

D O T S Disability **Community Interest Company**

Disability Consultation and Advisory Service

Consultation Report



Bournemouth Borough Council

Boscombe Town Centre Access Survey

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1.0 Introduction and Background

DOTS Disability was engaged by Bournemouth Borough Council to carry out a user Access Survey of Boscombe Town Centre to inform plans for Boscombe Regeneration.

The purpose of this survey was to provide feedback on how disabled people (from different impairment groups) and many older people, experience Boscombe Town Centre.

As well as this written feedback report an accompanying film of the survey was made, which can be viewed on the Access Dorset website <http://www.accessdorsetcentre.org/> (DOTS Disability is the social enterprise arm of Access Dorset).

The Access Survey was organised over 3 weeks and involved 11 local disabled people, including:

- People with mobility impairments
- Wheelchair and scooter users
- Visually impaired people
- People with learning disabilities
- People with hearing impairments
- People with visual impairments

In addition, two DOTS members of staff facilitated the survey. DOTS Disability is grateful for the support and background information provided by Cat McMillan, Community Regeneration Officer.

The first meeting of the group took place on 13th August 2013. The purpose of this meeting was to set the scope of the Access Survey. It was decided to focus on two typical 'visitor journey's, and to divide into two groups; one to arrive at the Sovereign Centre and the other to approach Boscombe from the Hawkwood Road Car Park. It was decided for the purpose of this survey that shops themselves would be out of scope, because of the scale of such an undertaking and the practicality of gaining permissions. Also out of scope of this survey is the newly proposed 'shared space' highways scheme and DOTS Disability will respond separately to this.

The second meeting on 20th August was the survey itself. The two groups divided and, using a checklist designed for the purpose, looked at:

- Car parking
- Routes to shops
- Signage
- Security
- Pedestrian Precinct
- Sovereign Centre
- Shopmobility
- The Royal Arcade

The third meeting held on 27th August provided the opportunity for each group to feedback their findings and for the group to identify the key issues and their recommendations, as follows.

2.0 Hawkwood Road Car Park

2.1 Signage to Accessible Parking

The Hawkwood Road Car Park is a large car park with the main vehicular entrance situated in the mid-point. On entering the Hawkwood Road car park there is no directional signage to indicate where the accessible parking is located and several of the participants struggled to find it. There is accessible parking at both ends of the car park.



Recommendation 1: Directional signage to the accessible bays is introduced.

2.2 Accessible Parking Bays

There are a total of 12 accessible parking bays, 9 located opposite Sainsbury's and 3 at the opposite end of the car park. Within 10 minutes of this photograph being taken, all of the bays were occupied.



Recommendation 2: The Access Survey was carried out on a Tuesday afternoon, which suggests that on busy Saturdays there is a need for more accessible parking bays.

The accessible bays were well marked with transfer hatching on two sides, but not at the rear.

Recommendation 3: A safety zone at the rear is recommended for rear-loading vehicles as per British Standard 8300 Guidelines.

2.3 Paypoints

The Paypoints are inaccessible to wheelchair users because they are raised on an island.



Recommendation 4: All Paypoints, when they are replaced, should be made to be accessible (note: DOTS Disability have been making this same point since 2007).

2.4 Lighting/Security

The survey was carried out in daylight. There appeared to be many lights but it was not possible to assess whether light pooling is an issue. The car park is well screened from Hawkwood Road by trees and bushes.

Recommendation 5: Security and perceptions of security would be improved if sight-lines to Hawkwood Road were improved by keeping vegetation low.

2.5 Pedestrian Routes Out of The Car Park



When exiting at the main vehicle entrance (or crossing it) there is a halfway refuge for ambulant people, but it is inaccessible to wheelchair users who must stop at the halfway point in the road.

Recommendation 6: Liaise with Highways to install a dropped curb either side of the refuge.

2.6 Wayfinding to the pedestrian precinct

On exiting the Hawkwood Road car park there is no directional signage to the pedestrian precinct. There are 3 possible routes – straight through Sainsbury's, to the left of Sainsbury's through an alleyway, or to the right of Sainsbury's via the library (the longest route). Visitors are left confused and unsure which way to head.



Each of the 3 routes has its problems. A lot of people do not like using Sainsbury's as a cut through without shopping there. The route to the left via the alleyway is perceived as insecure, and the route to the right via the library is longer and leads to the far end of the pedestrianized area.

Recommendation 7: Directional signage to the pedestrian precinct, to the left and the right, is introduced that also gives the distance (e.g. 400m).

The bollard on the pavement has not got any colour contrasting manifestation making it a hazard for visually impaired people.

Recommendation 8: Colour contrasting manifestation is added to the bollard.

The camber (and cross camber) of the pavement on either side of the crossing is very steep for manual wheelchair users.



Recommendation 9: Liaise with Highways to explore if the camber can be reduced.

The belisha beacons are hidden by trees and are dirty, making them almost invisible to drivers, which makes the crossing unsafe.



Recommendation 10: Liaise with Highways to risk assess the crossing.

The route to the left of Sainsbury's takes pedestrians into the road, in conflict with vehicles. The fence between the car park and Sainsbury's loading bay has been built right on top of the pavement, which would have provided a safe pedestrian route.



Recommendation 11: Liaise with Highways and Sainsbury's to uncover why this has been allowed to happen and have the fence moved off of the pavement to allow safe pedestrian access to the shops.



The alleyway leading to the shops is uninviting, dirty, dilapidated and insecure, without line of sight or CCTV (to the best of our knowledge). This area is perceived as dangerous, particularly at night.

Recommendation 12: CCTV coverage, and the promotion of such, is essential if this route is to be made safe and feel safe. The alleyway needs a program of refurbishment and redesign (perhaps with trompe-l'œil) to create an attractive approach to the shops. Lighting needs to be improved.



The bollard at the exit to the alleyway is a hazard for visually impaired/blind people.

Recommendation 13: Colour contrasting manifestation is added to the bollard

3.0 Pedestrian Precinct

3.1 Circulation

Visitor movement throughout the pedestrian precinct is impeded by a number of barriers including street furniture, pavement cafés, the market stalls, A-boards, broken surfaces and cyclists. These issues are looked at individually in more detail below, but the combined effect is that a visit becomes a challenging obstacle course with pedestrians forced to meander through the precinct in order to avoid obstacles and bottlenecks.

Recommendation 14: A Pedestrian Movement Strategy needs to be developed that prioritises ease of pedestrian movement over individual commercial interests. This could incorporate different surface colours to demarcate circulation routes and crossing points while discouraging the spread of café seating and temporary street furniture.



3.2 Surfaces and permanent features

The pedestrian precinct is generally poorly maintained and dirty, with broken paving and walls. The road camber makes circulation difficult for wheelchair users. The patchwork of numerous different surface types, drainage channels and manhole covers makes the area difficult for wheelchair users and visually impaired/blind people.

Recommendation 15: The entire pedestrian precinct needs a major program of refurbishment and redesign. In the meantime it needs a deep clean and repair.

3.3 Permanent street furniture and signage



At the Pokesdown end of the pedestrian precinct, permanent street furniture (including bollards, bins, cycle racks and signs) combine to create a bottleneck for pedestrians that at times becomes almost impassable, particularly for some disabled/older people.

Recommendation 16: As much street furniture as possible is removed altogether and the cycle racks relocated. We note that some of this work is already underway.

Recommendation 17: Retained street furniture is provided with colour contrasting manifestation to make it more visible and less of an obstacle for visually impaired people.



Directional and Advisory signage is either missing, or where it does exist, as above, it is poorly located, poorly maintained, illegible and blocked from view.

Recommendation 18: A Signage Strategy and Local Signage Plan should be developed and the public consulted on these.



Seating, where it exists, is unsuitable for many disabled/older people, as it does not have a back rest or arms.

Recommendation 19: Seating with back and arms (and space for wheelchair user alongside) is strategically placed at regular intervals.

3.4 Temporary street furniture/management issues



A-Boards proliferate in the pedestrian precinct and at different distances from the shops either side. It is essential for many people including blind and partially sighted people to have a clear route along the pedestrian precinct. There is a risk of people walking into A-boards and injuring themselves. Falling over an A-board can be painful, and can adversely affect a person's confidence and mobility.

RNIB supports a complete ban on A-boards. A complete ban would enable many people to walk along the pedestrian precinct without fear of colliding with a heavy, painful sign. A complete ban places all traders on the same footing.

Recommendation 20:

Unmonitored, over-use of A-Boards without local guidelines is dangerous and the continued use of A-boards without consideration for the passing pedestrians should be considered a low level form of anti-social behaviour.

Recommendation 21:

Boscombe should consider a progressive, total ban on A-Boards, as was successfully implemented in Kingston Upon-Thames. In Kingston, businesses were encouraged to use alternative, less obstructive and visually more appealing marketing methods, including banner flags hanging perpendicular to shops.

Recommendation 22:

Failing the above recommendation the Council should develop an A-Board policy (we cannot find one on the Council website) and licence A-Boards. The policy should follow Department of Transport “Inclusive Mobility” guidance.



On the day of our survey we saw numerous cyclists (as above) riding through the pedestrian precinct.

Recommendation 23: Increase the number and visibility of ‘no cycling’ signs.



There are a number of pavement cafes in the precinct, which are unmanaged and spread across large areas with no barriers or other means of enclosure, causing obstacles for everyone, but not least disabled people.

Recommendation 24: The Council should review its Guidance and Conditions of Pavement Cafes (which are clearly being ignored). The 'Guidance' should be elevated to a 'Condition' and the policy enforced.

3.5 Boscombe Market



The access survey did not take place on a market day, but many of the participants are familiar with the market. Most of the participants avoid Boscombe on market day because of the obstacle that the market stalls create, pedestrians to the far sides of the precinct (which has the steep camber).

Recommendation 25: The footprint of the market stalls should be pre-defined with set stall fixing points (and possibly the use of a different surface colour).

4.0 Sovereign Centre Car Park

4.1 Accessible Parking

There are a total of 19 accessible parking bays in the sovereign Centre Car Park, all located on the ground floor.

Recommendation 26:

The number of accessible parking bays falls far short of accepted standards. For shopping, recreation and leisure facilities, the minimum number of designated spaces should be one space for each employee who is a disabled motorist, plus 6% of the total capacity for visiting disabled motorists. A further 4% of the total capacity should be enlarged standard spaces (see 4.2.1.1).

4.2.1.3 British Standard 8300: Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - Code of practice

As the car park has 620 bays (according to Britannia's [website](#)), so 37 should be accessible.

8 of the accessible bays are in the central parking area near the car wash. All of these have transfer hatching on two sides. 5 are located at the back of the car park, to the left of the pedestrian entrance to the shops. These have transfer hatching on one side only. The remaining 5 accessible bays are located outside shop mobility and none of these have transfer hatching.



Recommendation 27: All of accessible bays should have transfer hatching on both sides and ideally at the rear, to conform to BS 8300:

A zone of 1200 mm wide should be provided between designated parking spaces and between the designated spaces and a roadway (without reducing the width of the roadway) to enable a disabled driver or passenger to get in or out of a vehicle and access safely the boot or rear hoist.

4.2 Ticketing, signage and lighting

There are no signs to indicate where the payment machines are located in the car park.

Recommendation 28: As per BS8300: “signs should be provided, indicating the accessible route to the ticket machines”.

The car park operates a camera controlled ticketing system (automatic number plate recognition, ANPR). The sign by the ticket machines states that “Tax Exempt vehicles displaying a blue badge should report for Shop Mobility”.



What in practice this means is that disabled visitors must report to Shopmobility with their car registration number or they will be fined. Shopmobility then have to email Britannia Car Parks a list of registration numbers, and this must be refreshed every 3 months to keep the owner from being ticketed.

Recommendation 29: This system is hugely off-putting to disabled visitors and should be abandoned. The responsibility for administering a parking system should be with the parking management company and not with inconvenienced individuals and a small local charity (Shopmobility). To serve a penalty ticket, the parking management company must first apply to the DVLA for keeper details of the vehicle. Therefore they could themselves check these details for tax exempt status rather than expect disabled visitors to fathom out this system.

The lighting in the car park is extremely poor (even on the bright sunny day we visited on) which presents particular difficulties for visually impaired/blind visitors. Many also feel the lack of light in the car park increases crime and the perceived risk of crime and puts people off visiting Boscombe.

Recommendation 30: Liaise with Britannia Car Parks to have lighting levels improved.

From within the car park there are no directional signs to the shops.

Recommendation 31: Directional signs to the shops are introduced.

4.3 Shopmobility



Shopmobility provides a wheelchair and scooter hire service and is a drop –off point for the Bournemouth Accessible Transport (BAT) bus. As well as providing hire services, Shopmobility is a known and well needed, ‘safe’ place, with helpful staff and volunteers. Without Shopmobility there is no doubt that many disabled people would not visit Boscombe.

The entrance to Shopmobility is through an automated wide access door.

Recommendation 32: A handrail on either side of the access ramp at the entrance would be beneficial to some people with mobility impairments.



There is an accessible WC.

Recommendation 33: It would be better for visually impaired people if the handrails had a stronger colour contrast with the walls (e.g. blue handrails).

Information about Shopmobility is available in large print on request. There is not an induction hearing loop.

Recommendation 34: A hearing loop is purchased, advertised and checked monthly. This would be very helpful to hearing aid users.

5.0 The Sovereign Centre



All entrances to the Sovereign Centre have wide access automatic doors and anti-slip flooring.

On entering the Sovereign Centre from the car park, by the lifts, visitors are met by music played extremely loudly through the tannoy system.

Recommendation 35: The Centre considers lowering the volume of the music!



Seating is available in the Centre, allowing disabled and older people to rest.

Recommendation 36: The Centre considers adding arms to some of the seating to help disabled/older people to stand.

The Centre has two accessible WC's. There is no directional sign to the accessible WC at the entrance near the bus stop.

Recommendation 37: The Centre considers adding directional signage to both accessible WC's.

6.0 Royal Arcade



The route between the Sovereign Centre and the Royal Arcade is across an access road, but there is no way visually impaired/blind people would be aware of this hazard. The crossing point is red block paviour to distinguish it from the tarmac road either side, but weathering and traffic has blurred this colour distinction. Delivery vans were observed crossing the 'path' at speed.

Recommendation 38: This crossing is hazardous for pedestrians, particularly blind and visually impaired people. Liaise with Highways to carry out a full risk assessment. Consideration should be given to introducing either a zebra or pelican/puffin crossing.



Once across the access road the entrance to the Royal Arcade is up a ramp and then through very heavy doors. Negotiating entrance doors can be difficult for the general public, not just disabled people: parents with children, those carrying luggage or with pushchairs etc. BS 8300 recommends a maximum opening force of 30N at the initial opening stage (0° to 30°), reducing to 22.5N from 30° to 60° opening angle.

Recommendation 39: BS 8300 points clearly to the use of powered solutions including low energy operators to achieve the level of accessibility required on external doors (including recommendations for the positioning of any manual controls). This would apply to all manually opened external doors at the Royal Arcade.



The seating in the Royal arcade is attractive, but not particularly practical for many disabled/older people.

Recommendation 40: Consideration is given to adding some seating with back rest and arms.



The café seating in the arcade is well managed and contained.

Recommendation 41: This is an example of how café seating in the pedestrian precinct should be managed.