

# THE VALUE OF DESIGN RESEARCH

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## THE VALUE OF DESIGN RESEARCH IN IMPROVING CRIME PREVENTION POLICY AND PRACTICE

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## ABSTRACT

*The Design Against Crime Solution Centre at the University of Salford adopts a human-centred, design-led approach to issues of security, wellbeing and social responsibility. This paper explores how improved service design can enhance the efforts of urban planners, designers, architects and developers for effective crime prevention. It describes and critically reviews work undertaken to improve the design-led crime prevention service offered by Greater Manchester Police, as well as further research undertaken in 2008/09 to improve the service offered by police forces across England and Wales. Since 1990, Police crime prevention advice has been delivered by Architectural Liaison Officers (ALOs). ALOs assess urban designs with regard to potential impact on crime, anti-social behaviour and feelings of insecurity, making recommendations to urban designers, architects and planners as appropriate. The Solution Centre supported the redesign of Greater Manchester's ALO Unit, which became a consultancy service tailored to the needs and requirements of architects, developers and planners. Rebranded "Design for Security", "Design for Security Consultants" advise architects during the early stages of the design process—i.e. when findings and recommendations can be better integrated into the design solution. In 2012/3, cuts in public spending resulted in massive reductions in police staff, especially amongst ALOs. This paper critically discusses the value of design research in supporting policymakers and public service providers in the current environment of austerity, public spending cuts and significant political and organisational change.*

*Keywords:* Design Against Crime, service design, Design for security

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s, design was positioned primarily as a recipient of government support to improve design education and practice, and raise awareness of the value of a design approach within industry. In 1993, the UK Design Council announced that it aimed "*to inspire the best use of design by the UK, in the world context, to improve prosperity and well being*" (Swan, 2010, p. 4). From 2000, the Design Council worked in partnership with businesses, schools and public services organisations to integrate design thinking and methods into their strategies and systems, the aim being to strengthen and support the UK—economically and socially.

Design initiatives have addressed a range of policy issues including crime, health, sustainability and education (Burns *et al*, 2006). The argument being that design is well suited to solving complex economic and social policy problems. Over the last decade, the emphasis on the improvement of public services through a service design approach (Swan, 2010). However, design

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continues to be positioned in traditional business terms, with the emphasis on meeting user needs and cost-effectiveness. Design thinking can be applied to government policy-making and delivery more broadly, with the aim of benefiting society and public sector organisations. In this paper, the authors show how design research supported the redesign of the service delivered to architects and planners by Greater Manchester Police's Architectural Liaison officers (ALO), leading to research and proposals to improve the ALO service in England and Wales.

### 2 UK CRIME PREVENTION POLICY AND PRACTICE

Within the urban environment, crime, anti-social behaviour and insecurity are generally addressed using an approach termed *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* (CPTED). Formulated in the United States in the 1970s, CPTED aims to design out crime from the urban environment, and has been implemented to varying degrees across the world. CPTED is based on scientific evidence that reducing criminal opportunities reduces crime, with 'opportunity' being recognised as a fundamental causal factor in the occurrence of crime (Cozens *et al*, 2005; Felson & Clarke, 1998; Farrell, 2013).

#### 2.1 POLICE ARCHITECTURAL LIAISON OFFICERS (ALOS)

In 1989, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) established an accreditation scheme for homes and commercial buildings called *Secured By Design*. *Secured by Design* supports the application of Crime Prevention Through Environment Design (CPTED) principals through the use of effective crime prevention and security standards. Scientific evidence shows that Secured by Design reduces the risk of crime and improve feelings of security (Armitage, 2001). Furthermore, reductions in burglary levels across Europe are attributed to better design and security (Farrell, 2013; van Dijk *et al*, 2007; van Dijk, 2012/13).

Secured by Design is delivered by police Architectural Liaison Officers (ALOs). All 43 police forces in England and Wales employ ALOs. In some forces, the role is entitled Crime Prevention Design Advisor. ALOs assess urban designs with regard to potential impact on crime, anti-social behaviour and feelings of insecurity, making recommendations to urban designers, architects and planners as appropriate. According to the SBD Website:

*"The ALO is a specialist in security and crime risk management who will prepare a site specific risk analysis and recommend appropriate measures to design out crime" (SBD website).*

In other words, the ALO is supposed to tailor recommendations to risk of crime associated with a specific site and/or type of development.

### 3 INTEGRATING CRIME PREVENTION INTO PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

In the UK, local authorities were expected to consider prevention of crime and disorder through the planning process. Pressure to consider crime issues comes from Section 17 of the 1998 *Crime and Disorder Act* (Great Britain (1998), which states that:

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*"It is the duty of the authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise on crime and disorder in its area, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area."*

Following on from the Act, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) were established to tackle problems of crime and anti-social behaviour in the region. Renamed Community Safety Partnerships in 2010, these brought together police, local authorities (including planners and city managers) and other key stakeholders.

In 2004, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published "*Safer Places. The Planning System and Crime Prevention*". This document outlined clear policy statements arising from Planning Policy Statement 1, delivering sustainable communities that put "*crime prevention at the heart of the planning process*" (p. 45). It drew attention to the importance of "designing out crime" and "designing in community safety" within Planning Policy Guidance. The policy related to a range of developments types, including PPG3 (Housing), PPG6 (Town centres and retail developments), PPG13 (Transport) and PPG17 (Open space, sport and recreation). Crime prevention became a "*material condition*" when awarding "planning permission" within development control process. Developments judged vulnerable crime may be required to re-design and may ultimately be denied planning permission—a decision that is at the discretion of the local authority planning department. The planning departments usually seek advice from experts on the potential crime impact in the granting of planning permission, and in the UK police ALOs generally fulfil this role.

However, the police ALO role is usually a split role with other police duties. This limits the numbers of planning applications that ALOs can review. At the outset, ALOs mainly offered advice on large schemes. It is probably fair to say that the service was fragmented, and that planners were not very responsive.

## 4 CRIME PREVENTION PRACTICE IN MANCHESTER

In 1991, GMP appointed an Architectural Liaison Officer—an architect. The reason for appointing an architect rather than a serving police officer, as is the practice amongst other police forces, cannot be recalled. However, the practice continued, and it was to be the foundation for the development of a quite different type of service. In the late 1990s, the GMP formed an Architectural Liaison Unit, staffed by an architect and two surveyors. By the mid 2000s (2004 to 2005), four Architectural Liaison Officers were in post—all with a background in the development industry. The Architectural Liaison Officers were reviewing over 2,000 applications at planning committee phase.

The local authority responsible for Manchester is committed to addressing crime and terrorism through urban design and planning, as well as tackling any emerging problems that arise. In 2004, Manchester City Council implemented a planning condition for Secured by Design, where all plans had to conform to the standard of the UK *Secured by Design* accreditation scheme. This was an action that revealed a 'gap' in Greater Manchester's (GMP's) ability to deliver on the Secured by Design condition.

### 4.1 REDESIGNING GMP'S ALO UNIT

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There was a 'coming together of minds' between: (i) Assistant Chief Constable of GMP; (ii) the Head of Architectural Liaison Unit at GMP; and (iii) Head of Planning at Manchester City Council, who was responsible for planning within the borough of Manchester—one of ten boroughs within Greater Manchester. In addition, a partnership was formed between GMP and the University of Salford—the *Design Against Crime Solution Centre*.

A vision for GMP's Architectural Liaison Unit that extended beyond delivering on the Secured by Design condition was developed. This recognised the value of a design-led approach to crime prevention:

*"To establish an innovative Architectural Liaison Unit that increases the use and effectiveness of design-led crime prevention across Greater Manchester, and becomes a focus for innovation and best practice in the Northwest"*

There was more work than the current team could reasonable deliver, and a realisation of the need to:

- Influence designers much earlier in the design process
- Formally integrate CPTED advice within the planning process
- Generate funding to employ additional staff to cope with additional demands on the service

The majority of ALOs were rarely consulted at an early stage of the development process. In simple terms, the development process may be conceptualised as comprising three key stages (i) briefing; (ii) concept design, and; (iii) detailed design. These three stages, which take six months to two year (or more), occur prior to a planning application being submitted. If the application is granted planning approval, then construction can begin on receipt of formal approval. The stage at which the majority of UK ALOs reviews design proposals is at the planning application stage. Generally, ALOs were notified about applications by the planners, and this practice was dependent on local protocols. For instance, a local authority might specify that the ALO should review plans for "major developments".

GMP ALOs aimed to consult at the concept design stage. There are benefits to embedding crime advice within the early stages of the design process. When this is achieved, designers are able to understand all needs and requirements, use their creative skills to generate solutions and better integrate solutions into the design. This early stage integration is much preferable to 'retro-fitting' unsympathetic security devices after the design is complete.

The mechanism for this early stage consultation is the "*Crime Impact Statement*" (CIS). The CIS was designed to fit with the 'Impact Statement' model common for considering issues in building development, such as the "Environmental Impact Statement" and "Traffic Impact Statement". The CIS is a document divided into two parts:

- A. An evaluation of the crime risks associated with the specific development and location
- B. Recommendations for reducing vulnerability to crime specific to the development.

The CIS is implemented within building control by embedding it within the Local Planning Authorities' 'Local List' of information required to accompany all major

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planning applications. The applicant is therefore made aware that a CIS must be submitted when applying for planning permission and that consulting with GMP's ALO Unit would be beneficial.

The Solution Centre rebranded GMP's Architectural Liaison service "*Design for Security*" and the ALOs "*Design for Security Consultants*". The role of GMP's ALO was also redesigned. *Design for Security Consultants* provide a critique of a design from a security, crime and fear of crime perspective, acting as "*a critical friend*" rather than simply a "gatekeeper" for planning permission. The employment of ALOs with a background in the development industry is fundamental to the consultancy role. In addition, the Solution Centre helped GMP develop a more professional image by redesigning the Design for Security brochure and supporting the design and communication of the CIS.

Developers commission and pay for the CIS. In this respect, developers pay not simply for a CIS, but for a timely and professional advice service. Developers benefit from fewer "last-minute surprises" and costly planning delays. Experience shows that once the requirement to consider crime and security is understood, architects tend to rise to the challenge. *Design for Security* charges developers for the CIS service, based on the "polluter pays" principle (Design Against Crime project team, 2000). This generates funding to cover increased ALO resources required by CIS. It enables a much more professional, customer-focused 'consultancy' approach and improved training. It has also increased research and evaluation opportunities.

The CIS was introduced in 2006, but initially only applied to major residential developments. It is currently required for all developments comprising more than six dwellings. GMP and the Solution Centre were awarded the *Secured by Design Award for Innovation* in 2010. Moreover, the Solution Centre was invited to conduct research into the ALO service offered by other police forces.

## 5 DEVELOPING A NATIONAL POLICE CRIME PREVENTION SERVICE

The *Design Against Crime Solution Centre* was commissioned by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) to evaluate the ALO service in England and Wales and develop strategies to help improve police crime prevention services across England and Wales—a *National Police Crime Prevention Service* (NPCPS). It was recognised that the service offered by the majority of UK police ALOs was often limited to advising local planning authorities about large building developments, and that planners were not very responsive. In addition, arguments were breaking out between planners, architects and ALOs about the perceived vulnerability to crime of neighbourhoods based on an urban planning approach called "New Urbanism". However, there had been no systematic review of the ALO service in the UK.

As part of the NPCPS research, the Solution Centre conducted in 2008 a survey of all 43 police forces in England and Wales, from which 78 per cent of questionnaires were returned. The survey asked about the amount of time allocated to the ALO role. The results showed that only 14 per cent of ALOs were allocated solely to an ALO role, and that 86 per cent of were utilised for non-ALO duties. Furthermore, amount of time dedicated to ALO activity was often relatively small. Sixty per cent of ALOs spent less than half their time on ALO activities.

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The survey also examined early consultation, asking about the approximate percentage of planning applications the ALO is consulted on *before* the planning application is submitted. The majority of ALOs (64 per cent) were rarely consulted at an early stage—i.e. in less than 10 per cent of cases. This finding was important because it clearly demonstrated the relationship that the majority of ALOs had to the planning process.

The Solution Centre developed proposals for a National Police Crime Prevention Service to improve service quality, delivery and consistency in England and Wales. The proposals were informed by the development and evaluation of GMP's Design for Security service. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) endorsed the findings, supporting the development of a National Crime Prevention Service and promoting wider adoption of the "*Manchester Model*", developed by design researchers and Greater Manchester Police. Unfortunately, since 2010, political changes have resulted in little progress on the national approach.

### 6 THE CURRENT SITUATION FACING POLICE CRIME PREVENTION SERVICES

Police funding will reduce by twenty per cent in real terms by 2014/15 in response to the global financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 and cuts in police (HMIC, 2011). The focus is on maintaining "front-line" policing. In real terms, this is resulting in a significant reduction in the police workforce. Between March 2010 and March 2015, 34,100 staff will be made redundant. 16,000 are support staff (police staff)—the group that has traditionally delivered the UK police's Architectural Liaison Officer service to architects and developers. The authors are aware of redundancies amongst police ALOs, but have been delayed in re-administering the ALO service survey as a list of ALOs is no longer available. Accurate data on the current ALO service and the impact of public spending cuts is therefore not yet available. This issue is discussed further in Hirschfield *et al* (2013).

The ability to generate funding has protected GMP's crime prevention service from reductions in staff numbers, resulting from cuts in police funding in the UK. In this sense, the "*Manchester Model*" appears a more sustainable approach to crime prevention for police forces in the UK. Nevertheless, *Design for Security* is having to adapt to changing priorities within GMP and a continuing process of restructuring of police departments, as GMP seeks to cope with cuts in public funding. This understandably makes it difficult to deliver the quality of service envisaged within the "*Manchester Model*" and support on-going improvement. However, early-stage consultation is becoming more common.

Delivery of the service also depends upon partnerships with local authorities and integration within the planning process. Recent changes to the planning procedures suggest that service delivery can be jeopardised by legislation and policies that seek to streamline planning procedures.

The Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework resulted in "Streamlining the Planning Application Process" (2013), which states that:

*"An effective planning system plays an important role in supporting growth—promoting and enabling the homes, jobs and facilities that communities need, and minimising uncertainty and delay for those proposing or affected by development"*

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The current planning system is considered to be "*burdened by unnecessary bureaucracy*". The focus is on "*promoting sustainable growth*". The aim is to minimise uncertainty and delay for individuals and organisations applying for planning permission.

The powers of local authorities to request information from applicants for planning permission will be limited. For instance, "Design and Access Statements" used within building control may only be required on larger developments and historical areas. This may reduce consideration of crime and insecurity because this is a mechanism for evaluating potential vulnerability to crime.

Furthermore, planning controls will be relaxed. For instance, there will be an increase in existing permitted development rights, with certain developments being allowed to proceed without planning permission. There is always a danger that certain developments linked with increased crime risk will not have to apply for planning permission. The authors note with some concern that the "Safer Places" design guide was relegated to the UK National Archive in 2014. However, the actual impact of new planning policies on GMP's crime prevention service is not yet clear.

## 7 CONCLUSION

*Design for Security* consultancy service offered by GMP actively seeks to embed crime prevention within design. Consultants review all major building development projects submitted for planning approval. As local authorities have made it a condition for applicants to submit a *Crime Impact Statement (CIS)* with their application for planning approval, architects and developers are retaining *Design for Security* consultants at an early stage of the design process. Early stage consultation benefits architects and developers by allowing advice to be easily incorporated into the design. However, the Solution Centre suspects that the checking the plans may be difficult due to demands on time. In addition, the authors are aware of efforts to improve the CIS format. Unfortunately, efforts to improve service quality are being hampered by demands to adapt to changing organisational structures and police priorities. Importantly, the development of a fee-paying service has protected *Design for Security* from staff redundancies.

The experience of working and researching with the UK police reveals the value of design research to improving the quality and sustainability of public services, like policing. Furthermore, the police continue to welcome support from the Solution Centre in coping with increasing and changing demands.

The authors suggest that a design-led research approach offers a number of benefits to public sector organisations—and that this transcends the input from social sciences.

*Use of multidisciplinary teams* – Within the social sciences, it is common for a single researcher to undertake most of the research, under the 'supervision' of a project leader/professor. In design, it is much more common multidisciplinary teams to work together to understand problems and generate solutions. The Design Against Crime Solution Centre at the University of Salford is a collaboration between an industrial designer and an organisational psychologist, who work together in close collaboration with the Head of the ALO service in Greater Manchester Police at the forefront of developing and implementing new

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and innovative approaches to social problems. The Head of GMP's ALO service works closely with senior management from GMP and local authority planners. The participation of a team is fundamental to creative process development of a new service was only possible because 'like-minded' individuals came together and were able to bring about the necessary changes in practice and policy to make it happen.

*Research conducted with empathy and with a view to gaining "insight"* – The Solution Centre's team of researchers learn from informal discussions with key individuals and from the process of working together to improve service delivery, as well as from more traditional social science research—such as semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Furthermore, the insight gained by the researcher/designer is highly valued. It is recognised that the interpretations of the designer/researcher are subjective, but this does not undermine their usefulness. Indeed, the "insight" offered by a good designer/researcher is highly prized for its potential contribution to process of understanding problems and generating solutions. The "insight" gained by the researcher/designer is developed and validated through the design process.

*Ability and commitment to developing solutions* – Design research is not simply about exploring and understanding problems, but also developing solutions. The solution may take the form of a service, communication, product and building, but also concepts, policies and ideas. In relation to the UK police force, the Solution Centre supported the development of brands/logos, communication materials, service delivery concepts and methods for embedding crime prevention into existing processes. The findings from social science research were incorporated into documents and presentations designed to win support for concepts for service delivery.

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