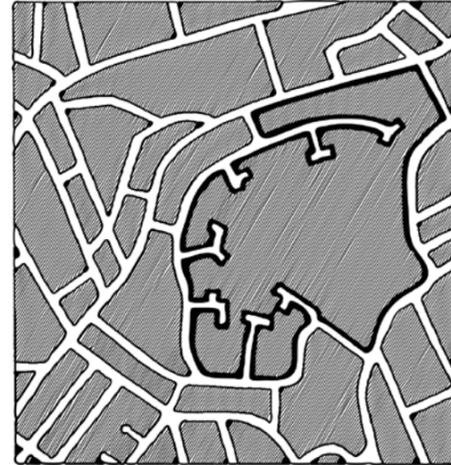


LEFT Connected vs unconnected routes: the layout (far left) has only three routes, but the one on the left has a choice of nine

RIGHT Dead-end streets cut you off from your neighbours and your neighbourhood

Diagrams © Responsive Environments: A Manual for Designers by Ian Bentley, Sue McGlynn and Graham Smith



dead-end street layouts offer some benefits but even more drawbacks, and you'll need to balance these when making your choice. Generally, cul-de-sacs are very quiet places with little traffic, and this can be an advantage for noise and for when children want to play out in the street. But the very things that can make them attractive can also cause problems. Homes in cul-de-sacs are a staggering 30% more likely to be burgled than those on connected streets. This risk can rise to even more dizzying levels if a series of cul-de-sacs are linked by footpaths, leading to a mind-blowing five-fold increase in instances of break-ins and burglaries.

The reason for this increase in property crime is due to cul-de-sacs being poorly surveilled, meaning that there are fewer people around to keep an eye on your home for you when you are out. Because they are dead ends, there is little chance of a burglar being disturbed as it's unlikely that there will be many people around

or passing through. The consequences of this are higher home insurance premiums, more costly home protection measures and less peace of mind. You'll have to decide on what level of risk you are comfortable with, but we think you'll agree that the figures make sobering reading.

And it's not just property security that can suffer from disconnected living. If you live in a cul-de-sac, you are far more likely to drive because the walking routes are often indirect, can feel boring as footpaths run between close-boarded garden fences and can seem positively dangerous at night. Hank Dittmar, director of the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment, claims that many people routinely burn a litre of petrol on a shopping trip for a pint of milk. "If you live at the end of a cul-de-sac in a housing estate, you have to drive to a collector road, then to a main road, to another collector road, to another cul-de-sac, to the shop," he says. "If you live on a set of interconnected blocks, you can

walk there." At today's prices, that pint of milk would cost £2.10 if we add in the true cost of using the car for short journeys.

Aside from wasting money on fuel and causing more damage to the planet, this can have dire consequences for your waistline, too. Dr Richard Jackson, the American public health expert, has shown that people who live in car-based communities weigh, on average, six pounds more than those in traditional towns because they have far less opportunity to burn a few extra calories through walking.

Finally, because layouts based on cul-de-sacs separate one group of houses from another, it can be very difficult for visitors to find your house without getting lost or taking the wrong turn. Instead, look for neighbourhoods that have streets and footpaths that are well-connected to surrounding areas and that are easily navigated by foot and by car.

Neighbourhoods in older and more historic places are usually laid out in a very different pattern and have straighter, more connected streets. This type of layout is much easier to grasp and move around in, giving you a choice of direct routes to where you want to go with little or no backtracking. As one street is connected to another, there tends to be more people moving around and this both increases opportunities to bump into neighbours and friends as well as decreasing instances of crime.

### NEXT TIME...

You now know what to look for when choosing your location, and you can start to build a picture of what your neighbourhood has to offer. Next month, we'll carry on our journey, adding to our list as we go. We'll be looking at the things that make your street desirable to live in and what factors help you when you come to sell on. When we're done, you'll be able to buy with confidence and know that your new home meets your needs.

