

**GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AND  
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**



**GUILDFORD JOINT COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 20 MARCH 2019**

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC QUESTION – ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES GUILDFORD  
TOWN CENTRE**

**DIVISION/  
WARD(S)  
AFFECTED: GUILDFORD TOWN CENTRE**

**To receive any written questions from the public under Standing Order 14.2.**

A Public question was received from Mrs Joanne McGowan at 12 December 2018 committee (see below), it was recognised that the response wasn't in plain English and the Chairman invited Mrs McGowan to come back to the next Committee to receive a better, more human response.

"How are GBC and SCC planning to ensure that mobility and accessibility issues are first and foremost when planning new and redevelopments in Guildford town centre?"

**RESPONSE:**

**Planning Development Manager, GBC**

Following the meeting with the Guildford Access Group on 22 January 2019, I highlighted to my officer Development Management Group, the need to be very mindful of access issues surrounding new development proposals, particularly in the town centre and where necessary to engage with the Guildford Access Group in order to seek their advice and comments. We agreed that the Access Group would also be consulted on any forthcoming large developments at an earlier stage, where access issues could be more easily negotiated.

The Access Group can use myself or our Business Manager, Peter Stevens as points of contact should they wish to contact us about a particular planning application or concerns about access issues and we will try and either point them in the right direction or directly assist. The matter has though been properly and fully highlighted with my Development Management Group.

**Snr Transport Development Planning Officer, SCC**

The Transport Development Planning (TDP) team will assess any planning application which Guildford Borough Council consult them on. The assessment will include a site visit where we will investigate access to and from the site for all users, including wheelchair users. If improvements were required to allow for all users to access certain facilities then we could request that these improvements are implemented by the developer.

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If the issue is existing then it would be for our Highways team to investigate. The local Highways team would carry out a site visit and determine what could be implemented or improved to rectify the problem, subject to funding availability.

TDP are now linked into the Guildford Access Group and we receive information on upcoming meetings and the items being discussed. The Access Group will be able to contact us should there be any issues related to new developments across the borough.

### **Highway Maintenance Engineer, SCC**

I attended the meeting with the Guildford Access Group on 22 January 2019, the Highways team, SCC are now linked into the Guildford Access Group and we receive information on upcoming meetings and the items being discussed. The Access Group will be able to contact us should there be any issues related to highways issues across the borough.

Surrey Highways has a term maintenance contractor Kier who carry out works on the highway, repairs, construction and cyclic maintenance. Highway safety inspections are carried out in line with national guide lines by highway safety inspectors.

Highway paving slabs which protrude, drop by more than 20mm are considered a defect which are scheduled to be repaired within 5 working days. If the defect is very severe and an immediate hazard to pedestrians it will be raised as an emergency job and be scheduled to be attended to by our contractor within two hours, to make safe or repair as appropriate. Where a footway defect is less than 20mm, less than intervention it will not be repaired but assessed again on the following highway inspection. I have attached a link to our policy on highway inspections. <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/policies-plans-consultations/policies-and-plans/highway-safety-inspections-standards-and-procedures>

On March 7th myself and Highway Officer Alan Adams, Sophie Butcher (Committee Officer) Guildford Borough Council and Gemma Roulston (Co-Chairperson of the Access Group) and Jenny Teagle (Access Group Member) undertook an accessibility review of the High Street and North Street.

We travelled up the High Street to North Street and then down North Street and finally up to and along Jeffries Passage and assessed footway condition and dropped kerbs and utility reinstatements. We found some rocking slabs but very few that met intervention criteria. We identified a utility defect in Jeffries Passage which Alan put through to our Streetworks Team as a defect whilst on site.

Gemma and Jenny commented on some of the pedestrian crossing points. They noticed that on some there are no tactiles, some paving tactiles, sand coloured slabs or granite and on natural stone slabs metal studs. Where there are no tactiles this is generally on the older crossing points. I have discussed this with Traffic Engineer, Bahram Assadi. It may be possible at a future date to install tactiles at locations identified as priorities subject to available funding.

I am following up with Waitrose on the footway slabs in Haydon Place, slab condition is being monitored in the interim. As soon as I have more information I will update the Access Group.

**Experience Guildford**

At the Guildford Access Group 22 January 2019 it was agreed that a meeting be convened between the Manager of Waitrose, Amanda Masters from Experience Guildford, Jo McGowan and Patrick Giles from Surrey Highways to talk about the options for improving the surface outside Waitrose.

Update:

Amanda Masters met with the Store Manager at Waitrose on 14 February and they updated that they are having the paving in the car park fixed. The developers and Waitrose are still in discussion about the long walkway.

**Background Information:**

Please also refer to the attached notes of the Guildford Access Group for further information on progress on issues that Mrs McGowan raised in her public question and in her background information to the Joint Committee.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Joint Committee is asked to:

- (i) *Note the officer's comment.*

**Contact Officers:** Tim Dawes, Planning Development Manager, GBC, Kirsty Wilkinson, Snr Transport Development Planning Officer, SCC, Patrick Giles, Highway Maintenance Engineer, SCC and Amanda Masters Experience Guildford.

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*Paul Bassi	Project Manager
*Mariana Beadsworth	Principal Conservation Officer
*Sophie Butcher	Committee Officer
*Tim Dawes	Planning Development Manager
*Patrick Giles	Surrey Highways Officer
*Andy Harkin	Parking Manager
*Diana Lockyer-Nibbs	Co-Chairperson of Access Group
*Amanda Masters	Experience Guildford
*Jo McGowan	Access Group member
*Councillor Caroline Reeves	Ward Councillor for Jo McGowan
*Gemma Roulston	Co-Chairperson of Access Group
*Jenny Teagle	Access Group member
*Donald Yell	Principal Transport Planner

\*Present

### ACTION

#### 1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

#### 2. Mobility Issues in Guildford Town

Jo McGowan explained that she had broken her ankle in Lisbon whilst on holiday in August 2018. As she lived five minutes from the town centre she thought that whilst she would need to make some adjustments it would be okay to deal with. However, she found the town difficult to navigate and could not leave her house on her own for approx. 8 weeks. This also had had an effect upon her mental health. She sought advice from a range of officers at the Council but found it frustrating that there was apparently no joined up thinking or a central hub where access issues could be easily resolved.

Jo had also attended the Guildford Joint Committee meeting to ask the following question on 12 December 2018: "How are GBC and SCC planning to ensure that mobility and accessibility issues are first and foremost when planning new and redevelopments in Guildford town centre?" She received a response that was technical in nature and not written in plain English. She therefore wished to hold a meeting with all relevant officers/councillors to gain a better understanding of the issues and how to resolve the access issues she had identified.

#### Outside the Waitrose Development

Jo reported that a number of paving stones were broken or lifting creating significant trip hazards outside of Waitrose. Big lorries were mounting the kerb that were delivering to Waitrose and causing the paving to break and/or lift up. Paving stones between Beverley Hall and the Waitrose development were also causing an issue. Jo felt that it was difficult for members of the public to know who to report such hazards too and that better signposting was required so that issues could be resolved quicker. In this case it was confirmed that the land belonged to Surrey Highways.

Patrick Giles from Surrey Highways explained that SCC had sub-contracted out repair works to be undertaken by a company called Kier. SCC had an inspection matrix, which Kier used to assess the urgency by which works were undertaken. If a paving slab for example protruded by more than 20mm, it was considered a defect that needed to be repaired as soon as possible. If less than 20mm then the defect

**Amanda  
Masters/Jo  
McGowan/**

was assigned to a queue for repairs in the next 28 days. Surrey Highways also had limited funds, which was reducing in the long term and not likely to improve. Surrey Highways were therefore unlikely to be able to take action until the beginning of the new financial year in April 2019.

**Patrick  
Giles/  
Manager of  
Waitrose**

It was agreed that a meeting was convened between the Manager of Waitrose, Amanda Masters from Experience Guildford, Jo McGowan and Patrick Giles from Surrey Highways to talk about the options for improving the surface outside Waitrose. One idea was to move the planters to where the lorries were mounting the kerb.

#### **Parking outside the Citizen Advice Bureau**

Jo explained that she had noticed a number of cars parked outside of the CAB, which were blocking the pavements from people being able to walk freely.

Andy Harkin, Parking Manager for Guildford Borough Council confirmed that he had seen a sign on the wall outside the CAB, which stated that the parking was for CAB users only. Andy confirmed this was not the case as there was not a lowered kerb in place. Andy would shortly be writing to CAB to outline the problems being caused by overhanging cars on the footways and that they should not encourage CAB users to do so.

**Andy Harkin**

#### **Cars parked on pavements at the end of Stoke Road**

Jo had noticed cars regularly parking on pavement at the end of Stoke Road forcing pedestrians into the middle of the road into the path of cars coming around the corner. This she found particularly terrifying if on crutches/in a wheelchair or with children.

Andy Harkin, Parking Manager confirmed that he was aware of the parking issues, particularly associated with parents dropping off/picking up their children from nursery. Parking controls were sensitively managed in this regard. The restricted parking zone sign in Stoke Road would also be updated to state no waiting at anytime and would be in place in the next 12-18 months. As part of the car parking review currently being undertaken, operating hours maybe extended to 9pm. This meant that there would be a greater number of enforcement officers available to enforce parking controls particularly around The Boileroom at night.

**Andy Harkin**

#### **Crossing over Leapdale Road**

Jo had observed that the dropped curb was steep and with a sharp turn as the pavement was so narrow. The camber could send you straight back toward the road and Jo could not negotiate this in a wheelchair and was difficult when being assisted too. Surrey Highways agreed to look at this further.

**Patrick Giles**

#### **York Road Crossing**

Jo had experienced that the light for pedestrians did not stay green long enough for someone with mobility issues to cross safely. Surrey Highways agreed to look into this further so to enable pedestrians with access requirements enough time to cross.

**Patrick Giles**

#### **North Street**

Jo had found that there were not enough crossing points for those with mobility issues. The poor state of the road made it difficult to cross in a wheelchair. At one point, Jo had to get out of the wheelchair to navigate safely across the road, which of course not all disabled people can do.

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Resurfacing works of North Street were not planned owing to lack of funding of Surrey Highways. If the North Street redevelopment went ahead then additional funds could be sought however the timeframe for this was unknown and further feedback was needed.

### **North Street Market**

Jo had found that it was very difficult to navigate North Street Market in a wheelchair to get to the stalls. The street traders were helpful but people with disabilities want their independence too.

**Paul Harkin**

Paul Harkin, Parking Manager agreed to check with Licensing as to whether it would be possible to ask market stall holders to move their pitches back so to provide enough space to those in wheelchairs or who have disabilities.

### **Shops**

Jo had found it difficult or virtually impossible to access some of the shops in Guildford in a wheelchair, because of poorly designed layout. Those shops lost Jo's custom and she was now unlikely to go back.

Amanda Masters of Experience Guildford was aware of the challenges surrounding the layout of shops. It was a question of keeping on making the shops aware of designing their layout with access issues for all in mind. One idea would be to score shops in terms of their accessibility, which would then be advertised in their shop window. In addition, planning control could reiterate the need for accessible layouts when shops put applications in to change their frontage.

**Amanda Masters**

### **Cobbles**

Jo had found the cobbles whilst being an attractive feature of Guildford were difficult to navigate. Jo signposted officers to Derby, which had cobbles, that were safe and accessible.

It was explained there were three access points across the cobbles in Guildford at the bottom, middle and top end of the high street. It was agreed that additional signage could be looked at to make it clear where the accessible points were. The cobbles had just recently been re-laid and therefore there were no works planned to re-do them. The Derby example given was of cobbles that had been made to look old when they were in fact modern replicas. Guildford's cobbles were original and could not be re-surfaced as per the Derby example.

The Guildford Tourist Centre was suggested as a place where people could be signposted as to how accessible Guildford was.

### **Tunsgate Centre**

Jo noted that this development had only recently opened in March 2018 and when she visited in August the only lift from the car park to the restaurants was out of order, with no indication of how someone with mobility issues could actually access the centre.

**Andy Harkin**

The Tunsgate Centre Manager had been notified of this issue who confirmed that out of order signs were placed outside the lifts if they were out of order. Andy Harkin, Parking Manager agreed that signage was also required and would be installed to re-direct people through the car park in such a scenario.

It was also noted that the ramp was too steep that enabled access from Castle Street to the Tunsgate Centre. It was noted that the architect should have ensured the design was DDA compliant. Applicants had the option to go with GBC approved Inspectors or external Inspectors. If external Inspectors were employed then GBC had no jurisdiction over whether or not the design of schemes met accessibility criteria. It was also noted that the Tunsgate development did not come before the Access Group for consideration, prior to going to Planning Committee.

#### **From Stoke Fields to the cinema or the station**

Jo highlighted the fact that there was no totally accessible route from Stoke Fields to the cinema or the station in a wheelchair. Upon going to the cinema, Jo had to get out and walk part of the way. They did not attempt the station as the steep ramp and steps made it unsafe. It was unclear to Jo how the Solum development was going to address this and should be the first thing taken into account in any new development.

It was agreed that disabled access needed to be considered at the outset of all new development. It was noted that accessibility was part of policy ID3 of the new emerging Local Plan. In addition, the Planning Development Manager confirmed that his department received approx. 2500 applications per annum and would seek to raise more awareness of access issues via consultation with developers and getting planning officers to raise these issues with them as well. The Access Group would also be consulted on any forthcoming large developments at an earlier stage where access issues could be more easily negotiated.

**Tim Dawes**

#### **Entrance to delivery bay to House of Fraser**

It was noted that there was a significantly dangerous risk posed by an uneven pavement surface outside the entrance to the delivery bay of the House of Fraser. This had been highlighted by Jo to her local councillors Caroline Reeves and Angela Goodwin and was quickly fixed by Surrey Highways.

#### **Swan Lane**

Deliveries to shops down Swan Lane were causing damage to the pavement used by pedestrians. In some cases holes had been filled in with tarmac and was agreed was not the most appropriate fix to the problem. The road surface needed to be designed to withstand deliveries as well as provide an accessible walking surface that was not vulnerable to being damaged.

**Paul Bassi**

#### **Public Realm Improvements**

Paul Bassi, Project Manager confirmed that he would be undertaking a consultation exercise on various public realm improvements in Castle Street and Swan Lane. The ambition was to retain the heritage and character of these areas whilst improving accessibility. They were at a very early stage in the design process and would like input to ensure it was fit for purpose with the Access Group.

#### **Audit of uneven pavement and road surfaces in Guildford Town**

It was noted that the Access Group with Patrick Giles of Surrey Highways would undertake an audit of uneven pavement surfaces in Guildford Town that needed to be fixed. [Post-meeting note: The audit would take place on Tuesday 4 March from 10am with the Co-chairperson of the Access Group – Gemma Roulston, Access Group member – Jenny Teagle, Patrick Giles – Surrey Highways and Access Group member – Councillor Angela Goodwin].

**Sophie  
Butcher to  
arrange**

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