

VOLVO S60

DESIGN CONCEPT

The Volvo S60 was designed from the outset to be a sports saloon and a dynamic addition to the Volvo range. Peter Horbury, then Volvo's Vice President of Design and Chief Designer, and later Executive Design Director at the Premier Automotive Group, described it as "a four-door coupe" with styling inspired by the Volvo C70 coupe.

The S60 also features a 'cockpit-forward' look, which Horbury described as "a new way of doing sports saloons". By moving the top of the car forwards to sit between the front wheel-arches, the designer has created a shape of unique balance and proportion. It asserts a strong, fresh identity, but the egg-crate grille and prominent shoulder lines ensure that it's also instantly recognisable as a Volvo.

- Designed as a 'four-door coupe' under Peter Horbury
- Cockpit-forward styling – a new way of designing a sports saloon
- Incorporates the latest Volvo design language
- Volvo S60 R matches style with high-performance
- S, Sport and SE model differentiation for added style and desirability
- Aerodynamic design with Cd of 0.28

The Volvo S60 was designed from the outset to be a sports saloon and one of the most dynamic designs in the Volvo range. Peter Horbury, the then Vice President and Chief Designer at Volvo Cars, describes it as, "a four-door coupe or a two-plus-two door." Its strident, distinctive appearance tempts customers who might have chosen other premium brand rivals such as BMW (3 series), Audi (A4) or Mercedes (C-class).

Much of the inspiration for the shape came from the Volvo C70 Coupe. "In the studio, the day we started the project," explains Horbury, "we had a Volvo C70 parked and when the designers were talking about what the car should look like, I put a piece of styling tape on the Volvo C70 to create a second door."

Horbury's moment of inspiration is reflected in the Volvo S60's roofline, which tapers elegantly into the boot. It's a coupe-like detail that gives a clear indication of this car's sporting intent. That it has been achieved without robbing rear passengers of headroom is a tribute to the designer's clever blend of form and function.

There was also another underlying influence in determining the Volvo S60's shape and one that sets it apart from the opposition. Horbury explains: "If you look back at the history of car design, it started very much in the days of the horse and carriage, where the horse – or the engine – was out front and the people were sitting in the carriage, over the rear axle."

“But then, later on, aircraft changed when the engines went onto the wings and the pilot came up front in his cockpit. Eventually cars, like Ferrari’s 250LM, changed this – they put the engine behind the driver.”

“And suddenly the new layout of the car looked right, it performed well and it looked good. All the design exercises since that day followed that track – the sort of cockpit-forward look. And that is what we’ve tried to do with the Volvo S60.”

In keeping with this design philosophy, the cockpit of the Volvo S60 has been brought forward so that it sits between the front wheels, creating a strong, dynamic, homogeneous appearance. “We brought the top of the car in-between the wheels, in-between the overhangs to create what I feel is one of the best-balanced looking cars there is,” says Horbury.

The Volvo S60 therefore manages to assert its own, distinct identity in a competitive class, but it’s also instantly recognisable as a Volvo. The prominent egg-crate grille and V-shaped bonnet are classic Volvo design elements, and so too is the strong shoulder line, which emphasises the car’s strength and durability as well as aiding its side impact protection.

The manner in which the rear tail lamps integrate beautifully into the boot also echoes the design language first introduced in the larger S80 and subsequently to the XC90 and new S40 compact saloon. This reflects what Horbury describes as “a very Swedish design simplicity.” It’s also a shape that works exceptionally well, as the drag coefficient of 0.28 testifies.

Another crucial element of the Volvo S60’s design is its understatement, which Horbury believes is crucial to the brand’s appeal. “A Volvo buyer displays terrific self-confidence,” he says. “Nobody’s allowed to show off in Sweden and a Volvo’s not a show off’s car. People buy Volvo’s because they know what they want.”

This is demonstrated by the subtle design changes differentiating S, Sport and SE models.

Sport models are given a sporting edge with the addition of body-coloured lower bumpers, lower side mouldings and a rear spoiler, plus larger 17in alloy wheels. Internally, sports leather/textile upholstery, a 'spaceball' gear lever for manual transmission models, and aluminium dashboard, centre console and door trim complete the sporty driver environment.

Visual design touches for the luxurious SE models are limited to chrome inserts on the body-coloured bumpers and unique 17in alloy wheels.

This Swedish 'understated' philosophy is even reflected in the high-performance Volvo S60 R. Despite its awesome performance potential, the styling changes are modestly restrained. "There is nothing which doesn't fulfil a function, no unnecessary design clutter," Horbury explains. "Some people might think the rear spoiler is too discreet, but its task is to reduce the rear lifting forces by 20 per cent – and it does precisely that."

Other subtle tweaks include a new front nose design incorporating matt silver bi-xenon headlights and a lowered grille, a front sports bumper with a deeper spoiler and larger air intakes for the two intercoolers. The R range also offers 18in alloy wheels carrying a discreet 'R' logo and shod with 235/40 Pirelli P-Zero Rosso's and are available in silver or graphite.