

GUARD RAILS: PART I

Are they really necessary?



Guard rails, questioning if more really is better



People prefer to take the shortest route



If needed, elegant designs are available



Guard rails in the Strand were removed in 1996



Guard rails removed at Clapham High Street, allowing people to decide for themselves

GUARD RAILS A BRITISH TRADITION?

This country still installs far more guard rails than any other. There seems to have been a tradition that guard rails are fixed at every pedestrian crossing.

Yet there is little or no evidence that they serve any purpose.

They can be positively dangerous by forcing people to take unnecessary risks.

CAN THEY BE ELEGANT?

There are few places where guard rails do have a purpose, such as where people would have to cross several lanes of moving traffic, each of which is carrying out complex turns and directions. But in these places they should be elegant and well maintained (far left).

At formal crossings and at other places where people want to cross the road, they can be removed, as at Charing Cross Station on the Strand, London (left). People are able to cross the road quite safely.

A TEST TO SEE IF THEY ARE NEEDED

Transport for London, who control the majority of main roads in London have their own test to decide if guard rails are needed. As a result 90% are removed when junctions are redesigned.

CASE STUDY: Clapham High Street

In the south London scheme more than half of the pedestrians cross the road near, but not on the formal crossing in south London. This allows those who feel they can make decisions for themselves, to do so. It also reduces the frustration of having to wait when it is clearly safe to cross.