

# Derry Inner Wall City Public Realm Accessibility and Inclusion Assessment

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# 1 Introduction

This Assessment report examines the approach to Inclusive Design within the Derry Inner Wall City Public Realm proposals. The report considers the needs of a wide range of older and disabled people, including people with sensory and cognitive impairments and people with mobility impairments, including wheelchair users. The report was produced following a visit to the streets concerned and a meeting with the landscape architect, Andrew Haley of The Paul Hogarth Company on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

The streetscape improvement scheme encompasses the following streets in the historically significant Walled City of Derry - Palace Street, Society Street, Magazine Street upper and lower, Union Hall Place, Bank Place and Linenhall Street. All of these streets are narrow, all have relatively low traffic volumes and vehicle speeds and most are limited to one way traffic.

The aim of Inclusive Design is to include the needs of the widest range of people into a design, removing unnecessary barriers to enable everyone regardless of age or disability to use and enjoy an environment on equal terms.

The five principles of inclusive design are as follows:

- place people at the heart of the design process;
- acknowledge diversity and difference;
- offer choice where a single design solution cannot accommodate all users;
- provide for flexibility in use; and
- Provide buildings and environments that are convenient and enjoyable for everyone to use.

The Assessment is based on the following Inclusive Design good practice standards:

- Department for Transport, Inclusive Mobility, 2002
- Department for Transport, Guidance on the use of tactile surfaces, 1998
- Guide Dogs for the Blind, Shared Surfaces in Town Centres, 2007
- Guide Dogs for the Blind, Effective Kerb Heights for Blind and Partially Sighted People, 2009
- British Standard 8300:2009 (Amended 2010) Design of Buildings and their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People - Code of Practice, British Standards Institution
- NI Director of Engineers Memorandum, 154/15 Kerb Heights in Public Realm Schemes

The report also considers the principles described in DfT Manual for Streets (MFS), Local Transport Note 1/11 Shared Space and various Guide Dogs for the Blind research documents on Shared Space, among other references, together with the consultants own experience of streetscape improvement schemes across the UK.

The Public Realm proposals have developed through an iterative process, evolving at each Stage of the design reflecting comments and feedback. The design team met with the following organisations in the initial Stages of the design:

- RNIB on 2 October 2015 (minutes attached)
- Disability Action on 20 January 2016 (minutes attached)

- IMTAC 25 January 2016 (minutes attached)

Proposals were then developed to facilitate the public consultation which took place from 20 June to 28 August 2016 with an open session on 28 June 2016 at which Guide Dogs NI were represented. The team then met with Guide Dogs/RNIB on 23 August 2016, subsequent to which a consultation response was received from Guide Dogs on 26 August 2016 (copy attached). This led to the meeting with Guide Dogs/RNIB/IMTAC on 20 September 2016. Following that meeting the design team prepared the Options Report, which was then the focus for review by the accessibility consultant. The design team anticipate meeting these groups again as the design detail is developed.

## 2 General Principles

Conventional raised footways will be provided on one or both sides of the streets within the scheme, wherever the street width permits.

The material palette for the scheme will be defined during the design development but there is a commitment to achieve a luminance contrast between carriageway and footway. The current proposals include dark Caithness stone footways and a dark granite kerb with a silver grey granite road set carriageway which would provide a luminance contrast between the footways and the carriageway where the streets are wide enough to provide a raised footway.

The surfaces intended for pedestrian use will be smooth and slip resistant - the footways, pedestrian crossings and shared areas. The proposed Caithness stone and 'flame-textured' granite achieve these requirements. The slip-resistance of the surfaces intended for the carriageway will be slightly higher on the majority of the streets which are wide enough for full segregation between vehicles and pedestrians. The proposed 'picked' granite finish in these locations is likely to achieve this aim while helping to avoid the potential tripping hazard that a 'split' finish can often create. The paving units will be tightly jointed to avoid creating a tripping hazard.

Light fittings will be wall mounted across the improvement scheme wherever possible.

On the day of the site visit there were rubbish bins blocking the narrow footway on Palace Street and on Google Map images of the scheme area there were cars, vans and bins blocking the footways on Magazine Street. The scheme area will be a Controlled Parking Zone with defined parking areas being the only exceptions to the exclusion on parking within the Zone. DfC has advised DfI Roads/TNI that they would like to see such an increase but this is outside their control - the final decision on this will rest with DfI Roads.

### Recommendations

- On kerb heights, the NI Director of Engineers Memorandum, 154/15 Kerb Heights in Public Realm Schemes, states the following: "For public realm schemes, and in line with best practice, it is recommended that a 'standard' kerb height of 125 mm should be generally used, though this may be reduced to a desirable minimum of 100mm to suit local site circumstances. Exceptionally however, where there is a desire to incorporate a lower 'standard' kerb height to that either stipulated here or in DMRB ... such as in a public realm

scheme where a shared surface street is envisaged, it is recommended that kerb heights should not be less than 60mm.” The memorandum goes on to say “it is also recommended that these lower kerb heights should only be introduced following meaningful consultation with organisations representing the accessibility needs of local people, particularly those with a disability, and after any equality considerations have been fully explored and accounted for.” The Guide Dogs for the Blind guidance recommends a kerb height of at least 60mm to ensure people with vision impairments can delineate between the footway and carriageway. However, most wheelchair users require level areas to cross the carriageway with a maximum up-stand of 6mm and not the 30mm suggested may be possible in some documents. Therefore, dropped kerbs or raised tables with the appropriate use of tactile blister paving should be provided in strategic locations across the scheme. While many independent wheelchair users require no or minimal upstand to cross a street, a 60mm kerb height will be easier to cross for a carer pushing a wheelchair user than a full 125mm standard kerb.

- A significant proportion of disabled people can only travel 50m between rests. Therefore, where practical blue badge parking spaces and seating should be provided at regular intervals across the scheme area. The latter should be grouped together with other necessary street furniture. Specific locations for parking and seating are suggested in the following sections and these should be considered more closely as the design is developed. If disabled people must pay to use Blue-Badge parking bays then the method(s) of paying for parking must be accessible.
- A small number of the lighting columns required to light the square will be within the footway and these should be highlighted with tonally contrasting manifestations at 1000mm and 1500mm.
- Dished channel may be required for drainage on a number of the streets. These channels can be a tripping hazard and ideally should not be used in shared or pedestrian areas. If channels are required in these areas, ideally pedestrians should not have to cross the channels and the channel detail will require careful consideration to minimise the risk of tripping. The openings in drainage gully grates in pedestrian and shared areas should be small enough to avoid trapping walking sticks and crutches.
- Drainage crossfalls should be as close as possible to good practice limits (a maximum of 1in50) within the site constraints.
- As part of a signage and wayfinding strategy for the area consideration should be given to producing a tactile map of the street network indicating shared and segregated areas.
- A Street Charter should be established for this historic area with sign-up from local residents and businesses. This Charter should include a description of the expectations in terms of where and when rubbish bins can be left on the streets and explaining the rules on parking within this Controlled Parking Zone. Other aspects such as the design rules for pavement cafes and on-street advertising should also be included within the Charter.

### **3 Assessment**

#### **3.1 Palace Street**

The section of Palace Street near the junction with Bishop Street Within is particularly narrow and only has a footway on the east side which is as narrow as 600mm at lighting columns and door step projections. The footway is too narrow for most disabled people who use mobility aids, including

wheelchair users and parents with prams, forcing this group to use the carriageway for the full length of the street. In addition there are no dropped kerbs at the end of the terrace houses.

The footway was blocked by rubbish bins on the day of the visit forcing all pedestrians to use the carriageway for at least part of the route. The raised strip/footway narrows the available surface preventing vehicles and pedestrians from using the full street width.

A raise strip is required along the building line to maintain surface water drainage.

### **Recommendations**

- Although not ideal in order to maintain vehicle access the best compromise would appear to be a shared surface for the length of the terrace for vehicles and pedestrians. The width of the raised strip next to the building line should be minimised to optimise the available shared surface.

### **3.2 Link to Bishop Street Car Park**

The link to the Bishop Street car park is stepped and therefore inaccessible to many disabled people. A continuous raised footway runs from the bottom of the steps to the ramped access to the Wall walkway at the junction with Society Street. The footway narrows to approximately 700mm at the corner of buildings, narrowed further by rainwater down pipes and lighting columns which will pose a barrier to many disabled people who use mobility aids, including wheelchair users; although the lighting columns are against the building line and unlike to present a hazard to people with vision impairments.

The proposed scheme includes improvements to the Bishop Street car park link and the removal of parking from the square adjacent to St Augustine's Church to free this space for other uses. The reduction in parking within the scheme area is also likely to reduce the volume of traffic entering the area.

The proposals include replacing the steps to the Bishop Street car park with a ramp. The ramp will be designed as close as possible to good practice in terms of gradient, width and handrail design. There is inadequate space to provide steps as an alternative to the ramp; many disabled and older people find steps safer and easier to use than ramps especially when wet or icy.

A continuous raised 2000mm wide footway will be provided from the Bishop Street car park link to the junction with Society Street providing a navigable route through this section of the scheme for people with vision impairments. The street width is too narrow for footways on both sides of this street.

### **Recommendations**

- In developing the detailed design there is likely to be need for two pedestrian crossings with dropped kerb and appropriate use of blister paving (between the link and Society Street) - one at the junction with the car park link to provide access from the Palace Street shared surface and the other opposite the Church to provide access to the record shop and the west of the square.

### **3.3 Square**

The square is used as a car park and as described above the proposals include removing the parking, including one blue badge space, from this area to free up the space for other uses. The footway along the square boundaries of Palace Street and Society Street will be raised above the carriageway. The paved routes around and through the square will be at least 2000mm wide.

The landscaping proposals for the square includes an area of grass and a performance area with seating steps. Ramped access will be provided to both sides of the seating steps giving access to the higher level thereby offering disabled people a choice of seating location.

Conventional bench seating is also shown around the square and at least a proportion of these seats will have back and armrests and paved areas will be included alongside for wheelchair users and prams. The lighting proposals integrate the light fittings for the square on the walls and on columns in the planted areas with the exception of two columns which will be adjacent to the footway.

#### **Recommendations**

- The surface/crossings at the Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall where the raised footways of Palace Street, Society Street and Magazine Street Upper meet will require careful consideration to provide a clear message to people with vision impairments on what is a pedestrian footway and what is a shared surface.
- The design of the ramps to the upper level of the seating should be developed with reference to good practice, including the gradient.
- The two lighting columns within the footway should be highlighted at eye-level (for people seated or standing) with contrasting features.

### **3.4 Society Street**

Society Street is wide enough to accommodate raised footways on both sides of the street and this is indicated within the proposals. A 2m wide footway on The Siege Museum side of the street, which is likely to be the busiest and a 1.7m wide footway on the opposite side.

#### **Recommendations**

- A significant proportion of disabled people can only walk a maximum of 50m between rests. Therefore, where practical blue badge parking spaces and benches should be provided at regular intervals across the scheme area. Ideally two or three blue badge bays should be provided on Society Street close to the junction with Palace Street, since spaces in this location would serve the new square, The Siege Museum and the ramp access to the Wall walkway.

### **3.5 Magazine Street Lower and Upper**

The longitudinal gradient on Magazine Street is significantly steeper than on the other streets within the scheme area. There is a continuous footway on the building side of the street with only short sections of footway provided next to the wall at the ramps and steps leading up to the wall walkway.

Castle Street is raised to the same level as Magazine Street where the two streets meet and the same approach is taken at the minor vehicle access crossings over the footways. There are

dropped kerbs at the junction with Butcher Street. There is no tactile blister paving provided at any of the crossings to warn people with vision impairments of the lack of a raised kerb. The crossing at the junction of Butcher Street is likely to be particularly problematic given the higher volume of vehicles using this street.

The proposed scheme include a continuous footway next to the building line for the entire length of the Lower and Upper sections of the street but there will be no footway on the wall side of the street. A mix of table crossings and dropped kerbs will be provided at each crossing point with tactile blister paving used where appropriate.

### **Recommendations**

- Although Magazine Street is relatively steep and therefore not ideal for all disabled people transferring to and from vehicles, two blue-badge parking spaces should ideally be provided on the street adjacent to the Craft Village and the ramped access to the Wall walkway.
- The Google Maps images of the street show a significant number of vehicles parked on the footway and bins on the footway outside the Craft Village and to the rear of the hotel. Therefore, a strict parking reinforcement regime and the Street Charter described above will be important to ensure disabled people can traverse the streets within the scheme area.

### **3.6 Union Hall Place**

Union Hall Place is particularly narrow at the junction with Shipquay Street but the street widens where it connects with Magazine Street (Lower). The street is a shared surface with no raised footway.

The street is relatively level compared with the steeper gradient of Magazine Street.

A dished channel is located close to the building line along the section of the street closest to Shipquay Street, with a build out of steps and a level approach at the entrance to the Tower Museum. The level approach to the Museum could potentially be confused with a footway to people with vision impairments and there is no corduroy tactile warning surface at the top and bottom of the Museum steps and no contrasting nosings on the steps which are a potential hazard at the end of the level approach.

Spherical bollards around the archway within the Wall opposite the Museum narrow the street at its widest point. These bollards are lower than 1000mm and are likely to be difficult to detect for people with vision impairments.

To maintain vehicle access the street is not wide enough to accommodate any raised footways. Therefore, the proposals show this street as a shared space. The street levels adjacent to the Museum entrance will be adjusted to remove the need for steps and the spherical bollards will be removed. There is no potential to provide any parking adjacent to the museum due to the requirement to maintain access for emergency vehicles.



## **Recommendations**

- Ideally pedestrians should not have to cross any dished-channel, since this feature can be a tripping hazard. And the dished channel detail should be considered careful to avoid tripping.
- The junction between Union Hall Place and Magazine Street (Lower) outside the Tower Museum could be a good location for seating.

### **3.7 Bank Place & Linenhall Street**

Bank Place and Linenhall Street must accommodate two-way traffic, since these streets are a vehicle cul-de-sac. The streets are not wide enough to accommodate parking being heavily used by large service vehicles. There is a ramped access to the Wall walkway on the street, although the ramp is steeper than at the access points on Society Street and Magazine Street.

The proposals include a raised footway on one side of the streets with dropped kerbs and tactile paving at pedestrian crossing points. An additional crossing point will be provided at the ramp access to the Wall walkway with a raised table crossing and tactile blister paving.