Suburban case studies

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Allcourt Meadow, Lechlade, Gloucestershire

Championed by the Home Office for being safe and lauded for its landscaping, this scheme has finely detailed rear courts and a frontage onto meadow. However, with no "street", it is housing turned back to front and would be less successful if applied on a larger scale.

Description

Allcourt Meadow is a development of 20 dwellings for residents over 55 years of age only; a wide verge lined road with a gatehouse office leads to the centre of the scheme. Conceived as a reflection of traditional Cotswold architecture, it is constructed of rough faced stone, with either timber external lintels or stone dressings around window and some door openings. Roofs are finished in a textured slate, and there is significant attention paid both to soft landscaping, and the provision of low dry stone walls. These line a number of footpaths that give some permeability to the plan, and assist access to the garage courts.

The conscious separation of residents and their vehicles makes the off plot garage court an effective solution for achieving this. Although there are integral garages to the two detached ‘farmhouse’ types, the court accommodates both residents’ and visitors’ parking. At Beechcroft’s development in nearby Fairford, double yellow lines dominate (middle picture page 15), suggesting that parking to the front of the house was blocking the carriageway. Allcourt Meadow has no obviously similar parking prohibitions, but with the majority of front doors positioned away from the road it means that residents access the garage courts through their back gardens. Finishes are generally consolidated gravel to the courts, separated from blacktop roadways by strips of granite setts. Planting is very well established within the courts and contributed to the scheme’s 2003 Green Leaf Award.

A meadow separates the frontage of the development from the main Lechlade through road.
All parking is in rear courts: garages for residents sit opposite visitor spaces. Fronts of properties look over a meadow rather than a street.

**Cross-reference**
See also pages 73, 83, 85, 105 and 131

Quality detailing of access to houses and parking courts. Wide verge-lined access past gatehouse.

Notes
Potential practical difficulties may arise in physical separation of visitor parking (and access for the disabled) from houses.

Access from court to rear of properties may render front doors redundant.

Low walls to rear of gardens encourage surveillance of court.

Court arrangement allows very positive frontage to meadow.

Good quality materials, detailing and lighting encourage sense of ownership to court.

Unmarked visitors bays acts as unallocated overflow parking.
Bryanston Hills, Blandford Forum, Dorset

A scheme where carriageways are wide enough to accommodate some on street parking to supplement good provision on plot. Building lines are generally close up to the wide roads to maintain enclosure, and there are a variety on plot treatments.

Description

The strategy to create an intimate community of varied streets, skylines, and associated landscapes in this scheme reflects some principles implicit in relatively near neighbour, Poundbury - at least in relation to the latter’s first phase. Set on a sloping site, the street pattern is informally organised with footpaths permeating blocks, and two hub buildings; the first a tall rotunda at the entrance to the scheme, the second a so-called folly on a hammerhead near the apex of the hill. Throughout the scheme, materials are of good quality and include polychromatic brick, knapped flint and brick, stained shiplath boarding, and painted render. As at Poundbury, there is a mix of straighter, more formal streets, and those that curve out of sight. However, the lack of retail units and a major civic or landscaped space to focus the scheme create a very different effect.

There are two approaches to vehicle and pedestrian organisation. Entering the scheme, the street has no clear demarcation between pavement and street; multi coloured paviors are used with dropped kerbs and minimal definition of a zone separating the dwellings from the road. Elsewhere, blacktop is generally used, with conventional raised precast concrete kerbs and blacktop pavements; other carriageways are finished in herringbone patterned paviors, with traffic calmed by strips of ramped setts. Car parking in this development superficially uses similar solutions to Poundbury; a mixture of conventional on street parking, with garage and parking courts. However, a significant number of semi-detached houses have hardstandings by their side leading to single garages; conventional pressed panelled up and over doors are used to incongruous effect. In some cases, the hardstandings have a softwood pergola over; this is sometimes expressed as a single unit, in other cases, as a paired structure preceding the detached garages. The garage courts are treated differently, in some cases with (effective) joinery detail reminiscent of inter war suburbia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>2004</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developers</td>
<td>Blandford St Mary Homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects</td>
<td>Morgan Carey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building form</td>
<td>2, 2.5 and 3 storey detached and semi detached houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwelling types</td>
<td>3 and 4 bed houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>37 homes to the hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>223%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bryanston Hills, Blandford Forum, Dorset

**A On plot: car port with detached garage**

Car ports are constructed up to edge of pavement. Spaces are easily wide enough to accommodate most cars.

**Cross-reference**
See also pages 65 and 117

Garages are tucked deeper into plot. On street parking keeps the street active.

**B On plot: integral garage**

Integral garages lead to relatively blank street level. Street is a cul-de-sac to cars but permeable to pedestrians and cycles.

**Cross-reference**
See also pages 83, 109 and 121

Tightness of garages makes on street first choice. Unallocated bays on street.
Critical commentary

Depending on location, on street parking to narrower streets potentially creates visual and physical congestion.

Ambiguous definitions of kerbs (sometimes in same street) raises safety issues when vehicles parked close to homes.

Good visual contact between homes and vehicles.

Lends animation to street scene; simple, effective solution to visitor parking.

Combination of hardstanding and garage gives generous on plot provision; traditional virtues of convenience, accessibility, and storage.

On plot: car port with detached garage.

Lack of visual contact between residents and their vehicles caused by over use of integral garages and lack of bay windows to compensate.

Despite variety of finishes used elsewhere, hardstandings bleak, lack textural interest; more soft landscaping desirable.

On plot: integral garage.
Butts Green, Kingswood, Warrington

Traffic noise from the adjacent M62 demanded deep rear courts as sound attenuation. But the rest of the scheme proposed more original treatments, including several varieties of accommodation over garaging and some excellent public spaces with on street parking.

Date | 2005
Developers | Bellway Homes
Architects | John Wilson Associates
Building form | long and short terraced townhouses; detached and semi detached houses
Dwelling types | 2, 2.5 and 4 storey houses; studios; 1 and 2 bed flats
Density | 40 homes to the hectare
Parking | 175%

Description

Butts Green is an impressively detailed scheme of 149 homes developed in partnership with English Partnerships, largely constructed in red brick with matching reconstituted stone dressings around windows and doors. The overall effect is baronial, in particular in the main circus at which one arrives - and reinforced by distinctive manse style detached houses. The ratio of wall to window throughout is rather greater than usual, and the impression is one of solidity and robustness. Away from the circus, detached houses have intricately designed entrances with good quality gauged brickwork. Although the landscaping is not overly generous, finishes to roads and pavements are good quality, with herringbone patterned hardstandings in setts, and buff coloured consolidated gravel roadways. Generally speaking, dropped kerbs are the norm in this scheme.

Parking to the main part of the development outside the circus is dealt with by courts approached through arches under the terraces; in certain cases, these are simple pitched roof canopies rather than actual habitable accommodation over. On street parking to the circus itself is on the opposite side of the access road to the houses, abutting the landscaped area. Because of the presence of the M62 nearby, the bulk of the conventional, unsheltered parking is formed as an acoustic buffer to the east of the site between the motorway and homes. Terraced garages are generally arranged in groups of four, although some parking courts only offer hardstanding; this is presumably for visitors. Elsewhere, short terraces use dormered rooms in the roof to offer integral single garages at street level. There are some unusual 2 storey units with a garage at street level, and accommodation over. The scheme is distinctive in providing covered bicycle sheds in addition to 150 allocated car parking spaces.

View across green in housing square.
Butts Green, Kingswood, Warrington

A On street: angled to pavement

Semi private access to front of crescent good for defensible space

Spaces close to trees to reduce impact of cars.

Cross-reference
See also pages 69 and 131

B On plot: mews court

Duplex flatted accommodation over integral garages.

Access to block creates defensible space.

Additional spaces in front court.

Pedestrian route through to adjacent square.

Cross-reference
See also pages 61 and 73
Critical commentary

On street: angled to pavement
- Presence of cars interrupts view from ground floor area to landscape area

Integration of landscaped circus with quality parking solution promises a high quality environment when mature
- High quality detail design and material specification

Provision of on street unallocated parking supplements rear courts and encourages use of front of homes
- Good surveillance of cars from both homes and public space

On plot: mews court
- Location of entrance doors over emphasises hardstanding

- Lack of clarity in defining areas of visitors’ parking

- Fairly limited surveillance of external road caused by inward looking scheme

- Two storey accommodation over garages makes efficient use of land

- Entrance to and scale of court encourages sense of ownership and community interaction

- Good surveillance of parking court from surrounding homes
Butts Green, Kingswood, Warrington

C Off plot: rear court

Gable and bonded gravel lifts otherwise simple layout.

Houses act as sentries to separate access to court.

Generous proportions will cope with bad parkers.

Materials change on entry to denote private space.

Cross-reference
See also pages 73, 83, 85, 95 and 131

D On plot: chauffeur unit

Parking in front of chauffeur unit undermines its attempt to reinvent garages.

Easy access from parking to house, but nowhere for visitors.

Chauffeur units look at home in wider streetscape.

Back of chauffeur unit is a blank gable.

Cross-reference
See also pages 75, 85 and 109
Critical commentary

Location of parking may encourage users to come and go without accessing homes from street.

Courts remote from homes served; offer limited visual contact with residents’ vehicles.

Provision of bicycle sheds sensible, but offset by physical distance from homes.

Detailing to garage blocks of lower quality than surround housing blocks.

Landscape design promises much for future quality of court.

Surfacing materials of good quality.

Breaking block into three distinct parking courts encourages sense of ownership.

Off plot: rear court

Parking in front of chauffeur unit detracts from overall streetscape.

Creates limited ground floor surveillance.

Accommodation over garages encourages flexible living and adds visual interest to streetscape.

Easy access from garage to homes.

Off plot: chauffeur unit