

Scrutiny Inquiry Panel - Accessible Southampton

Thursday, 18th November, 2021
at 5.30 pm

PLEASE NOTE TIME OF MEETING

Virtual Meetings - Virtual meeting

This meeting is open to the public

Members

Councillor Coombs
Councillor Guest
Councillor Rayment
Councillor Streets
Councillor Vaughan

Contacts

Mark Pirnie - Scrutiny Manager 023 8083 3886

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND PRESENTATIONS

7 **ACCESSIBLE SOUTHAMPTON - ACCESS TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SPACES** (Pages 1 - 58)

Friday, 12 November 2021

Service Director, Legal & Governance

SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living



Access Inquiry – Meeting 2

Built environment and public spaces

What is the experience of Disabled People

Ian Loynes, Chief Executive, SPECTRUM

Think you know Disabled People ... Think Again

Presentation Contents

- City Design & Getting About (Not Transport)
- Building & Spaces
- Planning & Building Control
- Events
- Solutions

NB: Impossible to cover everything in this Presentation

City Design:

What's good about Southampton

- There are plenty of good examples of good access, particularly in retail areas – simply because they have a financial incentive to encourage Disabled People to spend their £
- Most shops allow assistance dogs and shops make a lot of effort (9/10)
- Audio Loop Systems are really making a difference to hearing impaired people *[NB: only very few installed/operational in shops and public buildings]*
- More space allowed since the Pandemic: Great for access
- City Centre is good generally: But isn't good in other retail areas, (eg Shirley, Portswood, St Marys, Northam)

City Design: Getting Around the City (1)

- **Street Furniture:** most common barrier
 - Billboards, inconveniently placed bollards, rubbish bins, cafe/restaurant pavement tables
 - Particularly dangerous for people with visual impairments.
 - More guidance/checks about how much space should be left for pedestrians, boundary clearly marked
- **Pavements:** obstructions. sudden changes in width or height of the pavement, lack of dropped kerbs, cracked/broken paving, (even small gaps),
 - Not defining pavement space from road space
 - Paving with cobbles may look authentic, but you try wheeling on in in a wheelchair, or walking on it with crutches , or if you're in pain
- **Seating:** with backrests, and armrests (to aid sitting down, continual support and standing up or transferring to scooter)
 - NOT “artistically designed” form over function
 - integrated spaces for wheelchair and scooter users

City Design: Getting Around the City (2)

- **Not everyone uses wheelchair or has walking difficulties**
 - Mental Health Conditions or Autism, people who use Assistance Dogs.
 - A busy and crowded city centre can be a very disorientating, or even hostile, environment for many people
 - Ambient noise of thousands of people, mixed with music can make life very difficult
 - To the extent: reluctant to go to the city centre at all

Other issues:

- Cyclists, electric scooter and skateboarders
- Lack of accessible signposting
- Poorly phased pedestrian crossing



Buildings & Spaces – Retail & Public

Cafes, bars and restaurants

- Internal steps put in for purely aesthetic reasons
- Current fashion for high tables and stools

Shops & Public Buildings

- stepped access at entrances
- narrow and cluttered aisles or queuing lanes
- poorly sited or designed displays
- shortage of accessible lifts
- poor lighting for people with visual impairments
- lack of accessible changing cubicles in clothes and department stores
- lack of working hearing loop systems & staff trained in their use
- Lack of accessible toilets or hearing loop systems - remain even after recent refurbishments
- Even some council owned leisure facilities do not have full access

Buildings & Spaces – Audio Loop Systems

- LetsLoopSouthampton.co.uk. 3 Years trying to get audio loop systems fitted in premises
- Only 4% have actually got loop systems installed. Ridiculous because hearing impaired people won't go into shops if no loop system - completely unable to communicate.
- 23,000 deaf and hard of hearing people who live in Southampton
- LetsLoopSouthampton even has a grant fund of £30,000, available to meet cost of installing a loop system (they cost about £200): isn't even a financial case

Buildings & Spaces - Homes

All houses built from now should be built to be accessible, not just a small percentage for Disabled and Older People. This should happen for two main reasons:

1. Disabled and Older People want to visit their friends and family and neighbours just as much as everyone else
2. If all homes had a basic level of accessibility built in, it would be less costly to adapt as people grow older or become Disabled

There's no real evidence that it costs more to build accessible homes when they are built at scale. **It's a Myth**

Accessible Toilets

- often poor design, flush handles inaccessible, high dryers, high mirrors
- often full of junk, cleaning materials, huge bins, badly maintained
- poorly provided in many cafes, restaurants – no monitoring
- West Quay South: not one of the toilets complied with legislation
- **Landlord equally liable**
- **Why Radar Keys?:** Accessible toilets locked (with a Radar Key)
 - Why lock accessible toilets when 'ordinary' toilets are not locked.
- **Changing Places Toilets:** more space, hoist, adult changing place
 - Compared to other Cities, Southampton has very few
 - It should be a requirement in public spaces & new builds
 - Even though not many exist, they are not used simply because people don't know they exist
 - Need to raise awareness of where these are

Planning and Building Control

Should be building in good access at the design phase of new builds

- Guidance is routinely Ignored
 - The mantra of “Approved documents - they are guidance only and do not have to be followed” is repeated across the industry and within the Planning Dept
- Often no access or bad access in new buildings and access reduced when buildings are modified
- Access considerations should be put in place, and planning officers should ensure access rights are preserved – but they don’t
- SCC’s Buildings control is a major contributor to the lack of access
 - Inaccessible provision is routinely granted permission**
 - Planning officers don’t appear to ‘police’ access requirements**
- Left for individuals to make a complaint
- Used to be an Access Officer Role, and there used to be a relationship with the Access Group [Group of Disabled People] to vet plans before approval



Events

Mind Set: Disabled People can be watchers, but can also be performers – often access considerations don't allow this

Car Parking at the Civic Centre should be maintained at all times

- Currently, if there's an event going on they close the Civic Centre car parks
- Quite annoying because it's the most accessible one
i.e. when there's a cycling event in town, they closed the Civic Centre car park.
- These are the best spaces in the City because it's not like end to end parking where people block you in, resulting in inability to access your vehicle.

Solutions

- 15% of the UK population, or 37,000+ in Southampton, are Disabled People – Economic & moral case

Policy considerations:

- All public meetings (Council, MPs) should be held in accessible premises. Then accessible to everyone – including Disabled People
 - Time and again I've been to even MPs surgeries and not been able to use them because not accessible.
 - Enough public buildings that are accessible,
 - Would encourage the design of accessible venues as buildings that aren't accessible, would find they are losing money.
- Accessibility Checklist: Developed by City Council & Disabled People.
 - Event organisers expected to use accessibility checklist to follow to avoid regular access mistakes
 - Often, simple things that make all the difference. Cost is often not a factor
- Equality Impact Statements: Should be completed by people from different equality groups themselves, not just done by an officer that may, or not, know the issues that these groups experience.



Solutions

- Fully accessible transport systems – If you can't get there!
- A shared commitment to full inclusion
- Universal benefits – everyone benefits
- A broad view of Disability and accessibility
- An emphasis on communications
- Innovation
- A commitment to co-production
- A Learning City knowledge retained when officer leaves

Levers

- **City Centre Plan**
- **Southampton Local Plan Vision** local community organisations
- **City of Culture 2025** should be used to promote Southampton as an accessible and welcoming City. A real opportunity for the City Council to lead by example



Centre for
Independent
Living CIC

Email: Ian.Loynes@SpectrumCIL.co.uk

Website: www.SpectrumCIL.co.uk

Facebook: [@Spectrum.CIL](https://www.facebook.com/SpectrumCIL)

Twitter: [@SpectrumCIL](https://twitter.com/SpectrumCIL)

Think you know Disabled People ... Think Again



Accessible Southampton Inquiry – The built environment and public spaces: Feedback from Chester & Liverpool

Mark Pirnie – Scrutiny Manager



Chester

- EU Access City Award winner in 2017 – Submission attached as Appendix 1

Accessibility of the built environment:

- Historic city with ancient walls – Where full access not possible, principle of least restrictive access is applied
- 15 Changing Places across the Borough
- Access Guide to the City – AccessAble
- New signage strategy
- New Cultural Centre & Chester Northgate Scheme - Accessibility is at the forefront of the design

Key 'success' factors

Conversations with Rob Jones (Equality & Diversity Manager at Cheshire West & Cheshire Council - CWAC) and Graham Garnett (Inclusive Design Officer at Liverpool City Council, and formerly Senior Access Officer at CWAC):

- Corporate Priority for years – Accessible Chester in Council Plan
- Political Leadership and ownership
- Engagement with Disabled People – Corporate Disability Access Forum (CDAF) key component
- Access Officer – Expertise, influence, corporate resource
- Robust Equality Assessments – Engagement with Disabled People is expected

Influence on the built environment

- *‘The Access Officer, along with CDAF, works with architects/designers to go ‘above and beyond’ the minimum standards and comply with national & local ‘best practice’ e.g. British Standard 8300(2009). The Access Officer investigates and responds to all access related complaints received by the Council and works with internal & external partners to implement changes to buildings, facilities and practices.’*

Liverpool

- Liverpool has 37 Changing Places
- Local Plan – Urban Design Policy - All new developments must meet the highest standards for accessibility not just the minimum standards under building regulations.
- Accessible Housing Standards – M4(1) minimum, M4(2) accessible & adaptable, M4(3) fully accessible – Liverpool’s Accessible Housing Policy says you cannot build M4(1) in the city & 10% new homes to be wheelchair accessible.

Rationale?

- Moral argument
- Legal argument
- Financial argument
- Average cost to the NHS of a trip or fall where ambulance required - £14,000 – Improving accessibility of the built environment saves the public purse money
- Purple Pound – In 2015 the average amount spent in Chester by Shopmobility customers was £79 per visit. Shopmobility customers alone spent approximately £237,000 annually in Chester.

Accessible Southampton Inquiry

Place Directorate – 18/11/21

Place Directorate

- **How the Council contributes to making Southampton's Built Environment accessible to all?**
 - Strategic Planning [Amber Trueman]
 - Development Management [Stephen Harrison]
 - Building Control [Neil Ferris]
 - Highways & Infrastructure [Wade Holmes]

Strategic Planning

- **Current adopted policy** (details in Development Management section)
- **Emerging Southampton City Vision Local Plan - Engagement**
 - Broad questions around 'Issues and Priorities'
 - A review of comments containing "disabled", "disability", "disabilities", "accessible" and/or "accessibility" pulled the following ideas for improvement:
 - More consideration of hidden disabilities generally
 - Improvement to public transport accessibility and connectivity (inc. on-board)
 - Public realm improvements (design and maintenance)
 - More disability-friendly homes (inc. for visitors)
 - Technological options to support those with disabilities
 - Inclusive design for buildings and spaces
 - Better access to waterfront for all

- **Emerging Southampton City Vision Local Plan – Opportunities**

- **Homes** – inclusion of design standards which improve adaptability (e.g. introduction of national space standards = more easily adaptable homes).
- **Design & Public Realm** – additional/alternative design principles (could be more explicit e.g. requirement for ramps).
- **Waterfront** – creating and improving access for all, spaces should be designed to be inclusive and accessible from the outset.
- **Safety and Accessibility** – existing policies will be reviewed to see if any improvements can be made (e.g. clearer reference to accessibility for seen and unseen disabilities).
- **Reference to "accessibility for all"** - weaving reference to accessibility throughout the rest of the plan and the supporting text – raising awareness.

Note: changes to planning policy can only influence future development which requires planning permission.

Development Management

The planning application process & framework:

Equalities Act 2010 S.149 mandatory duty

- (i) eliminate discrimination/harassment/victimisation;
- (ii) advance equality in opportunity;
- (iii) foster good relations.



Equality Act 2010

Planning is a **plan-led system** for new development:

- “...the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”

s.38.6 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Statutory requirement for **Public Consultation** – response is a 'material consideration'

Target driven process – 8/13 week targets for decisions

Saved Local Plan Review (LPR) – 2015

SDP 11 Accessibility and Movement

Planning permission will only be granted for development which:

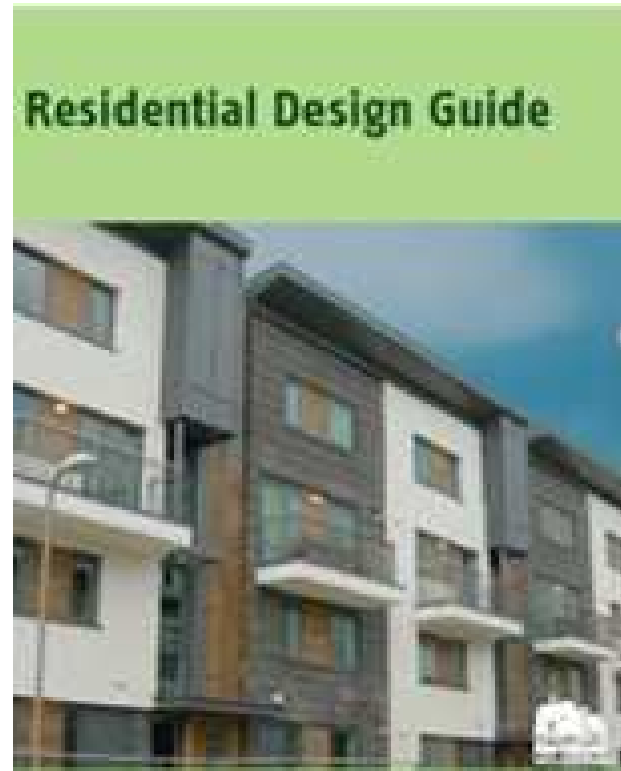
- *contributes to an attractive network of public routes and spaces for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles;*
- *secures adequate access for all pedestrians including people with mobility and sensory difficulties such as elderly people, disabled people, the very young and those using prams and wheelchairs.*

Supported by **Residential Design Guide** (2006) - inc. Adaptability

Design & Access Statements set out the applicant's case

- all Major development (10dwellings/1,000sq.m) and
- new dwellings in Conservation Areas

Plenty of evidence that this in itself doesn't deliver inclusive development



Building Control

Building Regulations – Part M v1 (Dwellings)

- Guidance setting minimum standards for dwellings.
- Higher standards can be applied subject to:
 - Planning conditions
 - Local Plan Policy – opportunity for improvement
- Approved Document M Volume 1 is currently being reviewed by MHCLG and is likely to be updated in 2022
 - Opportunity for Change?

Building Control

Building Regulations -Part M Vol 2 – Non-Dwellings

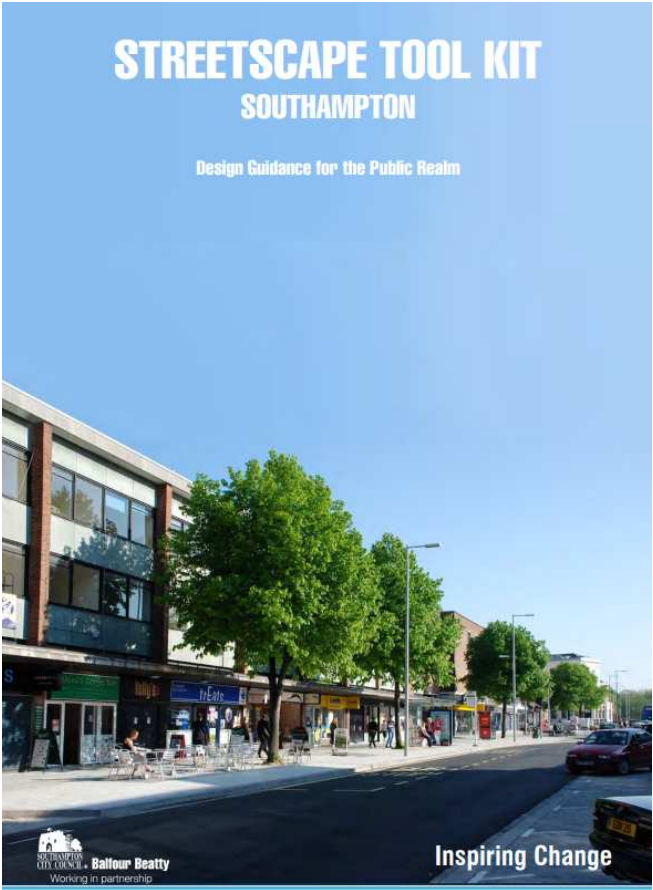
- Appropriate standards are recommended for access into buildings, circulation around and specific features such vertical lifts, loop induction systems, sanitary accommodation, stadia seating, hotel bedroom design, Changing Places etc.

Approval Process

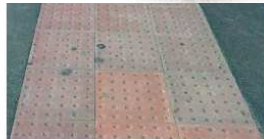
- Building Regulation applications are checked against Part M standards at plan approval stage and via site inspection at completion stage prior to occupation.

Can be strengthened by local plan policy – an opportunity

Highways & Infrastructure



Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving Surfaces



Colour/Finish
Red with Blister finish
Drawing Number
SD/1/1111
Note
Laid in accordance with DfT 'Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving Surfaces'



Product Name
Blister Paving - Buff
Location to be used
Citywide
Material
Concrete
Colour/Finish
Buff with Blister finish
Drawing Number
SD/1/1111
Note
Laid in accordance with DfT 'Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving Surfaces'



<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-transport-notes>

Collection Local transport notes

Traffic management guidance for local authorities.

From: [Department for Transport](#)
Published 13 September 2012
Last updated 27 July 2020 — [See all updates](#)

Local transport notes (LTNs) summarise the latest and most important ideas about traffic management issues and provide guidance for local authorities.

Documents

[Cycle infrastructure design \(LTN 1/20\)](#)
27 July 2020 Guidance

Highway Design is based around Streetscape Tool Kit, and relevant DfT guidelines

Highways & Infrastructure



Road Safety Audit Stage 2

Adanac Park to Hospital Park & Ride:
Coxford Rd/Lords Hill Way/Lordswood Rd junction

on behalf of Balfour Beatty Living Places

August 2021

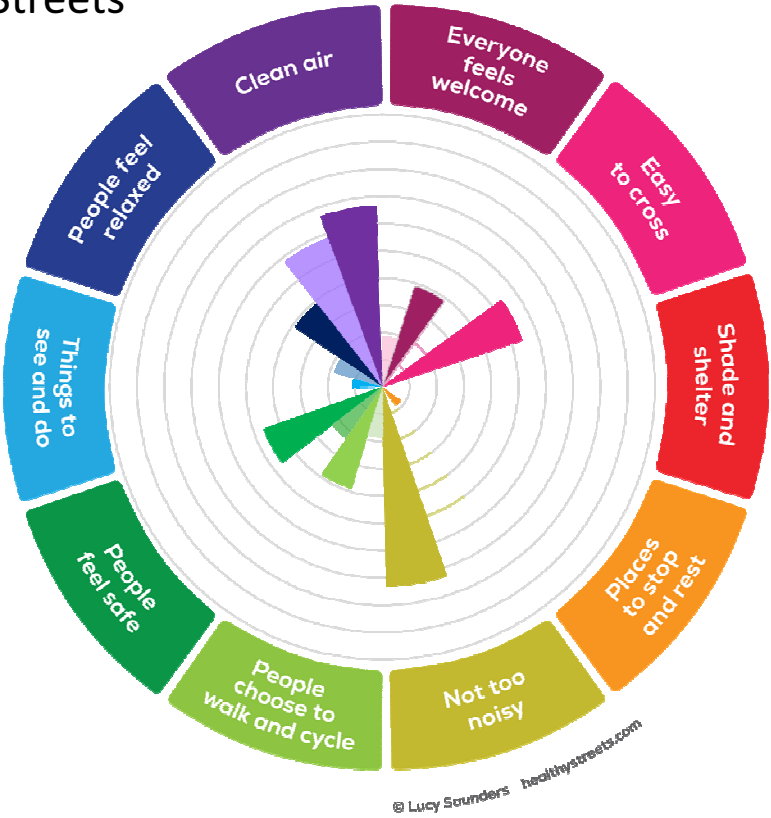
Document reference: 14/111

Client reference: 20ATM016A

Road User Audit Team
Hampshire County Council
Three Minsters House
78 High Street
Winchester SO23 8UD
roaduseraudit@hants.gov.uk

<http://www.hants.gov.uk/sharedexpertise>

- Other assessment tools used such as:
 - *LTN1/20 Cycle design guide Cycle Level of Service
 - *Walking Route Audit Tool
 - *Healthy Streets



Independent Road Safety Audit carried out on scheme designs and a post scheme evaluation

Highways & Infrastructure



Equality and Safety Impact Assessment

The public sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to be more efficient and effective by understanding how different people will be affected by their activities, so that their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs. The Council's Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) includes an assessment of the community safety impact assessment to comply with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and will enable the council to better understand the potential impact of the budget proposals and consider mitigating action.

Name or Brief Description of Proposal	Frogmore Lane / Brownhill Way / Lower Brownhill Road Junction Improvements With the arrival of the 'Transforming Cities Fund' (TCF), SCC have commissioned a series of sustainable transport schemes to be designed by BBLP. Developing Park & Ride sites is one of the strategic aims of Connected Southampton 2040 (LTP4) along with the need to support the growth of key employment areas in the city such as Adams Park and Southampton General Hospital through connections to Park & Ride sites. As such the Transforming Cities Fund includes funding for the delivery of highway works to support the Southampton West Park & Ride site. The aim of this assessment is to assess the impact the project will have on protected characteristic groups and the safety of the general public. If any negative impacts are identified, mitigations will be proposed to minimise them as far as reasonably practicable.
Brief Service Profile (including number of customers)	Strategic Transport is responsible for the policy and strategy relating to all transport activities in the City. It is also responsible for strategic direction of the maintenance and management of the highway network including maintenance and enforcement of the Strategic Cycle Network and any related functions. Customers include all transport users in the city including residents, visitors and businesses.
Summary of Impact and Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for proposed junctions to increase congestion. • Potential for conflict between cyclists and pedestrians.
Potential Positive Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading Traffic Signals for improved traffic flow. • Increasing NMU off-carriageway space. • Increasing & improving NMU crossing facilities. • Promoting sustainable travel. • Improving aesthetics & recreational areas.

Page 31

Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA)

All schemes have a ESIA carried out on them by the Designer (BBLP) and Client (SCC) *(internal review of how scheme impacts on community groups)*

Impacts and Mitigation Actions

Disability is one such user group

Taxi/Private Hire Representatives

Southampton Hackney Association (SHA)

Southampton Taxi Consultative Council

Door 2 Door Cars

Southampton Hackney Association (SHA)?

Sustainable Transport Representatives

Southampton Cycle Campaign

Southampton CTC

Disability Representatives

Geoff Wilkinson (Formerly of SPECTRUM Access Group)

SPECTRUM Access Group

David Livermore

David Livermore

Other Organisations

University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust

Network Rail

Hampshire Chamber of Commerce

All schemes have a Traffic Regulation Order Advertised with a dedicated consultation list Where they can input into Order



SOUTHAMPTON
CITY COUNCIL

Highways & Infrastructure

£1.5m Footway Budget until the end of 22/23
(an increase on previous years, normally £500k p.a)

30 Additional locations identified for improvement

Page 32



Patch Repairs



Rocking Slabs



Complete
Reconstruction



Slurry Overlay

Locations for intervention are from a variety of sources including Highway Safety Inspections, Pothole Reporting website, Member requests, Combining with adjacent schemes

Summary

- Southampton City Vision Local Plan opportunity to embed best practice in planning policy
 - Standards
 - Engagement processes - Disability/Accessibility Forum?
- Challenge of potential changes to planning system

Questions

Headings in Calibri (Heading Bold pt 36)

Sub headings in Calibri (Heading pt 32)

This page is intentionally left blank

SCC scrutiny meeting

Hello My name is Jemma Brown I want to start by giving you a rundown of who I am so you have context for what I am sharing. I live with multiple disabilities, I'm blind, I live with chronic illness that causes chronic pain and fatigue meaning I use a electric wheelchair part time. I also have complex post traumatic stress disorder... PTSD is a SEMI (sever enduring mental illness) so I tick all the boxes.

This gives me a unique perspective into the accessibility of the city. However I have struggled to write this because of the sheer number of problems and issues I face on a every day basis. Also the area of built environment encompasses so much of the city it is hard to narrow things down.

In my view SCC is failing its citizens with a disability we are left out of planning decisions and given very little thought when making decisions and planning on how the built environment impacts us.

In my opinion SCC are following a medical model of disability that is outdated and harmful, SCC expects me as a disabled person to adapt to force my body to work in environments that it was not designed for. I'm going to give a few examples.

The area around the station is one example of poor planning both in terms of traffic management and the impact on disabled people. Decisions to have the road and the pavement in the same colour scheme and have tactile crossing points but not actual crossing put pedestrians at risk.

Here is a real life example that has put me at risk. At the moment I don't have a guide dog so I am using a white cane, I use my cane to look for the area with a tactile, indicating I should cross there. I stop and attempt to cross the road as Taxis do u turns in the middle of the road, people are stopping and dropping people off at the station parking on the pavements, there are bikes and e scooters. I need to physically stop and take a minute to look and listen while I am doing this a lorry approaches it stops on my right it is bright orange, it blocks that lane of traffic and immediately cars and bikes just go round it. The

driver of the Lorry then starts to shout at me saying I need to move off of the pavement at a tactile crossing point which lets remember should be a safe space for me because he wants to park there to do his delivery.

The pavement should be a space where I am safe but around the station this is not the case.

Before I move on I will make one additional point about this area of the city, and that is when I had a guide dog and the changes were implemented initially, my guide dog had a great deal of trouble learning the location of crossing points. For this reason on one occasion coming home late at night I asked a member of staff to help me find the tactile place to cross the road, because I was unsure my guide dog would be able to find it. The fully sighted member of staff could not locate the tactile markings, they blended in too well with the surrounding area... if someone fully sighted can't find them what hope have I got?

Next a real life example of how poor planning in infrastructure is having a negative impact on my life.

SCC is investing in its road networks but I have to tell you that in doing this they have not considered the accessibility implications, in many cases the level of the road has been dropped and the difference in level has not been fixed when it comes to dropped curbs meaning that in some cases what looks like a dropped curb is actually a step. This is the case for many of the roads along hill lane between atherly bowling club and Taunton's college. It is incredibly difficult to get between the roads mentioned and just this week I had to drop councillor Fielker and Councillor Payne a message as I fear roadworks on Kingsclere avenue will lead to the same thing happening. As I have said to them I have little trust that if I had not brought the issue up it would be noticed, during the work the council have already had to raise with the foreman that putting cones blocking the only dropped curbs in the area is a problem... I was stunned the foremen did not already know this.

Sadly there are many shops and businesses in Southampton that are not wheelchair accessible and are also not offering reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled people meaning that there are areas that are totally no go.

With a guide dog I have been asked to leave shops in the city centre.

For me the biggest problem is there is no easy way of reporting accessibility issues like a broken dropped curb, there are no policies or programs in place. It is really difficult to report issues.

It is to the point that I now report issues directly to Councillor Payne if they are in Weston. This takes up his time and I shouldn't have to message him! As another example when West Quay south was built before it even opened I raised with both Guide Dogs, sensory services, and West Quay that the steps are incredibly dangerous there were no tactile markings and they are curved quite frankly it scared me one wrong step and there would be a serious accident I was so concerned I actually did a phone round of all the blind and visually impaired people I know in Southampton.

West quay and its contractors did nothing... it was about a year later the tactile markings were retrofitted but even these have been fitted not

following best practice. They are the same colour as the paving around them best practice for urban design is that they are a high contrast between the tactiles and the pavement around and to my utter dismay tactiles have only been placed at the top off the stairs there should be more at the bottom.

While we are at it multiple times I have got stuck because I have used the lift to get down a level in west quay south only to be then stuck at the bottom in a dimly lit area with no one around and the doors locked and no way out. When I have questioned this with west quay staff, they have told me to use the ramp... this more than doubles the walking distance if for example I want to go to Bills. Furthermore I challenge those here at this meeting to hire a wheelchair from motorbility and self propel all the way up the ramp... its exhausting.

I believe SCC should be holding the designers of planned works accountable where a public building is designed and proposed at a planning level SCC should be prioritising accessibility and where reasonable (e.g. public buildings) refusing planning applications that go against best practice.

Right now it takes me an unpaid (and unemployed) individual to affect change and put quite simply it is often to late by the time I flag it often takes years of me saying the same thing to multiple organisations to effect change it is exhausting and takes a lot of energy and time.

Add to this there is a cost in correcting mistakes and retrofitting, it often takes years of me sending emails, tweeting and as you have seen making tiktok videos.

SCC needs to be pushing for inclusion and equality with a joined up approach.

Here's what I think is needed, I think SCC needs to implement new systems of reporting accessibility issues. Here's why – I spent years reporting a gravel footpath that has worn away to highways in Weston, I watched the path deteriorate over a period of 10 years no one ever responded to me. It was only when I made a tiktok and councillor Payne took up the issue, I learned all the time I had been reporting it to highways it was the wrong department as its housing land so its up to housing to sort out. Either highways

were seeing my reports and passing them on to housing who were not contacting me or actioning anything or highways were going its not our problem and binning them. There is no record of the reports I made.

Gosport where I grew up has an accessibility forum, that just looks at the high street area disabled people can anonymously report issues and it can then be followed up by the forum, if the forum identify a problem and are able to confirm the report then the business or public building is contacted and the problem is raised. If there is a reasonable adjustment that could fix the problem the store is asked to fix it. If no action is taken the forum have the power to then raise it with the local council who will then ensure the issue is resolved.

I have used this ability to report to the access forum as a now visitor to Gosport. I was trying to find a cold remedy in a chemist in Gosport high street, I couldn't find it, I asked a member of staff to help me apologising and pointing out it was the only thing I needed. The member of staff said they didn't have time to help me they then continued serving other

customers and complained that my guide dog took up too much space. They essentially refused to help me then ignored my existence... I was able to report this to the forum, they were able to contact store management and keep me anonymous. Management promised the forum to retrain its staff on disability issues and how to treat disabled people as human beings. Volunteers from the access group then at a random time visited the chemist in question and asked for help to check that these changes were implemented.

I will finish by saying this I want to go to Mayfield park... I live very close to it but I have never been why? It is too far for me to walk and the only pedestrian crossing leads to a series of steps upwards and a ramp only suitable for push bikes.

My choices are limited by decisions made lack of infrastructure and joined up thinking and to be honest I am fed up of this.

I have more suggestions, I feel SCC should be employing disabled people to test accessibility

features and review potential problems, this member of staff can also start an access forum for the city centre, my dream would be for this to become something city wide.

When you go out for a walk new rule if you are out canvassing next election you are only allowed to cross the road where there is a dropped curb suddenly your choices are limited.

I would like to finish by inviting you all to come on a walk with me I propose we meet at the station and walk up hill lane very quickly.

Accessible Cities - GO! Southampton Response

1. Overview of Go! Southampton's view on the accessibility of the built environment in Southampton and your ambitions regarding improving the accessibility of the built environment and public spaces.

GO! Southampton views the issue of accessibility as part of the wider local and national debate on inclusion & diversity. Prompted by its members, the BID intends to feature the issue of inclusion & diversity in its second-term programme, with a new Inclusive City workstream. The BID's ambition is for Southampton to be an inclusive city that is accessible and welcoming to all. If you design a city with accessibility in mind, you can remove barriers and enable everyone to experience the city in a positive way and bring significant environmental, economic and social benefits. It is currently perceived that accessibility has not been at the forefront of decisions on the built environment, with many barriers still in place for residents and visitors to navigate the city independently and safely. Southampton has the potential to learn from best practice across the UK and Europe as seen in our report we commissioned from SPECTRUM Centre for Independent Living. It is critical to understand and listen to the needs of our community, to reflect on their perceptions of accessibility in the city and co-create solutions that bring meaningful value.

2. Rationale for Go! Southampton commissioning SPECTRUM to undertake an Access Audit in 2020 (did it reflect feedback from Disabled People / your members?)

It was important to capture feedback from a diverse mix of users with different accessibility needs to broaden our understanding of the accessibility challenges facing our city. By partnering with SPECTRUM CIL we were able to independently gather feedback from users and non-users of the city to understand their experiences or the barriers they face that limit their opportunities to visit the city and our businesses. The audit reflected feedback from individuals with accessibility requirements and there is further opportunity to gather further perspectives. The findings of the report have been discussed with our members and hence has subsequently become a significant area of our next five-year business plan to take on board the recommendations within the report to make changes in the city to become more inclusive. We also shared the report with Southampton City Council as several of the recommendations related to areas of activity that SCC have responsibility for.

3. GO! Southampton's response to the Access Audit – Actions undertaken, plans in development, engagement with partners etc

Working with Kate Martin it was agreed that an accessible city task and finish group would be set up in partnership with GO! and SCC, with representatives from SPECTRUM CIL and other relevant parties to address the actions recommended in the report. This task and finish group has yet to be established but GO! Southampton is committed to support this group. It is imperative that users with accessibility requirements are represented in this forum, to ensure interventions bring the most meaningful value.

4. The role that GO! Southampton and the business community can play to improve accessibility

GO! Southampton is committed to working with the business community to make individual premises more accessible through interventions such as the introduction of hearing loops and providing training for businesses to become more accessible by understanding different visitor requirements, to informing store layouts and providing enhanced facilities. The BID also intends to work with Southampton City Council to tackle opportunities and barriers in the built environment and to inform future developments. The report was shared with the agency developing the masterplan for the Mayflower Quarter to encourage future developments to be built with accessibility in mind.

5. Examples of good practice related to accessibility that you want to highlight and celebrate

Best practice can be seen within the report by understanding the approaches adopted by cities across the world.

There are a number of best practice examples of accessible cities around the world. None could, or would, claim to be completely accessible. But, what they all share in common is a commitment to inclusion and a long-term approach to making their cities accessible to all.

These cities also provide examples of particularly innovative access solutions ranging from the use of digital technology (e.g. Seattle) to repurposing existing infrastructure to improve access while, at the same time, maintaining the integrity of historical heritage sites (e.g. Chester and Breda).

Probably the best of example of an accessible city in the UK is Chester, which in 2017 became the first British city to win the European Commission's Access City award.

6. Recommendations for the Inquiry Panel

The key recommendation is for Southampton City Council to acknowledge the need for Southampton to become more accessible and inclusive. To commit to working with the wider community including businesses and users with accessibility requirements to implement and address the recommendations highlighted in the report. It is important to establish a vision and set clear criteria for future developments that can be incorporated into the local plan to inform future accessibility arrangements in the city.

Access Inquiry Focus Group 1: 11th November 2021

Facilitated by SPECTRUM, to hear the views of Disabled People

“What contributes to good accessibility of the built environment and public spaces”

Introduction to this report

This are the views of the Disabled People present at the focus group, the only editing that has been done, is to structure the feedback into areas of common theme and repartition; no editing has been done to place a value judgement on individual comments made, if comments are made about a subject in a future focus group, then those comments will appear in the report for that specific focus group..

All comments are anonymised to encourage free speaking

[Were SPECTRUM provides context, these comments are shown like this]

Examples or specific suggestions are shown like this

Introduction to the focus group

Ian Loynes & Mark Pirnie worked together to promote these focus groups to as many Disabled People as possible, covering all impairment groups

All focus groups will be held on Zoom, with Disabled People encouraged to write to SPECTRUM to voice their comments if they were unable to attend the meeting for any reason. That way we capture the views of people who did not have access to the internet.

Meetings are subtitled and people have access to a live transcript to aid accessibility.

Ian and Mark introduced the session, the subject matter and the background to the Scrutiny Panel’s inquiry; as well as the accessibility options available.

Part 1: Good examples of access in Southampton: Pg 2

Part 2: Areas where access should be improved: Pg 3

PART 1: Comments on GOOD examples of access were invited:

- There are plenty of good examples of good access, particularly in retail areas – simply because they have a financial incentive to encourage Disabled People to spend their money *[It is estimated that 15% of the UK population, or 37,000+ in Southampton are Disabled People – no business can afford to not encourage that amount of people to spend their money]*
- **Audio Loop Systems** (whilst only installed/operational in a very small percentage of shops and public buildings) really make all the difference to hearing impaired people *[Audio loop systems enable people with hearing aids to hear what's being said]*
- **More space allowed since the Pandemic.** Now, if you go into a cafe or something, because before they have only given a small space between the tables. And that for me was a major access problem. It's great for me now that they are more spaced out - probably annoying for the restaurant or whatever because it says less tables,
- **Retail allowing assistance dogs.** Most shops routinely allow assistance dogs and shops make a lot of effort, which is really great they see someone when using an assistance dog (nine times out of 10)
- **The City Centre is good generally, not so in other retail areas.** Getting around the centre is fairly easy. But when you get out into the suburbs, eg Shirley and Portswood, just being able to get around is really difficult.

...continued...

Part 2: Comments on examples of access that NEED IMPROVING were invited:

Homes:

- All houses built from now should be built to be accessible, not just a small percentage for Disabled and Older People. This should happen for two main reasons:
 1. Disabled and Older People want to visit their friends and family and neighbours just as much as everyone else
 2. If all homes had a basic level of accessibility built in, it would be less costly to adapt as people grow older or become Disabled

[SPECTRUM Clarity: There's no real evidence that it costs more to build accessible homes when they are built at scale]

Improve Access Awareness of Southampton City Council Planning Department and Building Control

- Guidance is routinely Ignored & treated as legally ignorable - The mantra of “Approved documents are guidance only and do not have to be followed” is repeated across the industry and within the Planning Dept

For Instance:Part M Guidance says: “Wheelchair accessible unisex toilets should not be used for baby changing.” In West Quay North, opened about 2000, all the accessible toilets complied. In West Quay South, opened in 2016, none of the accessible toilets complied.

- Often we find no access or bad access in new buildings and access being reduced when buildings are modified. I've talked to the council, architects, planning officers but nothing ever improves.
- By law, access considerations should be put in place, and planning officers should ensure to access rights are preserved – but they don't
- SCC's Buildings control is a major contributor to the lack of access across the city. Architect shouldn't put barriers into their plans in the first place,

and building control should monitor this before they grant permission –
But that don't

- The Law and guidance is being routinely ignored or left for individuals to make it make a complaint about it.
- Wheelchair users, people with sticks, crutches, needing loop systems – the needs of all Disabled People should be put in place when a new build takes place or existing building is modified. But they don't do it, and planning officers don't appear to police access requirements.
- There used to be an Access Officer Role, and there used to be a relationship with the Access Group [*Group of Disabled People*] to vet plans before they were approved, but both of these have been stopped

Car Parking at the Civic Centre should be maintained at all times [*Included in this report because it is part of the built environment*]

- Currently, if there's an event going on they close the Civic Centre car parks, which is really quite annoying because it's the most accessible one that I can use and I know other people can use, and I don't see that they need to close them, i.e. when there's a cycling event in town, and they closed the Civic Centre car park.
- I'd like to see that we can keep the parking spaces outside the Civic Centre at all times– These are the best spaces in the City that I can use [*wheelchair user*] because it's not like end to end parking where people block you in, resulting in inability to access your vehicle.

Improving Accessibility of public and retail spaces:

Maintenance and staff training of accessible provision and equipment

- Disabled People are often let down, because access provision or equipment is not maintained, or staff do not know how to use it. Maintenance and staff training is an essential aspect to good access.

Audio Loop Systems

- A group of people [letsloopsouthampton.co.uk], for about three years now, have been trying to get audio loop systems fitted in premises in Southampton. All together we have done an audit on about 300 premises, covering Shirley, Portswood, and the City Centre, and of these only 4% have actually got loop systems installed, which is absolutely ridiculous because I [*hearing impaired person*] don't go into shops because I have to contend with music playing. And I'm a lip reader. And if there's no loop system on just then I'm completely unable to communicate.
- That's the same for 23,000 deaf and hard of hearing people who live in Southampton. They avoid the shops in Southampton because they just can't manage in the shops out there. It works well in the odd occasion when that a working loop system is installed, and staff know how to use it, that's fantastic. The majority of banks, building societies all have loop systems.
- If done, you will find there's a lot more deaf and hard of hearing people will go into those because they can hear, they can listen to what the people in the shop or whatever is saying, and it gives them the confidence to go into those places, and knowing that they're going to be listened to and they can hear back and reply back.
 - Example given: A lady was in tears she was, she left a shop, because they had a loop system but the staff didn't know how to turn it on! Now if you go into that shop and it's turned on, it's fantastic you find people spend their money, which is what it's all about going shopping and the retailer and the person both benefit.
- LetsLoopSouthampton even has a grant fund of £30,000 to meet the cost of installing a loop system (they cost about £200) so there isn't even a financial case for not doing the right thing

Pavements, kerbs and street furniture

- In pelican crossings: Adequate time allowed for slower walking people, or those with thought impairments, and slower start and moving people at electronically controlled road crossings.
- Street furniture, seating & A Board. During the Pandemic, rules were relaxed, which enabled some of the pubs restaurants to spit out onto the pavement. Often no consideration to Disabled People needing space to use the pavement is thought of.
- We really need to tighten up the use of these spaces to get through to monitor pubs and restaurants abuse.

For Example: Yates use most of the pavement and opposite to a bus stop. So, and that makes it really difficult for me going out anywhere.

- Paving needs to be maintained to make sure it's not a trip hazard for people with walking difficulties. Some paving ridges which encourage correct usage by cyclists are then a real problem to Disabled People – but we were not consulted before they went in.
- Paving with cobble may look authentic, but you try wheeling on in in a wheelchair, or walking on it with crutches or walking difficulties generally, or you're in pain - It's an absolute nightmare.
- Plenty of choice of comfortable seating with backrests, and armrests (to aid sitting down, continual support and standing up or transferring to a wheelchair or scooter). NOT “artistically designed” lumps of stone or concrete, but instead having integrated spaces within any rows for wheelchair and scooter users, and those who cannot sit, or prefer to stand to socialise with others.
- Road/Pavement design: There needs to be a colour differentiation between the colour of the road compared to the pavement, they sort of blend in now. And I know that one of my friends, found himself walking in the middle of the road, he has a visual impairment, until somebody walks up to him and said, Do you realize you're walking in the middle of the road! He didn't because there was no color contrast or anything.

Accessible Toilets:

- The accessible toilet provision is frankly, getting worse and often they are full of junk, or cleaning materials, or huge bins or badly maintained. If you can't use a toilet, you don't go there.
- Retail or public toilets are often poorly provided in many cafes, restaurants, particularly out in the suburbs again, a lot of them don't have accessible toilets.

For Example: I like to go out and have a pint. There are three bars, restaurants, bars or mini bars have been created over the last couple of years, and none of them, I can get into, because one like door has got to a step, there is no ramp provision. In one, I'm told it has an accessible toilet, but as a step to get into it, I've never seen it. And planning presumably have approve that.

- In West Quay South, not one of the toilets complied with the legislation. I took this up with, with the West key management and I was told that building control that part m *[the section of guidance covering access]* does not have to be complied with it is only guidance!. They blamed each tenant and I pointed out that under the equality act that the landlord is equally liable to ensure compliance. They did make some changes (at a lot of extra, unnecessary expense), but still not as good as it should be – and importantly, could have been.

Example of bad toilet design: folding doors, are very difficult to operate from a wheelchair and impossible to get in to rescue somebody if they fall down behind them. You'd physically going to have push them out the way or break the door down.

- Why Radar Keys?: Having Accessible toilets locked (with a Radar Key) makes it inaccessible if you don't have a key. Why lock accessible toilets when 'ordinary' toilets are not locked.
- Changing Places Toilets: These enable more space, a hoist, and a adult changing platform/bed. Compared to other Cities, Southampton has very few, and even those are not publicised. It should be a requirement that public spaces new builds have these sorts of toilets as a standard

But even though not many exist in Southampton, they are not used because people often don't know they exist. We need to raise awareness of where these are so that they get used and people know where to go.

- Toilets: springs on the doors, trying to get in a wheelchair, through this with a strong spring which is constantly, you know, doesn't give you even a second.
- And the other thing is the dryers which are on the opposite side of the room. So you've got wet hands on the walking sticks on the wheels of your chair. Try to get one side of the room to the other.
- Also mirrors are often too high.

Building in good access at the design phase of new builds:

- Lift Availability. I was shocked that even new buildings often don't have lifts. Or bands play on floors without lifts. A band was playing upstairs, but I couldn't go to it. So when they put on events, they don't check they don't check access.
- Lifts regularly maintained so they always arrive correctly aligned with floor level to avoid bumpy trip hazards, and to have audio and visual floor level announcements, and door opening and closing announcements allowing plenty of time for everyone to enter and exit.
- Contrasting colour décor to make doors etc. more distinguishable for visually impaired people and those who have dementia.

Bad example of design: some parts of West Quay South were designed specifically to avoid the consideration of Disabled People. Ramp gradients, if changed slightly then you don't have to have rest resting points for wheelchair users - it's almost a bit like a challenge for them to find a way to, to not comply!

- Bad Design: Shops that block the aisles with extra stuff make it very difficult to get around

- Bad Design: More and more café, pub, restaurants are using high tables and chairs or providing seating up a 'cosmetic' step which are completely inaccessible to many Disabled People

Policy considerations:

- All public meetings (Council, MPs) should be held in accessible premises. Then they all would be accessible to everyone – including Disabled People also. Time and again I've been to even MPs surgeries and not been able to use them because not accessible.
- There's enough public buildings are here that are accessible, and doing this would encourage the design of accessible venues as buildings that aren't accessible, would find they are losing money.

Suggestion: Accessibility Checklist provided by City Council written by Disabled People. Event organisers for any event in the City should be expected to use an accessibility checklist to follow to avoid regular access mistakes being made. Often, simple things that make all the difference. Cost is often not a factor

Suggestion: City of Culture 2025 should be used to promote Southampton as an accessible and welcoming City. A real opportunity for that City Council to lead by example

- Equality Impact Statements should be completed by people from the different equality groups themselves, not just done by an officer that may, or not, know the issues that these groups will experience.
- Getting it right will boost the economy of Southampton: With a population of 37,000 plus Disabled People, there's an enormous amount of money in their pockets and will spend that if places are accessible.

The End

This page is intentionally left blank