4.2.6 Materials and Finishes

The use of materials and finishes is one of the most defining elements of a street, particularly where it is used to define the levels of segregation and integration within a street. The material palette can define space, calm traffic and improve legibility, reducing the need for barriers, signage and line marking in favour of texture and colour. Materials can be used to enhance the value of place and produce more attractive and cost-effective streets.

When choosing surface materials, designers should:

- Use robust surfaces (such as natural stone, concrete block paving or imprinted asphalt) extensively throughout *Centres* and around *Focal Points* to highlight the importance of place, calm traffic and alert drivers of higher levels of pedestrian activity (see Figure 4.23).
- Use robust surfaces and/or changes in colour around *Gateways* and *Transitional Zones* to alert drivers of changing driving conditions (see Section 3.3.4 Wayfinding).
- Choose items from a limited palette to promote visual cohesion (see Section 5.2.1 Policy and Plans).
- Apply a hierarchical approach to the application of materials. Altering the palette according to the street hierarchy and/or importance of place will assist in way finding.
- Use of contrasting materials and textures to inform pedestrians of changes to the function of space (i.e. to demarcate verges, footway, strips, cycle paths and driveways) and in particular to guide the visually impaired (see Section 4.3.4 Pedestrianised and Shared Surfaces).

The layout and colour of tactile paving used to assist the visually impaired in navigating the pedestrian environment should ensure that a consistent logic is applied. This includes the cumulative impact of tactiles with other material choices. For example, the use of strong red or yellow tactile paving may not be appropriate to avoid visual clutter associated with too many surface types or colours. In such instances an approach which balances the need for visual contrast (to aid the visually impaired) whilst promoting visual cohesion is preferable (see Figure 4.24). Further guidance on the use of tactile paving may also be taken from Section 13.3 of the *Traffic Management Guidelines* (2003) and the UK *Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving Surfaces* (2005).

Figure 4.23: O'Connell Street, Dublin. The high place status, intensity of activity and low design speed (30 Km/h) is highlighted by high quality and robust materials, such as granite paving.

Designers may have concerns in regard to the initial costs associated with using higher specification materials and their ongoing maintenance. The use of higher quality materials has wide economic benefits. For example, in relation to shopping streets, research in the UK has shown that streets finished with better quality materials result in better market prices, better rents and better retail sales.[17] Capital costs should also be measured against savings that result from a reduction in the need for barriers, signage, line marking and longer term costs related to durability and maintenance. Further guidance may be obtained from *Advice Note 2 - Materials and Specifications* and the *Natural Stone Surfacing - Good Practice Guide (SCOTS Guide) (2004)* .

The quality of materials may also be selected to ensure that more robust and higher quality materials are used where they are most needed and appreciated. Figure 4.25 from the *Adamstown Street Design Guide* (2010) provides an overview of how the standard of materials may be applied with regard to amenity, density and activity. When applied systematically it directs the designers to use the highest specifications of materials in the *Centres* and along streets which are the most active, such as *Arterial* and *Link* streets. It will also direct the use of higher specification materials to the vicinity of *Focal Points*. Good results may also be achieved on lower budgets, provided material selection has the desired effect of supporting other measures aimed at calming traffic and defining place (see Figure 4.26).

Figure 4.24: Example form Drogheda, Co. Louth, of red tactile paving at a zebra crossing which has been toned down to balance the degree of contrast with higher specification materials.

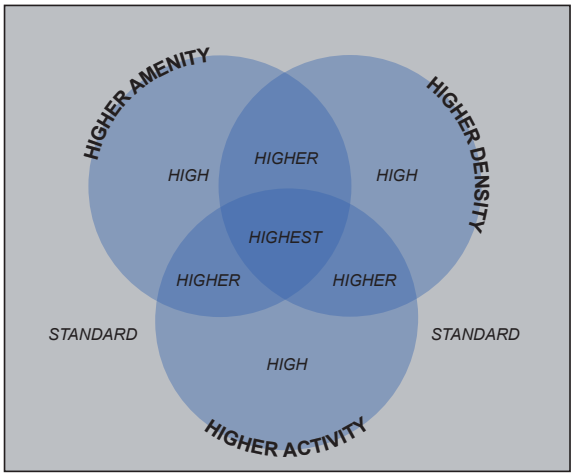

Figure 4.25: Diagram illustrating a hierarchical and cost-effective approach to the specification of materials on streets.

Figure 4.26: Fade Street, Dublin City Centre. To reduce the overall cost of work in remodelling the street, lower budget materials such as HRA with coloured aggregate chips and epoxy resin bound surfaces were used on the carriageway and footpath, respectively.

17 Refer to *Paved with Gold* (2007).