Tower Hamlets
Inclusive Design Advice: Public Realm
Inside

What is Inclusive Design?

Why Inclusive Design is important in the Public Realm?

Policy Framework

The KEY inclusive design requirements in the Public Realm

What information should be provided upon submission by the applicant

Examples: good and bad practice in the Public Realm

Further Reading
This document is part of a series that sets out Tower Hamlets’ approach to Inclusive design.

The Inclusive Design advice notes will concentrate on the fundamental spatial issues that need to be considered early on in the planning and design stages of all new development. The advice notes are intended to assist developers, architects, designers and planning officers at this stage in the development process, in determining if a development has considered inclusive design in its proposal and to give them the confidence to make amendments.
What is Inclusive Design?

Inclusive Design means designing in a way that aims to remove the barriers that create undue effort and separation. It enables everyone to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities.

Good example of multiple ways of accessing a Victorian bandstand which is used for community events.

Clapham Common
Inclusive Design: Public Realm

Why Inclusive Design is important in the Public Realm?

- We are all pedestrians, our streets are the only public space we all use everyday. Inclusive design requires that you consider all potential users and what their particular needs are.
- Statistically Tower Hamlets has a young population, the needs of young people with or without disability are often over looked.
- By 2050 nationally over 50% of the population will be over 50, you’re statistically more likely to have a disability the older you are. For example, the Department of Health estimates that the numbers of older people registered blind or partially-sighted will rise from 798,000 to 1,178,000 between 2008 to 2025, an increase of 50%. This accounts for almost half of all consumer spending, or £175 billion a year.
- 20% of the population is deemed to have a disability as defined by Equalities Act legislation – this includes people with mental health, long term sickness such as cancer as well as the 5% that are wheelchair users. Many people will have a ‘hidden disability or be related to someone who has a disability.
- There are high levels of obesity in Tower Hamlets (20% of residents).
- The percentage of people with mobility difficulties in the population is 14% within the UK.
- Natural England recommends that accessible public green space should be less than 300m from people’s home and a big park (over 20 hectares) within 2km.
- Audit Commission report on access to play in 2003 identified a national shortage of play provision for disabled children.
- Poorly located dropped kerbs and disabled parking provision are common problems that prevent people accessing public space.
- According to Sport England only 1 in 10 disabled young people over 16 are engaged in more than 90 minutes of physical activity each week. 60 minutes a day is recommended by the Chief Medical Officer.
Policy Framework

For the purposes of this guidance note the public realm includes the public spaces within and outside of developments.

National Planning Policy Framework

Achieving sustainable development
Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

7: supporting strong vibrant and healthy communities, by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural wellbeing.

9: pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people’s quality of life, including (but not limited to):
• replacing poor design with better design.
• improving conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure.

Delivering sustainable development
4. Promoting sustainable transport
35: Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. Therefore, developments should be located and designed were practical to
• give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities:
• create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians: avoiding street clutter and were appropriate establishing home zones.

National planning policy

Equalities Act 2010
Civil rights legislation protecting disabled peoples’ equitable rights, including access to everyday goods and services.

(1) Every public authority shall in carrying out its functions have due regard to—
(a) the need to eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under this Act;
(b) the need to eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities;
(c) the need to promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
(d) the need to take steps to take account of a persons’ disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people;
(e) the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
(f) the need to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

This is the core duty under the Act.
• consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport.

Promoting healthy communities
69: The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities.
• safe and accessible developments, containing clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.

Planning for London

The London Plan
This is the Mayor of London’s spatial plan which the local authorities of London have to comply with.

3.1 Equal Life Chances for All which aims to ensure that the barriers to meeting the needs of and expanding opportunities for particular groups and communities and tackling inequality across London are addressed.

6.7 Better streets and surface transport to ensure good access to and within areas served by networks, ensuring direct, secure, accessible routes to stops.

6.10 Walking increased by emphasising the quality of the pedestrian and street environment, including the use of

Good example of multiple ways of accessing a slide, there is also a ramp that winds around the hill.
Mile End Park - Inclusive Play Area

shared space principles - promoting simplified streetscape, decluttering and access for all.

7.1 Lifetime Neighbourhoods whereby places and spaces are designed to met the needs of the community at all stages of people’s lives and meet the ‘lifetime neighbourhoods’ criteria

7.2 An Inclusive Environment which requires all new development in London to achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design.
7.5 Public Realm should be secure, accessible, inclusive, connected, easy to understand and maintain.

Planning for Tower Hamlets

Core Strategy 2010
SP04 supports improving the quality and quantity of open spaces, as population density increases the need for accessible quality streets and open spaces becomes more acute. SP09. Supports the Implementation of a street hierarchy that puts pedestrians first and promotes streets both as links for movement and places in their own right.

Managing Development DPD (submission version)

Good example of seating.
St Andrew’s Development
KEY Inclusive Design Considerations

Way finding

- People prefer to walk down streets with well maintained public and private gardens/green space – access to quality green space is vital for maintaining mental well being.

- Planting can assist way finding through sound and scent and colour.

- Appropriate signage located at key decision making points.

Barriers

- Bollards are a barrier to the visually impaired even if the bollard is highlighted and contrasts with the background they are viewed against in all lighting conditions. They should be used circumspectly and only after all other methods to prevent vehicle infringement have been considered. Introduced as a reaction to pavement parking, the bollards can be just as much of a nuisance as the parked cars.

- Municipal waste and A boards are a hazard for the visually impaired people who can’t predict where the obstructions are and, may walk into them. This affects their confidence to use the footway. They should be removed or located out of walking routes.

Street furniture

- Seating should be provided in public space – 50m is considered the maximum distance someone with mobility impairment can travel without a rest. Seating requirements vary and should cater for a variety of different users.

- Seating, lighting and most street furniture should be located consistently across the scheme, not in the walking route.

- Street lighting, security cameras and signage were possible should be mounted on buildings, effectively removing street clutter and removing a potential barrier for the visually impaired.

- Phone booths etc should not be located were they effect key sight lines such as forward views from seating at bus stops.
Street Planting: Trees are important for health and wellbeing and assist way finding, maintenance and the correct species for the given site are vital.

Water features and art features should be placed out of the main walking route and not be visually ambiguous, some slab water features that are at a leaning/seated height maybe confusing for the visually impaired.

Surface design/Footway design

Inconsistency of materials should be avoided. When public meets private land and hard surfacing is proposed, materials should be consistent (inset studs can be used to mark boundary). Different materials can be confusing and joints are more likely to fail, a potential tripping hazard in future years.

Lack of tonal contrast and patterns within the pavement that can be perceived as a level change i.e. stripes are a particular concern of people with visual impairment/learning disabilities.

Paths for pedestrian routes within developments should be smooth including were they cross vehicle paths, small sets or cobbled paving should be avoided. As uneven surfaces are uncomfortable for wheelchair users and awkward for people with sensory impairment. They can also be a heel trap and difficult for some of the elderly who are unsteady on their feet.

Drop kerbs:

Point 1 - steep kerbs affect independent and assisted wheelchair users in particular, and can cause a wheelchair to tip forward onto the road. In icy/wet weather the crossing may become unusable as a wheelchair user can potentially loose there grip and slip back into the carriageway, steep gradients are not safe for elderly and mobility impaired who have gait problems.

Point 2 - kerb gradients within developments should not exceed gradients of 1:12, with a minimum 1200mm level area between the back of the dropped kerb and the building line, where this is not feasible a raised table should be considered as an alternative.

Raised tables (crossing at at same level as pavement) are an alternative to dropped kerbs, can assist in reducing vehicle speeds and are preferable to dropped kerbs were site constraints would result in excessive gradients.

Identify a network of routes for disabled people and people wheeling buggies to use, and ensure they are equipped with suitable crossings.
Inclusive Design: Public Realm

Junction radii should be tight around development, sweeping kerbs allow vehicles to negotiate junctions at speed. Require pedestrian crossing points to be relocated out of direct walking route and additionally those crossing need to look back much further along the road to detect vehicles. A particular problem for those unsteady on their feet and the visually and sensory impaired.

Vehicular access across footway into development; Vehicles can more easily negotiate gradients were as crossfalls/gradients are a tripping hazard for mobility impaired. For self propelled wheelchair users it is hard to negotiate and can make the chair unstable. Use bevelled kerbs instead of crossovers. Never create a crossover where it narrows the level portion of the footway below minimum recommended widths.

New footways with excessive gradient, camber or cross-fall are a barrier for many including elderly who may have gait problems.

Historic surfaces

The retention of historic surfaces may be required for conservation reason. Substantial improvements can be made by analysing how people navigate the site introducing smooth materials were people want to walk and placing heritage material elsewhere. Pointing and surface maintenance can also improve matters.

Shared Space

- Ideally suited to low volume traffic areas.
- Shared space is NOT the same as a shared surface, which has no tonal/surface contrast between vehicle and pedestrian areas, these are particularly difficult for people with sensory impairments to navigate and small children who are unable to judge traffic speed.

Level changes

- Steps that taper – are a tripping hazard, particularly when they are visually indistinct.
- Steps that taper with ramp sliced through are a tripping hazard – wheelchair users can be unaware of the level change and tumble due to being half off and on ramp.
- Level changes if significant require mechanical means – these should be robust easy to locate and alongside the steps.
- Opportunities should be sort to mitigate any level changes across development site by considering the placement of all the built elements to improve gradients.
Urban design

- Relationship of particular buildings to their immediate surroundings as well as community facilities i.e. logical and direct linkages.
- People with Dementia need the reassurance of familiar landmarks to venture out. Consider retention of key buildings.
- Overhanging vegetation at head height; blind and partially sighted people are vulnerable from walking into these obstructions, may fall, or suffer laceration.
- Phased developments, require a condition to ensure that temporary solutions are sought to ensure that adequate provision for everyone (including disabled people, buggies and the elderly) to access their property is maintained throughout construction.
- Improvements in access should be proactively identified as part of any 278 works.
- Materials should be chosen that are robust and can be easily replaced if damaged.
- Sustainable urban drainage prevents surface water which can be a hazard for the mobility impaired.

Facilities

- Parking; many disabled people rely on a car to move around, parking provision needs to reflect this.
- Taxi drop off should be provided and the amount reflect expected need to prevent pavement parking.
- Provision of public toilets. Many people are prevented from going out by lack of public toilets.
- **Play**
  Access to local play space should be logical, safe and easy to access.
  Play area designs that improve visibility into and across the sites help reinforce parents and children’s feelings of safety.
- Enclosure is important for many. Some learning disabilities need close supervision.
- Provide easy access and use for wheelchair.
- The accessible elements should also be fun, and encourage interaction between children of all abilities.
- Consideration for a mix of ground-level opportunities should be integrated with elevated opportunities accessible by a ramp or transfer platform.
Informal Skateboard use is frequently designed out of benches and planting kerb edges, is this always necessary.

Formal environments such as Canary Wharf and Bishopsgate square are not places that teenagers would frequent.

Cycling

Cycling and walking are not always compatible, people with sensory impairments and small children and the elderly may not be aware of cyclists who can be travelling silently at speed.

Sustrans recommends 3m wide paths for shared use. Good site lines and adequate width are required when shared paths change direction to avoid conflicts between users.

Bonded gravel surfaces give some audible warning, were as completely smooth materials do not.

Commuter routes can be intimidating to vulnerable road users.

Cycling should be accommodated on the carriageway as standard and traffic calming measures should be instigated to ensure cyclists feel confident on the road.

Cycle parking should be located so that it is out of pedestrian walking route – including when it has bikes parked.
What information should be provided at Planning stage

- Plan marked up with the Step free route in and around the site including sections showing gradients.

- Distance to key community facilities in metres – excessive walking routes without suitable resting points (seating) unduly affect people with mobility impairments. Convoluted illogical routes adversely affect people with learning disability.

- Location of accessible parking bays within the scheme where applicable as well as current on street provision.

Within the access statement

- How the proposed public realm achieves best practice inclusive design.

- Quality public realm can only be achieved when pedestrian movement is the primary consideration as per the hierarchy proposed by manual for streets - Department for Transport Guidelines.
Municipal waste stored in the street at this location is an effective barrier.

Excellent use of heritage pavement surface to give a tactile warning in this historic setting.
The approach to this coach station in Birmingham has no taxi rank resulting in all the pavements being blocked by taxis.

The location of kiosks/phone booths needs to take account of site lines, anyone seated at the bus stop would not see approaching buses.
A smooth path of York stone was inserted in the cobbles, in which the majority of people walk.

Good example of steps combined with ramp, the steps are visually obvious.
Further Reading

Inclusive Mobility;
Department for Transport

Manual for Streets; Department for Transport

Manual for Streets II; Department for Transport

Lifetime homes, lifetime neighbourhoods
http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/lifetimehomesneighbourhoods

Sign Design Guide

CABE: Sight Line designing better streets for people with low vision
http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/sight-line

street design
http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/civilised-streets

London 2012 Inclusive Design Standards