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GUIDE TO IMPROVING SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS IN THE BRUSSELS REGION

# REINVENTING SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS

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## GUIDE TO IMPROVING SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS IN THE BRUSSELS REGION

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS


P

# INTRODUCTION

## CONTEXT

Every day of the week, children and teenagers travel to and from school. They pass through the school gates at the start of the day, and meet up with their parents or friends at the end of the day.

School surroundings are an important environment not only for students, but also for school staff, parents, grandparents and other visitors.

Between the school and the public space, the school reception area is also a space that benefits all citizens.

In the Brussels-Capital Region, there are no fewer than 848 schools spread across the entire territory. The surroundings of these schools varies to a significant extent, depending on the characteristics of the urban fabric of which the infrastructure is part (density of urban environments, accessibility by public transport, proximity of public spaces, green spaces, etc.).[1]

The environment near schools is therefore not always suited to the needs of the youngest children.

The aim of this guide is to provide solutions to improving the quality of school surroundings in the Brussels Region, taking into account the constraints inherent in each school environment, and proposing actions in line with the current needs of society.

By putting the child's eye view at the centre of our thinking, we can envisage an overhaul in the design of school surroundings and the public spaces that make them up.

From there, taking into account the safety of the area, creating a friendly, fun environment, and creating the right conditions for young people to flourish, becomes all the more important.

This paradigm shift can also be the starting point for a more overarching urban transformation. By taking children's needs into account in urban planning, we create public spaces that are safer, more comfortable, more convivial and more accessible to all residents.

Over the last few years, a major dynamic has emerged on the issue of school surroundings in the Brussels Region. Public authorities, associations, school headmasters/mistresses and parents are getting together to think about redesigning school surroundings and changing the way people travel around cities.

There are more and more interventions in public spaces by communities or schools themselves, school streets are receiving increasing attention from local authorities, and various regional policies show that the public authorities are also taking the lead.

For example, the Good Move regional mobility plan explicitly puts forward the STOP principle as a guideline for redeveloping streets and squares. This principle aims to ensure satisfactory travel conditions for everyone, depending on the mode of travel chosen, according to the following order of priority: walking-cycling-public transport-car[2].

1 Study on the quality of school infrastructure for standard basic education in the Brussels-Capital Region. This study is available on the perspective.brussels website: https://beecole.brussels/sites/default/files/documents/etude_qualite_infrastructures_scolaires_rapport_ipe.pdf

2 https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/good-move

← Entrance of the Municipal School n°1, Rue Josaphat, Schaerbeek. © citytools-2020

The Go4Brussels 2030 strategy of the Brussels Regional Government includes concrete tools to improve the urban environment of schools, in particular through the School Contract scheme. Brussels Mobility has drawn up a road-map for creating school streets, and financial resources are made available to municipalities via calls for projects (creation of school streets, modifications for road safety, etc.).

Finally, since January 2021, 30 km/h has become the default speed limit in the Brussels-Capital Region.

Growing awareness of road safety, air quality and the quality of interactions in the public space will clearly transform school surroundings in the Brussels-Capital Region in the years to come.

*Filter Café Filtré* takes action against air pollution at the school gates. Between March and October 2018, 137 schools in the Brussels-Capital Region took part in street protests to demand better air quality and a safer school environment.


↑ © FilterCafeFiltré

Many schools make their own furniture to improve the school environment. Here, at the Saint-Antoine school in Forest, colourful pallets are used to mark out the street space reserved for the school's children.

↑ © Suède36

More and more schools are introducing school streets. Via Brussels Mobility, the Brussels Region subsidises the implementation of the test phase of the school street and the furniture to close the street off, for a permanent project.


↑ © GoodPlanet

# FOR WHOM?

This guide is intended for all stakeholders concerned with the surroundings of primary and secondary schools in the Brussels-Capital Region.

- Public authorities: the relevant departments of the Brussels municipalities and the Region, as responsible for roads near schools, the regional departments involved in supporting projects to develop school surroundings (Brussels Mobility, BMA), and the Communities, as responsible for school infrastructure.
- Designers of the modifications: architects, landscape architects and urban planners in charge of transforming school surroundings.
- Schools and their organising bodies: management, teaching staff, students, parents and their associations who, as users, would like to be involved in these modifications. What's more, they have the resources to call on the public authorities and encourage them to undertake the necessary transformations around their schools.
- The citizens of Brussels: all people concerned by the vicinity of a school who, as users of these public spaces, would like to get involved in transforming these surroundings. Modifying school surroundings can improve mobility, comfort, safety and quality of life for all users.

# WHY?

The guide in your hands aims to provide an inspiring reference tool for quality school landscaping in the Brussels Region. In a single brochure, it offers a set of recommendations and concrete steps that can be taken right away to bring about change.

Without replacing existing guides to public spaces in Brussels, this guide is intended to contribute to current thinking by taking into account the specific challenges of school environments and their main users: young people and children.

It also responds to a desire to offer a common frame of reference and therefore bring greater visual coherence and a recognisable spatial identity to school surroundings in the Brussels Region that will be redeveloped in the coming years. Indeed, despite the growing attention paid to school surroundings, there is still no uniform approach to their design. This guide, with recommendations, aims to achieve greater harmony in town planning projects, avoid the deterioration of the public space, and improve user safety.

This guide is the result of a collaborative effort involving a wide range of stakeholders: municipal authorities, who shared their experience and expertise during support committees; resource persons from regional authorities, who helped proofread the document; and school headmasters/mistresses, teachers, students and parents, who took part in various workshops.

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide brings together a set of recommendations for improving the quality of school surroundings. Without aiming to be exhaustive, it nevertheless offers a broad spectrum of interventions from which you can draw inspiration to take action. This guide can therefore be used "à la carte": the aim is to achieve the highest possible quality of design, taking into account the objectives you have set yourself, the specific context of your school, and the means at your disposal. The structure of the guide will help you navigate through these recommendations, taking these different elements into account.

## Recommendations

### Four qualities

The recommendations are divided into four main categories, corresponding to the first four chapters of the guide:

- Safe school surroundings;
- Friendly and accessible school surroundings;
- Green school surroundings;
- Identifiable school surroundings.

The aim is to strive for these four qualities in order to design a successful overall project. It's a good idea to go back and forth between these different chapters.

However, depending on the objectives you set yourself, and taking into account the issues on the ground, you may find yourself working more on one quality than another. If necessary, you can go straight to the chapter that best corresponds to your objective.

↑ Entrance of the Municipal School n°6, Georges Primo, Rue Richard Vandevelde, Schaerbeek. Georges De Kinder © urban.brussels

### 01. SAFE SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS:

Schoolchildren are vulnerable users of the roads. At rush hour, different modes of transport go past the front of the school. In most cases, this leads to complex situations, and sometimes to conflict. Safe school surroundings ensure that the weakest users are also safe, and accelerates the development of sustainable mobility.

See page 17

### 02. FRIENDLY AND ACCESSIBLE SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS:

The public space around the school is an important part of students' lives. It's where young people meet before and after school. It's also the place where parents wait for their children and get to know each other. Friendly school surroundings facilitate these interactions and uses, while integrating into the setting. The school entrance remains accessible to all citizens, and in particular to people with reduced mobility.

See page 35

### 03. GREEN AND HEALTHY SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS:

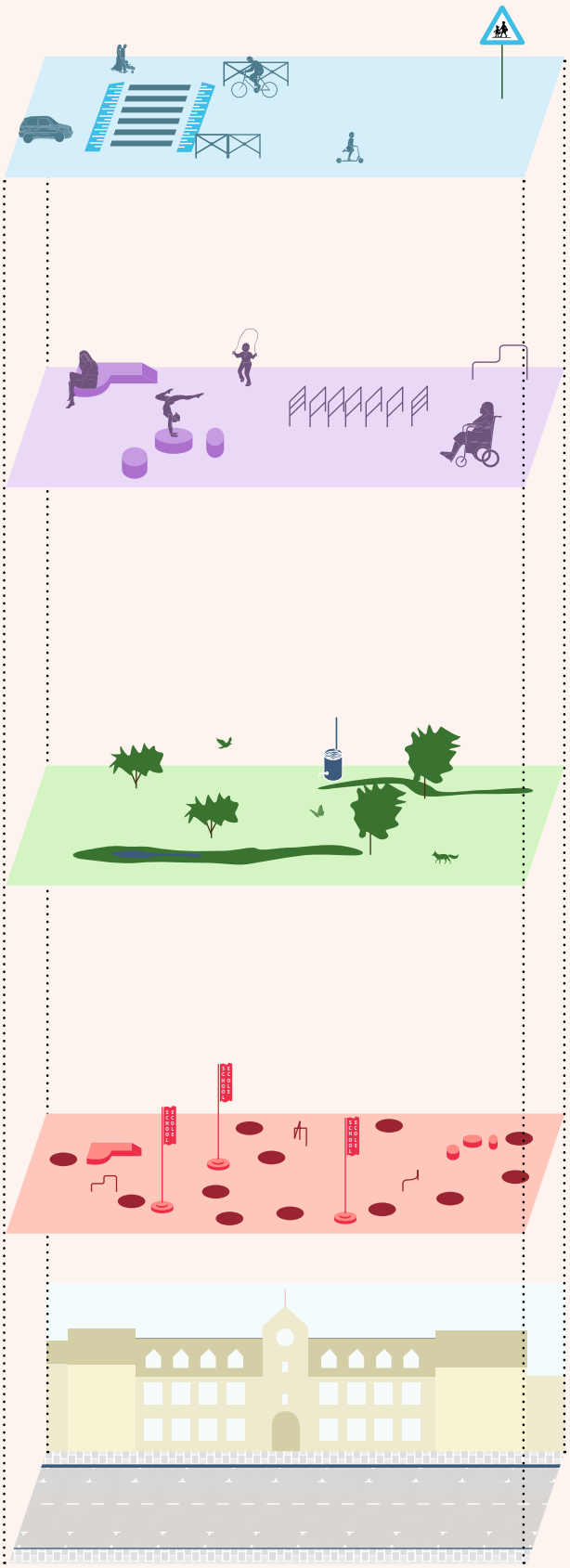
The ecological quality of a school environment, and keeping cars away from the school, have a positive influence on air quality and the noise environment around the school. The presence of green spaces can also play an educational role in raising students' awareness of protecting nature. A green school fosters the presence of nature in the city and sets an example for younger generations.

See page 47

### 04. IDENTIFIABLE SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS:

The graphic identity of schools and their surroundings ensures visual coherence within the region and makes schools landmarks in the landscape of the neighbourhood. Recognisable school surroundings are the best way to alert motorists to the presence of students. Recognisable school surroundings ensure the school's visual imprint in the urban landscape.

See page 57



## Various scales of intervention

The recommendations you will find in this guide take into account, where appropriate, various scales of intervention. They are summarised here as: the school forecourt, the street and the neighbourhood.

In an overarching approach to the quality of school surroundings, the aim is to take into account not only the direct surroundings of the school, but also the wider context of the street and the neighbourhood. In addition to the school entrance and street layout, the routes taken by students to get to school, for example, are just as important in improving the overall quality of the school environment.

However, depending on the characteristics of the neighbourhood, the street and the resources available, it is not always possible to intervene on a large or medium scale. It will therefore be important to develop an approach that best suits the given context.

### SCHOOL FORECOURT

A school forecourt is the area in front of the school gate where students, teachers and parents are welcomed before and after classes. The forecourt is a buffer zone between the intimacy of the school and the public space surrounding it. An extension of the school into the public space, the forecourt is an area where students and their parents must be able to stay and move around safely.

For example, a widened pavement in front of the school gate can be pleasant without modifying the flow of traffic. A simple layout can therefore already bring significant improvements in terms of road safety, cohabitation between users of the public space, opportunities for interaction and landscape quality. This scale is preferable if you can't change the flow of traffic, or if you have limited means at your disposal.

### THE STREET

During rush hours, the school street is used by a large number of users (pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, public transport, etc.). Before or after classes, students often make their way to the school street to hang around, wait or play. The street must be designed to accommodate these uses.

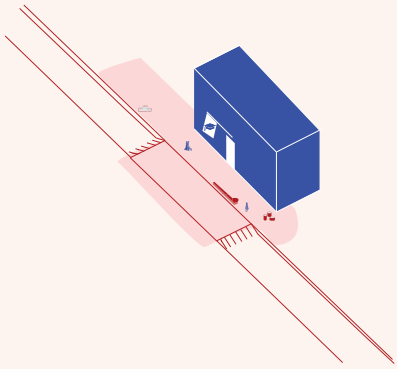
Intervention on this scale could, for example, involve putting in place a 'school street'. In this case, the street is temporarily closed to traffic when students arrive and leave. The work can be carried out quickly and does not necessarily require any infrastructure redevelopment. Another option would be to completely modify the street to turn it into a pedestrian zone. A facade-by-facade renovation requires more time and money, but will have a greater impact.

### NEIGHBOURHOOD

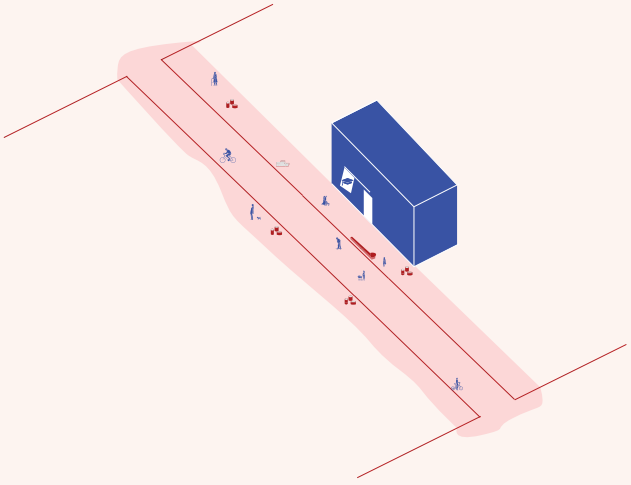
Outside school hours, students often occupy spaces in close proximity: public transport stops, swimming pools, gyms, parks, libraries, street corners and small squares. Alone or in groups, on foot or by bike, youngsters and children make their way through the neighbourhood. The layout of streets, crossroads and squares must take this aspect into account. This means ensuring safety and comfort well beyond the school pavement.

Traffic in the neighbourhood can be calmed by introducing strolling zones or pedestrian zones, or by a traffic plan (e.g. one-way streets). If changes to traffic flow cannot be implemented, improvements can be made to pedestrian crossings and pavements to ensure safety in the neighbourhood.

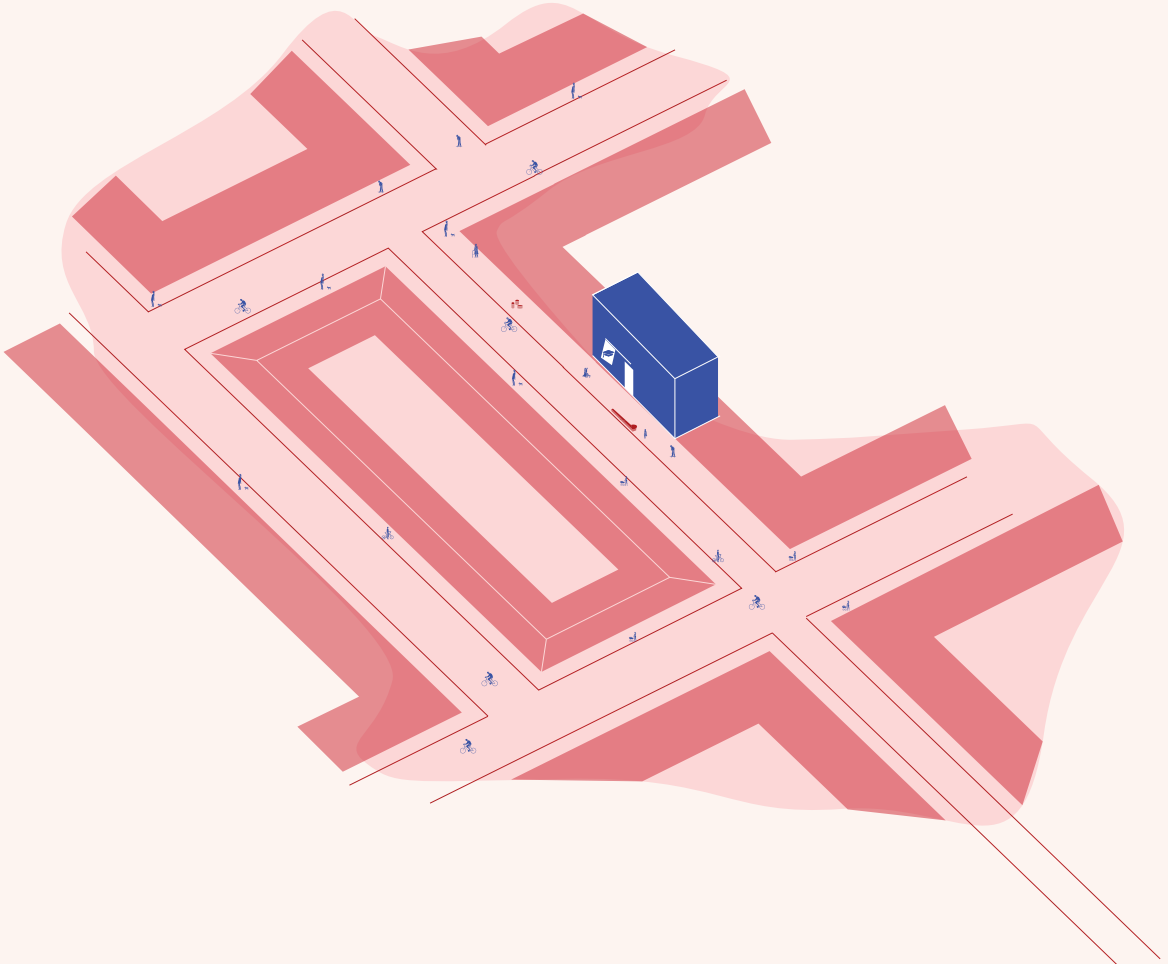
## THE SCHOOL FORECOURT



## THE STREET



## THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



## Quick-wins

Quick-wins are interventions that are quick to implement, require little in the way of budget, but already have an impact on the quality of school surroundings.

They are there to inspire you to take action, even on a limited budget. These small-scale interventions can be initiated by the managers of the roads concerned, or by the schools themselves, associations or motivated residents, subject to approval by the public authorities.

In some cases, quick-wins can also represent a first step or a first stage towards a bigger ambition, which includes more long-term modifications requiring a more substantial budget.

## Points to bear in mind

The points to bear in mind highlight a number of elements to be considered when redesigning school surroundings.

## Quality checklists

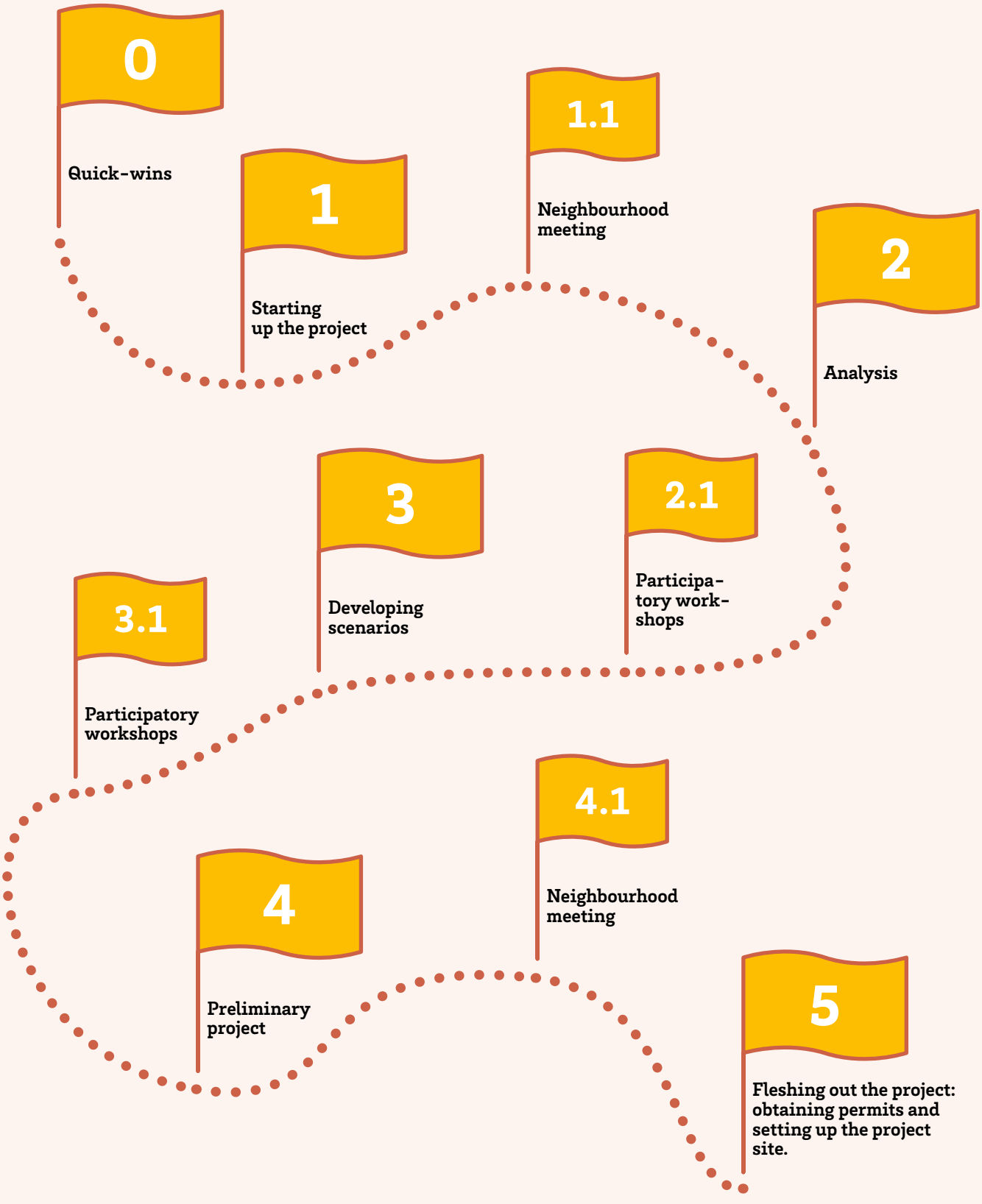
At the end of each thematic chapter, you'll find a checklist to help you assess the quality of a school's approach. By asking a few simple, concrete questions, you'll be able to get an initial idea of the priority areas to work on around the school.

# The stages of realisation

This final chapter presents a 5-step plan for devising a complete overhaul of the public domain surrounding the school. These stages are intended to guide any public stakeholder wishing to initiate comprehensive change with a view to achieving the four qualities described in this guide: safe, friendly, green and identifiable school surroundings.

The stages are accompanied by fact sheets offering concrete ideas and best practices for setting up a participative process at each stage of the project. Consultation with the stakeholders involved in the transformation of the public space (students, headmasters/mistresses, teachers, residents, etc.) is essential in designing a quality project.

## STAGES OF REALISATION

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# SAFE SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS

## RECOMMENDATIONS 01

Schoolchildren are vulnerable users of the public roads, and the layout of roads must ensure they are protected. Wherever possible, the "STOP" [3] principle should be applied to restore the disrupted balance of "only car use" in favour of sustainable modes of transport. By systematically reducing the number of motor vehicles on the streets, school surroundings can become pleasant and safe places of interaction.

It is possible to limit or prohibit the presence of cars on three spatial scales:

- The direct environment at the school entrance;
- The street and nearby crossroads;
- The entire neighbourhood around the school.

Safe school surroundings are important to encourage sustainable modes of travel to school. As long as parents find it too dangerous to walk, cycle or take public transport to school with their children, they will remain prisoners to mobility by car and will themselves make the roads less safe for other users. A weak link in the route, such as a dangerous pedestrian crossing, may dissuade parents from letting their child travel alone.

Clear choices and a comprehensive approach are therefore essential if we are to break the vicious circle of unsafe roads. In addition to reducing the number of motor vehicles, developing safe networks for pedestrians and cyclists (separate facilities for cyclists and pedestrians) is particularly important in this respect.

← School street in Amsterdam converted into a pedestrian zone.
© Perspective

3 An acronym derived from Dutch and used in Brussels in both languages, the STOP principle (in Dutch 'Stappen', 'Trappen', 'Openbaar vervoer', 'Personenwagen') gives priority in ascending order to walking (S = Stappen), cycling (T = Trappen), public transport (O = openbaar vervoer), and finally the car (P = personenwagen).

# FREE UP SPACE TO CREATE A SCHOOL FORECOURT

A first high-quality intervention in favour of safety around schools consists of freeing up sufficient space in front of the school entrance to allow a forecourt to be created. Space can often be saved by eliminating (or moving) parking spaces.

This is the first step towards a high-quality area in front of the school entrance. The aim is to create sufficient, comfortable and safe space. The surface of the parking spaces and the remaining spaces are reallocated for pedestrians and schoolchildren, freeing the pavement in its continuity for other pedestrians using it (including people with reduced mobility).

The presence of cars in front of the school entrance also hinders good visibility of the school and its entrance, and therefore of the children and young people. In fact, most of them cannot be anticipated or seen by drivers using the road, as they are concealed by parked cars. This is a safety hazard for students who cross without looking or being seen. In the case of elementary schools, this unsafe situation due to parked cars in front of the school entrance is all the more critical as parents wait on the other side of the street and children hurriedly cross it.

Nevertheless, bear in mind that eliminating parking spaces may be a bone of contention in a neighbourhood. It will be easier to gain acceptance for this measure if neighbourhood users understand the reasons for it and the benefits: child safety, improved and more comfortable school entrances, public spaces for the neighbourhood, and so on.

The redevelopment of the forecourt at the Maison des Cultures de Saint-Gilles is a good example of a minor intervention that has produced rapid benefits for users. The parking spaces have been replaced by a large forecourt that also incorporates planted areas. Decorative elements also mark the building as an emblematic place in the neighbourhood.

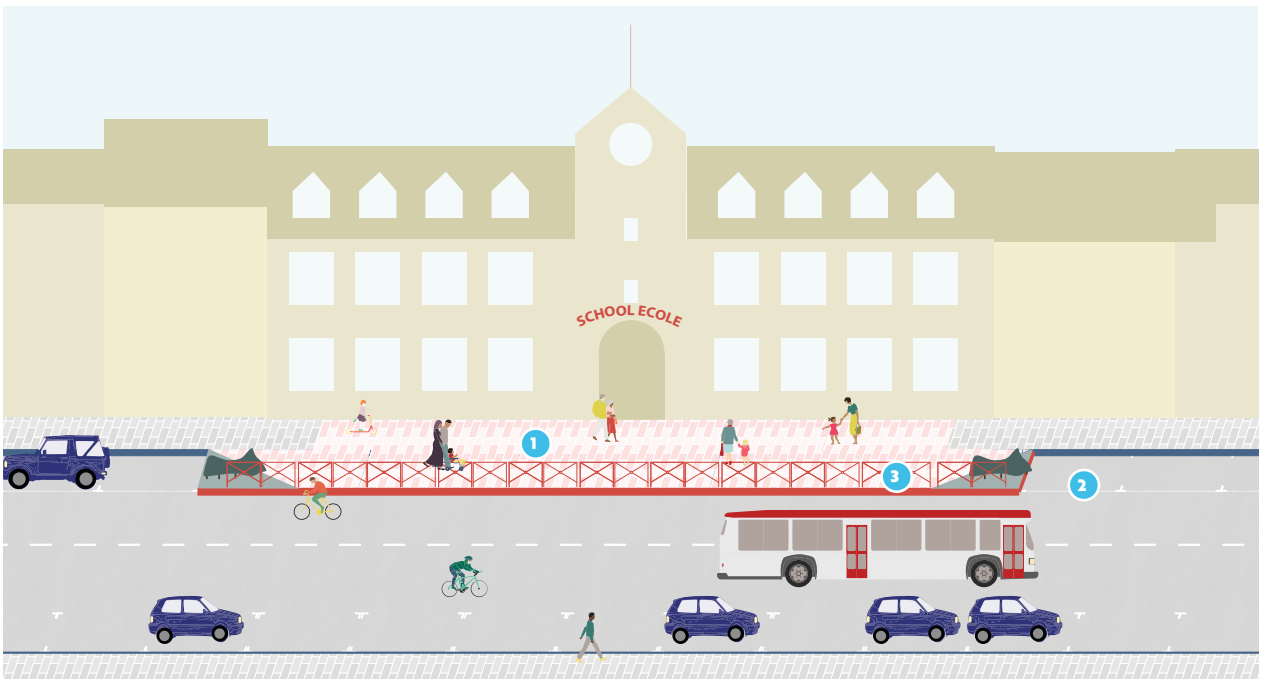
↑ Maison des Cultures, Rue Belgrade, Saint-Gilles
Séverin Malaud © urban.brussels


↑ Maison des Cultures, Rue Belgrade, Saint-Gilles
© Suède36

Temporary furniture can replace parking spaces, freeing up space for schoolchildren and residents alike. The materials used for these temporary facilities should preferably come from the circular economy. For building temporary furniture, pallet wood is robust and often freely available, but other options are also possible. Based on these temporary installations, we can check, for example, whether there are enough benches, whether the area is sufficiently visible to drivers, or whether there is a bigger perception of safety.

See Chapter 2, "A friendly school forecourt", p. 35

↑ At Scheut elementary school in Anderlecht, vegetable bins installed in front of the school have replaced cars.
© Suède36




1: A spacious school forecourt without car parking
2: Good visibility for pedestrians
3 : Elements to separate pavement from road

# DESIGN A PEACEFUL SCHOOL STREET

Interventions aimed at modifying the flow of traffic in the street may make it safer for active users (pedestrians, cyclists, scooterists, etc.) on a wider scale. Depending on your ambitions, the characteristics of the street and the resources available, different types of intervention can be envisaged.

Particularly in terms of road safety, most accidents involving children occur beyond the immediate surroundings of the school (and thus the school street). Making "school streets" safe is essential to ensure safety at all times, especially for children.

➔ See "Design a peaceful neighbourhood" page 24 and "Improve pedestrian circulation" page 26

ⓘ The design of public spaces plays a crucial role in mobility. However, awareness-raising campaigns or actions organised within the school can complement these interventions, such as setting up a school travel plan, teaching children the highway code, organising a 'pedibus' (walking bus), etc.

**Further information**:

- The School Travel Plans produced by Brussels Mobility stimulate and accompany awareness-raising actions in favour of sustainable mobility: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/ecole/les-plans-de-deplacements-scolaires
- Via Brussels Mobility, "L'opération cartable" aims to provide educational tools to raise awareness of the Highway Code among students, parents and teachers: https://operation-cartable.mobilite.brussels/homepage/
- The "Guide to starting a 'pédibus'" is a publication from the Walloon Region that provides all the information you need to set up a "bus" of schoolchildren walking to school under adult supervision: http://mobilite.wallonie.be/home/je-suis/un-etablissement-scolaire/education-mobilite-et-securite-routiere-emsr/le-pedibus.html

↑ Rue de la Braie, Brussels.
© Perspective / Marc Detiffe

# School street

In the Highway Code, a "school street" is a public thoroughfare near a school from which motor vehicles are temporarily prohibited during certain hours, i.e. when classes start and end[4]. A "C3" road sign is displayed in these areas, with another sign underneath indicating "rue scolaire" (school street). The lower panel may give an exemption for certain motor vehicles.

The temporary closure of the school street using a 'rue scolaire' sign guarantees a safer and more pleasant car-free environment in the immediate vicinity of the school entrance. It offers parents the space they need to wait for or drop off their children in complete safety, and to chat in a friendly atmosphere.

It is part of a general modal shift strategy designed to encourage parents to take their children to school on foot, by bike or by public transport, and to encourage schoolchildren to travel independently.

However, temporarily closing the school street is not enough to improve the quality of the public space in the long term. It occasionally improves safety during certain periods of the day, but this advantage disappears as soon as the street reopens to "normal" traffic.

**Further information:**

- Brussels Mobility's roadmap for the school street: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/diy-rue-scolaire
- Document on solutions for closing school streets available on the Beecole website: https://beecole.brussels/fr/be-ecole/nos-publications

↑ School street Rue de la Limite, Saint-Josse
© Perspective / Marc Detiffe

**A school street can be set up quickly and does not require any redevelopment of the public space. It is a relevant and effective action that quickly achieves the desired effect: a temporary improvement in safety and air quality around the school entrance. However, in addition to prior consultation and communication, it requires a careful examination, right from the test phase, of the impacts (mobility and safety) in the vicinity of the school street, so that adaptations can be made if necessary, as well as proper management of the furniture used to close the street.**

When a school street is closed, particular attention must be paid to the accessibility (and parking) needs of people with reduced mobility.

4 article 2.68 of the Highway Code

## Strolling zone

A strolling zone is a modification of a street that allows the interactive role to take precedence over traffic. It is defined in article 2.32 of the Highway Code and is indicated by an "F12a/b" sign. Cars are not banned, but priority is given to pedestrians, who can occupy the entire space. The street layout is therefore conducive to a variety of activities, including games, for example.

Traffic speed is limited to 20 km/h and all drivers must adapt their driving to avoid endangering pedestrians [5]. Parking is prohibited except in areas marked with road markings or a specific road surface covering. The letter P must be displayed.

↑ Example of a shared street, Mortsel, Belgium.
© Kind & Samenleving

However, the low-threshold design of strolling zones is poorly understood in nursery and elementary school environments, where learning how to travel safely does not yet take into account the particular features of these layouts. In such cases, unless other educational measures are taken, it would seem preferable for the street layout to clearly indicate where car traffic is and where pedestrians can walk.

See "Protecting vulnerable road users" on page 28.

## Pedestrian zone

The ideal situation is traffic-free school surroundings, where the school is located in a pedestrian zone. In this case, the entire street functions as safe, high-quality school surroundings. According to the Highway Code (art. 2.25), this type of street is identified by an "F103" sign. Only pedestrians have access to the street, with a few exceptions [6]. Cyclists who have access to the street must dismount and push their bikes when the street is busy. A pedestrian zone can be designed as a fun, green and safe school environment. Parents will find the space they need to wait for their children in complete safety. Children can leave the school and play there.

↑ Example of a pedestrian street, Rue de la Braie in Brussels-City.
© Perspective / Marc Detiffe

The road layout must take into account the needs of emergency vehicles for access to the school in the event of fire.

**Further information:**
Guide to modifying roads for the circulation and accessibility of emergency vehicles: https://brrc.be/sites/default/files/2021-03/Am%C3%A9nagement%20de%20voirie%20-%20v%C3%A9hicules%20de%20secours.pdf

5 See article 22bis of the Highway Code

6 See article 22sexies.1 of the Highway Code

## The school bus and deliveries

Deliveries should be avoided when the school starts and ends. In addition, if possible, deliveries should be made via an entrance other than the main gate, for example at the rear of the school.

Similarly, school buses should not park in the immediate vicinity of the school. If students can get to the bus safely, there's no harm in the bus waiting a little further down the street or in the neighbourhood (which also encourages children to walk). However, children must be able to gather safely around the entrance to the school bus. The bus must also be able to manoeuvre without endangering passers-by.

An alternative to using the bus for school trips is to use public transport, or to accompany students on foot, scooter or bike.

↑ Rang piéton
© Collectif ipé

## "Kiss & ride" in a nearby street

Setting up kiss & ride[7] zones should be avoided. These zones tend to attract car traffic: they make it easier for parents to drop off children in cars, and therefore encourage this practice. However, in neighbourhoods with fewer public transport connections, where distances from home to schoool are greater and there is a lack of parking spaces within a reasonable distance of the school entrance, keeping a kiss & ride zone may be considered.

However, in order to safeguard the comfort and safety of students as much as possible, these zones should not be built in the direct vicinity of the school. Alternatives can be found in the immediate vicinity: supermarket car parks or nearby streets. With a comfortable, high-quality layout, the route from the kiss & ride can be covered by older children on foot in complete safety. Ideally, a school project with older children looking after little ones, or teachers forming rows between the kiss & ride and the school, can be a good solution for the youngest children. However, these zones need to be managed to prevent them from being used as long-term parking areas.

Finally, if it is still necessary to consider this particular need for parking, it should be outside the direct vicinity of the school and limited (around 15 to 30 minutes via a pay station).

7 Kiss & rides are intended only for a short stop and not for parking. The idea is for the driver to drop off their passenger(s) and drive off immediately to make way for the next vehicle.

# DESIGN A PEACEFUL SCHOOL NEIGHBOURHOOD

Routes from the school to important destinations (public transport stop, local library, homework school, etc.) must also be taken into account. The aim is to guarantee overall safety around the school. The "STOP" principle can therefore be extended to the entire neighbourhood.

It will also be particularly important to take a comprehensive approach and consider the neighbourhood scale when several schools are located on adjacent streets. Redesigning one school will have a direct impact on that of neighbouring schools. It will be a question of coordinating the interventions. For example, if one of these schools develops a school street on its own, the result will be more car traffic on the streets of neighbouring schools. If the different schools work together and set up a joint system, the positive effects will be multiplied. The entire neighbourhood will benefit from the development of a safe and peaceful school neighbourhood.

This will have a major impact at the start and end of classes, when public spaces are most used, but also at other times, as the streets around the school also have a residential and interaction function for many students and local residents.

## Loops instead of through traffic

To reduce traffic, through-traffic should ideally be moved out of the neighbourhood. A one-way system can create "looping" traffic. Crossing the neighbourhood by car is then rendered impossible, although all roads remain accessible to motor vehicles. Traffic in the neighbourhood is therefore limited to local traffic. This strategy is based on the principles of the Good Move plan, which proposes relieving neighbourhoods of through-traffic by channelling it along certain traffic arteries.

**Further information**: Good Move regional mobility plan: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/good-move

## Minimum parking

The number of on-street parking spaces can be reduced to ease traffic congestion throughout the neighbourhood. The former parking spaces can then be converted into new recreational areas.

## School routes

The children come to school from every possible direction. Thanks to an analysis of school travel (in particular via a regularly updated School Travel Plan), it is possible to determine the busiest school routes. Streets with less traffic, such as strolling zones or quiet streets, should be prioritised wherever possible. An attractive, safe route will appeal to students, even if they have to make a slight detour. Where the route crosses a major intersection, an optimum level of safety must be ensured. School routes must be integrated into any local municipal traffic plans.

**Further information**:
Road safety action plan 2021-2030 (Brussels Mobility): https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/plan-de-securite-routiere

## Traffic calming

Measures such as setting up a school street, strolling zone or pedestrian zone can be extended to several roads in the school surroundings, to enhance the impact. However, a mobility study will have to be carried out to assess the impact of such measures on mobility, and even road safety, in and around the neighbourhood.

## Consistency with the Good Move plan

Before determining the nature of your intervention to reduce car traffic on the school street or in the neighbourhood, it will be important to take into account the role the street plays in the regional mobility network as set out by the Good Move Regional Mobility Plan. This plan determines the function of each street in the Brussels-Capital Region within the multimodal specialisation of roads. It aims to offer a highly effective network for each mode, while addressing the necessary trade-offs when designing roads and public spaces.

It is divided into three categories: "plus", "comfort" and "neighbourhood", for each of the following modes: pedestrian, bicycle, public transport, car and truck.

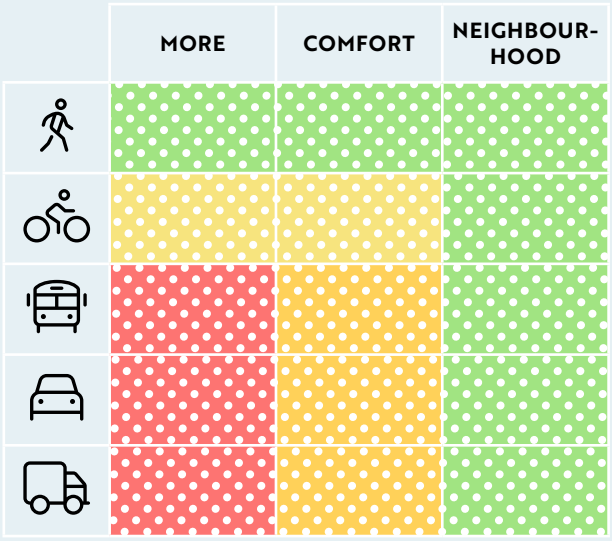
1° The PLUS category comprises fast, efficient and comfortable main routes for long-distance travel within the metropolitan area and the Region;

2° The COMFORT category consists of reliable, visible connecting routes, adapted to a more refined service to the various parts of the region;

3° The NEIGHBOURHOOD category provides local service to neighbourhoods.[8].

It will be important to check the road specialisation maps in the Good Move plan to see how the school street is categorised for each mode of transport. Multimodal specialisation maps can be consulted on the Brussels Mobility website: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/good-move/good-network

From there, the table opposite will help you determine your interventions in the school street according to the categories defined for each mode of transport.




In neighbourhood streets, car traffic is not a priority under the Good Move plan. These roads can be laid out as school streets, strolling zones or pedestrian zones. In this way, the natural routes of active users, and pedestrians in particular, can be given priority. Quality of life in the neighbourhood is a priority.

These streets are heavily used by cyclists, and will have to be adapted to facilitate their journeys.

In these streets, traffic is probably not going to be prohibited. Instead, solutions can be found in changing the direction of traffic, reducing road capacity, and so on.

If the school street is categorised in the "plus" network for motor traffic, public transport or heavy transport, this means that it fulfils an important function for the circulation of each of these means of transport in the regional mobility network. In principle, the traffic flows of each of these modes of transport can be neither modified nor prohibited.

For example, if the school street is categorised as "plus" for cars, the choice will be made to modify the school forecourt while improving the pavements and street crossings. Constructing a high-quality school forecourt can already be a major change for the well-being of students.

8 See the regulatory section of the Good Move plan, article 11 et seq. (https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/good-move).

# IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Students' journeys must be safe. And this is the case regardless of where they are coming from and where they are going: between school and public transport stops, between school and home, the library, the gym, the park, and so on. Even if this route includes streets with heavier traffic, students must be able to walk safely and cross the street as comfortably and safely as possible.

Crossing major traffic roads is therefore crucial to the safety of a route, as a crossing is potentially dangerous for a pedestrian. The position of pedestrian crossings on streets and at junctions requires a certain amount of consideration. A pedestrian crossing must be clear, logical (without constraints), accessible and as short as possible. In addition, it must guarantee good mutual visibility between pedestrians and drivers, and speed control must be ensured around it, while overtaking around it must be prevented. The size of the pedestrian crossing must also take into account the organisation of school runs (phasing of traffic lights, sizing of storage islands, etc.). Particular attention must also be paid where the crossing serves public transport stops, especially where this is managed by traffic lights, to avoid taking risks when a bus or tram is approaching.

**Further information**:
Dossier GO 10: Guidelines for a pedestrian-friendly city (Brussels Mobility): https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/sites/default/files/vm3-ville-conviviale-pour-pietons.pdf
2021-2030 regional road safety action plan: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/plan-de-securite-routiere

## No pedestrian crossing in front of the school gate

To ensure that children are protected from traffic, it's important that they don't end up immediately on the road when they leave school. This guide recommends envisaging a buffer zone, i.e. a good-sized pavement and forecourt, once they have gone through the school gate, and installing the pedestrian crossing(s) a few metres further up, offset from the school entrance. This system goes hand in hand with the installation of street furniture that physically contains children in an area which is protected from traffic, at the same time forcing them to split up before crossing, and limiting crossings "en masse".

## Ensure that pedestrian crossings are well visible

Pedestrians who are about to cross must be clearly seen by drivers, just as drivers must be clearly seen by pedestrians. We refer to "reciprocal visibility" between these users. There should be no obstacles to visibility. In front of the pedestrian crossing, in the direction of traffic, avoid installing advertising hoardings, trees with large trunks and greenery higher than 75cm, to take into account the specific needs of small pedestrians, especially children. It is also prohibited to allow parking in the last 5 metres before the crossing. In addition to placing pedestrians as close as possible to the road, so they have the information they need to cross, and making them more visible, installing kerb ears and moving parking areas further away shortens the crossing and therefore exposure to the risk of accidents.

Finally, according to the Highway Code, pedestrian crossings must be at least 3m wide, and at least 4m wide on major roads.

## Raised pedestrian crossings

By creating a pedestrian crossing on a platform, and paving the forecourt through it, the public space in front of the school will visually integrate this crossing. The pedestrian crossing therefore becomes an extension of the school forecourt. This system ensures traffic calming and optimum accessibility. Pedestrian comfort and safety are also enhanced.

## Traffic lights

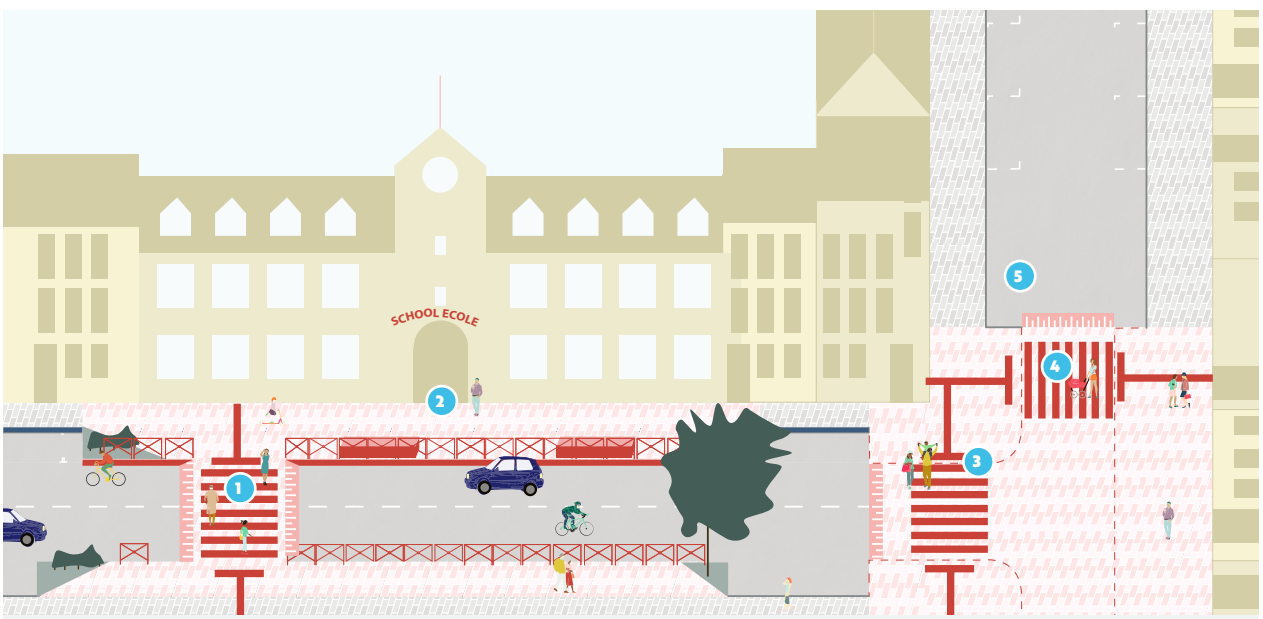
A pedestrian crossing without traffic lights gives priority to pedestrians (without, however, exempting drivers or pedestrians from making sure they see and are seen by the other, as a precaution). It can be designed for roads with little traffic, if the carriageway is limited to a maximum of 2 x 1 lanes per direction, and if visibility and speed control are ensured.

However, for added safety for small children, for example, push-button lights can also be installed, the relevance and use of which will vary according to how responsive they are. On major roads, push-buttons can also be used to extend green phases, useful when crossing rows.

## The position of the crossings

Pedestrian crossings should be located on the desired pedestrian routes or according to specific travel routes (possibly specific to the school). A study of school journeys (in particular via a school travel plan set up by the school) will make it possible to identify the traffic flows that have a barrier effect. On main roads, between major hubs, avoid detours that are too inconvenient and prompt risk-taking. Crossings must be envisaged every 100 metres.

**Further information**:
Dossier GO10: Guidelines for a pedestrian-friendly city:
https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/sites/default/files/vm3-ville-conviviale-pour-pietons.pdf




1: A pedestrian crossing on a platform
2: No pedestrian crossing in front of the school gate
3: Widened pavements at street corners
4: Width of pedestrian crossings: at least 3m, or 4m on major roads
5: No parking in the last 5 metres before the crossing

# PROTECT VULNERABLE USERS

The best way to ensure the safety of students is to prohibit cars in the immediate vicinity of the school. However, this is not always possible. For schools located on roads where vehicle traffic cannot be modified, the safety of students can be ensured by a forecourt which is protected from the street, wide pavements, pedestrian crossings and separate cycle paths.

## A wide, safe pavement

The width of a pavement is at least 2 metres along a street with longitudinal parking and at least 2.5 metres along a street without parking. The forecourt, generally +/- 2 metres wide, is added to the pavement and its length varies according to the available space, waiting requirements, whether or not there is a crossing to be made safe, whether bike parking is needed in front of the school, etc.

It is important to take into account the potential problems of co-use that could arise between children (on foot, bike, scooter) and pedestrians (especially the most vulnerable, the elderly, people with reduced mobility, etc.) if the pavement is too small.

In addition, to make the road as safe as possible, a physical barrier can be placed between the pavement and the road. Barriers and bollards are often used to protect a school's forecourt from the pavement and to prevent illegal parking, but this spatial separation can also be achieved by multifunctional objects such as small steps or planters.

See "Transform the school street into a new vibrant area" on page 38.

↑ Entrance to Saint-Antoine school in Forest. © Suède36

**Quick, simple and inexpensive installations are possible The forecourt can be made safe with planters, self-built benches, bicycle racks, etc. Temporary solutions can also be implemented, such as using "New Jersey" type concrete blocks or wooden pallets like in the example above.**

## Maintain a distinct space between pavement and road

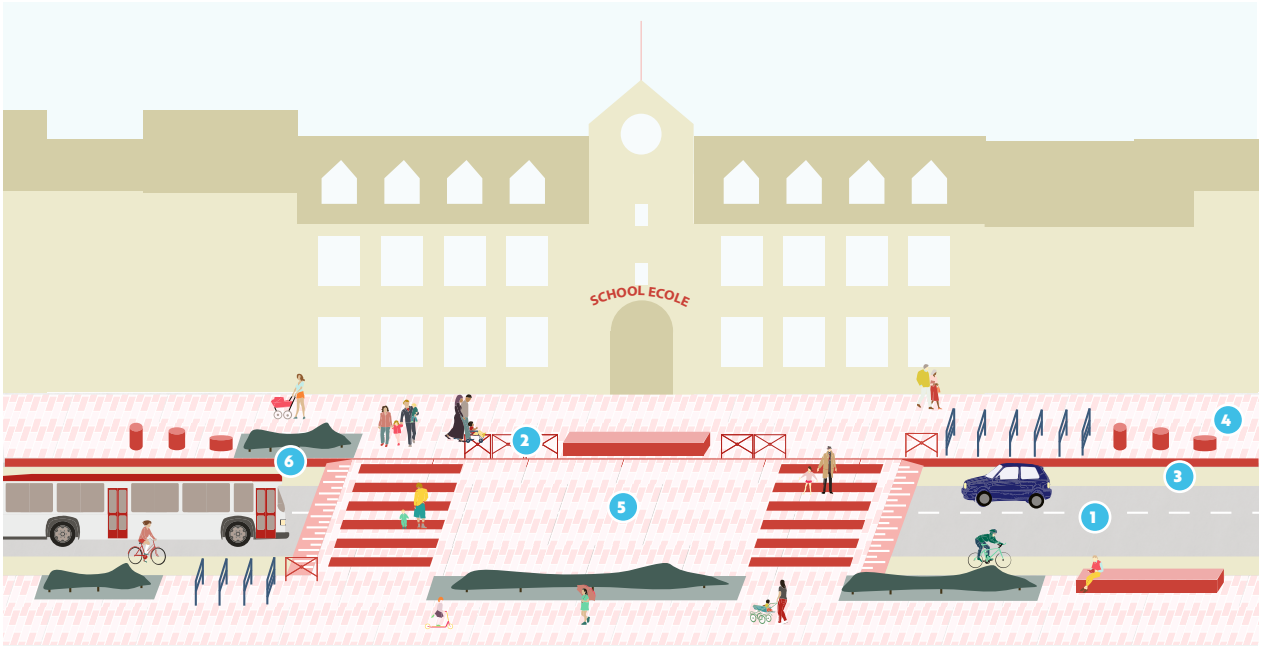
Where motor traffic is not prohibited, users of nursery and primary schools often prefer a clear separation of pedestrian and vehicle traffic. By physically and visually separating the pavement from the road, we create an area where children can move around, play and wait without the risk of ending up in front of a car.

# Reduce vehicle speed

Narrow roads generally lead to slower speeds, as motorists instinctively become more cautious. Streets can be visually narrowed by trees, street furniture or other elements.

Other physical speed reduction measures can be implemented: chicanes, plateaus, kerb ears, speed bumps, etc.

**Useful information**:
Every year, the Brussels-Capital Region offers regional subsidies via Brussels Mobility to support municipalities in the area of mobility and road safety. This includes subsidies for equipment and infrastructure, and the implementation of "sustainable mobility" projects.
https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr




1: Narrow carriageway
2: Physical barrier between pavement and road
3: Separate cycle path
4: Wide pavement: min. 2.5 m on a street without longitudinal parking
5: Raised platform in front of school entrance to reduce speeding
6: Well-marked pedestrian and vehicle circulation

# ENSURE GOOD VISIBILITY

The various users of public space need to be fully aware of what's going on around them at all times. Blind spots and obstacles that compromise visibility are therefore detrimental to the safety of the youngest children. They have different notions of danger, and estimate speeds and distances differently. They are also smaller and therefore less visible to motorists.

This is particularly important in pedestrian-only zones, where pedestrians have priority and there are no pedestrian crossings. In such cases, the driver (including the cyclist) is obliged to slow down or stop in front of a pedestrian, who still has priority (but cannot hinder traffic unnecessarily).

## Taking into account the child's point of view

A good way to check the visibility of a school environment is to look at the context from a child's eye view. Indeed, schoolchildren don't have the same view of their environment. There are real dangers that adults are unaware of.

For example, parked cars are a major obstacle to a good overview of the road. The problem is twofold. On the one hand, children can't see beyond certain obstacles, so they don't see the danger coming. On the other hand, they are smaller than the elements obstructing the driver's view, so that drivers do not see them and are therefore unable to adapt their driving behaviour.

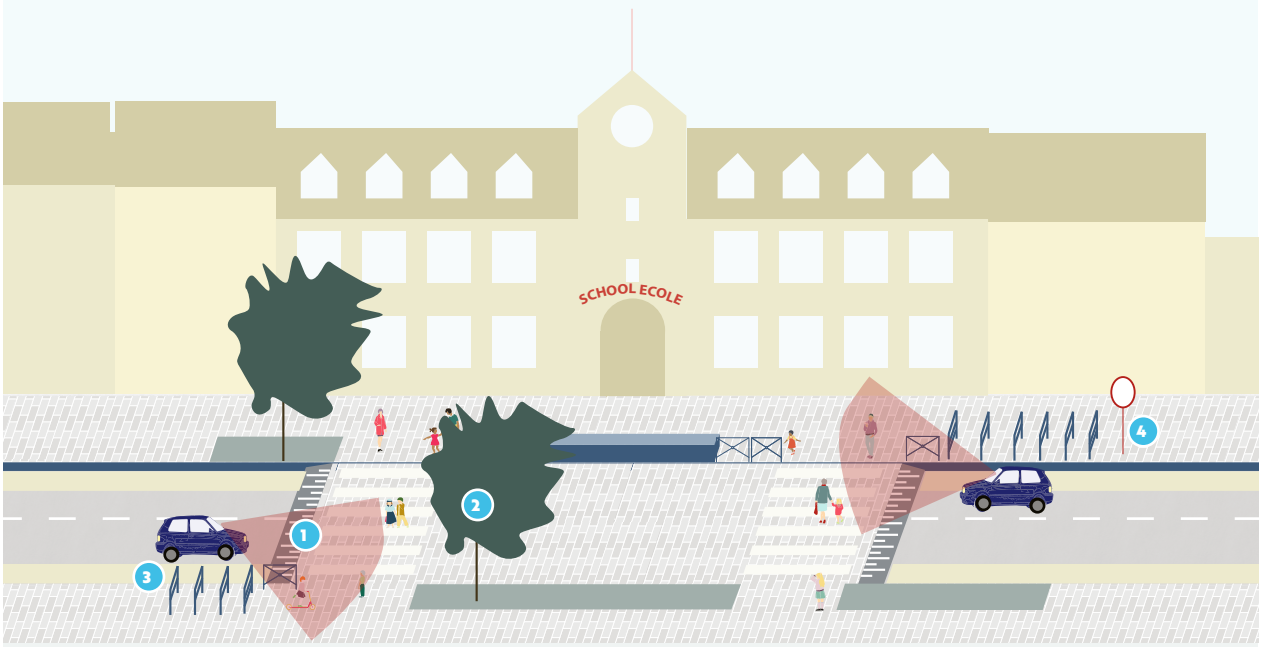
↑ Rue Émile Féron, Saint-Gilles.
© Heroes for Zero

## Ensure the visibility of pedestrian crossings

Where possible, it is important to widen pavements at street corners (see kerb ears). Where there are separate or marked cycle paths, the pedestrian crossing markings should also be extended across the paths to highlight the priority of pedestrians over cyclists. Among other things, parking areas, trees, planters, intransparent bollards and terraces, advertising hoardings, poles (lighting, catenaries, etc.) with large cross-sections should be set at a sufficient distance to avoid concealing things. As a general rule, avoid installing any obstacles that could reduce visibility at pedestrian crossings.

↑ Exit from Toots Thielemans elementary school, Rue de l'avenir, Molenbeek-Saint-Jean. © PTArchitecten – 2021

↑ Rue Pierre Decoster in Forest. © Suède36




1: No concealing in front of pedestrian crossings: mutual visibility guaranteed
2: Trees behind pedestrian crossings
3: No parking in the last 5 metres before the crossing
4: Height of signs or other street elements: 2.2 m

## Checklist

### Safety improvements for pedestrians

- [ ] Is the school visible? Do drivers understand that they are driving in a school environment?
- [ ] Does the school have a forecourt? Is it protected from traffic and clear of car parking (both legal and illegal) to ensure good visibility?
- [ ] Is the speed in front of and around the school appropriate and controlled?
- [ ] Are pavements wide enough to meet local needs? Is there a physical separation between the pavements and the road?
- [ ] Are the street's status and layout consistent with its function in Good Move? Is the public space designed to correspond to the "plus" and "comfort" categories for pedestrians?
- [ ] Are school routes to school buses, public transport stops or kiss and ride zones laid out in a safe manner: visibility, safe crossings, controlled speeds, sufficiently wide pavements?

### Pedestrian crossings

- [ ] Is there a pedestrian crossing near the school entrance? Is it clear of any obstacles that could hinder good visibility? Is the ban on parking within 5 metres respected?
- [ ] Are there safe pedestrian crossings at crucial points around the school?
- [ ] Is there enough ambient lighting at pedestrian crossings?
- [ ] Are pedestrian crossings at least 3 metres wide, or 4 metres on major roads?
- [ ] Is the speed at pedestrian crossings appropriate and controlled?
- [ ] Are pedestrian crossings accessible?

## Bike facilities

- [ ] Are there bicycle facilities on adjacent streets: separate cycle paths, marked cycle paths, pictograms on the ground, etc.?
- [ ] Is the layout of the street consistent with its function in GoodMove? Is the public space designed to correspond to the "plus" and "comfort" categories for cyclists?
- [ ] Are speeds kept under control, particularly in the case of mixed traffic (with suggested bike lanes) and lines marked on the street?

## Public transport

- [ ] Are public transport stops safely accessible? Do the traffic-light phases allow students to cross when a bus or tram is approaching? And if not, are passengers informed of the next departures? Is the bus frequency appropriate?
- [ ] Is it possible to get in and out of a vehicle (bus/tram) safely and without impacting other pedestrians?
- [ ] Are the stops clearly visible?

## Car traffic

- [ ] Does the design/comfort of public spaces give priority to active modes? Are traffic calming measures implemented where multimodal specialisation allows (narrow roads, school streets, strolling zones or pedestrian streets)?
- [ ] Are large vehicles such as delivery trucks or school buses kept at a safe distance from the school gate? Are their hours limited to off-peak hours outside school hours, so that they don't pose a danger to children?
- [ ] Are the drop-off zones far enough away from the school to not interfere with pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users?
- [ ] Are traffic speeds compliant with road regulations, and respected?

# FRIENDLY AND ACCESSIBLE SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS

## RECOMMENDATIONS 02

Public spaces around schools are used intensively at school entrances and exits. They are occupied by children and young people, but also by parents, teachers and other visitors. Roads must therefore be designed and sized to accommodate a large number of users. Public spaces must also be comfortable and accessible for parents with pushchairs, people with reduced mobility and all citizens, to avoid any form of exclusion.

In addition to efficient travel, the quality of the living space around schools is also important. In particular, the space in front of the main entrance is an essential area. While waiting for their children, parents make friends and talk about school life. These supportive networks of parents are important for the school, and even for the neighbourhood. Children and teenagers also like to meet in front of the school. They hang around, to chat or play. Specific facilities can facilitate these convivial moments: benches, a shelter, a green, fun environment.

In some cases, the street can even become an extension of the playground. However, it remains a public space available and accessible to all citizens. It is in fact this dual nature of the school environment that is its strongest asset. Because of the specific requirements they have to meet, the public spaces around schools are more generous than ordinary pavements. As a result, it has become a comfortable place that is also available to other local users. Lively during peak school hours, the rest of the time it's a place where everyone can meet and play.

← Rue Émile Féron in front of Ulenspiegel elementary school in Saint-Gilles has been temporarily closed over the summer to become a new play area for children. "Pôze midi 2020" project by Heroes for Zero. © Heroes for Zero

# CREATE A FRIENDLY AND ACCESSIBLE SCHOOL FORECOURT

The forecourt must be able to accommodate several uses: waiting for children, chatting, walking, etc. A school forecourt should become a pleasant place to be, with space for passers-by, including the disabled. A balance needs to be struck between circulation space and interaction space.

## A spacious interaction place

When students leave the school, the pavement in front of the entrance is quickly jam-packed. Students leave the school, while parents pick up their children with pushchairs, cargo bikes, scooters or simply on foot. The school forecourt must therefore have enough space to accommodate everyone.

The size of a school forecourt depends on the number of students in the school. A quality space comprising at least 30 metres to the left and right of the school entrance, with no parking spaces between the forecourt and the road. However, this may vary from one context to another. The width of the forecourt is approximately 2 metres, in addition to the pavement.

A sufficiently wide forecourt will also limit problems of co-use between more or less static users of the forecourt and pedestrians using the pavement on their travel route.

In some cases, the school is located on a square. In this case, the layout of this public space is a decisive factor in improving the environment. A square has many advantages. For example, there's generally more space to safely organise incoming and outgoing traffic. Its large surface area also means there can be abundant benches, greenery, play equipment, etc. Constructing such a public space also enhances the comfort of the entire neighbourhood.

## Furniture for socialising

The design of a public space can stimulate interaction. Like benches positioned face to face, or designed to accommodate larger groups. On a school forecourt, the furniture welcomes waiting parents and children leaving school. The view of the school entrance is therefore important. If necessary, these seats can also serve as a physical separation between the school forecourt and the road.

↑ Forecourt of the Devoirs Marconi school in Forest
© Perspective

## A covered waiting area

Some schools have a covered waiting area on the school premises, such as a covered playground. If this is not the case, and if the characteristics of the street allow it, a canopy can be placed in the public space facing the school. This can be integrated into the facade or installed on a wider pavement. Its layout and form will depend on the urban context of the school. However, the visibility of children on the pavement must be taken into account. The height of the canopy must be at least 2m20 to provide protection from the rain.

↑ Forecourt of the School 13, Rue Wayez, Anderlecht.
© Suède36

↑ Example of a canopy installed in public space in Molenbeek-Saint-Jean.
© Suède36


1: A generous pavement accessible to all
2: A space for bicycles, including outsize bikes (cargo bikes, freight bikes, etc.).
3: A shelter if there isn't one on the school grounds
4: Furniture for resting, socialising or playing.

# TRANSFORM THE SCHOOL STREET INTO A NEW VIBRANT AREA

By transforming an entire street into a new vibrant area, more space is provided than a simple forecourt with a widened pavement. The street can become a new place for users to stay a while, and activities can take place there. At the same time, new public spaces are created that can be used by all Brussels residents. Streets can become play areas, especially for schools that lack outdoor spaces within their premises, and for neighbourhoods that lack playgrounds. Access for the fire service, removals and deliveries must, however, remain possible.

## A comfortable pavement for all

Pedestrian access and comfort are the top priorities when designing a school street. Pavements must be designed and sized according to their use. They must also be accessible to all, including parents with pushchairs and people with reduced mobility. The pavement must be in good condition, level, wide and non-slip. Street furniture should be carefully positioned so as not to become an obstacle on the routes.

The width of a pavement is at least 2 metres along a street with longitudinal parking and at least 2.5 metres along a street without parking.

## Create green, sustainable places to relax

The street can also be equipped with furniture for a sit-down or a conversation. Quiet, intimate rest areas can be created. These spaces can also become small planted squares that promote biodiversity and sustainable rainwater management.

➜ See "The equipment for school surroundings" on page 42 and "Green and healthy school surroundings" on page 47.

## The street as a playground

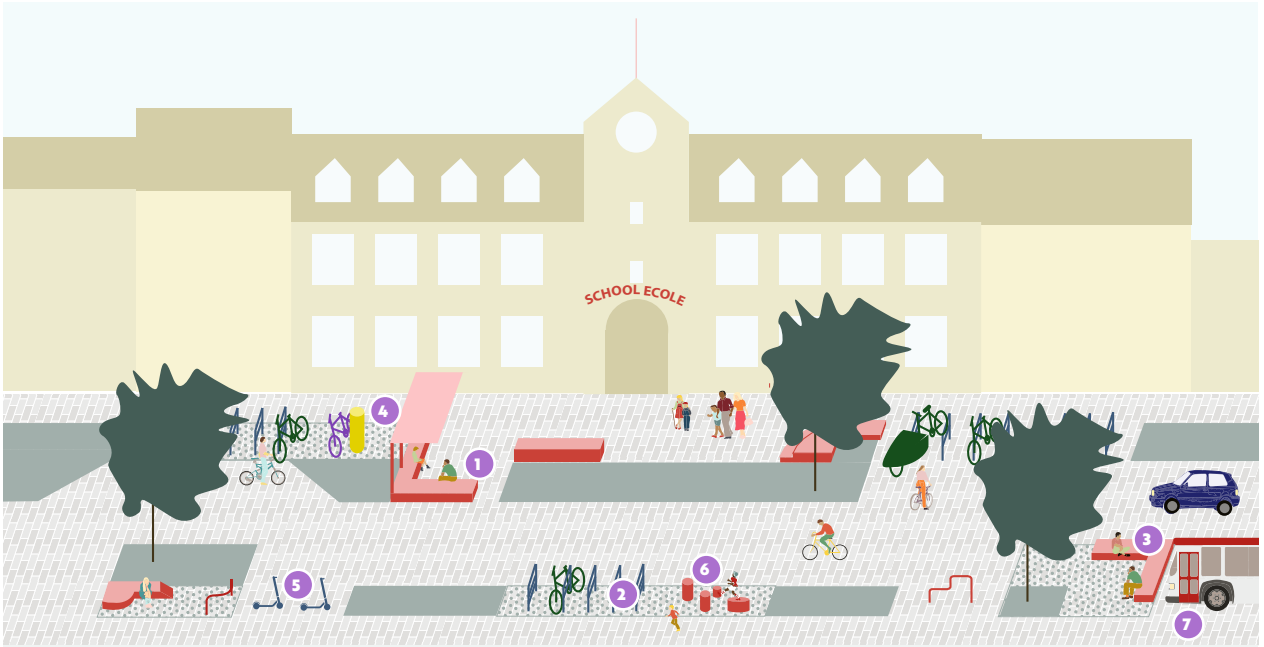
If the road is definitively closed to cars, it can be equipped with playgrounds, a play trail or multifunctional furniture. In densely populated areas, dwellings with gardens and terraces are rare. A safe, landscaped street can become a play area for residents and an extension of the school playground.

↑ Fun street project by "Filter Café Filtré" and "Pool is Cool" as part of the call launched by the Brussels-Capital Region to encourage temporary street occupation projects during the summer of 2021.
© Filter Café Filtré

The road can also be temporarily closed to cars by creating a "Play Street". This is governed by articles 2.36 and 22 septies of the Highway Code. The proposal to create a street reserved for games must be made by local residents to the Municipality.

↑ A racetrack is signposted on the street around Place Bockstael.
Jonathan Ortegat © urban.brussels

↑ Multi-purpose playground by Suède 36 in Forest.
Séverin Malaud © urban.brussels




1: Small, intimate spaces alternating with larger play areas
2: Bicycle parking for the entire street
3: Generous benches for socialising
4: A space reserved for an activity: here, a bicycle repair point.
5: Space for scooters
6: Play and sports furniture
7: School bus parking area outside school grounds

# DESIGN A SCHOOL NEIGHBOURHOOD

Routes between schools, residential areas and public transport stops form part of a "pedestrian school network". Other destinations can be added: parks, shops, gyms, etc. In all cases, therefore, it's a good idea to consider the layout of the entire school neighbourhood. When a neighbourhood is home to several schools, it makes even more sense to consider a broader scope for the project. Transforming this area into a peaceful, green and comfortable neighbourhood is an opportunity to set up exemplary pilot projects on a wider scale. These high-quality urban islands will therefore have an impact at the metropolitan level.

## Develop public spaces at the neighbourhood level

A friendly school neighbourhood with leisure facilities spread throughout the area. A varied range of street furniture should be installed: benches for conversation, more intimate benches and/or fun elements. Bicycle parking spaces should also be abundant and scattered throughout the area. The whole area is designed to accommodate residents, users and students, both during and outside school hours.

**Crossroads as interaction places:** by removing parking spaces around intersections, we can create wide spaces for pedestrians, add bicycle parking, benches, greenery and thus improve small public spaces in the neighbourhood.

**Distribute bicycle parking throughout the neighbourhood**: it's important to provide sufficient bicycle parking spaces not only in front of the school, but throughout the neighbourhood as well.

**Reduce parking spaces:** by reducing the number of parking spaces, we offer new vibrant areas in the neighbourhood.

**Take the gender aspect into account in the design of public spaces**

It will be important to take gender into account when designing the public spaces around schools. As a number of studies have shown, girls and women move around and experience urban public spaces differently, often for safety reasons.

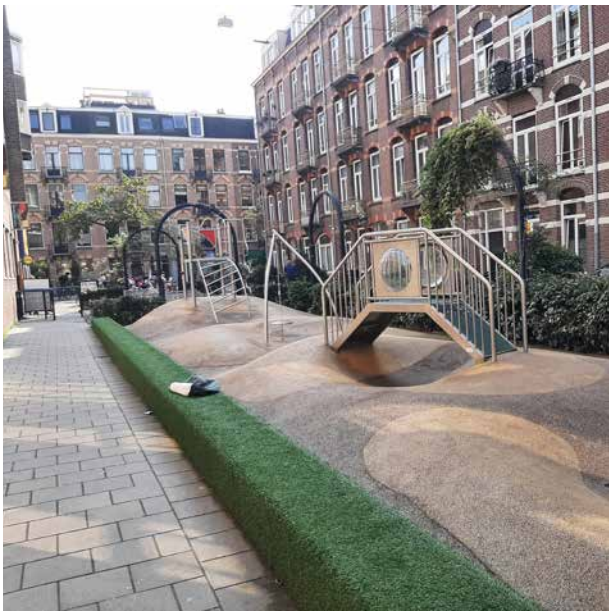
As such, encouraging active mobility, improving lighting, avoiding recesses and blind walls, and promoting multiple, intensive occupancy to create social surveillance are all responses to this gender issue. Participatory workshops will make it possible to highlight these issues and sketch out solutions.

**Further information**:
In this document, the association "Kind en samenleving" publishes advice and 10 design principles for making play areas accessible to girls: https://k-s.be/medialibrary/purl/nl/3046745/Meisjes%20en%20de%20publieke%20ruimte.pdf

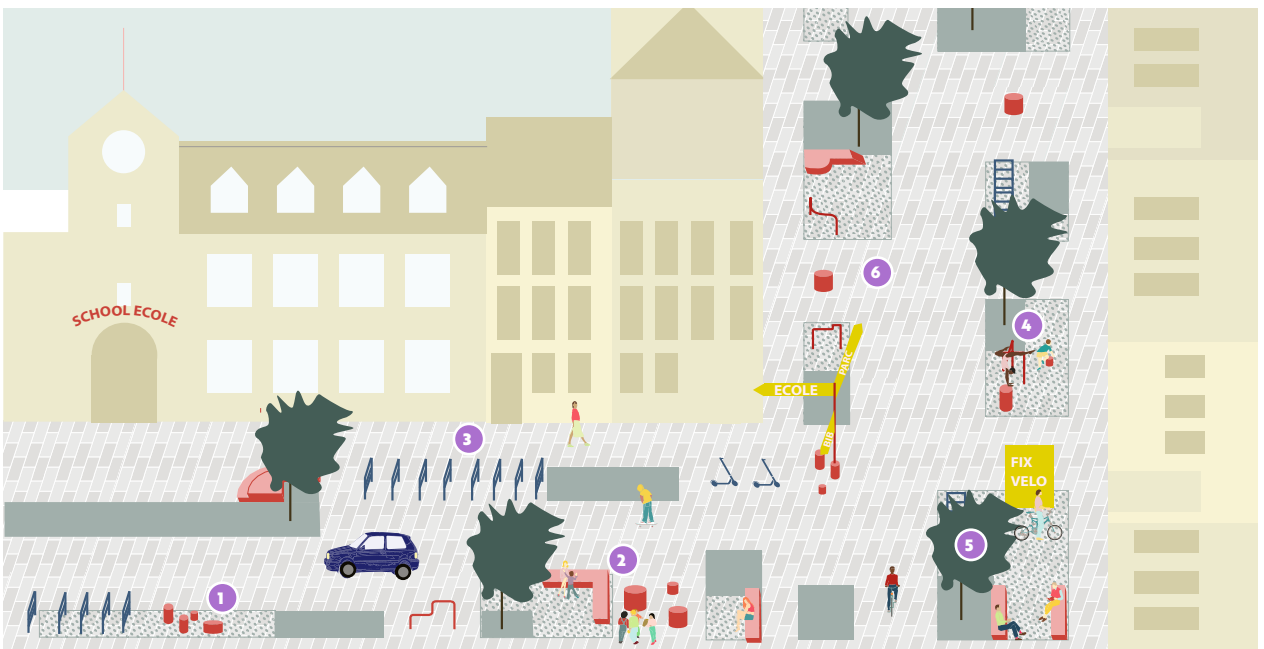
**Conflicts of use**: Furniture is not simply placed anywhere in the public space. Every intervention has its consequences. The success or failure of a public space depends to a significant extent on thinking ahead about the uses and implications that an intervention will have for the neighbourhood. For example, a bench can be a nuisance if placed too close to a home. The school forecourt will generate activity and needs to function harmoniously with the site, which is often a residential area. During participatory events, you can examine all co-uses honestly, and identify potential conflicts of use, in order to avoid them.

See "Participation sheet for Stage 2" page 73.

↑ Rue de la Braie, Brussels.
© Perspective / Marc Detiffe



↑ Fun street in Amsterdam.
© Perspective




1: Multifunctional furniture
2: Alternating between relaxation and play areas
3: Bicycle parking facilities throughout the neighbourhood
4: Play and sports areas
5: Greenery and rainwater management
6: The street as a vibrant area

# THE EQUIPMENT FOR SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS

## Put in place solid, flexible furniture

The furniture at school entrances is subject to intensive and multiple use. The furniture's durability and flexibility must therefore be taken into account in its design.

In terms of its use, furniture has multiple functions: it stimulates social contact, acts as a space divider, provides the possibility to sit down and lends a fun character to the school environment.

Five functions that school furniture must fulfil:

**Social function:** Children must be able to sit or lie down on street furniture. It should have the capacity to accommodate several people: large platforms, facing benches, stands, etc. This furniture also stimulates a convivial atmosphere and interaction in the neighbourhood, outside peak school hours.

**Vibrant area function:** Furniture to welcome and provide shelter for parents and children opposite the school entrance. Large benches can bring several groups together, creating a convivial atmosphere. These elements must be positioned in such a way as to allow a view of the exit, without blocking foot traffic.

**Fun function:** By giving the school environment a fun character, the school's presence in the urban landscape is reinforced. The children's domain is extended onto the street, where they'll feel at home. Elements which are intended for play will become signals in the public space, reinforcing the school identity of the street for passers-by.

This can be achieved by setting up a fun trail or network. The idea is not to install play areas on the pavement, but rather multi-purpose elements that can be used for play: a small ramp for sliding, a Japanese step, etc. Simple geometric shapes automatically invite children to play. The design doesn't have to be explicit: castles or pirate ships aren't necessary. This guide recommends using abstract shapes, on which the child can project their imagination. The idea is to awaken creativity, rather than offering pre-made games.

↑ Games created by Brussels artists Sarah and Charles at Cureghem, Anderlecht.
© Sarah&Charles

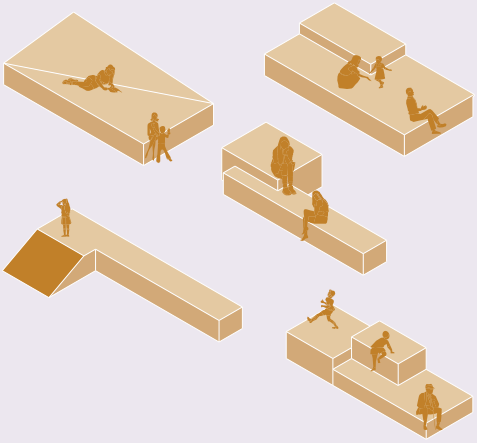
**Safety function:** Safety around schools is paramount. A clear spatial separation between the road and the pavement is often desirable. Barriers and bollards can be used to protect a school forecourt from the road and prevent illegal parking. However, this barrier function can also be fulfilled by multi-functional objects: a step to protect a pavement, planters to create a separation, and so on.

**Visual function:** A specific aesthetic, combined with a recognisable colour palette, will define the furniture in the school environment. An infinite variety of combinations of shapes and materials can be applied according to the specific needs, but the identity of the school furniture should tend towards a single, recognisable format.

➡ See "Identifiable school surroundings" on page 57.

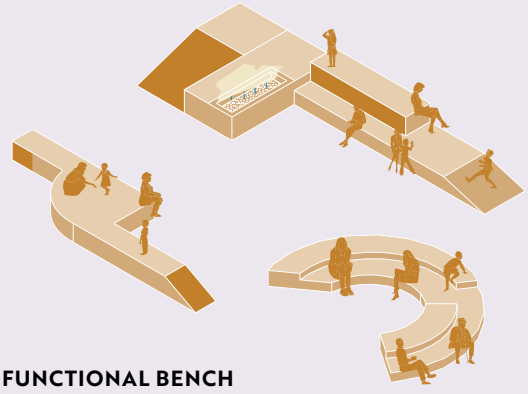
## Some examples:

The elements to be installed can be found in catalogues, but can also be designed by project designers and manufactured in Brussels, thereby stimulating the local economy. There are many ways to design them. The furniture described below is just a small sample of the possibilities.



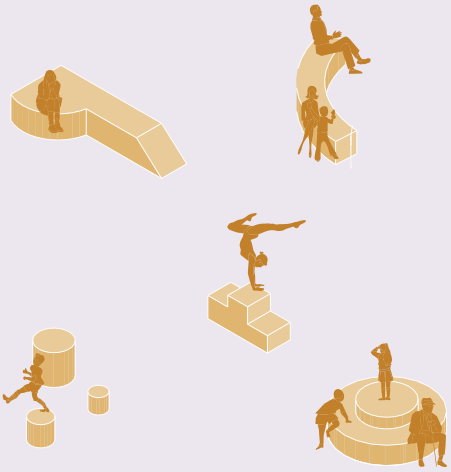
### TIERED BENCH

Tiered benches are very popular with young people in public spaces. They allow several people to sit on a single element. An ideal device for parents who are waiting or for young people meeting up. For example, the benches can have a wood finish on a steel frame. A circular tiered bench is the ideal sociability enhancer. Its shape offers a central podium, while the stand can accommodate several groups.



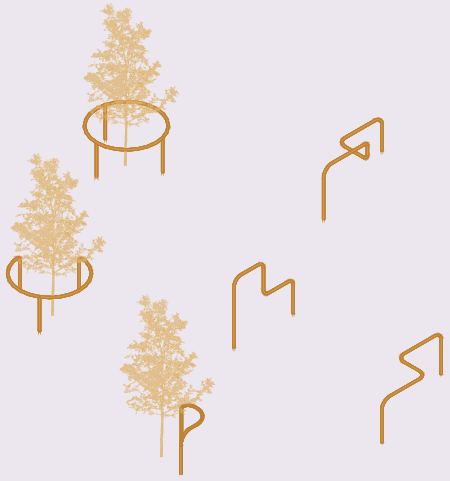
### MULTI-FUNCTIONAL BENCH

A single element can combine several functions. These seats can accommodate several groups, a sloping surface serves as a slide, an integrated planter provides greenery and its mass protects the pavement from cars.



### TINTED CONCRETE ELEMENTS

These small objects serve as fun mini-furniture. Coloured concrete forms sturdy elements. They also prevent illegal parking and protect active users on the pavement. These objects can form a fun path along the school street. It's not a game as such; it's open to interpretation and spontaneous play.



### PLAY BARS AROUND TREES

These design ironworks protect trees while offering a fun way to use them. You can hang, swing or lean on them. If they are tinted in bright colours, these elements will be visible and recognisable in the school environment.

# Integrate bicycle parking facilities

To encourage active modes of transport, it's important that every school offers spacious, comfortable bicycle parking. On the school forecourt, find a suitable place for a minimum of 10 bicycle parking spaces (this number will increase according to the number of students in the school). It's best not to place them facing the entrance, but at a distance of less than 50 metres from the entrance. The school forecourt must also be able to accommodate parents dropping off their children with cargo bikes, and be easily accessible and kerb-free from the cycle path. If possible, these parking areas can be covered by a canopy.

The best way to set it up is to keep the surface area to a minimum, while ensuring ease of use. The length occupied by a standard bike is 1.80m to 2m. Handlebar width varies from 50 to 65 cm. In order to accommodate the growing range of electric bikes and cargo bikes, the bike parking should also offer specific spaces for these varieties. The dimensions used for an outsize bicycle are 2.50 m long and 80 cm wide. To prevent theft, we recommend using supports with a rectangular profile.

Finally, bicycle parking facilities are ideally located at street intersections. This ensures good visibility of the pedestrian crossing and blocks the possibility of parking.

**Bicycle parking**

**Bicycle racks can be installed quickly and easily on a parking space. They form a barrier between the pavement and the street. Using one car park space to park six bicycles is a strong, illustrative signal. A simple way to reduce motor traffic in the school environment and give priority to active road users.**

In view of the increasing use of scooters, we also recommend integrating drop-off zones for scooters where appropriate. This will prevent them from being parked on pedestrian walkways, creating de facto problems of co-use.

**Further information**:
Vade-mecum of the Brussels-Capital Region on bicycle parking:
https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/sites/default/files/vm_7-stationnement-velo-web.pdf

# Managing waste

Install a sufficient number of clearly visible, separate waste bins (depending on the number of students at the school). The installation of the bins needs to be carefully thought out, taking into account the movements of the students and their various activities around the school perimeter.

# Working with pioneering talent

A public space development project is also an opportunity to include one or more lots for socioprofessional integration companies. It is also possible to manufacture furniture components locally with non-profit associations or via socio-professional integration schemes. When defining the project, it is important to ask the question: how can we involve artists, youth centres, vocational schools, local businesses, small enterprises, the most disadvantaged residents?

# Checklist

## Forecourt

- [ ] Is there enough space in front of the school gate?
- [ ] Is the space comfortable for waiting parents?
- [ ] Is the space comfortable for the students who use it?
- [ ] Is there specific furniture to allow multiple uses: stopping, resting, chatting, waiting, moving around, playing?
- [ ] Is there a covered waiting area around the school accessible to parents?
- [ ] Is the furniture used sturdy?

## Accessibility

- [ ] Is the public space fully accessible for people with reduced mobility, pushchairs, etc.?
- [ ] Are there enough comfortable bicycle parking facilities for parents and other visitors? Are they located in suitable, accessible areas? Is there enough room for cargo bikes, freight bikes and scooters?
- [ ] Are there any facilities for new modes of transport such as electric mopeds or scooters?
- [ ] Does the design of public space take gender issues into account?

## Social life

- [ ] Is the fun aspect of the street capitalised on?
- [ ] Does street furniture fulfil several social functions?
- [ ] Does the school environment offer space for a block party, flea market, etc.?
- [ ] Is the street furniture properly maintained?
- [ ] Waste and garbage: are there places to separate waste?


DERTIEN
SCHOOL
ZONDER
RACISME

# GREEN AND HEALTHY SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS

## RECOMMENDATIONS 03

An exemplary layout in terms of ecological considerations is a driving force behind the transition to a sustainable city. Targeted interventions in the public space around schools, in addition to developments in favour of sustainable modes of transport, can free up floor space, create green spaces and bring in biodiversity.

There are many benefits for users, beyond the comfort and aesthetic advantages of a green public space.

Functional ecosystem services provide very real tangible and intangible benefits, such as water self-purification, soil stabilisation and plant pollination. In addition, using local materials or recycled materials can encourage local employment. Absorbing water into the soil also reduces the risk of flooding. This reduces the cost of sewer installation and avoids the need to build costly stormwater basins.

Finally, the presence of greenery has soothing effects, improves air quality and generally improves the health of users.

← The forecourt of School 13, Rue Wayez in Anderlecht has been completely renovated. Particular attention was given to greening the site and making it more friendly. Project realised by Suède36. © Suède36

# PRIORITISE THE PRESENCE OF NATURE WITH NATIVE GREENERY

A green approach to a school increases the comfort of its users. What's more, biodiversity will add value to the city's ecological system. This means choosing native, hardy, low-maintenance trees and plants that are adapted to the soil type.

## Stimulating biodiversity

To achieve resistant vegetation and increase biodiversity, there are two important factors. On the one hand, the palette chosen will be varied and native, adapted to the soil. On the other hand, the greenery planted will be maintained naturally. The aim is to use vegetation that requires as little maintenance as possible. The aim is to create a self-regulating ecosystem of flowers, some of them melliferous, and native plants. Thereafter, it is important to plant in several layers. Just as in a forest, a healthy ecosystem requires density and variety. Ground plants are combined with perennials, shrubs and low-trunk trees.

## Planting and maintenance

It's important to create the right conditions for planting to flourish. It's a question of providing sufficient space for roots and spacing trees. Do not plan to install equipment above the roots. Take a close look at soil quality and type, and choose appropriate plantings. As part of a concerted management plan, managers should also ensure proper irrigation during dry periods. Hardy, robust and low-maintenance plants are preferable in public spaces.

**Further information**:
"Végétalisons nos rues" is a best practice guide produced by the municipality of Saint-Gilles: https://stgilles.brussels/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/BROCHURE-ENTIERE_2020.pdf

**Front gardens**

**Easy to install, these small installations quickly add green character to the street. Simply remove a few paving stones, dig the soil, add potting mix and plant. To create permanent front gardens, it's best to include a small border that isolates it from the paving. The width of the pavement must be taken into account. The aim is to ensure that 2 metres of free space remain between the plantation and the kerb. The greenery can be developed with the involvement of local residents and students. The type of vegetation to be planted can vary from climbers to shrubs, flowers, bulbs, herbs or even vegetables and fruit. Vegetation should be chosen according to the orientation of the facade and the amount of sunlight it receives. In all cases, we must ensure that accessibility and safety for PRM is always ensured.**

↑ Front garden, Saint-Gilles
© Jean-François Gheysen - Municipality de Saint-Gilles

# IMPROVE AIR QUALITY AND PROMOTE A PLEASANT CLIMATE

Air quality around schools is a concern for many citizens. First and foremost, the aim is to combat pollution by reducing motor traffic around the school, but also by integrating greenery. Creating a public space with healthy air can then become an example for the neighbourhood.

## Trees for healthy air and a pleasant climate

Planting trees and plants helps improve air quality. When suspended particles come into contact with leaves and branches, they remain attached. When it rains, they are carried to the ground without entering our respiratory system. Dust deposition is 2 to 16 times higher on trees than on low vegetation, mainly due to the total surface area of the leaves[9].

In addition, by planting high-crown trees on streets exposed to the sun's rays, the temperature of the public space can be considerably lowered. Near schools, trees can provide shaded waiting areas. Refreshing interaction places are thus created while improving street comfort. Deciduous trees are preferable. These cast shade in summer, but let in the sun in winter.

↑ Place de la Duchesse de Brabant, Molenbeek-Saint-Jean.
© Marc Detiffe 2014

## Measure your own air quality

An air quality meter can be placed in the school environment. By publicly displaying the level of air quality, its importance is underlined and the user's sense of responsibility is stimulated.

**The "InfluencAir" website explains how to make your own meter with affordable means. Once again, it's an educational way of integrating environmental values into the school setting.** https://influencair.be/

**Further information**:
For more information on air quality in Brussels https://environnement.brussels/lenvironnement-etat-des-lieux/en-detail/air

At the initiative of Bruxelles environnement, "air quality" projects are carried out in schools: https://environnement.brussels/thematiques/air-interieur/lecole/des-projets-qualite-de-lair-dans-les-ecoles

9 https://www.bosplus.be/nl/bosfuncties/bosfuncties

# INFILTRATE WATER RUN-OFF

Sound management of rainwater in public spaces means infiltrating as much run-off as possible into the ground before it reaches the sewer system. In the event of a storm, buffer spaces hold back excess water to slow its arrival at drainage systems. Several systems exist: ditches, ponds, flood plots, etc. Planting will also reduce the amount of water reaching the ground: the leaves absorb and retain some of the raindrops.

## Direct water to infiltration zones

Planted areas have the capacity to absorb run-off. The ground must therefore be designed so that slopes direct run-off towards planted flowerbeds and the feet of trees. If borders surround these surfaces, they must be able to accommodate this run-off. Today, in most cases, vegetation is separated from the pavement surface by a kerb, and water is directed directly into the gutter and downspouts.

## Soil permeability

Using permeable surfaces, planted areas or open-joint paving increases the infiltration surface of the soil. These different types of ground covering are part of the composition: a visual distinction is made between intimate areas, transition zones, waiting areas and play areas. The space freed up by the former parking spaces can once again become permeable to water. The entire area does not have to be planted, but can be planted with semi-permeable transition zones. For example, by widening the open joints of floor elements, we increase permeability without losing the accessibility of the space.

## Water basins

These are planted areas dug deeper. Water basins are filled with specific vegetation with superior water retention capacity. They are equipped with an "overflow" to direct excess water in the event of an exceptional storm. A minimum depth of 80 cm is required for installation. The substrate consists of a 40 cm layer of draining gravel, an anti-perforation fabric and a 40 cm absorbent soil mix of sand, compost and soil. The ditch is planted with specific vegetation, the roots of which can remain submerged without rotting. Certain species of shrubs can also be planted in a water basin.

↑ A water basin separates the road from the pavement and collects run-off water on Rue Esseghem in Jette.
© Suède36

**Further information**:
The Brussels Environment website provides more detailed information on the different types of water basins and their implementation: https://environnement.brussels/thematiques/eau

# Visualise the water cycle

Drainage of run-off and roof water from buildings can be used for educational purposes. The flow of the rain becomes visible and an educational tool to explain the importance of water management in our cities. Connecting taps to rainwater, and clearly indicating this, is another way of raising user awareness. These features can be used to decorate the school environment. For example, a bicycle washing area could be set up on the school street.

↑ Self-built rainwater tank made by the non-profit organisation Commonslab. © Commonslab & Klimplant

**Rainwater tank**

**A rainwater tank can be connected directly to the drainpipe. If a new canopy is installed, it can be fitted with a vat where students and users can see how it is filled. These systems act as a buffer before they reach the ground or the sewer. The water can be reused for a variety of purposes: cleaning bicycles, maintaining planters, washing pavements, etc.**

# CHOOSE SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

The choice of materials is not insignificant. Their impact on the environment, as well as their transport, management and use all have repercussions on our environment. An exemplary, educational project must include these parameters in any considerations.

## Reuse

To minimise the environmental impact of the project, recycled materials can be used. For example, the paving stones from the removed parking spaces can be reused to create a semi-permeable pavement on the new forecourt, while ensuring a high quality pedestrian walkway. Underneath the layers of asphalt, natural stone paving stones can often be found, which are very popular for re-use.

Remember that the municipalities have a stock of recycled materials, which can be used for projects free of charge. There are also a number of interesting initiatives in Belgium promoting reused materials. Some companies specialise in selling used building materials. Architects produce building materials from locally collected soil, without the addition of chemicals. Working with these partners to design school environments enhances the sustainability of the project, making it exemplary.

**Further information**:
Catalogue of circular offers in the Brussels-Capital Region: https://www.circlemade.brussels/le-catalogue-des-offres-circulaires/

## Durable, local materials

A sustainable project also depends on the durability of the materials and the design of solid elements. Elements used in public spaces must withstand intensive use and benefit from a suitable configuration. Choose items that are vandal-proof, easy to maintain and repair. It is advisable to keep a stock of replacement materials for the most critical and hard-to-find components, such as wood. Public authorities can also include maintenance contracts and the possibility of intervention for repairs.

In addition, a sustainable project will give preference to local materials which do not require too mcuh energy to produce. It is possible to check what $CO_2$ emissions were produced to manufacture the materials available before ordering them. What's more, an exemplary project will reduce energy consumption on site, in particular by minimising transport.

**FSC wood**

The FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) is a label which guarantees that the production of a wood-based product has followed the specifications of sustainable forest management. Local or European wood species are preferred.

**Sonian Wood Cooperative**

This cooperative works with forest owners, sawmills, carpenters and other partners to keep wood from the Sonian Wood as local as possible. https://sonianwoodcoop.be/store/

# INTEGRATE AN EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Some schools readily create micro vegetable gardens on the pavement in front of the school. Aromatic plants, for example, can be a good idea here. This is a good way of making the school's environment part of the educational project, making the school visible outside its walls and bringing biodiversity to the neighbourhood.

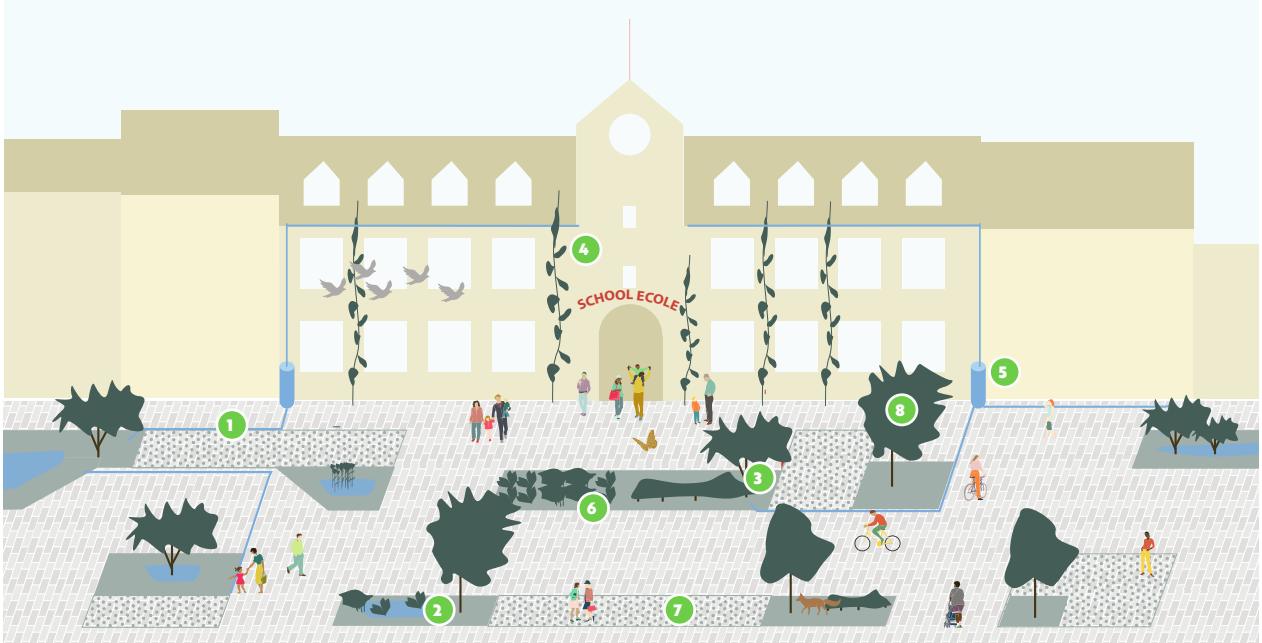
The school can also become an educational space for raising awareness of ecology and biodiversity. The idea is to make the chosen measures visible. This can be done in a fun way, with school quizzes to recognise plants and the benefits they bring. Information panels will explain the various aspects of the ecosystem in place. Students can play a role in maintaining the vegetation and learn about the importance of groundwater.

**Greening school grounds is also an opportunity to create links between the school and its neighbourhood. By building, planting and maintaining planters with the students, local residents will be enriched by this learning experience. Each class can take responsibility for its own planting. Outside partners or neighbours can also take the initiative in installing such features.**

**The non-profit association Bûûmplanters aims to inform, raise awareness and inspire anyone interested in the sustainable management of ecosystems and ecosystem services in Belgium. In collaboration with students and teachers, the association plants trees and shrubs in the school environment.**

↑ A "Bûûmparcks" in the municipality of Schaerbeek. © Bûûmplanters

↑ Entrance to School 13, Rue Wayez, Anderlecht. © Suède36




1: A view of water paths in the street: gutters as structuring elements
2: Rainwater collection and creation of water basins
3: Varied vegetation: different heights and varieties
4: Climbing plants
5: Rainwater tanks
6: Small green areas maintained by the school
7: Permeable and semi-permeable soils
8: Trees to purify the air

# Checklist

## Vegetation

- [ ] Are there trees in the school environment? Do their planting and environment allow for crown and root development?
- [ ] Estimating the site's biodiversity: Are there enough flowers for birds to build nests? Can you see bugs?
- [ ] Is the vegetation indigenous? Is the vegetation adapted to the soil type and climate?
- [ ] Does the vegetation have several planting strata?
- [ ] Are the feet of the trees also planted?
- [ ] Is greenery used to provide shade: shading walls, windows, meeting and waiting rooms, etc.?
- [ ] Does the vegetation need a lot of maintenance, or is it a self-regulating ecosystem?

## Air and sound

- [ ] Is the air quality in the school environment good? [10]
- [ ] Are the school grounds quiet? What is the source of any noise pollution?

## Water

- [ ] Is there organised rainwater management?
- [ ] Is the rainwater that falls on our roofs collected or reused?
- [ ] Is the rainwater that falls on the pavement channeled directly into the sewer system, or is it collected in infiltration zones?
- [ ] Are there any unpaved, unpaved, permeable areas?

## Materials

- [ ] Have sustainable and ethical materials been chosen for the landscaping and street furniture?
- [ ] If wood is used, is it indigenous, does it have an FSC label?

## Educational function

- [ ] Has the vegetation around the school been used for its educational function?
- [ ] Does the school have its own vegetable garden?
- [ ] Does the school have a compost point?

10 See, for example, the maps showing air and sound quality in Brussels. Source : https://aqicn.org/map/brussels/fr/


.com
DUCATI

# IDENTIFIABLE SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS

## RECOMMENDATIONS 04

A recognisable spatial identity not only benefits the visual quality of the school surroundings, but also ensures consistency between different school surroundings within the region.

A recognisable design must immediately convey to users of the public space that they are in a school environment. To do this, we need to find similar characteristics in the different school environments in Brussels. This requires a unity of expression, a "style" that can be recognised from afar. This form of standardisation can be found in the composition, colour, material or texture, as well as in the spatial and functional aspects of the school surroundings.

To define a recognisable visual quality around the schools in Brussels, this guide suggests applying a palette of colours and shapes. Using the same colour scheme and furniture will give a recognisable character to the school environments.

However, consistency of design and standardisation of expression must not prevent a distinctive local identity being expressed. Each school must be able to add its own personal touch. For example, a school with a well-defined pedagogical vision, which has a lot of consideration for expression, should have the opportunity to showcase this in the public space adjacent to its building. Other schools take a different, more modest approach, emphasising discretion. The aim is to create a common, recognisable language, to which personal touches can also be added.

← Catteau primary school, Rue Aurore, City of Brussels

# PRIORITISE A RECOGNISABLE COLOUR CODE

To enhance the school's visibility, this guide suggests using a two-colour palette for the various elements of the school's surroundings: red and white.

The choice of colours is based on what already exists in the Brussels streetscape and in the visual language of traffic. The red and white colours instinctively warn of danger and make cars slow down as they approach. These shades will be used to colour fences, steel elements, bike racks, furniture and other elements. They can also appear on the facade or pavement, or mark the bike path.

However, each school can add a few extra colours to create an expression specific to its school environment.

If you wish to paint pedestrian crossings, make sure that the markings (white stripes) are in compliance with the law, otherwise the crossing has no legal value and the pedestrian is not covered by any legal protection.

↑ On Boomkensstraat in Hasselt, where De Boomgaard elementary school is located, the colour of the street alerts people that they are in a school environment. © Suède36

↑ The works of Daniël Buren are good examples of colourfully patterned elements that mark the landscape of the neighbourhood in which they are installed. © Une Munster

**Underscore the ambition**

**A quick and effective way to make a school visible on the street is to literally highlight it. Paint can be used to make the intentions clear, for example by painting the future perimeter of the intervention in red.**

← Catteau primary school, Rue Aurore, City of Brussels © CityTools 2021

# INTEGRATE RECURRING ELEMENTS

## Fun furniture

This fun approach to the public space reinforces the school's presence in the street. The secure area within the school walls extends outwards, making the children feel more at ease. Playful objects with a strong visual language could become the totems of the Brussels school neighbourhood. They can form a fun trail or a network of games in the neighbourhood.

Two types of furniture could be found around schools: small concrete blocks painted red, and steel bars used as play equipment (see "Equipment" on page 42).

These elements will give a fun, recognisable character to the school surroundings. They do not have a defined use, but are open to interpretation. They can take many different forms, but are always created using the same materials and colours. They create a language of specific shapes, while offering a multitude of possible combinations and uses. The idea is to stimulate creativity rather than provide youngsters with a prefabricated play object.

↑ All of Rue Émile Féron in Saint-Gilles has been redeveloped to the same level, and red play elements have been installed. Séverin Malaud © urban.brussels

↑ Urban furniture in London, UK. © WMB studio

# Materials

The school can also be identified with a specific floor surface. For example, small-scale paving emphasises the interactive character of the location. Combined with distinct kerbs and speed bumps, this is a subtle way to indicate the entrance to the school in a school environment.

For example, as part of the Klavertje Vier School Contract, the school's forecourt and street will be redeveloped. The school forecourt will be laid with terracotta paving stones in two different shades of red. The overall effect is a sober, fun mosaic that clearly indicates you are approaching a school.

↑ Redevelopment of Place Guy Cudell in Saint-Josse, including a play of colours in the flooring. Project by Dev Space architecten. Séverin Malaud © urban.brussels

↑ Preliminary project designed by Act. – WAUW – Tractebel. © Act 2020


1: Paint on the floor to mark the school environment
2: Symbols specific to the school
3: Multi-functional, fun red furniture

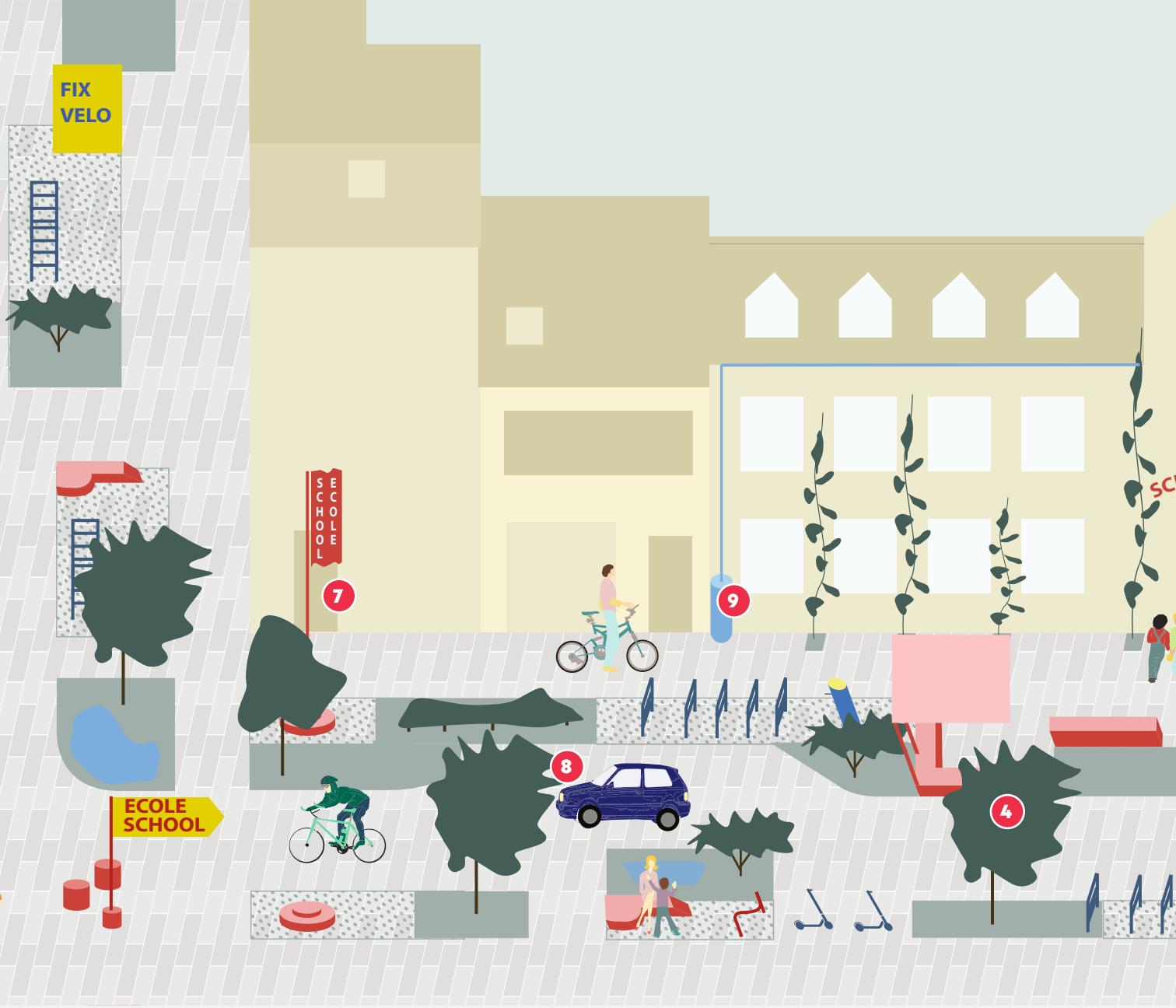
## Checklist

### Visibility

- [ ] Is the school visible enough?
- [ ] Is the environment recognisable as a school?
- [ ] Are there specific elements such as a signal, colours, signs, etc.?
- [ ] Is the choice of materials geared towards small-scale cladding materials that accentuate the interactive function?
- [ ] Has any thought been given to the use of colour? Is colour used strategically?

### Identity

- [ ] Does the school have a local identity, its own image, in line with its educational project? Is this identity reflected in the design of the surrounding area?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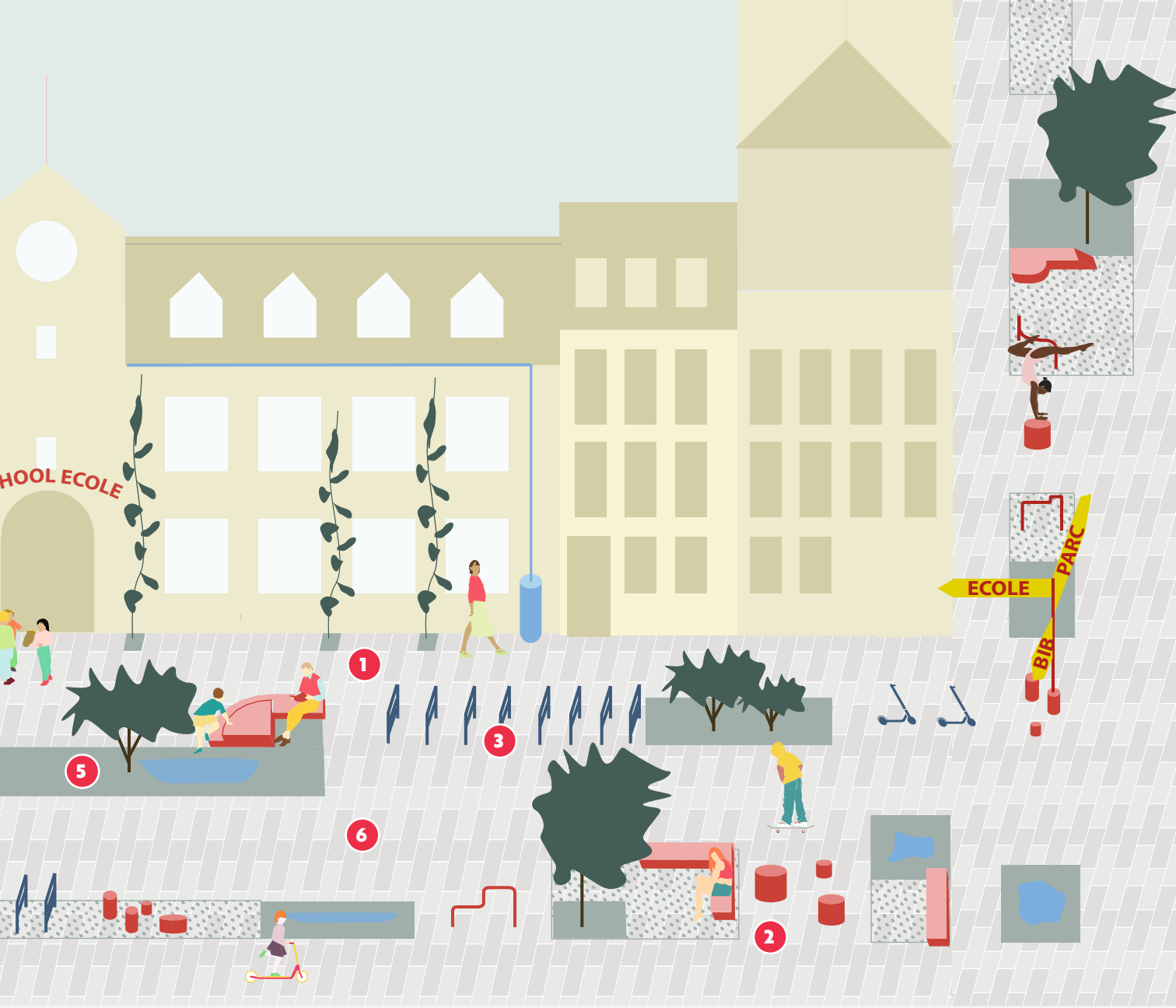



1. A generous pavement to welcome students, parents and passers-by.
2. Furniture for socialising, playing or resting.
3. Bicycle parking for parents and visitors.
4. Trees and vegetation for a healthy environment.
5. Furniture to form a physical barrier between pavement and pavement.
6. Quiet roads with little or no vehicle traffic.
7. Elements to signal the school's presence on the street.
8. Excellent visibility for passers-by, especially small children.
9. A rainwater recovery system.


NOTRE ÉCOLE
S'ENGAGE POUR UNE MEILLEURE
MOBILITÉ

# STAGES OF REALISATION

← Entrance to the Athénée Charles Janssens, Ixelles.
© Perspective / Jonathan Ortegat

# WHERE TO START?

Where to start improving the school environment? Who needs to be involved in the process? What steps are needed to initiate change?

This guide proposes an overall process for initiating the complete redevelopment of the school surroundings. It involves a thorough rethinking of mobility and a complete reorganisation of the public domain. This process is summarised here in five stages, each involving different stakeholders. However, improvements around schools can be made to varying degrees and at different paces.

## Quick-wins

It is possible to bring about change around schools through smaller-scale or temporary actions. As you will have discovered throughout the guide, quick-wins can be managed by citizens, the schools themselves, or the Municipality, with modest means, and already improve the quality of the public space surrounding a school. These interventions will draw attention to the issues relating to school surroundings, and raise awareness among parents and residents of the neighbourhood in which the school is located.

↑ Following an initiative by school parents, and authorisation from the municipality, a "fun bench" has been installed on parking spaces in front of the Voorzienigheid school in Anderlecht. © Loik Dal Molin

In some cases, these interventions also make it possible to embark on a limited, temporary project, pending a more in-depth redevelopment of the public space by the Municipality or the Region. This can involve creating small planted areas, painting pavements, placing planters on the edges of barriers or placing furniture to protect the pavement from the road.

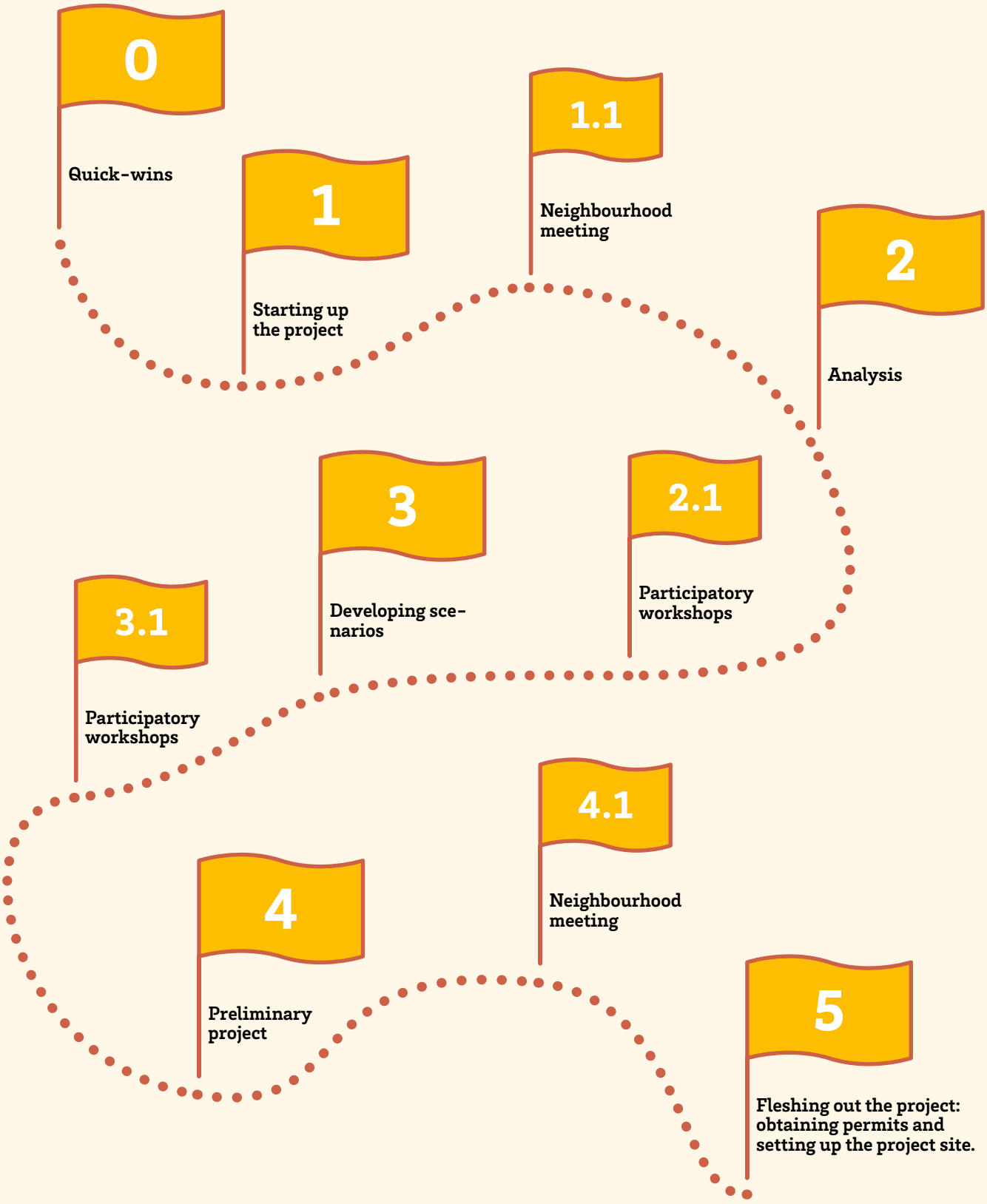
While these interventions do not require planning permission, they always require authorisation from the Municipality or the Region.

They also need to be well prepared in advance: the rationale of the action and its objectives need to be clearly defined. These few questions can help you frame the initiative:

- What message(s) do you want to convey?
- What are you going to put in place and with whom?
- How are you going to communicate and involve the neighbourhood?
- Are there any safety risks for users?

**Further information:**
Articles 6 and 7 of the Decree of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region of 13 November 2018 specify the acts and works in the public space that are exempt from planning permission: http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2008111337&table_name=loi

STAGES OF REALISATION



# STAGE 1: STARTING UP THE PROJECT

For the complete redevelopment of the school surroundings, collaboration between the school and the municipality[11] in which it is located must be established from the outset to initiate the project. This will be developed in consultation with the key stakeholders in order to assess needs, define ambitions and frame interventions in line with the available budget. When a common vision is shared, the project can begin.

## Set up a steering committee

The idea is to bring together the various key stakeholders in a group that will take the process in hand. This committee will drive the project forward, coordinate actions and make decisions in collaboration with political leaders. Good cooperation and trust will be crucial.

The work of the steering committee will be carried out in collaboration with the other stakeholders as part of a wider participation. This broader working group will have an advisory role only.

See "Stage 2: Analysis" on page 71.

The steering committee will comprise at least:

- The Municipality, which is responsible for the roads and will therefore act as project owner.
- The school: the school management or its representatives, and possibly motivated teachers, will be involved as the main users.

Option:

- A design office: this is a company generally made up of landscape architects and urban planners, specialising in the design of public spaces. The design office will be responsible for designing the layout and overseeing the process. If the intervention is limited, this role can be taken on by the municipality itself.
- Parents or action group: if the project is based on a citizen's initiative, it's a good idea to invite one of their representatives to sit on the steering committee.

In addition, the 'Bouwmeester' and his team will be able to support you in the quality of your landscaping project. The latter's role is to monitor spatial quality, in terms of architecture and in terms of urban planning and the public space in the Brussels-Capital Region.

**Further information**:
Website of the BMA team: https://bma.brussels/

## Determining the ambition

Once the various stakeholders on the steering committee have been brought together, a common ambition can be drawn up. The aim is to give the project an initial outline.

To this end, an initial exploratory analysis is developed, based on the elements of the guide. An assessment of the existing situation is based on the limited information available. The first obstacles, potentials and challenges have therefore been identified. This exploratory analysis provides an initial indication of the project context.

Based on this, the committee identifies the qualities it feels are important to add to the school's approach. It determines the potential limits of the intervention and the ambition it wants to bring to it. The ambition of the project and an initial budget estimate will then have to be validated by the administrative department responsible for the development.

11 Or with the Region in the case of regional roads

## Planning the process

Once agreement has been reached on the ambition, the steering committee can define a process. A schedule will be drawn up, including times for consultation, workshops and information evenings.

## Identify and consult users

It's important to identify and consult the various users of the public space. Although the school is an important stakeholder, there are many other stakeholders in the neighbourhood. These will be brought in at various stages of the process. By listening to everyone's needs, a base of support can be created for the redevelopment, and prevent resistance to change from hijacking the project.

The identity of these stakeholders will depend on the context. But it is basically everyone who has a stake in the public space concerned by the project. They include residents, shopkeepers, pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users, municipal services, school management, teachers, parents, the person in charge of school buses or deliveries, etc.

Don't forget the students who use the school environment on a daily basis. They see a lot of things that adults are not always aware of. They have extensive experience of traffic and its dangers. What's more, children and teenagers use public space informally and playfully, and their imagination knows no bounds. Their experience is very useful and can give new perspectives to the project.

# PARTICIPATION: "KICK OFF" NEIGHBOURHOOD MEETING

## For whom?

This meeting is open to all. Invitations are sent out to a wide audience via attractive multilingual communications: social networks, flyers, posters, "word of mouth" in the school or neighbourhood, etc. It's not always easy to reach all target groups. To be successful, it's important to think outside the box: always have someone in the street, at the entrance to the school, door-to-door visits, and so on. It's also a good idea to get invited for a few minutes to an existing gathering, such as a parents' meeting, local association assembly, sporting event or youth movement.

## Why?

- Provide information and explain the ambition.
- Submit the initial ambitions to the broadest possible group of stakeholders for joint consideration.
- At the end of the meeting, identify those interested in joining the "working group".

## Process

### PROVIDE INFORMATION

- Welcome and general introduction: What is the reason for this meeting?
- Brief presentation of the project's ambitions. It is preferable for this presentation to be made by several different members of the steering committee. The aim is to show that the project already has the support of multiple stakeholders (the school, the municipality, etc.).
- References to other projects to develop the school surroundings, or other possible projects, can be used to illustrate the ambition.

### GATHER FEEDBACK

Suggestions and comments on the steering committee's initial ambitions. It's a good idea to make this part of the meeting interactive. For example, by dividing the audience into sub-groups to gather their ideas and comments from an aerial map. Or going out into the field for an exploratory walk and discussing a bottleneck.

### FINALISATION

At the end of the meeting, a rapporteur summarises and synthesises the most important ideas that have emerged. Some priorities can be highlighted. For example, "What is the most important message we want to convey to the steering committee and the municipality?"

### COMPOSITION OF AN ADVISORY "WORKING GROUP"

A call is launched to participate in the "working group". This group includes all those interested in the project. These are residents or concerned citizens who want to get more actively involved. Depending on the context, this working group can be set up on the spot at the end of the meeting, or through a more formal application.

Be careful, however, not to overlook the input of others who couldn't be present at the meeting. It is therefore advisable to draw up in advance a list of stakeholders likely to be interested in the project, and to plan other recruitment methods: social networks, free sheets, mailings, etc.

We can also include resource persons who are less involved, but who have expertise in the neighbourhood and/or the process to be implemented.

# STAGE 2: ANALYSIS

Hasty decisions are not advisable. In order to refine the project, it is important to analyse the existing situation in depth. To achieve a stable, well-thought-out project that has the support of the community, we recommend a step-by-step approach.

## Observation

The existing situation can be studied as objectively as possible. The surroundings of the school extend beyond the school gate, so it makes sense to conduct this observation on a larger scale. The elements listed below can help guide you through the diagnostic process.

At the school entrance:

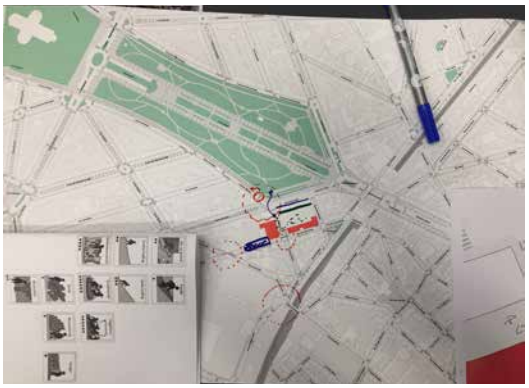
- Locate the various entrances to the school. Is it possible to use another entrance as the main entrance?
- Measure the width of the pavement and the space in front of the school gate.
- Identify all elements around the school (furniture, seats, bike parking, etc.) and existing measures to protect pedestrians (barriers, etc.).

In the school street:

- Characterise the street profile (lane widths, parking lanes, pavement widths, bike lanes, etc.).
- Identify the street's status according to the Good Move plan, the Highway Code, according to use (recognised bike path, etc.)?
- Identify existing road signs.
- Locate entrances and exits to garages on the street, delivery areas, spaces for people with reduced mobility, access points for the fire service, etc.
- Identify special circumstances: public transport, a store attracting a lot of cars, a school bus stop, etc.

In the neighbourhood:

- Locate local amenities and attractions near the school
- Identify other schools near the one you're working on. Could a joint project be set up with several schools to create a school neighbourhood?
- Map out the public transport stops within walking distance of the school



↑ © Suède36

## Analysis

An initial assessment of the quality of the school surroundings can then be made using the four checklists in the guide:

- Safe school surroundings: page 17
- Friendly and accessible school surroundings: page 35
- Green and healthy school surroundings: page 47
- Identifiable school surroundings: page 57

This assessment will then be informed by the participatory process carried out through the analysis workshops.

→ See "Participation in Stage 2: analysis workshops" page 73.

# PARTICIPATION: "ANALYSIS" WORKSHOPS

## For whom?

"Children" working group: students from the school in question, possibly students from another local school, young users, etc.

"Adult" working group: users, parents, residents, school staff and local resource persons identified in the first stage.

## Why?

These two workshops will be set up by the steering committee, possibly with the help of participation experts. They both have the same objective: to incorporate users' expertise into the analysis of the school and neighbourhood, and to get their feedback on the ambitions of the project.

At the start of the "adult" working group meeting, the results of the children's workshop are presented. This method allows the adults to see the students' views at an early stage. One person can be assigned to draw attention to the needs of younger children during the workshop.

↑ © Kind & Samenleving

## Process

### PROVIDE INFORMATION

It is important to provide information on what is absolutely not possible (in legal terms, in terms of traffic, space, budget, etc.) and to clearly present the ambitions of the steering committee (e.g.: the objective is clearly to reduce car pressure and improve the quality of space for active users).

Participants are then invited to express their views on the ambitions of the steering committee. To support this, a wide range of possible street modifications is presented for the participants to consider. These examples can be realised projects or more utopian images, with or without feedback. Clearly unfeasible proposals will be put on the back burner or postponed for the longer term.

It's possible that the participants will disagree, and that several trends will emerge during the discussion. In this case, it's important to acknowledge the different ambitions without excluding them, unless they run counter to the ambitions of the steering committee. The final decision on the scope of the project is left to the municipal and/or regional authorities.

### UTILISE USER EXPERTISE

The second objective is for experienced users, both adults and children, to provide input to the steering committee's analysis.

Users of the school environment will provide information on:

1. **Their use of the space:**

- How do students, parents and teachers get to school? (If the school has a school travel plan, this can be used as a basis).
- What are their journeys and routes? What are the most important crossing points?
- Where are their main public transport stops, meeting points and waiting areas?
- What are the neighbourhood's most important destinations and attractions?

All these aspects are mapped out. The participants will be able to sit around a map or aerial photo to highlight the various points of difficulty, journeys, school routes and avenues for the project.

**2. Their evaluation and perception of the school surroundings:**

- How do they see the current situation?
- How do pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users, car passengers and drivers, children and adults, perceive their journeys?
- Which road segments, intersections or plateaus are unpleasant or dangerous? What feelings does this evoke: stress, fear, peace, neighbourliness, lack of safety? Where are the most problematic sections of the route?
- Is the public bicycle parking perceived as high quality? Is there any theft or damage to existing parking spots?
- What are the most significant and attractive locations? What are the most enjoyable parts of their school journey? What are the most popular places? Where are the possibilities for making the school route safer, more fun, greener and more enjoyable?
- To what extent do parents and residents feel involved and feel ownership of the school surroundings?
- Is there a sense of neighbourliness? Is there a daily gathering of people in front of the school gate?
- Do people feel responsible for the upkeep and management of the school surroundings (reporting problems, clean-up actions by the school or neighbourhood, etc.)?

An exploratory walk with adults and children is a highly effective interactive method. A way to analyse directly on the site, explain by showing, illustrate with real-life examples, and win people over. Participants, adults and children alike, can do this in a fun way: take photos with emoticons, close their eyes to listen to the sounds, separate to observe each other and then share their perceptions, etc.

↑ © Kind & Samenleving

### LISTENING TO PROPOSALS

After hearing the participants' experiences and knowledge in analysing the context of the school and its neighbourhood, it will be important to hear their views on potential ways of improving the situation. Several solutions will be put on the table by all those present. These will then be summarised by the steering committee, and may be incorporated into the rest of the work.

↑ © Kind & Samenleving

# STAGE 3: DEVELOPING SCENARIOS

During the previous phases, the existing situation was analysed in detail with the help of all stakeholders involved. This information can now be used to develop several different scenarios for the project. By testing out different scenarios, project stakeholders will be able to grasp the possibilities open to them.

Designing the scenarios requires technical knowledge. The steering committee includes experts from the municipality and/or the design office. They will therefore be in charge of drawing them up.

The scenarios may differ in terms of mobility and traffic flow, uses, road layout, street furniture, green spaces and so on. The aim is to come up with a solution that is broadly supported. The aim is to best meet the needs of the school surroundings to which the project relates.

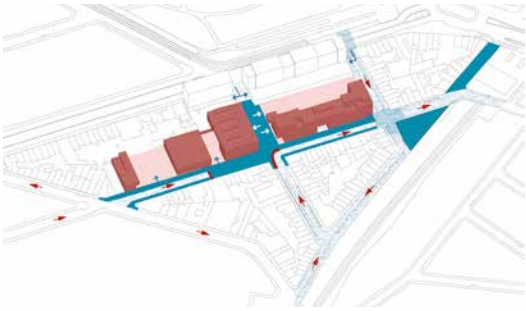
### RESEARCH BY DESIGN

This term refers to a tried and tested technique: finding solutions by drawing them. It is a method that makes it possible to examine the consequences of different options and different levels of ambition.

What are the consequences of a change in road traffic? Can one-way streets to create "loops" exclude through traffic? Are we in compliance with the road status or legal constraints? Is there enough width and space for a bike path, a wider pavement or a spacious reception area at the school entrance? Can we find other parking solutions?

### EXISTING PLANS

In many cases, adapting the road traffic is the most effective way of making the school surroundings safer, more sustainable and more pleasant. However, this modification almost always involves making changes at a larger scale. Existing mobility plans will need to be adhered to. If there are already municipal plans, it will be necessary to examine whether adjusting the traffic is possible at the school level. The Good Move plan is a good guideline for initiating this process. Measures to stimulate active mobility can be supported by this plan, approved at the regional level.



# PARTICIPATION: "SCENARIOS" WORKSHOPS

## For whom?

- "Children" working group: students, possibly local children going to school elsewhere, young users, etc.
- "Adults" working group: users, parents, residents, school staff, local resource people, etc.

## Why?

In these workshops, both groups have the same objective, the same structure and the same progression.

- Explain the different scenarios;
- Evaluate the scenarios with the users;
- Choose the most appropriate scenarios together.

## Process

### EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENT SCENARIOS

- Give each scenario a clear, easy-to-remember name;
- Keep photos of the streets close at hand, so you can show them if you need to;
- If possible, explain the scenarios at the site of intervention, in the street: a neighbourhood walk, drawing on the street with chalk to show the different solutions, etc.

### EVALUATE AND TEST THE SCENARIOS

Each participant receives plans or an aerial photo showing the scenarios;

For each scenario, participants are asked to mentally follow the route between home and school (or other routes they take regularly);

What do they encounter along the way? Is anything different? Is the scenario an improvement for them?

Participants note this on the plan for each scenario.

### COLLECT THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF EACH SCENARIO

Each scenario is reviewed, and participants draw conclusions:

- What is different?
- What was good and what was not so good?
- Do certain conclusions correspond?

Record the findings on a central chart. The situation is then examined in its entirety: is there a difference in usage between pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and motorists? Is there a difference depending on which side of the neighbourhood you come from?

### CHOOSE THE OPTIMAL SCENARIO(S)

By weighing up the advantages and disadvantages, the participants will choose the scenario that seems most relevant to them. The aim will be to frame the debate so that everyone serves the general interest, putting their own personal interests aside.

**FINALISATION**

To conclude the session, you need to be clear about the scope of the workshop. This work will be used to define the future project and inform those who will ultimately have to make the decisions: local and/or regional decision-makers. These workshops and working groups are advisory only.

4 PRELIMINARY PROJECT

# STAGE 4: PRELIMINARY PROJECT

The conclusions of the "adults" and "children" working groups are brought together and studied by the steering committee to arrive at a single preferred scenario. This contains the essential ideas for the future redevelopment project. This preliminary project will be validated internally by the College of Mayors and Aldermen of the Municipality concerned.

## Presentation of the preliminary project

The preliminary project will then be presented to a wider neighbourhood meeting for final evaluation. The methodology used to achieve this result will also be explained. The aim is to offer a clear vision of the project ahead, and to hear any remaining concerns.

## Dissemination

After the neighbourhood meeting, the results of the process and the chosen preliminary project can be disseminated more widely: press release, municipal website, fact sheet, social networks, etc. For a two-week period, users will still be able to submit their comments to the project managers. However, a specific deadline will be set beyond which it will no longer be possible to give an opinion. It should also be mentioned that the decision on the development principle has been taken, and only constructive proposals to refine the plan can still be considered.

## Final approval

The steering committee will summarise all contributions for final approval. After the presentation to the neighbourhood and wider communication, all reactions are collected. The individuals responsible for implementing the project will check whether any new information has come to light, and whether the preliminary project needs to be revised or modified. The design of a definitive project can then be started. A complete dossier is prepared by the steering committee and submitted to the municipal and/or regional authorities for approval. They will then officially confirm this choice and adopt it as the preliminary project.

# PARTICIPATION: NEIGHBOURHOOD MEETING

## For whom?

This meeting is open to all.

## Why?

The main aim of this meeting is to provide information on the chosen scenario, but also to detect any important additional concerns or information in good time, and to include them in the development of the final project.

## Process

### COMMUNICATION

The invitation to this meeting will make it clear that, following a consultation process, the project's political and administrative managers have chosen a development scenario. Communication will explain the purpose of this meeting: to explain and justify this choice. At the start of the meeting, there wil be a reminder of the agenda.

### FORMAT OF THE MEETING

It's not advisable to organise a formal or overly academic meeting. An office visit or a walk around the neighbourhood are more convivial and effective ways of communicating. This type of meeting can also be extended to special target groups such as parents' associations. An office visit requires clear, well-thought-out and accessible visual and textual material. These information materials can be used at a later date for dissemination via reference websites and social media.

The meeting will start with an explanation of:

- the process followed, including previous participation sessions;
- an evaluation of the scenarios with their main advantages and disadvantages;
- the justification for choosing the scenario;
- the chosen scenario in detail.

Participants will be invited to mentally trace the route from home to school (or other routes they take regularly) and highlight what this plan means to them. The users in attendance will have the opportunity to share their reactions and concerns. For example, in answer to the question: "For the scenario to be implemented, the Municipality and/or the Region would clearly have to...".

### COLLECT ANY CONCERNS

Participants in the information meeting, and by extension all residents, will be invited to send their feedback to an e-mail address set up for this purpose. A precise deadline will be set. The organisers will point out, however, that the decision to make the school environment safer has been taken. In principle, the conceptual solution presented at the meeting will no longer be called into question. However, concerns can be expressed about the consequences, possibly unintended, that implementing the preliminary project could entail. If a consensus emerges on the merits of an alternative scenario, the meeting organisers will also inform the decision-making bodies.

# STAGE 5: FLESHING OUT THE PROJECT

## Temporary layout and/or test phase

A step which is not mandatory, but which can have beneficial effects for the project, is the implementation of interim measures pending a complete redevelopment or a comprehensive overhaul of the traffic situation. This will make it possible to proceed in stages, so that the neighbourhood can gradually get used to the changes. A distinction is made here between a temporary layout and a test phase.

### Temporary layout

The idea is to build elements that partially modify the public space while awaiting the final development. These temporary interventions not only keep the enthusiasm alive before the final project arrives, but also make the transformations underway visible.

These interventions can be carried out by the school itself, with the participation of the students, or by the citizen collectives that have supported the ongoing process. The manager of the road can also take the initiative. Inexpensive and quick solutions can be chosen: floor paint, temporary furniture, planters, etc. (see the quick-wins in the guide).

These small-scale actions can already have a major impact on the perception and functioning of the school environment. However, it is important to carry them out in consultation with the public authorities.

- Provisional does not mean irresponsible: it means taking into account the context and its constraints.
- The layout will evolve, but not the ambition. Be clear about what is definitive and what can still be modified.

### Test phase

The test phase is often carried out when a project to redevelop the school surroundings has an impact on mobility, such as the introduction of a school street.

This is an experimental period during which a new situation is rolled out. The aim is to test the planned measures against reality. The advantages and disadvantages are analysed objectively. At the end of the test phase, the intervention will be evaluated. Those responsible will then be able to decide whether or not to implement the new layout permanently.

This phase requires careful preparation. Clear communication aimed at all users is essential. Prior to implementation, the information required for the evaluation will be collected: traffic counts, photos of the pre-test situation, parking surveys, etc. It is advisable to create a transparent and accessible platform where users can share their comments.

The test phase can give the illusion that decisions on change have not yet been taken, and therefore amplify the voice of users who are against the change and the project. So when communicating about a test, it's important for those in charge to assert their intention to implement a layout that meets an ambition and objective of quality and safety.

#### WHY A TEST PHASE?

Among other things, this makes it possible to:

- Check whether the spatial interventions provoke conflicts of use that only arise when they are put into practice.
- Experiment with new street furniture to evaluate its use.

#### TEST CONFIGURATION

This type of installation is carried out at the initiative of the municipality: concrete blocks to narrow a street, to cut off a street, to transform parking spaces into vibrant areas, etc. The layout can be made more attractive with the help of the stakeholders involved in the process and the workshops.

#### PERIOD

The duration of the test phase is proposed by the steering committee. Mobility experts recommend a minimum period of 14 weeks to allow users to get used to the new situation. It's best if the trial period doesn't start after the summer holidays, but on a Monday in the middle of the year. That will give those involved in the project the time they need to inform the public. In addition, the seasons, one-off events and any period likely to be unusual in terms of traffic and/or school attendance will all be taken into account.

#### EVALUATION OF THE TEST PHASE

For a 3-month trial period, a survey will be carried out during the last month. For this, a survey form is distributed to students, parents, teachers, local shopkeepers, users, residents and so on.

The survey form identifies the respondent's role in the school environment and how he or she uses it. Is it a motorist or an active road user? The questionnaire must be designed to obtain correct and accurate information. What do we want to know? The questions will be clearly formulated and will refer to the initial ambitions.

If the results are positive, the final project can be implemented. If the evaluation shows there is not enough support, the situation can be re-examined by those in charge. However, bear in mind: you need to distinguish between objective reasons and opposition due to resistance to change or individual interests that take precedence over the interests of the community.

**Further information:**
On its website, Brussels Mobility suggests how to initiate a test configuration. You'll also find sample forms for carrying out the evaluation surveys on the school streets: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/diy-rue-scolaire

## Implementing the modifications

A definitive project can be drawn up, if necessary, following a positive outcome to the trial phase. On the basis of the work carried out and the results of the test phase, the design office will then propose a project to the municipality. This must then be approved by the College of Mayors and Aldermen.

At this stage, all the consultations, reflections, analyses and preparations for the project will have been completed. Now it's time to actually start the project. If the project is large-scale, a design office is usually responsible for overseeing the entire process: planning permission, tender documents, site supervision and acceptance. Ideally, the design office will have been involved in defining the project from the outset, so as to create a bond of trust with those involved. For more modest projects, the public authorities can take on the task of designing the project themselves.

# AVAILABLE RESOURCES

## SAFE SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS

Roadmap for the school street - Brussels Mobility: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/diy-rue-scolaire

Road safety action plan 2021-2030 Brussels Mobility: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/en/road-safety-plan

Regional support for municipal mobility and road safety initiatives - Brussels Mobility: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr

Cahier GO 10: guidelines for a pedestrian city - Brussels Mobility: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/sites/default/files/vm3-ville-conviviale-pour-pietons.pdf

School travel plans - Brussels Mobility: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/ecole/les-plans-de-deplacements-scolaires

Good Move – Plan régional de mobilité pour la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale : https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/en/good-move

Opération cartable – Brussels Mobility : https://operation-cartable.mobilite.brussels/homepage/

Guide to starting up a 'Pedibus' Walloon Region: http://mobilite.wallonie.be/home/je-suis/un-etablissement-scolaire/education-mobilite-et-securite-routiere-emsr/le-pedibus.html

Solutions for closing the school street – Beecole : https://beecole.brussels/fr/be-ecole/nos-publications

Guide to road design for the circulation and accessibility of emergency vehicles: https://brrc.be/sites/default/files/2021-03/Aménagement%20de%20voirie%20-%20véhicules%20de%20secours.pdf

## FRIENDLY SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS

Publications on child-friendly public spaces and gender issues: https://k-s.be/publicaties/#:~:text=-Kind%20%26%20Samenleving%20focuste%20in%202019,terug%20in%20deze%20interactieve%20publicatie.&text=Spelen%20kinderen%20nog%20buiten%20op%20straat%20en%20in%20hun%20eigen%20buurt%3F

Vade-mecum of the Brussels-Capital Region on bicycle parking - Brussels Mobility: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/sites/default/files/vm_7-stationnement-velo-web.pdf

## GREEN AND HEALTHY SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS

Best practice guide "Végétalisons nos rues" – Saint-Gilles : https://stgilles.brussels/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/BROCHURE-ENTIERE_2020.pdf

Air quality in the Brussels-Capital Region - Brussels Environment: https://environnement.brussels/lenvironnement-etat-des-lieux/en-detail/air

Water basins – Brussels Environment : https://environnement.brussels/thematiques/eau

Catalogue of circular offers in the Brussels-Capital Region: https://www.circlemade.brussels/le-catalogue-des-offres-circulaires/

Sonian Wood Cooperative: https://sonianwoodcoop.be/store/

## STAGES OF REALISATION

Acts and works in the public space exempt from planning permission: http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2008111337&table_name=loi

Bouwmeester Maître-Architecte : https://bma.brussels/

School street, DIY - Brussels Mobility: https://mobilite-mobiliteit.brussels/fr/diy-rue-scolaire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