

A request for scrutiny regarding the adoption of the Shared Space criteria and its impact on the Blind and visually impaired citizen, and the disabled wheelchair user.

Leeds City Council has officially adopted the 'Social Model' of disability. This places an obligation on the city to remove all the things that create inequality in the life of disabled citizens and so helping disabled people to be able to live along side able bodied people and be able to prosper as an equal.

In adopting the 'Social Model' for disability the authority has committed to ensure that when new developments are planned and under taken, disabling features are not introduced that would disadvantage the large and growing number of blind and disabled citizens of Leeds.

Very clearly, the planning and acceptance of this Shared Space street design that is currently being built into many new developments in and around Leeds blatantly ignores the Social Model of disability adopted by the city, and is producing a large number of features that will denigh the blind and visually disabled people their civic rights to Equality with their normally sited neighbours.

The Local authority has a duty of care to include all minority groups of citizen in our city. As disabled people we are in danger of being excluded. If the present principal of Shared Space criteria is to continue, these estates are going to become 'No Go Area's to people with severe visual problems and by extension, they will be deigned the opportunity to live in these modern desirable homes. If this Shared Space continues using the present design and expands, when the problem is recognized at some future date, no doubt the cost of rectification to the roads on these estates will fall on the Public Purse.

We have been told by the civic departments responsible for adopting the principal of Shared Space that all relevant groups who would be affected by this arrangement had been fully consulted and as such were aware of the implications that were liable to arise.

As a principal Service User and Carers group in Leeds, the Alliance has been unable to find any blind or visually impaired support groups in the city or else where who have a recollection of ever been consulted or involved in any discussion on this issue.

It appear to be the accepted norm in our city, that when a controversial issue needs to be approved that consultation is undertaken with inappropriate groups of people, so ensuring that predetermined outcomes and controversial issues are uncontested.

When we spoke to planning officers, the emphasis was in reducing the speed of through traffic. That is very desirable but it must not restrict the blind and other less able people. The problems faced by those that are blind is the lack of footpaths to follow, vehicles parked close to property and garden edges, gardens with no boundary walls to follow. Following a pathless road out of an estate and into a main road without any indication or guidens of a footpath. There is lack of directional guidance for a person using a white stick, or any guidance that a dog is trained to follow.

Could we appeal to the members of this board who are councillors, to investigate into the issue of Shared Space and so be able to make recommendation that all future developments are accessible to all those who live in our city and that blind and disabled people can enjoy equality with able bodied members of our communities.

Keith Spellman.

Vice Chairman, Alliance of service Users and Carers