



Shared Space in the Public Realm

Policy Statement

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**Joint Committee on Mobility of
Blind and Partially Sighted People**

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Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People Policy Statement:

Shared Space in the Public Realm

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Joint Committee on Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People (JCMBPS) is an independent body consisting of representatives of the principle organisations of and for blind, deafblind and partially sighted people with a specific interest in mobility. The Joint Committee believes that blind, deafblind and partially sighted people should be able to move around safely and independently.
- 1.2 The Joint Committee believes that currently this is not the position and that blind, deafblind and partially sighted people experience enormous barriers to freedom of movement, seriously limiting their opportunities and choices. The Joint Committee believes that all blind, deafblind and partially sighted people should receive the support and skills they need to enable them to meet the challenges of the external environment.
- 1.3 There are around 10 million adults covered by the DDA in Great Britainⁱ, including over a million blind and partially sighted people. Almost 2 million people with significant sight lossⁱⁱ would have difficulty, even with the aid of glasses, in recognising a friend across the street. Many also have additional disabilities, particularly hearing loss, and experience serious problems moving around the built environment. Those engaged in providing services and facilities in the built environment should always take their needs into account.
- 1.4 It is predicted that over the next 30 yearsⁱⁱⁱ
 - The proportion of the population over 65 will increase by 40%
 - The number of people aged over 65 will double;
 - The proportion over 80 will increase by 100% and the number will treble
 - Over the same period the overall population will increase by less than 7%.
- 1.5 The growing disabled and older population will have social as well as economic impact if those responsible for the provision of transport systems, pedestrian environments and built environments do not recognise and address the need for more inclusive environments.
- 1.6 The Government is committed to social inclusion, and access to goods, facilities and services through the Disability Discrimination Act. By 2006 it will be unlawful for a public authority to discriminate against a

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disabled person in carrying out its functions, with a public sector duty to promote disability equality in such areas as pedestrian environments. It is necessary for public authorities to be incorporating equality for disabled people in its current planning and decision making to be able to meet its 2006 duty.

- 1.7 DPTAC, the government's advisory committee on access in transport and the built environment commissioned a MORI survey into the attitudes of disabled people to public transport^{iv}. The research findings show that the poor condition of the pedestrian environment is the major cause of concern to disabled people, and that disabled people did not consider that those responsible for providing and operating the pedestrian environment sufficiently understand their requirements. It is also notable that the research showed that visually impaired respondents are significantly more likely to rate streets and pavements poorly than other disabled people.
- 1.8 Access to the public realm is an important factor in the mobility of disabled people. This includes access to and along main roads with shopping, leisure facilities and transport links. The Government is encouraging walking and pedestrian routes which are 'pleasant, safe and convenient to walk'^v. This policy statement should be taken into account in developing national policies, planning and design guidance.

2 'Shared Space': The Concept

- 2.1 This policy statement looks at the shared space concept, as outlined by advocates of the concept, and then considers the implications and issues for blind, deafblind and partially sighted people. As this street design concept is relatively new with on-going developments and necessary responses, this policy statement represents the situation as at the time of production. JCMBPS aims to re-address the issues as they develop and to amend the statement as required.
- 2.2 The 'Shared Space' website defines the shared space concept as the integration of traffic, pedestrians and other road users to reduce the dominance of vehicles on the roads and create a more social space^{vi}.
- 2.3 This is achieved through traffic management methods proposed by the Hans Monderman model which rely on the design of the road, the environment around the road and the behavioural psychology these give to inform the driver that this is a social space and extra caution must be taken. The concept is flexible in its application, but there are key measures proposed such as the removal or reduction of traffic signs, markings and other instructions to drivers which prevents the road looking like a space designed for traffic. The concept taken to it

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fullest requires the removal of the separation between motorised vehicles and other road users, mainly through the removal of the traditional pavement and kerb.

- 2.4 It is claimed that this shift from the traditional 'separation and control' of pedestrians and vehicles to integration and shared space has the effect of creating caution and making drivers slow down. By giving back users responsibility for their own action it is argued that this reduces accidents by 'making roads dangerous to make them safe'^{vii}.

2.5 **Shared Space: Policy Development**

There are currently a number of experiments in the shared space concept through Europe called 'Shared Space'^{viii}. The shared space project aims to develop a new policy for designing public spaces. There are seven project partners, each of whom undertake a pilot project on roads and streets following the Hans Monderman model. This co-operation project includes a pilot in Ipswich. Within Britain there are also roads implementing the shared space concept to some degree.

- 2.6 Within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Kensington High Street has implemented a 'simplified streetscape', which retained and extended the width of the standard pavement and some pedestrian crossings, although concerns have been raised by visually impaired people on the very limited use of tactile paving. The Exhibition Road Project proposal aims to implement the shared space concept to some degree, removing street 'clutter' and many of the traditional traffic management methods. The proposal is still in development and the degree to which vehicle and foot traffic is integrated is still to be determined. Current proposals include shared surfaces with some other form of demarcation replacing the traditional kerb boundary between the pedestrian and vehicle 'zones'

- 2.7 'New Life for Roads' project by Transport 2000 Trust^{ix} is supportive of this concept. There is also a strong possibility that the shared space principles could be incorporated within the new guidance document currently being developed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and The Department of Transport 'Manual for Streets'^x. This could mean that the shared space concept becomes mainstreamed into the key design principles for Britain's roads and streets. JCMBPS has concerns about this concept which have not yet been adequately addressed. These concerns are outlined below:

3 **Shared Space: JCMBPS Response**

- 3.1 In principle, JCMBPS fully supports the aim to reduce the dominance of vehicles, reduce traffic speed and make the streets a safer place, as for

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blind, deafblind and partially sighted people a safe and accessible pedestrian environment is fundamental to independent mobility.

- 3.2 There are a number of measures, which the shared space concept suggests to create caution and slow drivers down, which JCMBPS supports and believes will particularly benefit the mobility of blind and partially sighted people in the public realm. These are as follows:
- the narrowing of the carriageway and increasing the size of the pavement
 - rationalisation of street furniture,
 - increased lighting,
 - provision of seating at regular points.

- 3.3 There are however a number of measures which this concept suggests which JCMBPS has very serious concerns over with regard to the safety and mobility of blind, deafblind and partially sighted people. These are described in section 4 under the headings

- **Reducing or removing any demarcation between surfaces used by cars and other vehicles and pedestrian areas**
- **Removal of Controlled Crossing Points**
- **The effect on wayfinding for blind and partially sighted people.**
- **Mixed Use with Pedestrians and Cyclists**

Contact with colleagues through the European Blind Union has indicated similar concerns, and there appears to have been little attempt to engage European disability groups in the development, implementation or assessment of shared space areas.

3.4 Key principles:

- The right of all pedestrians to unrestricted and safe passageway must be upheld under all circumstances.
- Safety and peace of mind of footway and carriageway users must have precedence over all other issues.
- A proper balance must be established between vehicular traffic, cyclists and pedestrians so that each does not adversely affect the others.
- JCMBPS supports the following hierarchy, adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government and enlightened local authorities throughout the UK.
 - Disabled people; then
 - Pedestrians; then
 - Cyclists; then
 - Public transport; then

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- Freight deliveries; and then
- Other motorised modes.

This hierarchy should be reflected in the reallocation of road space and its subsequent design and management.

3.5 Responsibilities

- Local authorities and promoters of the shared space concept must accept their responsibility for the safety of vulnerable road users and clearly demonstrate they have conducted robust research to demonstrate safety and usability before embarking on schemes. Blind, deafblind and partially sighted people, elderly people and people with learning disabilities are particularly affected.
- Equally, organisations responsible for rehabilitation services will have a responsibility to consider their training methods to enable blind and partially sighted people to cope with new concepts in the pedestrian environment, where this is possible. However a significant number of blind and partially sighted people do not receive mobility training.^{xi}

4. JCBPS concerns

4.1 Reducing or removing any demarcation between surfaces used by cars and other vehicles and pedestrian areas.

4.1.1 There is a major safety concern over the removal of the separation between vehicles and pedestrians, in particular the removal of the standard kerb.

4.1.2 The concept behind the removal of the traditional 'separation and control' traffic management is as stated by its creator Hans Monderman:

'who has the right of way?...I don't care. People here have to find their own way, negotiate for themselves, use their own brains'^{xii}.

As a result one of the central requirements for successful and safe creation of the shared space public realm is as Hamilton Baillie states,

**"Using eye contact and careful observation to negotiate space"^{xiii},
"Eye contact and human interaction replace signs and rules"^{xiv}.**

4.1.3 The key issue with this approach for blind, deaf blind and partially sighted people is that for many blind and partially sighted people the approaching car cannot be seen never mind being able to achieve eye

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contact with the drivers. People who are deaf blind will not be able to see or hear the approaching vehicles.

4.1.4 JCMBPS have concerns when the car drivers are not prepared to automatically give way to pedestrians. Further, people who are partially sighted may not be identifiable to drivers, as there may be no outward sign of their disability e.g. a guide dog or white cane, which may mean that drivers are not aware they are required to act differently.

4.1.5 Hans Monderman has illustrated (on video) that within a shared space scheme the priority shifts so significantly between the vehicles and the pedestrians, that he can cross the space backwards, with his eyes closed and not be injured. This should not be transferred to assumptions about blind, deafblind and partially sighted people. They will have no visual memory or awareness of the space therefore it is a completely different experience and to use such comparisons is inappropriate and misleading. JCMBPS wants robust research rather than gimmicks.

4.1.6 Hans Monderman states that 15% of drivers behave badly no matter what^{xv}.

It is these drivers that people, particularly blind and partially sighted people, need division and protection from. With the integration of pedestrians and vehicles there is no protection on the safety of the pavement for someone who is blind, deafblind or partially sighted who may not be able to determine this risk as it approaches and react accordingly, as would a fully sighted person.

4.1.7 Experiments on use of this social space claim to have reduced accidents^{xvi}. This is one of the key arguments for the implementation of the shared space concept. JCMBPS has serious concerns about this claim. JCMBPS would require that these claims be supported by the presentation of systematic data on the improved safety. Furthermore, JCMBPS doubts that these claims would have sufficiently assessed the impact on blind, deafblind and partially sighted people. JCMBPS would require information on the involvement of blind and partially sighted people in these trials and safety figures and whether the schemes included blind and partially sighted people within these figures. If blind and partially sighted people and possibly also other disabled people no longer use the area, or use it less, this would impact on accident figures but cannot be said to demonstrate success.

4.1.8 Recommendation

JCMBPS recommends that until systematic data supporting the claims of increased safety is provided and this data demonstrably includes the impact on blind and partially sighted people, the removal of the

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separation via a standard pavement between the pedestrians and vehicles is not proceeded with. Further we recommend that the full implications for visually impaired and other disabled people are investigated. We would be pleased to help with this.

4.2 Removal of Controlled Crossing Points

4.2.1 There are variations within the shared use schemes on the inclusion of controlled crossing points. The shared space concept taken to its fullest would require the removal of traditional controlled crossing points and the use of eye contact to navigate across the road.

4.2.2 JCMBPS has grave concerns about this. As noted above, the shared space concept reliance on the use of 'eye contact' between pedestrians and drivers to enable pedestrians to safely cross the road cannot be applied to blind, deafblind and partially sighted people. Blind, deafblind and partially sighted people rely on well sited controlled crossings fitted with audible signals, tactile rotating cones and appropriate tactile surfaces at the approach.

4.2.3 Where some demarcation between pedestrians and vehicles remains in a 'shared space' development, one of the measures proposed for traffic calming is to use raised tables, which also function as informal crossing points for pedestrians. It is noted that the raised tables would be level with the pavement so it is easy for people with pushchairs and wheelchair users to cross the road. This removes the differentiation between the pavement and the road, which serves to enable blind and partially sighted people to stay within the safety of the pavement. The Government guidance advises tactile paving is used at raised tables, similar to that at dropped kerbs^{xvii}. These informal crossing points should not replace the requirement to provide well designed controlled crossing points.

4.2.4 Recommendation

JCMBPS strongly recommends that it is still essential that controlled crossing points, meeting the current best practice standard, are maintained. Until comprehensive research with blind, deafblind and partially sighted people is undertaken into crossing roads safely without controlled crossing points, any move away from installing satisfactory crossings must be resisted.

4.2.5 JCMBPS would suggest that caution needs to be taken with the installation of raised tables and that the guidance on the use of tactile paving on these raised tables should be followed^{xviii}.

4.3- The effect on wayfinding for blind and partially sighted people.

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- 4.3.1 JCMBPS has concerns about the ‘shared space concept’, particularly the removal of the standard kerb, in terms of the effect of this on blind, deaf blind and partially sighted people and wayfinding.
- 4.3.2 Many blind, deaf blind and partially sighted people would use the pavement edge as a tool for guidance and wayfinding. Whilst some shared space schemes remove the separation between vehicles and pedestrians completely, others retain some separation but there is variation in its treatment, including standard height kerb segregation, low kerb segregation or delineation via colour and/or surface texture. Some shared space projects advocate the use of colour and texture to portray information on use of the space and required behaviours^{xix}.
- 4.3.3 This use of textures and/or colours for delineation and guidance needs careful consideration. Tactile surfaces are mainly used to indicate a potential danger and to use them for directional purposes on a large scale may be confusing and inappropriate, as well as uncomfortable for other pedestrians. Colour and tonal contrast is useful in many circumstances to enhance delineation but is not a solution for blind people with little or no residual vision – and there are obvious aesthetic considerations.
- 4.3.4 The ability of blind, deaf blind and partially sighted people to wayfind in an area and follow a route is often enhanced by ‘following’ pedestrian traffic flows. Where no barriers or pavement confine the majority of pedestrians to maintain one/two-directional travel and encourage the capacity to cross open areas at will; the blind, deaf blind or partially sighted person can become disorientated, and lead to them travelling in an area which is undesired and/or wholly inappropriate.
- 4.3.5 JCMBPS also have concern over the lack of uniformity between the shared space schemes and also within them. Blind and partially sighted people require uniformity and familiarity to be able to effectively wayfind within an area.
- 4.3.6 **Recommendation**
Research needs to be undertaken into how people can wayfind successfully through a shared space with the removal of the standard pavement edge, the regularised pedestrian flow currently used for navigation and the uniformity within an area.
- 4.3.7 The use of low kerb segregation or delineation via colour and/or surface texture should not be assumed to be sufficient provision of information for blind, deafblind or partially sighted people. The effectiveness of these methods as a tool for wayfinding needs to be researched.

4.4 Mixed Use with Pedestrians and Cyclists

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- 4.4.1 Another concern for JCMBPS within the shared space concept is the mixing of cyclists with pedestrians.
- 4.4.2 The JCMBPS Policy Statement on adjacent facilities for cyclists and pedestrians outlines the reasons for appropriate segregation.^{xx} The shared space concept proposes in some applications to remove the separation between pedestrians and cyclists.
- 4.4.3 Cycling on footpaths and footways is undoubtedly one of the current greatest causes of concern to blind, deafblind and partially sighted pedestrians. The problem with cyclists is that their silent presence is unnerving and potentially dangerous, the perception of the danger caused can reduce the confidence to go out independently.^{xxi}
- 4.4.4 Furthermore, Conrad King, RAC Foundation consultant psychologist, suggests that in shared space areas, in the absence of clear markings, and with slower cars, cyclists would speed up on roads, causing conflicts between pedestrians and people on bikes. The lack of clear markings would also blur the distinction between pavements and roads, making such streets popular with skateboarders and rollerbladers, argues Mr King - raising the potential of minor skirmishes between non-motorist road users^{xxii}.
- 4.4.5 **Recommendations**
JCMBPS calls for research to be undertaken investigating this issue and the potential increased safety concerns. Until this research has been undertaken cyclists and pedestrians should be adequately segregated.

5 Research and Consultation

- 5.1 The ODPM requires that the forthcoming Manual for Streets be based on sound research and should consider the needs of disabled people^{xxiii}. JCMBPS supports that and requests that representatives of blind, deafblind and partially sighted people are fully involved in this research which should demonstrably address the issues and safety implications raised above.
- 5.2 The Shared Space project currently being undertaken requires that 'specialists from every policy field work together on the design of the public space'^{xxiv}. JCMBPS requests that this includes specialists on access for blind and partially sighted people.
- 5.3 It is essential that the research into the Shared Space experiment includes not just accident figures, which incorporate blind, deafblind or partially sighted people, but that the number of users before and after the implementation of shared space, is considered. This is because

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there is a strong possibility that people may use the area less due to safety concerns therefore the figures would not be reliable. JCMBPS also request that safety figures include a range of accidents from minor to major to be able to assess the full impact on safety.

- 5.4 While records of reported accidents can be assessed, it is more difficult to take account of 'near misses' or minor accidents which were not reported, but these will affect perceptions of safety. Local consultation with representative groups and inviting public comment may be useful here.
- 5.5 The research and consultation needs to be full and effective and it should be an inclusive process. Blind, deafblind and partially sighted people are often excluded from traditional consultation methods and techniques, particularly those focusing on print media. Advice on contacting and involving blind, deafblind and partially sighted people is readily available from JCMBPS.

6. Mobility Training for Blind, Deafblind and Partially Sighted People

- 6.1 It is recognised that rehabilitation workers and mobility instructors, and their organisations, will have a responsibility to consider their training methods to enable blind and partially sighted people to cope with new concepts in the pedestrian environment. Within a local environment, site-specific training may enable navigation around the new layout. This will be greatly assisted by involvement of rehabilitation workers in the design and development of the area so that orientation clues can be built in. However when blind, deafblind and partially sighted people visit unfamiliar areas wayfinding will be much more difficult. Consistency of key design principles within such environments, developed in association with rehabilitation organisations, would assist here.

7 Summary

- 7.1 JCMBPS essentially support the key aims to reduce the domination of vehicles and traffic speed, and make the street a safer and more pedestrian friendly place. JCMBPS supports a number of methods that are suggested in the Shared Space concept to achieve this such as increased pavement width, lighting, and rationalisation of street furniture.
- 7.2 JCMBPS has major concerns about claims of increased safety generally created by the removal of the segregation between vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians, removal of controlled crossing points, and the replacement of these 'segregation and control' measures with negotiation via eye contact. Until adequate research is undertaken into the effects of removal of these traditional facilities in relation to safety and wayfinding for blind, deafblind and partially sighted people, then we

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firmly recommend that central and local government and other agencies do not proceed to implement schemes.

- 7.3 JCMBPS would be pleased to be involved in research and policy development aiming to consider current and future street design concepts and can advise on the engagement of blind, deafblind and partially sighted people.
- 7.4 Potentially, the introduction of the Shared Space concept could reduce even further the confidence, ability and safety of blind, deafblind and partially sighted people to use the pedestrian environment. We believe it will also have implications for elderly people, people with learning disabilities and other disabled people. This means the exclusion of an increasingly larger number of the population from a space that is being proposed for them. A 'Shared Space, A Space for Everyone'^{xxv} must include blind, deaf blind and partially sighted people.

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JCMBPS has a range of policy statements including:

- Walking Strategies (Nov 2002)
- Adjacent facilities for pedestrians and cyclists (June 2004)
- Pedestrian Crossings (December 2004)
- Local Transport Plans (March 2005)
- Public Realm (In preparation: due end 2005)

ⁱ Family Resources Survey (DWP) and DRC Figures

ⁱⁱ Figures from the 1999 DSS Research report No.94 'Disability in Great Britain' indicated there were an estimated 1.97 million people with a significant sight loss.

ⁱⁱⁱ Figures from DRC

^{iv} DPTAC (2002) Attitudes of Disabled People to Public Transport
<http://www.dptac.gov.uk/research/apt/index.htm>

^v Encouraging walking: Advice to Local Authorities DETR 2000 and On the Move by Foot DfT 2003

^{vi} www.shared-space.org

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- vii Adams JGU (1985) Risk and Freedom: the record of road safety regulations. London Transport Publishing Projects
- viii www.shared-space.org
- ix <http://www.newlifeforainroads.org.uk>
- x http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_susttravel/documents/page/dft_susttravel_037635.hcsp
- xi The lack of available outdoor mobility training means 9 out of ten blind and partially sighted people have never received any assistance, despite nearly all those who had saying it improved their quality of life and independence. (GDBA)
- xii <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/01/21/news/profile.html>
- xiii Hamilton-Baille, Ben (2004) 'Why Don't We Do It in the Road', Journal of Urban Technology, Issue 11 pp 57 http://www.hamilton-baillie.co.uk/papers/urban_design.pdf
- xiv Ibid pp 51
- xv <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/01/21/news/profile.html>
- xvi Hamilton-Baille, Ben (2004) 'A Street Revolution', Green Places, Issue 06 June, pp20-30
- Hamilton-Baille, Ben (2004) 'Why Don't We Do It in the Road', Journal of Urban Technology, Issue 11 pp 61 http://www.hamilton-baillie.co.uk/papers/urban_design.pdf
- xvii Department of Transport, Guidance on the Use of Tactile Paving Surfaces, section 1.5.5
- xviii
- xix Shared Space: Room For Everyone (2005) p.37,44
- xx For further details, please refer to JCMPBS Policy Statement on Adjacent Facilities for Pedestrians and Cyclists, June 2004
- xxi RNIB, 1999, Rights of Way
- xxii Can 'naked roads' kill speed? Alexis Akwagyiram BBC January2005
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4213221.stm>
- xxiii http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_023006-01.hcsp
- xxiv Shared Space: Room For Everyone (2005) p. 23
- xxv www.shared-space.org