



BALANCING ACT

Dominic Renney explores how to get the mix of security and aesthetics right

With an increase in pedestrianised spaces and placemaking throughout the world, planners have been given an opportunity to look at urban spaces differently; from designing fresh and exciting areas specifically for pedestrians to changing the way that existing town and city centres look and operate.

However, with this new opportunity comes a new responsibility, both for urban designers and councils/venue operators. For when we encourage people to gather – by creating pedestrian zones – there comes the implicit responsibility to ensure safety and security for anyone that uses them.

When designing or redesigning spaces, planners need to consider ways to mitigate potential hostile vehicle attacks and ensure pedestrian security. This can be achieved through the implementation of physical security products, for example HVM bollards. These are designed to mitigate hostile vehicle attacks and can reduce risks by providing a deterrent and impact-tested protection in the unlikely event of an attack. But how do you successfully implement the necessary security measures without compromising on area

aesthetics, and do aesthetics have to give way to a ‘fortress mentality’?

As with any urban planning project, thinking about the implementation of security can mean making compromises on aesthetics – after all, crash-tested HVM bollards are visible structures that might not fit an architect’s vision of a space. However, keeping the public safe should always be one of the primary concerns, and so finding a balance between the two is crucial for any project’s viability. The three considerations below offer a simple guide to ensuring the right security while achieving an aesthetic balance.

PROCESS

In security design, ‘process’ refers to the considerations between security risk, aesthetics and user considerations. This must include thinking about how proportionate a project is and how it justifies its cost, but also how each of the threads come together to make a project work best. This stage involves thinking about it in the broadest possible terms, involving designers, architects and security consultants to uncover any concerns that each might have about the aesthetic-security balance.

Dominic Renney is ATG’s Product Specification Manager and has a wealth of experience working collaboratively with clients and designers developing robust project specifications which not only work operationally but also look good and meet security requirements.



PROPORTIONALITY

The second step to balancing the security and aesthetic concerns is working out the proportionality to balance a project’s threat-versus-risk score. This can help to guide the balance between aesthetics, usability and security robustness, hopefully finding an acceptable level for each factor. Security consultants work with developers and architects during this stage to agree on a level of security that not only keeps the public safe, but also lives up to the architect’s and designer’s expectations.

PEOPLE

The final consideration to ensure that the security and design principles don’t impede each other is that people are at the heart of everything to do with projects. Making sure that the right people are brought in at the right stages to be able to start the conversations early is key to finding the right balance.

Finding the right balance between security and aesthetics can be easy when the competing factors are managed successfully, and that compromise is found as early as possible in the process. Every project should have public safety at its heart, and bringing in a

security consultant to start the conversation about what needs to be done can help to define the art of the possible.

Likewise, it is vital to look at the security of a specific area holistically, bringing in different stakeholders to develop a wider scheme. This can help to reduce the visual impact of security measures, rather than creating a ring of steel, while ensuring that a wider area is secured – this averts the problem of stakeholders failing to work together and focusing on boundaries.

Other tactics, such as changing road layouts by creating narrower lanes and adding chicanes to reduce vehicle speed, can help to bolster security without damaging aesthetics. The lower the speed and the smaller the vehicle able to gain access to a space, the slimmer and smaller the measures that may need to be deployed.

Finally, some dual-purpose measures can be incorporated into the landscape. So, for example, HVM bollards might be used as cycle stands, planters and bins. Effective planning can help to minimise street clutter and integrate these items as and where they’re considered appropriate ●



Bollards can reduce risks by providing protection in the unlikely event of an attack