

PE1595/C

To the Public Petitions Committee

I have been involved with the problem of Shared Space since 2009. The petitioner of PE 1595 has put a very good case forward. I support his views on the duty of Local Authorities under the Equality Act 2010. Unfortunately, Local Authorities across the UK have ignored their duty under the Code of Practice for Local Authorities. The section of the code that is continuously ignored is, "The Provision of Access to Goods and Services." Too many times, Local Authorities state that giving due consideration to Blind and Partially Sighted people will impact negatively on other disability groups. The issue that they ignore is, if there is a negative impact on any one group, they have not fulfilled their responsibilities under the act.

The Shared Space concept is flawed. It supposes that the users of shared space schemes will be considerate of one another, this without giving any of the user groups a "right of Way." In many other European Countries, pedestrians do have a "right of Way" and as a result, the "consideration" expected in shared spaces is enforceable.

If the drivers of vehicles were considerate, they wouldn't park on pavements, or on the cross-hatchings either side of a crossing. They wouldn't block entrances or roads, by parking in areas they shouldn't. We wouldn't have need of Traffic Wardens or car park attendants checking on people who have parked illegally or over-stayed their time.

In the schemes that have been introduced to date in the UK, all of the safety aspects of a highway have been removed, all of the safe crossing points and many of the navigation points along with the rules of access are lost. Each of the schemes seem to want to carry on using the area as a highway and as a result, the minimum speed limit that can be enforced is 20mph.

The schemes also expect the users of these shared space areas to use "eye contact" to aid the use of the area. This of course is of no use to someone with a Sight Impairment.

I mentioned earlier the loss of navigation points, these are the kerbs, the inner and outer shorelines, safety railings, tactile paving and controlled crossings.

Once a shared space environment is brought in to being, traders use the opportunity to place goods and advertising A frames outside their premises, this takes away the inner shoreline. Where schemes have been made level and the shared space has lost the kerbs, the outer shoreline is lost. We also find that, to make an area look more inviting, other items are placed in the areas where pedestrians will walk.

These include, cycle racks, waste bins, seats and flower tubs. The one area that is never affected is, the central roadway. As a result, the traffic always moves at the fastest speed it can and pedestrians avoid the area as it is not a safe place to walk.

Other level access schemes have encountered another problem, this being, having to put raised kerbs in at bus stops. As busses are designed to lower to kerb height, they have found that people have not been able to access the buses without the kerbs.

The most important aspect of this issue is, the prevention of people accessing an area that they have always been able to, until the introduction of the shared space scheme. If a person has been able to access an area, but as the direct result of a Local Authority introducing a "shared Space", they are no longer able to do so, discrimination has taken place.

The duty a Local Authority has is to all of its residents, not to the majority. If a decision that they make impacts on a minority of the population, no matter how small that minority is, they are guilty of discrimination and are open to prosecution under the Equality Act 2010.

Yours Faithfully

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