

## **PE1595/AAA**

Councillor Janice Long Email of 23 January 2016

My comments on petition PE01595: Moratorium on shared space.

As a councillor in LB Brent I get the impression that shared surfaces are designed by male traffic engineers who do not use shared surfaces. They look good on paper and councillors and able bodied citizens see café culture. I may be a councillor in England but I do come to Scotland. Shared Surfaces must be opposed in the whole of the UK.

Pedestrians are bottom of the hierarchy. To say that in shared surfaced areas speeds are slow and drivers will give way is factually incorrect. I know from experience.

And even on the rare occasion that one driver will stop there is no guarantee the driver in the opposite lane will stop, so you end up stranded in the middle of the road, with a row of traffic going by and a deliver who will probably not stop again as they are being kept waiting for you to cross.

Drivers speed through amber lights and often accelerate when the light turns red. Many drivers fail to stop at zebra crossings and many that do stop move off as soon as the pedestrian has passed them, even before they have reached the opposite pavement. So it is naïve to expect that drivers will concede to pedestrians in a shared surface area.

There used to be educational films on how to cross the road, aimed at the general public and not just school children. There is limited training given at schools and nothing for adults. But many adults need to be told how to cross the road.

People with learning disabilities are told that keeping on the pavement and not crossing the kerb will mean you are safe. What are they told when there is no raised kerb? Nothing. So how do they know how to cross the road? There is no funding for people to teach them and to refresh the teaching.

Many people with mental health problems are worried about the public realm. They can be frightened to cross the road. Yet getting out for a walk is shown to be good physical exercise and also helps their mental condition. But they can be too frightened to go into a shared surface area. They end up more stressed and their condition can get worse instead of better.

People with mobility problems need extra time to cross a road. At controlled and uncontrolled crossings traffic will move off before the person has reached the other

pavement. Drivers go by the lights when it suits them and if the light is green they will move.

So if controlled crossings are not safe it is naïve to think that shared spaces are safe for disabled people.

We are told that in shared spaces you make eye contact with the driver. Not easy if you are in a wheelchair and are below the drivers eyeline and with many cars, below the bonnet. And how do you see into a car when street lights reflect off the windscreen. Or when the sun reflects off the windscreen or into the eyes of the driver or pedestrian.

Why are proposals for shared spaces always illustrated as lovely sunny days. They are never designed for rain. As a result there can be water pooling and pedestrians end up with a shoe full of water. The pooling may not be immediate but with use the road and pavement surface levels go down but the drains remain at the same height, above the road/pavement. The traditional road layout isn't perfect but water drainage is far better. It rains in the UK. Any scheme should assess the impact of bad weather on the walking environment.

Drivers often drive over the `pavement` section of a shared surface and break up the paving stones. Granted these can be repaired but are never quite the same. And then often a bollard is installed to stop vehicles accessing the pavement. This bollard is a sudden feature and so blind people will not expect it to appear. If the road had been designed with a kerb there would be no need for bollards and vehicles would not be driving on the pavement.

Many shared surfaces have bus services. As wheelchair users need to access the bus there needs to be a raised pavement. So these are installed by the bus stops. This can lead to a confusing layout in the area as kerbs suddenly appear and can be unexpected and lead to more accidents.

Crossings, whether formal or controlled, are not installed to improve the pedestrian experience but are often only installed when there has been an accident involving a vehicle and pedestrian. So we need volunteer lemmings to get crossings installed. Unlikely to happen.

Shared surfaces are areas not shared by many disabled people. They cannot access them. So they are not shared areas but are exclusion zones.

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