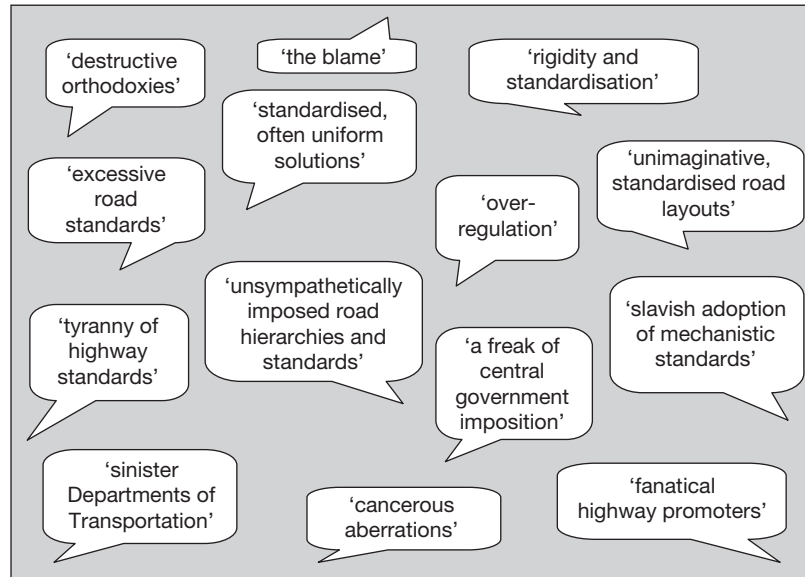


described by the Prince of Wales as ‘war by other means’. Rather, critics may envy or resent the way that transport-related concerns – bound up and defended by seemingly unchallengeable principles relating to traffic flow and safety criteria – seem to have ultimate supremacy over all other influences on the form and structure of urban layout.²⁶

In particular, the blame is pointed at the rigid application of highway engineering standards that seem to control much of urban layout (Figure 1.10).²⁷ These rigid highway conventions and standards have often led to ‘a sense of sprawl and formlessness and development which contradicts some of the key principles of urban design’. Highway engineers have been caricatured as the pariahs of the urban design professions. Indeed, it has been suggested that ‘Almost all the blame for the amount of disappointing bland housing estates can be laid at the door of highway engineers.’²⁸

Of course, it is not all one-way traffic; and Robert Cowan points out that the architecture and planning professions have to take their own share of the blame.²⁹ The issue of street design and street pattern is not necessarily one of inevitable inter-professional conflict. After all, disciplinary boundaries are somewhat fuzzy – even arbitrarily drawn in the first place – and different professions could be in charge of the different aspects of design.³⁰

In effect, then, urban designers and planners do not wish to claim the territory of the design of streets and patterns simply as a matter of



1.10 • Criticisms of the highway engineering influence on urban layout. For full citations, see Appendix 1.