



POYNTON REGENERATED

In the 19th Century, Fountain Place in Poynton was a country crossroads where children played and Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee was celebrated. The cast-iron fountain with its elegant lanterns is a reminder of that bygone age. *Martin Cassini* writes

Then came the 1960s, the heyday of traffic engineering. The crossroads became a multi-lane intersection which cut the parish of Poynton in two, subjecting it to decades of domination by traffic.

In the 21st Century, Howard Murray became a Poynton councillor and pondered regeneration. He soon saw that traffic engineering 'solutions' might move traffic faster through Poynton, but they did nothing to revitalise it.

Then he heard about shared space – an approach which replaces standard traffic control with streets designed to stimulate civility among all road-users. After extensive research and a self-funded trip to Holland to see shared space in action, the Council commissioned street designer Ben Hamilton-Baillie.

His scheme removed traffic lights, used unusual road paving, and introduced 'gateways'. It created single-lane approaches, thus doubling pedestrian

space. It met opposition from concerned locals. How would children cross the road? The local press, too, was hostile. Wouldn't single lanes mean traffic queues all the way back to Stockport?

Now that the painful roadworks are over, there is general delight at the results. The place looks better. Traffic is calmer, journey times are shorter. People can cross the road in peace and safety. There is a sense of place. Business is booming, with no retail units available on Park Lane or Fountain Place.

The only decline – reported by the Police – is in speeds and the number of traffic incidents. There is less air and noise pollution. More people are going by foot and bicycle. People are smiling.

Now that's progress. ■

Martin Cassini is a founder of Equality Streets, a campaign for traffic system reform. www.equalitystreets.com