

Consider the proven evidence of accident records

CAN ROADS EVER BE TOTALLY SAFE?

Accidents occur when road users fail to cope with their environment. Road design is only one matter that affects road safety. Drivers may fail to cope if they are distracted, for example by a phone call, are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, are young and inexperienced or are elderly. Deaths and serious injuries caused by road accidents have decreased mostly due to modern vehicle design.

Accidents involving pedestrians and particularly children have not significantly changed and injuries to cyclists have increased. Motorcyclist accidents are high, due to some riders putting themselves at risk and, on urban roads, not being noticed.

Roads are never totally safe for everyone, but they can be designed to make accidents less likely.

COPING WITH A HAZARD

Accidents are less likely when drivers expect a hazard, are able to recognise the hazard and have time and room to react safely.

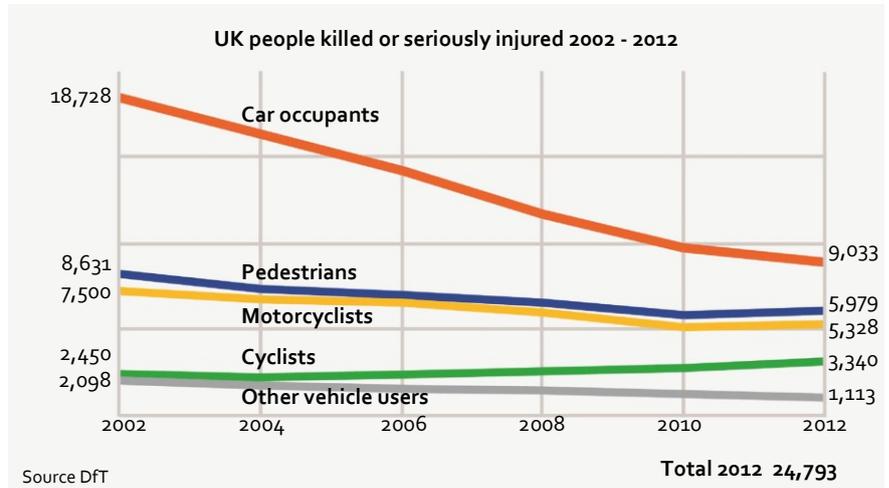
For example a driver entering a village or residential area should be able to appreciate that there may be pedestrians or cyclists crossing the road. If there are he should be able to see them in time to be able to stop safely.

In multi-use roads, moderate speed has a very significant effect on the likelihood and severity of accidents. The chance of a pedestrian being killed or seriously injured in an accident involving a vehicle travelling at 20 mph is less than 3%, if the vehicle's speed is 30 mph the likelihood is 20%. Where the speed is 40 mph, it rises to 90%.

PROVEN EVIDENCE

Accidents are more likely when a road appears to be safer than it really is. Multi-use roads, for example high streets that appear to be designed to almost motorway standards lead drivers to think they have more protection and priority than is available. This is because unlike true motorways, pedestrians and cycles are permitted and there is no room for the essential generous dimensions and layout of a fully segregated motorway.

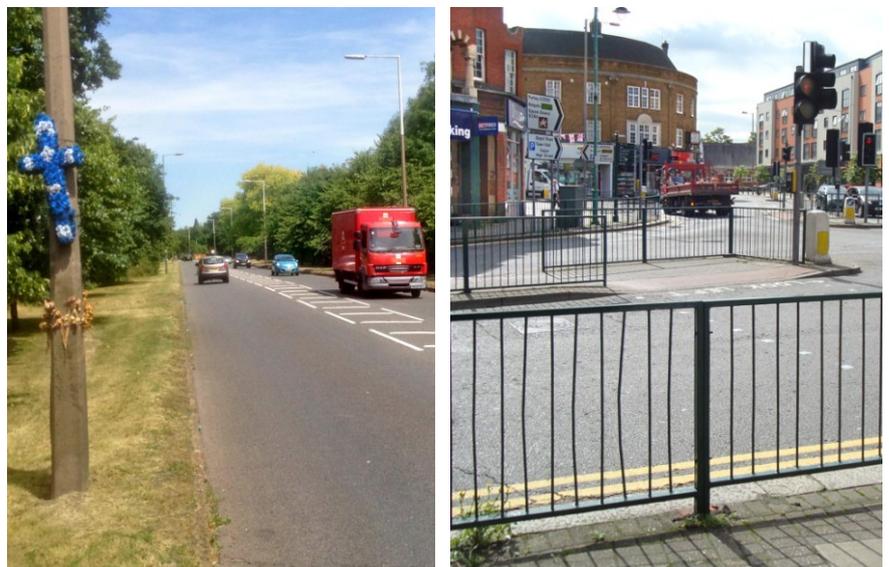
Wide straight roads are misleading and cause accidents. Some measures which have been applied in the interests of safety have little or no proven effect. Much of the current guardrailling and anti-skid road surfacing on roads merely give drivers the impression that a road is safe enough for them to relax their concentration. A review of the road safety evidence of these measures at specific locations will conclude that in many cases they should be removed.



The total number of accidents is reducing primarily because modern cars are safer



Traffic speed of 20 mph reduces both the likelihood and severity of accidents



Straight roads and guardrailling encourage drivers to think a road is safer than it really is