scheme at one end of a spectrum. 'We were very fortunate in having a client who had the political will and instigated an integrated design team from the outset,' says Whitelaw. 'Ashford is about that incredible process of buying in to a vision, getting excited about



Courtesy and controlled crossings: The scheme's single Puffin crossing caused Hamilton Baillie several sleepless nights: 'Having a green traffic light facing drivers as they enter Elwick Square 'scared the hell out of me,' he says. 'I'm glad to say that it doesn't seem to have unduly damaged the scheme'. Courtesy crossings, unlike controlled crossings, have no legal status, but simply act as a guide for the pedestrian. Feedback indicates that, for drivers and the public, there is some confusion between the two, and the IDT is monitoring both types of crossings to see how they perform over time. Groups representing the blind, disabled and visually impaired would like to see more controlled crossings and more controls



Design detail: Raised bus borders are 165mm high in order to cope with bus access. Bus clearways, if required, are delineated with vanilla blocks instead of yellow lines: where possible material, textures and colour are used to give visual and tactile clues to footways and carriageways. Glass beads in the kerbs glow like cats' eyes at night. In future, double and triple kerbs, along with more sophisticated transitions between footways and kerbs, could be used to create interim spaces for cyclists, pedestrians and the visually impaired. There are many design implications around creating more accessible environments that designers are only beginning to be aware of, hence the need for ongoing workshops, and study exercises