

**Leeds City Council Meeting Wednesday 10th September 2008
Deputation to Council by Alan Oldroyd of the
National Federation of the Blind Leeds**

Thank you Lord Mayor and Elected Members.

My name is Alan Oldroyd and I am Chair of the National Federation of the Blind Leeds Branch and the other members supporting my deputation are:

Barry Naylor, Joy Fisher, Martin Bingley, Tim McSharry

The title of my deputation is "SAY NO TO SHARED SPACES"

I am here today with a deputation that represents disability organisations from across the whole of Leeds to make a heartfelt plea to all City Councillors to support the cause of social inclusion for all disabled people by saying no to all highways and planning policies that are designed on the grounds of Shared Space.

The local and national evidence clearly demonstrates that the policy of Shared Space has very serious implications for the health, choices, independence and mobility of disabled people within this great City of Leeds and reinforces social segregation and isolation of already vulnerable people.

Blind, deaf blind and partially sighted people already experience enormous barriers to their basic freedom and mobility within society and the introduction of the flawed and discriminating concept of shared spaces reinforces these barriers in a way that is unacceptable for any City that truly values the diversity, inclusion and equality of all citizens.

All local authorities in the UK now have clear public duties to promote disability equality and to meet their obligations under Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 in relation to their policies, practices and services, and the function of the highways and planning departments are fundamental to achieving this.

The whole idea of planning areas within this City that exclude disabled people and where their public safety is being seriously compromised should not be supported by elected members of this Council.

When considered from the viewpoint of a non-disabled person, it may first appear on paper that there is nothing wrong with the concept of "Shared Spaces", but in reality the loss of public footpaths and pedestrian rights of way within housing and other public developments can have a devastating impact on the lives, mobility and independence of not only blind, deaf blind and other disabled people, but also young children, families and older people who all face potential increased risks and dangers through being forced to mix with cars, vans, lorries and cyclist's.

From my own experience as a totally blind person the difficulties and stress that I face in negotiating my way through Leeds is a price I accept to maintain my independence and dignity, but when it comes to negotiating my way through a shared space complex the barriers that are inherent to the design, deny my rights to independence and completely disable me by demonstrating a total lack of consideration for my mobility and safety needs as a blind person.

Shared space excludes disabled people by default, it makes many blind, deaf blind and partially sighted people prisoners in their own homes, unable to independently make their own way out and makes many people wholly reliant of the good will of others to go out into the community.

Leeds City Council should not be party to increasing the number of victims of the flawed policy of shared space. Leeds must continue to develop its work with disabled people's representatives to ensure that inclusion, mobility and diversity are truly celebrated through a total commitment to supporting the independence, choices and equality of disabled people across the whole of this great City.

I call on this Council to place a moratorium on any development that involves shared spaces and to ensure footpaths and pedestrian rights of way are at the heart of highways planning in the name of equality, inclusion and independence.

Thank You

Alan Oldroyd

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