

RECLAIMING THE STREET

The Dings Home Zone, Bristol



Source: *The Dings Home Zone*

If you've been to the cinema or watched television recently, you may have seen the latest round of advertisements to remind us that driving within the speed limit saves lives. The Dings community in Bristol have made a concerted effort to turn the streets in their area into safe places, not dangerous ones.

The Dings is a small residential area north of Temple Meads railway station in Bristol. For years the area had been blighted by rat-running and a severe commuter parking problem, with major access problems for emergency vehicles and traffic dangers for residents.

As part of the Europe-wide transport project VIVALDI (Visionary and Vibrant Actions through Local transport Demonstration Initiatives), Sustrans and Bristol City Council worked with the local community to develop proposals for a 'home zone' in the Dings. Home zones are groups of streets designed primarily to put the interests of pedestrians and cyclists first ahead of those of motorists. [Local residents have played a key role in all decision-making, from the overall design of the streets right down to detailed decisions](#) on the choice of road surface, planting and artwork.

The home zone project began in September 2004. Since then many of the planned changes have already been finished, including a new cycle and walkway linked to the National Cycle Network and the mainline rail station, and a safer cycling and walking route to the adjacent school. The new road layout has been 'designed for uncertainty' to slow down drivers by creating so-called 'shared-use areas'. These changes have been accompanied by campaigns to encourage people to get out of their cars and use other ways of getting around. One way of doing this has been to provide training on how to cycle safely.



Source: *The Dings Home Zone*

Some residents were concerned that motorists would not drive safely in the new space. To try and help educate the residents about the new space, they devised a scheme called Safe Car. Every household was asked to sign a safe car pledge agreeing to drive slowly and safely in the new home zone and to be considerate to pedestrians and cyclists in the home zone. Those who signed the pledge were given a Safe Car sticker to put in their car. When a large number of pledges had been secured, residents arrange a balloon launch to highlight the scheme and the local MP joined residents to release the balloons.

Local resident Marilyn Silverthorne says that, “The Safe Car stickers have helped to remind all residents that they should drive carefully now that the street layouts have changed. [The stickers in the cars are a good way to make sure that people are reminded that lots of their neighbours have pledged to drive slowly and carefully. If new residents see the sticker they ask what it’s all about, so it’s a good way to help educate them to drive carefully as well.](#)”

Bristol University, funded by the British Heart Foundation, is monitoring to what extent these changes are influencing how residents live and the travel choices they make. There are also plans to keep improving transport options in the area, with a car share club for short-term rental as an alternative to owning a car, and limits on parking so that people only park in marked bays.

But [not all the improvements have been directly about transport. Water, telecommunications and electricity systems have all had an upgrade](#), and there is now a sustainable urban drainage system, which reduces the potential for flooding through reducing the amount of hard-surface drains.

The project has also included a community arts programme – artists and writers have worked with residents to develop local sculptures in association with the Sustrans Art in the Travelling Landscape programme.

[Since the project began residents have formed the Dings Residents Association and an arts group, and a number of residents have led community gardening days.](#)



Source: *The Dings Home Zone*

Facts

- A government study by the Home Office on the “perceptions and experiences of anti-social behaviour”, found **speeding traffic** was seen as the **biggest problem by far**.
- According to Meyer Hillman, an expert on environmental issues, within a single generation, **the distance children roam on their own – their “home habitat” – has reduced to 1/9th** of the area they used to roam.

Further Information

- If you would like more information about similar projects to The Dings, contact Sustrans at National Cycle Network Centre. Call them at 0117 915 0323, email daniel.black@sustrans.org.uk or write to the Centre at 2 Cathedral Square, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5DD.