



**Leeds**  
CITY COUNCIL

Originator: Mike Darwin

Tel: 75302

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**Report of the Director of City Development**

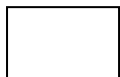
**Scrutiny Board (City Development)**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

**Subject: SHARED SPACES**

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**Electoral Wards Affected: All**



Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity



Community Cohesion



Narrowing the Gap



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**1.0 Introduction**

At its meeting on 16 October 2007 the Board received a request for Scrutiny from the Deputy Chair of the Alliance of Service Users and Carers regarding the use of Shared Surfaces in the draft Street Design Guide.

The Guide was, at that time, undertaking formal consultation (as a Supplementary Planning Document) and following representation by the Alliance the period was extended, by a month, to 23 November 2007.

The Board requested that, following the conclusion of the consultation a report be brought back outlining the outcome of the consultation in order to determine whether the concerns expressed by the various interested groups had been taken into account and to determine if further scrutiny was required.

**2.0 Background**

Recent government guidance, in the form of Manual for Streets, promotes shared surface streets and squares. Shared surface schemes work best in relatively calm traffic environments with the key aims being to encourage low vehicle speeds, create an environment in which pedestrians feel safe, easier and where people can move around easier to promote social interaction. The Manual for Streets recommends a wider use of these areas than currently proposed in the draft Street Design Guide.

The Home Zone concept is for residential areas designed with streets to be places for people instead of just for motor traffic. By creating a high quality street environment, Home Zones strike a better balance between the needs of the local community and drivers.

The current West Yorkshire Highways Design Guide has promoted shared surfaces for the last 30 years and a number of these streets have been constructed throughout West Yorkshire, as well as throughout the country, albeit using different names such as mews courts and access ways. It can be noted that in Leeds these areas have formed safe streets that residents have enjoyed and that there have been no recorded personal injury accidents on shared surfaces in this time.

At the Board meeting on the 16 October Mr Spellman raised the following issues:

The alleged lack of consultation

Safety issues of disabled groups

The problem of parking on pavements and enforcement

High density housing developments built with seemingly little regard to parking provision

### **3.0 Lack of Consultation**

The Statement of Community Involvement (within the Leeds LDF process) sets out the consultees that are required to be consulted on all Supplementary Planning Documents. In addition, a list of other consultees is also suggested. In consultation with the Equality Team it was concluded that, amongst others, the following bodies should be included:

- Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee
- Shire View - RNIB
- National Federation for the Blind
- RNIB
- Leeds Involvement Project/Older Peoples Group

Following representations from the Alliance of Service Users and Carers and other agencies comments have now been received from the following bodies:

- Alliance of Service Users and Carers
- Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People
- Transport Access Group
- National Federation for the Blind (National branch and Leeds branch)
- Vision is not Essential
- Leeds Jewish Blind Society
- RNIB Shire View
- Access Committee for Leeds
- British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society
- Talking Newspaper for the Blind (Otley and district)
- Voluntary Action Leeds

### **4.0 Safety Issues for Disabled Groups**

The main concern, from all the consultees that responded to the consultation on the use of shared spaces, is the potential conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. This is not borne out by accidents statistics, however it is clear that the bigger concern is one of finding their way through an area.

## 5.0 Shared Space

Shared Space can be either Shared Area or Shared Surface, and the difference between the two can be expressed by the following. A Shared Space is an area, usually between buildings, which can include the highway but may also include landscaped areas and other features. A Shared Surface is usually just the highway. The former can be successful in meeting everyone's needs provided that physical 'clues' such as kerbs and tactile surfaces are retained. The latter is generally taken to mean the removal of all delineation between areas traditionally used by vehicles or pedestrians, with the exception of a narrow margin around the edge, and is a cause for concern for people with reduced visibility.

On Shared Surfaces, with the lack of a kerb or definite building line, there is no dedicated route that the blind and partially sighted can follow. To address this, the Alliance have suggested that a single raised white line be provided which will guide people through a shared surface to where a normal highway, with kerbs, is provided.

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association have stated that Shared Areas are acceptable subject to the provision of a designated route through the Area. The Association therefore proposed that a designated route be provided by means of a kerbed footway within these areas.

With regard to Home Zones the JMU Access Partnership, Shire View, Headingley have produced a comprehensive document entitled "Designing for Disabled People in Home Zones". The report provides guidance on how these areas can be made accessible for disabled people. A copy of the executive summary, which includes the 'Key Findings and Guidance' is attached to this report. The report recommends that its findings contribute to a revision of the current guidance published by the Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers.

## 6.0 Considerations

The issue of the provision of Shared Areas and the concerns raised by the various groups is one of a national concern and not just related to our own Street Design Guide. The Manual for Streets recommends the provision of these areas but qualify the statements with the following:

*"However shared surfaces can cause problems for some disabled people. People with cognitive difficulties may find the environment difficult to interpret. In addition, the absence of a conventional kerb poses problems for blind or partially sighted people, who often rely on this feature to find their way around. It is therefore important shared surface schemes include an alternative means for visually-impaired people to navigate by."*

When Manual for Streets deals with Home Zones it states:

*"Home Zones often include shared surfaces as part of the scheme design and in doing so they too can create difficulties for disabled people. Research commissioned by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) on the implications of Home Zones for disabled people, due to be published in 2007, will demonstrate those concerns. Design guidance relating to this research is expected to be published in due course."*

That research has now been published and is entitled 'Designing for Disabled People in Home Zones' which includes a number of recommendations when designing Home Zones.

Further research entitled “Testing proposed delineators to demarcate pedestrian paths in a shared space environment”, undertaken by University College London Pedestrian Accessibility and Movement Environment Laboratory, has recently been published. However the findings are not conclusive and the recommendation is for further research to be carried out.

Following discussions with some of the above mentioned groups and attending a design awareness workshop which dealt with the provision of Shared Space, at which a group representing the Alliance of Users and Cares also attended, I propose that we give further consideration to their concerns and to recently published research and guidance.

## **7.0 Parking on Pavements and Enforcement/Parking Provision in High Density Developments**

The enforcement against vehicles parking on the pavement is an issue for the police, and is outside the control of this Authority. Parking on pavements often occurs when there is not adequate parking provision provided off the highway. The Street Design Guide sets out two methods of calculating car parking provision within residential developments, both of which are intended to increase off street parking provision whilst still adhering to government guidance.

Street design can however limit opportunities for pavement parking, through for example, placement of bollards, planters or street furniture. However care has to be taken not to create potential obstacles to pedestrian movement.

## **8.0 Conclusions**

Concerns have been raised by a number of groups representing the blind, partially sighted and other disabled people. Their concerns relate to the provision of shared space in the form of shared surface, shared area and home zones.

Following investigation into the provision of shared areas and researching government and other guidance, provision of the blind and partially sighted can be provided through these areas. However further discussion is necessary before the final advice can be determined.

## **9.0 Recommendations**

9.1 To note the content of the report.

9.2 To give further consideration to issues raised as a result of the consultation in the context of best practice and emerging studies.