

Colmore Business District

Accessibility Audit 2024:

Easy Read version



Picture 1: Volunteers at Colmore Row working with Sustrans to make travel easier and more active for everyone.

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Supported by: Colmore Business District and Transport for West Midlands.



About This Project

This project was made possible by Colmore Business District. They are helping to make our city easier for everyone to walk, wheel, and cycle. Transport for West Midlands also helped, wanting to make the West Midlands great for disabled people.

The idea came from the Colmore BID Accessible and Sustainable Working Group. They work to make the city center better for walking wheeling and cycling. Special thanks to Philip Singleton and Paul Fielding for their help.

About the Authors

Alistair wrote this report. He understands the challenges disabled people face in Birmingham. He leads groups that make walking, wheeling, and cycling accessible. Thanks also to Karl, who helped lead the sessions. Big thanks to all the volunteers and professionals who shared their time.

About Sustrans

We help communities become better by walking, wheeling, and cycling. This makes places healthier and people happier. Visit us at www.sustrans.org.uk. We are a registered charity.

About Colmore BID

Colmore Business District is a group where local businesses work together to improve Birmingham's business area. They invest in projects and services to make their place better. They are mainly funded by a small fee paid by businesses.

About Easy Read

This document includes "Easy Read" sections, which present information in a straightforward and accessible manner. "Easy Read" means:

Simple Language: We use clear and plain language without jargon or complex terms.

Clear Formatting: Information is organised with headings, bullet points, and tables to make it easier to follow.

Concise Explanations: Key points are summarised to convey the main ideas effectively.

The purpose of "Easy Read" is to ensure that everyone, regardless of background or reading ability, can understand the content.

Technical Version Available

For readers who are interested in more detailed explanations, technical specifications, or in-depth analysis, a comprehensive technical version of this document is also available. The technical version includes:

- Detailed Policy Frameworks
- In-Depth Analysis and Data
- Technical Terminology and References

Feel free to refer to the technical version if you require more extensive information on the topics discussed.

How We Use Words in This Document

Talking About Disabled People

We talked to many people who have disabilities or health problems. In this report, we use the term "disabled people" to mean those who have long-lasting conditions that make daily life harder. "Long-term" means the condition lasts a year or more. We know not everyone likes this term. Our ideas also help people who are temporarily disabled, or have problems moving easily, like families with pushchairs.

Walking, Wheeling, and Cycling

Some people use wheelchairs or scooters and might prefer the word "wheeling" instead of "walking." So, we say "walking and wheeling" to include everyone. "Wheeling" means moving on the sidewalk with wheels. It usually doesn't include cycling, unless someone uses a bike to help them move.

People sometimes use the term "Active Travel" for walking, wheeling, and cycling. But this term can be confusing and might not include everyone. So, we try to say "walking, wheeling, and cycling" to make sure our report includes everyone.

Making This Report Easy to Read

We tried to make this report easy for everyone to read. We included descriptions for pictures and a list of important words and pictures at the end. Words in the glossary are underlined the first time you see them.

If you need a large print version or have other needs, please contact:

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How to Read This Report

This report is about making our streets better for everyone. Here is what you will find inside:

| Section | What You Will Find |
|---|--|
| Summary | The main ideas of the report explained in a short and simple way. |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | Why we created this report. We want to make walking, wheeling, and cycling easy for everyone in our city. |
| Chapter 2: How We Did Our Research | How we checked the streets. We used special tools and talked to people about their experiences. |
| Chapter 3: What We Found | What we saw when we looked at the streets. We checked things like pavement widths, benches, crossings, and bus stops. |
| Chapter 4: What People Told Us | We listened to people who use the streets every day. They shared what is hard for them and what can be better. |
| Chapter 5: Ideas to Make Things Better | Suggestions on how to improve the streets. We talk about better designs, signs, and ways to help everyone move around. |
| Chapter 6: Different Types of Streets | How we made plans for different kinds of streets. This can help make streets better all over the West Midlands. |
| Chapter 7: Conclusion and Next Steps | We sum up what we learned and talk about how to make our city more friendly for everyone. We also share what we plan to do next. |
| Extra Information | A list of important words and pictures to help you understand more. |

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Other Helpful Places to Get Information

There are many charities that help people with different disabilities. They can give you advice about making places easier to access. Here are some you might find helpful:

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Disability Policy Centre</u>• <u>Guide Dogs for the Blind Association</u>• <u>Motability Foundation</u>• <u>Scope</u>• <u>Sight Loss Council</u>• <u>Thomas Pocklington Trust</u>• <u>Transport for All</u>• <u>Wheels for Wellbeing</u>• <u>Canal and Rivers Trust – Towpaths for Everyone</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Sense</u>• <u>Midland Mencap</u>• <u>RNIB</u>• <u>Disability Resource Centre</u>• <u>Disabled Ramblers</u>• <u>University of Westminster Active Travel Academy</u>• <u>National Centre for Accessible Transport</u>• <u>Sustrans Paths for Everyone programme</u>• <u>Sustrans Disabled Citizens Enquiry</u> |
|--|---|

Summary of our report

Why We Looked at Our Streets

We wanted to see how easy or hard it is for people with disabilities to move around Birmingham, especially in the Colmore Business District. We found that many streets are difficult for people who use wheelchairs, have trouble seeing, or have other needs.

What We Did

- Checked Important Routes: We looked at key walking, wheeling, and cycling paths in the city centre
- Talked to People: We spoke with people who use these streets every day to hear about their experiences.
- Used a Special Tool: We used a tool called CoLSAT to see how good the streets are for different people.

What We Found

1. Streets Are Hard to Use

- Narrow Pavements: Many pavements are too narrow.
- Blocked Paths: Things like signs and tables block the way.
- Few Places to Rest: There aren't enough benches or seats.

2. Crossings Are Not Safe Enough

- Missing Tactile Paving: Pedestrian Crossings often lack bumpy tiles that help blind people know where to walk.
- No Sounds or Timers: Many crossings don't have sounds or countdowns to tell when it's safe to cross.

3. Public Transport Is Difficult

- Hard to Board Buses and Trains: People using wheelchairs or other aids find it tough to get on and off.

- Not Enough Space: There isn't always room for mobility devices.

4. Other Challenges

- Loud Noises: Traffic noise can bother some people.
- Feeling Anxious: Some feel worried when using mobility aids because they are lower down or feel in the way.
- Design Over Function: Some places look nice but aren't easy to use.

Our Suggestions to Make Things Better

1. Clear the Pavements

- Move or remove things that block the way, like signs and tables.
- Ensure pavements are wide enough for everyone.

2. Improve Crossings

- Add tactile paving, sounds, and countdown timers at pedestrian crossings.
- Make sure crossings are safe and easy to use.

3. Add More Seating

- Place benches or seats every so often so people can rest.
- Provide seats at different heights to help all users.

4. Better Access to Bikes and Scooters

- Make it easier for people with disabilities to use adapted bikes and scooters.
- Allow these mobility aids on public transport.

5. Teach and Train

- Help city planners understand what people with disabilities need.
- Use tools like CoLSAT regularly to check street accessibility.

What We Hope Will Happen

We want the city to use our ideas to make Birmingham a place where everyone can move around easily and safely. By working together, we can make our streets better for:

- People with Disabilities
- Parents with Pushchairs
- Young Children
- Older Adults

Why It's Important

Making streets accessible isn't just good for some people; it's good for everyone. It helps people feel included and makes our city a happier place.

What's Next

We know there's more to learn, and we hope to keep talking to more people. Together, we can keep improving our city.

In Closing

By making these changes, Birmingham can lead the way in showing how cities can be welcoming and easy to navigate for all people.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Why We Did This Project

We want to make the West Midlands a better place for everyone, especially people with disabilities. This means making it easy for people to walk, wheel (like using wheelchairs or mobility scooters), and cycle anywhere they need to go.

We worked with the Colmore Business District, Transport for West Midlands, and Birmingham City Council to help make this happen. We also want to make the air cleaner, reduce traffic, and make our streets safer.

What Is the Transport Accessibility Gap?

Many people with disabilities find it hard to get around because streets and transport are not easy for them to use. This is called the "transport accessibility gap."

Because of this gap:

- Disabled people take 38% fewer trips than others.
- They walk or wheel 30% less than people without disabilities.

This makes it harder for them to go to work, see friends, or get to important places like doctors or shops.

The Purple Pound

Did you know that people with disabilities have a lot of spending power? This is called the "Purple Pound." In the UK, it's worth about £274 billion each year!

In the West Midlands, this could be around £8.8 billion. But businesses might be losing out on this money because their shops and streets aren't accessible. By making places easier to get to, businesses can welcome more customers.

Why Accessibility Matters

When streets are easy to use:

- People with disabilities can live more independent lives.
- Everyone feels included.
- Local businesses do better.
- The city becomes a happier place.

How We Did It

- **Checked the Streets:** We looked at the streets in the Colmore Business District using a tool called CoLSAT. We checked things like pavements, crossings, and signs.
- **Read Important Plans:** We studied national and local rules to make sure our work matches what the government wants.
- **Talked to People:** We listened to people with disabilities to understand their experiences.

Our Goals

We have five main goals:

1. Check Accessibility

See how easy it is for people with disabilities to walk, wheel, or cycle in the area.

2. Find Barriers

Identify what makes it hard for people to get around, like narrow pavements or obstacles.

3. Listen to Experiences

Talk to people who use cycles as mobility aids to understand their challenges.

4. Suggest Improvements

Offer ideas on how to make the streets better for everyone.

5. Promote Inclusive Design

Encourage city planners to design streets that are safe and easy for all to use.

What Is the Social Model of Disability?

This idea says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their bodies. If we remove these barriers, everyone can take part equally.

By making streets and transport better, we can help people with disabilities live fuller lives.

Important Policies We Looked At

We checked many plans and rules to guide our work, such as:

- Inclusive Mobility Guidance (2021): How to make transport accessible.
- Gear Change (2020): The government's plan to increase walking and cycling.
- Local Plans: Like the Birmingham Transport Plan and the West Midlands Cycling Charter.

Why It Matters to Everyone

Making streets accessible helps:

- People with Disabilities: They can move around freely.
- Families with Pushchairs: Easier paths make outings smoother.
- Older Adults: Safe streets help them stay active.
- Children: Safer streets mean they can play and travel safely.
- Businesses: More customers and happier communities.

Chapter 2: How We Did Our Study

How We Gathered Information

We wanted to understand how easy or hard it is for people with disabilities to move around the Colmore Business District in Birmingham. To do this, we followed three main steps:

Step 1: Planning and Gathering Information

— **Setting Our Goals:**

We decided which areas to focus on. We looked at important walking, wheeling, and cycling routes called "active travel connections" (ATCs) in the Colmore Business District which had been chosen as important by Birmingham City Council (BCC) in another recent report.

— **Talking to Important People:**

We spoke with Birmingham City Council, Colmore BID, and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) to make sure we were all working towards the same goals.

— **Reading Policies and Data:**

We read national and local rules and guidelines, like the Inclusive Mobility Guidance (2021) and Birmingham's City Centre Movement and Access Strategy (2024). This helped us understand what is expected for accessible streets.

— **Finding the Right People to Help:**

We identified and reached out to community groups, accessibility advocates, and transport professionals. This ensured we included different perspectives and experiences.

Step 2: Checking the Streets and Listening to People

Professional Street Checks Using CoLSAT:

We used a special tool called CoLSAT (City of London Street Accessibility Tool) to check the streets. This tool helps us see how accessible the streets are for different people with disabilities. We looked at things like:

- Pavement Widths: Are the pavements wide enough for wheelchairs and mobility scooters?
- Obstacles: Are there things blocking the way, like bins, signs, or café tables?
- Pedestrian Crossings: Are crossings safe and easy to use? Do they have tactile paving and audible signals?
- Public Transport Access: Is it easy to get to buses and trains? Are there ramps and step-free access?
- Surface Conditions: Are the pavements smooth and even?
- Kerb Heights: Are kerbs too high or difficult to navigate?
- Places to Rest: Are there enough benches or seats for people to rest?

Lived Experience Sessions:

- Inviting Participants: We invited people with disabilities, such as wheelchair users, people with visual impairments, and those using other mobility aids. We also included transport professionals.
- Walking and Wheeling Together: We walked or wheeled through the priority routes together. Participants shared their real-life experiences and pointed out challenges they faced along the way.
- Understanding Real Challenges: We focused on practical issues like:
 - + Street Clutter: Things blocking the path.
 - + Poor Signage: Signs that are unclear or hard to see.
 - + Inadequate Crossing Times: Not enough time to cross the street safely.
- Some Professionals Tried Mobility Aids: To better understand the challenges, some professionals used mobility aids for the first time.

Step 3: Looking at what we found and making suggestions

Collecting and studying what we found:

— **Looking at measurements**

We looked at the scores from the CoLSAT tool to see how accessible each route was for different user groups.

— **Looking at what people said:**

We reviewed the feedback from the lived experience sessions to find common themes and issues.

— **Making Recommendations:**

Based on what we found, we came up with practical ideas to improve accessibility. We focused on:

- + Immediate Changes: Things that can be fixed quickly.
- + Long-Term Improvements: Plans for bigger changes over time.

Creating Street Categories (Typologies):

We developed categories for different types of streets, like:

- + Pedestrian Zones
- + Public Transport Corridors
- + Areas with lots of homes

We hope this helps planners know what improvements are needed for different kinds of streets.

Writing the Final Report:

We put all our findings and suggestions into a report, making sure it matches national guidelines and policies.

Where We Focused Our Study

Birmingham City Council has plans to improve walking, wheeling, and cycling routes in the city centre. These routes are called "active travel connections" (ATCs).

— **Understanding the City's Plans:**

We looked at Birmingham's Interim Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and the City Centre Active Travel Connections to Interchanges (CCATCI) project.

— **Choosing Key Routes:**

We focused on ATCs that are important because:

- + They are used by many people.
- + They are central to the city's future plans.
- + They are within or connected to the Colmore Business District.

The Areas We Studied

We examined specific routes (ATCs) in and around the Colmore Business District. We grouped them into categories:

— **Priority ATCs (Main Focus):**

These were our main focus. We checked them carefully and included them in our lived experience sessions. For example:

- + ATC 5: Colmore Row
- + ATC 6: Temple Row

— **Secondary ATCs:**

We checked these routes but didn't focus on them as much.

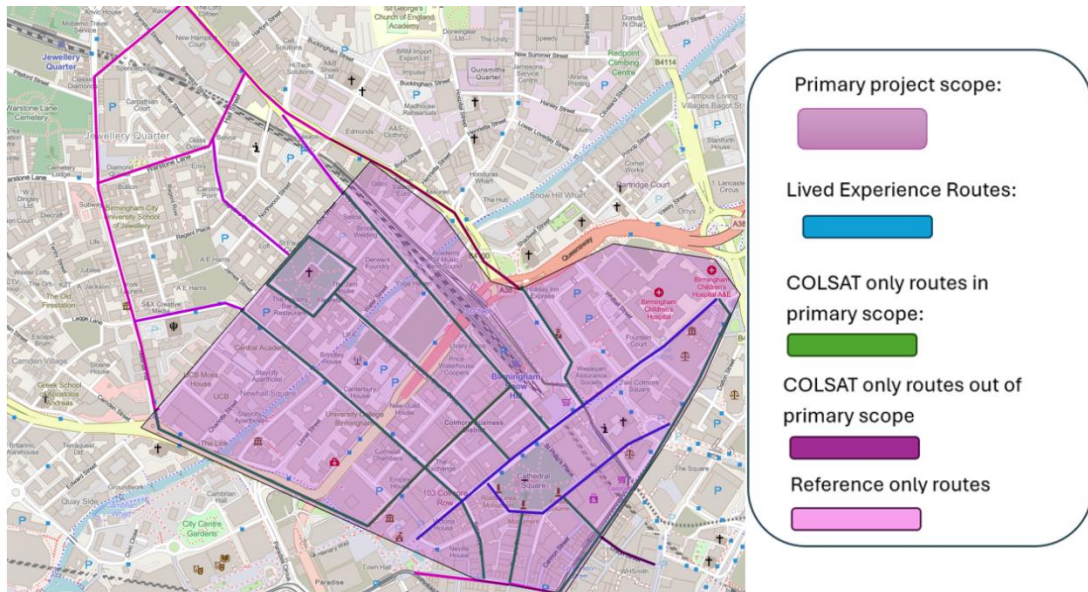
— **Reference ATCs:**

We considered these routes when making overall recommendations but did not study them in detail.

Mapping the Routes:

We created maps to show where these routes are and how they connect.

Map 1: This map shows the different **Active Travel Corridors (ATCs)** both **inside** and **outside** our main study area. It also uses **CCATCI Designations** to categorise each corridor.



What the Map Shows

- Inside the Primary Scope Area:
 - + ATCs that are part of the main study zone.
 - + CCATCI Designations to show specific categories and requirements for each corridor.
- Outside the Primary Scope Area:
 - + ATCs that are near the main study zone but not included in the primary focus.
 - + CCATCI Designations to highlight how these corridors are categorised compared to those inside the main area.
- Why This is Important
 - + Understanding Locations: Helps us see where the key travel routes are located.
 - + Categorising Needs: Shows the specific needs and categories for each corridor, making it easier to plan improvements.

- Inclusive Design: Ensures that all areas, both inside and outside the main study zone, are considered for accessibility enhancements.
- Key Points
 - + ATCs are essential for safe and easy movement for everyone, including people with disabilities.
 - + CCATCI Designations help identify what each corridor needs to be more accessible.
 - + Inside vs. Outside: Both areas are important for creating a fully accessible city.

Other Important Information We Considered

To fully understand the challenges, we looked at additional information:

Traffic Speeds and Volumes

| Aspect | Details |
|--------------------------|---|
| Speed Limits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most streets in the area have speed limits of 20 mph. - Some larger roads, like Great Charles Queensway, have higher speeds of 30 mph. |
| Impact of Traffic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High-speed and heavy traffic can make it harder and more dangerous for people to cross the street. - Noise from traffic can be overwhelming, especially for people with sensory sensitivities. |

Public Transport Routes

| Aspect | Details |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Transport Hubs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Colmore Business District has many buses, trains, and trams. - Colmore Row is one of the main bus interchanges. |
| Important Stations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Snow Hill Station serves over 2.7 million passengers a year. - The future HS2 Curzon Street Station will be nearby. |
| Accessibility Importance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring that public transport stops are accessible helps people switch easily between walking, wheeling, cycling, and public transport. |

Collisions Involving Pedestrians and/or Cyclists

| Aspect | Details |
|---|--|
| Number of Collisions (1999-2022) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were 407 collisions involving pedestrians or cyclists in the area. - 3 were fatal, all involving pedestrians. - 69 were serious injuries, mostly pedestrians. - 335 were slight injuries. |
| High-Risk Areas | - Streets like Colmore Row, Edmund Street, and Newhall Street had more accidents. |
| Economic and Personal Impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accidents cost money due to healthcare, investigations, and traffic disruptions. - Improving street safety can help reduce these accidents and their impacts. |

Disability Data in the West Midlands

| Aspect | Details |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Higher Disability Rates | - About 17.8% of people in the West Midlands have a disability, slightly higher than the national average. |
| Transport Challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 28.2% of households without a car include someone with a disability. - Disabled people made 24.8 million journeys in 2022, mostly by bus. |
| Accessibility Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not all public transport stations are fully accessible. - Only 87% of stations are step-free, and more improvements are needed. |
| Walking and Wheeling Less | - Disabled people walk 30% less than non-disabled people due to barriers and safety concerns. |
| Economic Challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The disability pay gap is 14.7%, higher than the national average. - Only 49.1% of disabled people are employed, compared to 57.3% nationally. |
| Impact on Daily Life | - Inaccessible streets make it harder for disabled people to access jobs, healthcare, and social activities. |

Why This Matters

Understanding these factors helps us see where improvements are needed most. By focusing on areas with:

- High Traffic and Speed: We can make crossings safer.
- Important Public Transport Links: We can ensure seamless travel for everyone.
- Higher Accident Rates: We can target safety improvements.
- Higher Disability Rates: We can prioritise accessibility where it's most needed.

What We Hope to Achieve

By studying these areas carefully and listening to people with real-life experiences, we can:

- Suggest Practical Changes: Offer ideas that can be implemented to improve accessibility.
- Improve Safety: Reduce accidents involving pedestrians and cyclists.
- Promote Inclusion: Make the city centre welcoming and accessible for everyone

In Summary

Our study combined careful planning, on-the-ground assessments, and real-life experiences to understand the accessibility challenges in the Colmore Business District. We made sure not to leave out important details, even if they were complex, by explaining them in simple terms.

By doing this, we aim to help Birmingham become a city where everyone can walk, wheel, or cycle easily and safely.

Chapter 3: What We Found from Our Street Checks Using CoLSAT

Introduction and Context

Using CoLSAT to Check Street Accessibility

To understand how easy or hard it is for people with different disabilities to use our streets, we used a special tool called CoLSAT (City of London Street Accessibility Tool). This tool helps us see how various street features affect different groups of disabled people.

Why CoLSAT is Important

- **Recognising Different Needs:** People with disabilities have different needs. Sometimes, making improvements for one group might make things harder for another. CoLSAT helps us find these trade-offs so we can make balanced decisions.
- **Twelve Disability Groups:** The tool considers 12 different groups based on people's disabilities and how they move around. This helps us see how changes might affect each group.

The Twelve Disability Groups in CoLSAT

- **Mobility Needs:** These groups represent individuals who have physical mobility challenges and may require assistive devices or accommodations to navigate their environment effectively.
- **Sensory Needs:** These categories include individuals with visual or hearing impairments who rely on specific tools or support, such as canes, guide dogs, or auditory aids, to interact with their surroundings.
- **Neurodiversity Needs:** This section covers individuals with neurological or cognitive differences, including those with acquired conditions or developmental differences, who may need tailored support to process information and engage with the environment.

| Category | Disability Group | Description |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Mobility Needs | 1. Electric Wheelchair User (EWC) | Someone who uses a motorised wheelchair. |
| | 2. Manual Wheelchair User (MWC) | Someone who uses a wheelchair they push themselves. |
| | 3. Mobility Scooter User (MS) | Someone who uses a mobility scooter. |
| | 4. Walking Aid User (WA) | Someone who uses sticks, crutches, a walking frame, or a rollator. |
| | 5. Person with a Walking Impairment (WI) | Someone who has trouble walking but doesn't use a mobility aid. |
| Sensory Needs | 6. Long Cane User (LC) | Someone who is blind or partially sighted and uses a long cane. |
| | 7. Guide Dog User (GD) | Someone who is blind or partially sighted and uses a guide dog. |
| | 8. Residual Sight User (RS) | Someone who is blind or partially sighted but doesn't use a mobility aid. |
| | 9. Deaf or Hearing Impaired (HI) | Someone who is Deaf or has hearing loss. |
| Neurodiversity Needs | 10. Acquired Neurological Impairment (ANI) | Someone with a brain injury or condition like dementia. |
| | 11. Autism/Sensory Processing Diversity (AT) | Someone who processes sensory information differently. |
| | 12. Developmental Impairment (DI) | Someone with cognitive differences since childhood. |

What We Checked with CoLSAT

CoLSAT examines up to 45 different aspects of a street to evaluate its accessibility. Here are the key features we checked:

| Feature Category | Specific Aspects Checked | Details |
|------------------|---|--|
| Crossing Points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Type of Crossing - Tactile Paving - Signals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Type of Crossing: Is it a zebra crossing, pelican crossing, etc.? - Tactile Paving: Are there bumpy tiles to help visually impaired people? - Signals: Are there lights or sounds to indicate when to cross? |
| Surface Material | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pavement Type - Patterns and Contrasts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pavement Type: Is the surface smooth or uneven? - Patterns and Contrasts: Are there patterns that might be confusing? Is there good contrast between pavement and road? |
| Kerbs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kerb Types - Alongside Walking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kerb Types: Are kerbs high, low, or dropped at crossings? - Alongside Walking: Are kerbs consistent along the pavement? |
| Footway Width | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximum Width - Unobstructed Width | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximum Width: How wide is the pavement overall? - Unobstructed Width: How much space is there without obstacles? |
| Street Furniture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positioning - Obstacles - Contrast | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positioning: Where are benches, bins, signs placed? - Obstacles: Are there café tables or temporary items blocking the way? - Contrast: Do items stand out visually for easy detection? |
| Slopes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gradient - Camber | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gradient: Are there steep slopes? - Camber: Is the pavement slanted to one side? |
| Vehicle Access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bus Stops - Taxi Drop-offs - Parking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bus Stops: Are they accessible? - Taxi Drop-offs: Are there convenient places for taxis to stop? - Parking: Is there Blue Badge parking available? |
| Toilets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessible Toilets - Changing Places Toilets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessible Toilets: Are there toilets that people with disabilities can use? - Changing Places Toilets: Are there facilities for people with complex needs? |

Challenges and Considerations

Issues with Scoring

- Unexpected Results: Sometimes, CoLSAT gave scores that didn't match people's experiences. For example, a bus stop with a proper seat scored lower for long cane users than one with just a perch seat. However, many believe proper seating is important for everyone.

Subjective Measures

- Sensory Experience: Some features, like how noisy or overwhelming a place feels, are hard to measure and can vary from person to person.

Summary of CoLSAT Results

We focused on key routes called Active Travel Corridors (ATCs):

- **ATC 5:** Colmore Row area.
- **ATC 6:** Temple Row area.
- **ATC 7:** Edmund Street area.

Understanding the Scores

Score Range: Scores are out of 100%. Higher scores mean better accessibility.

Rating Guide:

- **Above 80%:** Excellent, few weaknesses.
- **75-80%:** Generally good, minor improvements needed.
- **70-75%:** Some weaknesses.
- **65-70%:** Poor.
- **Below 65%:** Critical fail.

Scores for Each Route

| ATC Route | Average Score | Rating |
|---|---------------|--|
| ATC 5A (Victoria Square to Newhall Street) | About 73% | Some weaknesses |
| ATC 5B (Newhall Street to Livery Street) | About 64% | Poor, needs improvement |
| ATC 5C (Livery Street to Colmore Circus) | About 72% | Some weaknesses |
| ATC 5D (Colmore Circus West to East) | About 74% | Some weaknesses |
| ATC 5E (Colmore Circus to James Watt Queensway) | About 67% | Poor, needs improvement |
| ATC 6A (Temple Row to Bull Street) | About 66% | Needs improvement |
| ATC 6B (Bull Street to Priory Queensway) | About 68% | Needs improvement |
| ATC 7A (Chamberlain Square to Margaret Street) | About 75% | Generally good, minor improvements needed |
| ATC 7B (Margaret Street to Livery Street) | About 64% | Poor, needs improvement |

Notes:

- **ATC 5 Series:** Focuses on the Colmore Row area, with varying scores indicating some weaknesses and areas needing improvement.
- **ATC 6 Series:** Covers the Temple Row area, with scores suggesting the need for improvements.
- **ATC 7 Series:** Pertains to the Edmund Street area, showing a mix of generally good conditions and areas requiring attention.

Analysis of the Results

What the Scores Tell Us

- Better Performing Areas: ATC 7A scored better, especially for:
 - + Mobility Scooter Users (MS)
 - + Walking Aid Users (WA)
- Areas Needing Improvement: ATCs 5B, 5E, and 7B scored lower, particularly for:
 - + Guide Dog Users (GD)
 - + People with Walking Impairments (WI)

Specific Issues Identified

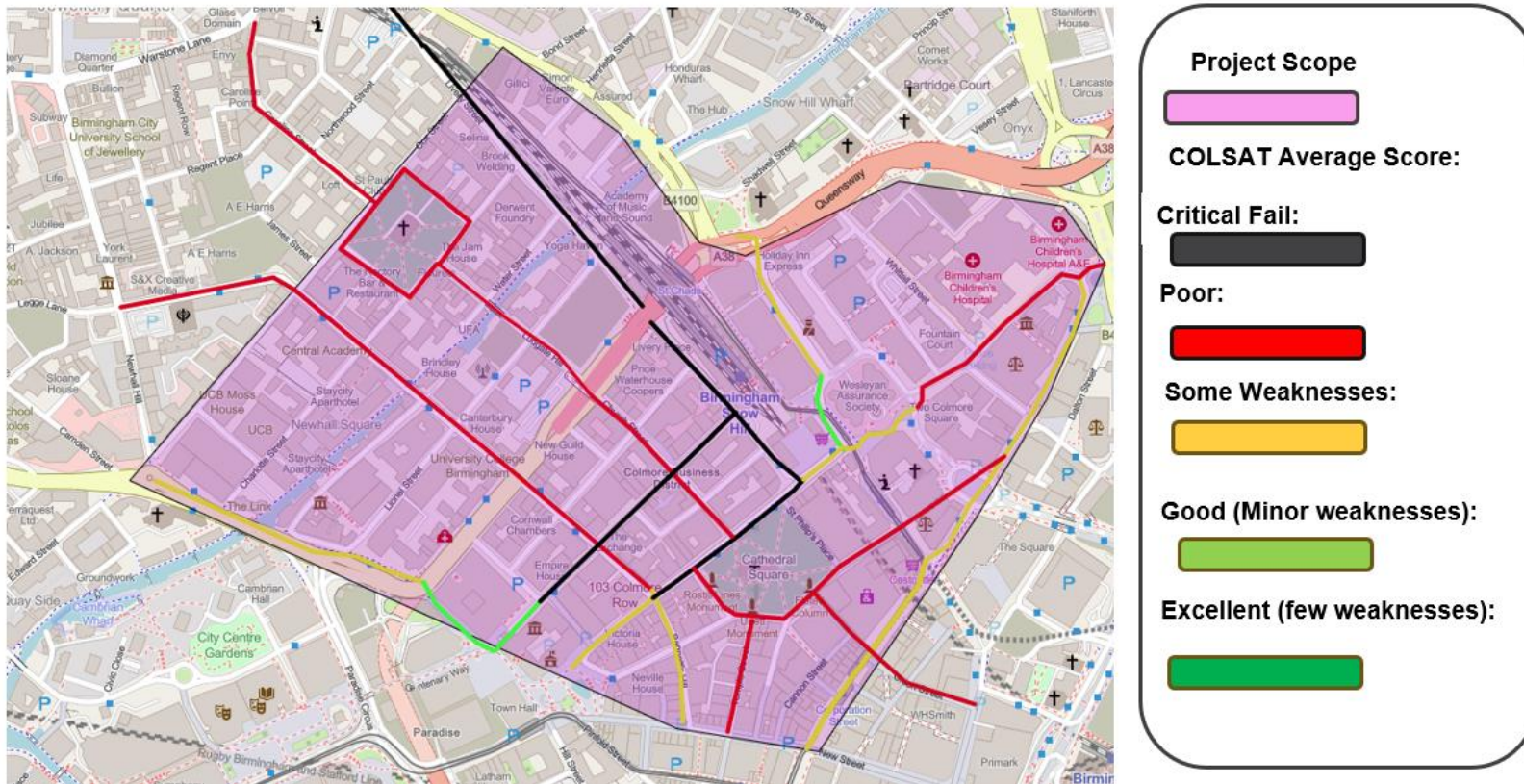
1. For Visually Impaired Users (GD, LC, RS):
 - + Lack of Tactile Paving: Makes it hard to navigate safely.
 - + Inconsistent Kerbs: Changes in kerb height can be confusing or dangerous.
 - + Poor Auditory Signals: Crossings without sounds make it difficult to know when it's safe to cross.
2. For People with Walking Impairments (WI):
 - + Uneven Surfaces: Trip hazards and difficulty walking.
 - + Narrow Pavements: Not enough space to move comfortably.
 - + Lack of Rest Areas: Few places to sit and rest.
3. For Neurodiverse Users (ANI, AT, DI):
 - + Visual Clutter: Too many signs and items can be overwhelming.
 - + Sensory Overload: Busy streets with lots of noise and movement can be distressing.

Key Findings

- **Accessibility Varies Greatly:** Some areas are much better than others.
- **No One-Size-Fits-All Solution:** Different groups have different needs, and improvements must consider these differences.
- **Importance of Inclusive Design:** We need to make changes that help all users, even if their needs sometimes conflict.

Map of CoLSAT Scores

Map 2:/We created a map showing the average CoLSAT scores for each route. This helps us see which areas are doing well and which need more attention:



Conclusion

Our assessments using CoLSAT revealed that:

- Many Streets Need Improvement: Especially for certain disability groups.
- Some Streets Are Better: But there's still room for enhancement.
- Focused Changes Are Needed: By understanding specific issues, we can make targeted improvements.

What's Next

We will use these findings to:

- Develop Recommendations: Offer practical solutions for each route.
- Work with Stakeholders: Collaborate with the council and community groups.
- Aim for Inclusive Streets: Ensure that future designs consider the needs of all users.

In Summary

By carefully checking our streets and understanding how they affect different people, we can make Birmingham a city where everyone can move around easily and safely. Our work highlights the importance of inclusive design and the need to address specific challenges faced by people with disabilities.

Chapter 4: What We Learned from Walking and wheeling the Streets Together

Why We Did This

We wanted to understand how easy or hard it is for people with disabilities to move around Birmingham's city centre. So, in the summer of 2024, we went on two visits to important streets: Colmore Row and Temple Row.

We invited people from local councils like Sandwell and Coventry, groups like Wheels for Wellbeing, and The Sight Loss Council. Even some people from HS2 joined us to think about future works. They all helped us see the challenges faced by people with different needs, especially those using mobility aids like adapted bikes or wheelchairs.

We also walked with local residents, including people from Better Streets for Birmingham and the University of Birmingham, and had a session with Birmingham City Council transport planners. We included what they said in our findings.

It's important for our streets to follow the best guidelines, like the Wheels for Wellbeing Guide, Inclusive Design Guidance, LTN 1/20, and CoLSAT. This helps make our streets welcoming and accessible for everyone.

We hope local councils will include more sessions like these when they plan new streets. Listening to people's real experiences helps make better designs.

What We Found at Different Places

During our visits, we stopped at six key spots to talk about what we saw:

1. Snow Hill Square
2. Junction of Livery Street and Colmore Row
3. Colmore Row East of Church Street Junction
4. Junction of Colmore Row and Temple Row
5. Colmore Row Junction with Newhall Street and Bennetts Hill
6. Temple Row Junction with Waterloo Street

1. Snow Hill Square



- Confusing Crossing Signals: The beeping sound at the crossing stopped suddenly, even though the green man was still on. This confused people, especially those who are visually impaired.
 - + "It's scary when the beeping just stops. I feel unsafe when I can't rely on that sound." — Participant
- Tiredness for Mobility Aid Users: People using wheelchairs or scooters got tired quickly, even after short distances.
 - + "I've only gone 20 meters, and I'm already exhausted." — Mobility Aid User
- Sloped Pavements: The tilt of the pavements made it hard to keep balance.
- Hard-to-Reach Buttons: Crossing buttons were placed too far back, making them difficult to reach from a wheelchair or adapted bike.
 - + "Turning in my chair to press the button hurts, and I often can't do it without help." — Wheelchair User
- Blending Tactile Paving: The special bumpy tiles for blind people blended in with the pavement, making them hard to notice.
- Sound Issues: The area was too quiet because buildings absorbed sound, making it hard for some people to navigate.

2. Junction of Livery Street and Colmore Row



- Uncertainty with Cars: People weren't sure if cars would stop at crossings, which was worrying.
 - + "I can never be sure if the cars will stop, and my friend's guide dog's paws get hurt on the metal tactile paving when it's hot." — Guide Dog User
- Obstacles on Pavements: Bins and bike racks blocked the way, making it hard for wheelchair users.
 - + "I have to zigzag through, which is exhausting." — Mobility Scooter User
- Uneven Surfaces: The paving stones were uneven and slippery when wet, making it dangerous.
- Missing Signs: Important signs, like those for accessible cycle parking, were hard to find.

3.Colmore Row East of Church Street Junction



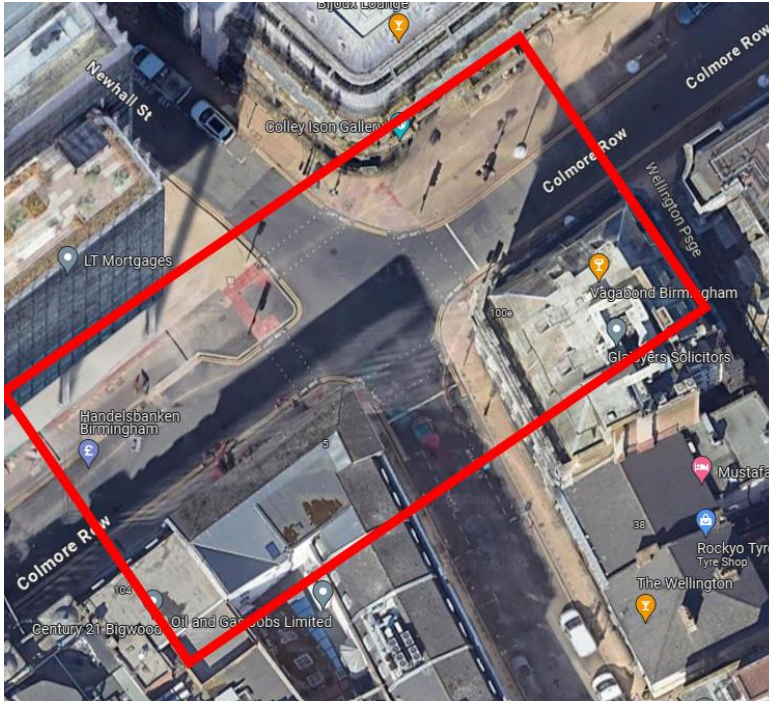
- Narrow Pavements: Big seating blocks made the pavements too narrow. Wheelchair users felt anxious when people brushed past them.
 - + "People walking past me always brush against my handles, which makes me anxious." — Wheelchair User
- Uncomfortable Seating: The seating blocks were too high and had no backrests, making them unusable for many.
 - + "The blocks are too high for me to shift onto from my wheelchair, and there's no backrest for support." — Participant
- Slippery and Uneven Surfaces: The stones were slippery and uneven, especially when wet.
- Obstacles: Old sewage covers created hazards for wheels.

4. Junction of Colmore Row and Temple Row



- Feeling Unsafe: Wheelchair users felt vulnerable because they couldn't see oncoming traffic.
 - + "I feel more unsafe here because I'm lower down and can't see what's coming."
— Wheelchair User
- Sensory Overload: Too much noise and clutter made it overwhelming for some people.
 - + "There's just too much going on here with all the bollards and furniture; it's overwhelming."
— Neurodiverse Individual
- Lack of Clear Signs for Cyclists: Without clear markings, it was hard to know where cyclists might be.
- Wayfinding Issues: Signs meant to help people find their way were placed in the path, causing obstructions.

5. Colmore Row Junction with Newhall Street and Bennetts Hill



- Difficult Crossings: People using mobility aids worried about bumping into others because crossings were crowded and too short.
 - + "I'm more worried about hitting people while crossing than the camber." — Mobility Scooter User
- Confusing Tactile Paving: The tactile paving blended in with the pavement, confusing visually impaired users.
 - + "I don't know where to cross because the tactile paving blends right in with the ground." — Visually Impaired Participant
- Obstructions from Businesses: An advertising board (A-board) from a local business caused a tricycle user to lose balance.

6. Temple Row Junction with Waterloo Street



- Not Enough Space: The pavement was too narrow for people to pass each other, especially hard for wheelchair users.
 - + "I have to stop and wait for others to pass because there's no room for two-way traffic." — Wheelchair User
- Sloped Pavements Near Restaurants: The tilt made it hard to keep moving straight.
- Café Seating Blocking the Way: Outdoor seating forced wheelchair users into the road, which is dangerous.
 - + "I had to go out into the road because the café seating left no room, and drivers don't wait even when traffic is light." — Participant

What We Learned

Our walks showed that many things make it hard for people with disabilities to use the streets:

- Poor Pavement Quality: Uneven, narrow, and slippery pavements.
- Inadequate Crossings: Confusing signals and not enough time to cross.
- Obstacles and Clutter: Bins, signs, café seating, and other items blocking the way.
- Lack of Clear Signs and Markings: Making it hard to know where to go safely.

We need to follow good guidelines like CoLSAT and the Wheels for Wellbeing Guide to fix these problems.

Feedback from Participants

— From a Birmingham City Council Transport Planner:

"It highlighted important things that can be quick fixes if we think about them early on. We can't always do everything, but we want to make our schemes as good as we can."

— From an Engineer at Coventry City Council:

"The session was really informative and will help guide our designs moving forward. If you have future events, we'd love to be involved."

— From a Transport Planner at Sandwell Council:

"It was really eye-opening. Using a wheelchair and hand-cycle helped me understand others' experiences. You can't get this from just reading guidelines."

— From Kate Ball, Wheels for Wellbeing:

"The Colmore BID accessibility event was a great opportunity to share good practice and educate about pan-impairment public realm accessibility. We're always really happy to collaborate to improve understanding of accessible design."

— From Steve Keith, The Sight Loss Council:

"It was an excellent opportunity to do the wheeled accessibility audit around Birmingham city centre. It highlighted the similarities that blind people and wheelchair users have in navigating footpaths with multiple obstacles and uneven surfaces. Doing this as a shared experience shows what changes need to be made to improve accessibility."

In Summary

By walking the streets and listening to people who face these challenges every day, we learned a lot about how to make our city more accessible. It's clear that there are many areas that need improvement.

We hope that by sharing these findings, we can encourage changes that make the streets safer and easier to use for everyone.

Chapter 5: A Vision for Better Accessibility – How We Can Improve

Introduction

In the previous chapters, we looked at how things are now in the Colmore Business District. We saw the challenges people with disabilities face when moving around. Now, let's imagine how things could be better.

This chapter is about:

1. Practical Recommendations: We'll share specific ideas on how to improve the streets, based on our assessments and what people told us during our walks.
2. A Vision for the Future: We'll tell a story of what it's like to move around an inaccessible street and then imagine how wonderful it could be if the street were accessible to everyone.

Recommendations for Improving Accessibility

We used a tool called CoLSAT to assess different streets (we call them Active Travel Connections or ATCs) in the Colmore Business District. CoLSAT helps us see how accessible a street is for 12 different disability groups.

Our goal is to make each street score at least 80% on the CoLSAT scale for all user groups. We know it's hard to make everything perfect for everyone, but we can make big improvements.

Below, we'll share our recommendations for specific streets. We'll focus on practical changes that can help many people.

Colmore Row: Victoria Square to Newhall Street (ATC 5A)

- **Current Score:** Around 73%
- **After Improvements:** We can increase it to about 80%

| Recommendation | Why | How |
|------------------------|--|--|
| 1. Widen the Pavements | Narrow pavements make it hard for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. | Increase the width to at least 2 meters, preferably 3 meters. |
| 2. Remove Obstacles | Things like temporary signs and bins block the way. | Keep pavements clear and remove unnecessary items. |
| 3. Add More Benches | People need places to rest, especially if they get tired easily. | Install benches every 150 meters with different seat heights, armrests, and backrests. |
| 4. Improve Crossings | Safe crossings are crucial for everyone. | Add countdown timers, tactile paving (bumpy tiles), and lower kerbs for easy crossing. |
| 5. Adjust Kerbs | High kerbs are hard to navigate. | Ensure kerbs at crossings are less than 3 mm high. |
| 6. Better Toilets | Accessible toilets are important for everyone. | Make sure there's an accessible toilet within 100 meters. |
| 7. Flatten Slopes | Steep slopes make it hard to move. | Reduce the tilt (camber) of pavements to make them flatter. |

Additional Suggestion: Make the Area Semi-Pedestrianised

- **Why:** Improving safety and air quality.
- **How:** Limit the number of buses and make car access for disabled users only to make the street more pleasant and safer for everyone.

Colmore Row: Newhall Street to Livery Street (ATC 5B)

- **Current Score:** Around 64%
- **After Improvements:** We can increase it to about 82%

| Recommendation | Why | How |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Reposition Street Furniture | Items like benches and bins should not block the path. | Place them close to the kerb, leaving the middle of the pavement clear. |
| 2. Ensure Café Tables Are Safe | Outdoor seating can be obstacles. | Add barriers around tables so they are detectable by canes. |
| 3. Remove A-Boards and Temporary Signs | They create hazards. | Keep pavements free of unnecessary signs. |
| 4. Improve Pavement Surfaces | Uneven surfaces are dangerous. | Fix cracks and ensure the pavement is smooth. |
| 5. Increase Contrast | Helps visually impaired people navigate. | Use contrasting colours for pavements and street furniture. |
| 6. Add More Seating | Rest areas are needed. | Install accessible benches. |
| 7. Enhance Crossings | Safe crossing points are essential. | Add tactile paving, lower kerbs, and make crossings more visible. |

Other Streets (ATCs 5C, 5D, 5E, 6A, 6B, 7A, 7B)

We made similar recommendations for other streets, focusing on:

- Widening Pavements
- Improving Crossings
- Fixing Pavement Surfaces
- Repositioning Street Furniture
- Adding More Benches
- Increasing Contrast
- Ensuring Accessible Public Transport Stops

Overall Goal:

- Make the streets safer and more accessible for everyone, including those with mobility aids, visual impairments, hearing impairments, and neurodiverse conditions.

Imagining the Future – A Story of Accessibility

To understand the impact of these changes, let's imagine two scenarios: one where the street is inaccessible and one where it's accessible.

The Inaccessible Street

Imagine you want to meet your friends at a coffee shop on Colmore Row. You use an assistive cycle to get around. One friend uses a guide dog, and another has autism and sensory processing difficulties.

- Before Leaving Home:
 - + You can't find clear information about accessibility online.
 - + You're unsure if the coffee shop has step-free access or allows guide dogs.
 - + You don't know if there are accessible toilets nearby.
- Getting There:
 - + The bus driver challenges you for bringing your assistive cycle.
 - + The kerb at the bus stop is low, making it hard to get off.
 - + There's heavy traffic with speeding cars and loud noises, causing sensory overload.
 - + There's no nearby Blue Badge parking or proper taxi drop-off points.
- On the Street:
 - + You feel tired, but there's nowhere comfortable to sit.
 - + The seating is too high or too low, with no backrests or armrests.
 - + The pavements are uneven, narrow, and cluttered with obstacles like A-boards and café tables.
 - + The kerbs are either too high or too low, making it dangerous.
- Crossing the Road:
 - + There are no safe crossing points.
 - + You have to step down a high kerb and dodge traffic.
 - + There's no tactile paving or audible signals for your friend with visual impairments.
- At the Coffee Shop:
 - + There's no secure place to park your assistive cycle.

- + The shop has steps and doesn't welcome guide dogs.
- + There's no accessible toilet, and the staff are unhelpful.

You feel frustrated and unwelcome. The street doesn't feel like it's for you.

The Accessible Street

Now, imagine the same journey, but the street has been improved.

— Before Leaving Home:

- + You find clear, accessible maps online showing accessible routes, facilities, and businesses.
- + The coffee shop is listed as step-free, welcomes guide dogs, and has accessible toilets.

— Getting There:

- + The bus has an automatic ramp, and the driver is helpful.
- + The kerb at the bus stop is the right height for easy boarding and alighting.
- + The street is pedestrian-friendly, with limited traffic.
- + There's Blue Badge parking and designated taxi drop-off points nearby.

— On the Street:

- + There are benches every 150 meters with different heights, backrests, and armrests.
- + The pavements are wide, smooth, and have a gentle slope.
- + Street furniture is placed out of the way, and the paths are clear.
- + There's good contrast between the pavement and the road, helping visually impaired people.

— Crossing the Road:

- + There are safe, controlled crossings with tactile paving, audible signals, and countdown timers.
- + Kerbs are low and ramps are gentle.

— At the Coffee Shop:

- + There's secure, accessible parking for your assistive cycle.
- + The shop has step-free access and welcomes guide dogs.

- + There's an accessible toilet and changing space.

You feel confident and welcomed. The street is pleasant and easy to navigate.

The Difference in Numbers

Using CoLSAT, we can see the improvement:

- Inaccessible Street Average Score: 56% (Poor)
- Accessible Street Average Score: 83% (Excellent)

This shows that with the right changes, we can significantly improve accessibility for everyone.

In Summary

By making these recommended changes, we can transform the Colmore Business District into a place where everyone feels welcome and can move around easily. Whether it's widening pavements, adding benches, improving crossings, or providing clear information, every step makes a big difference.

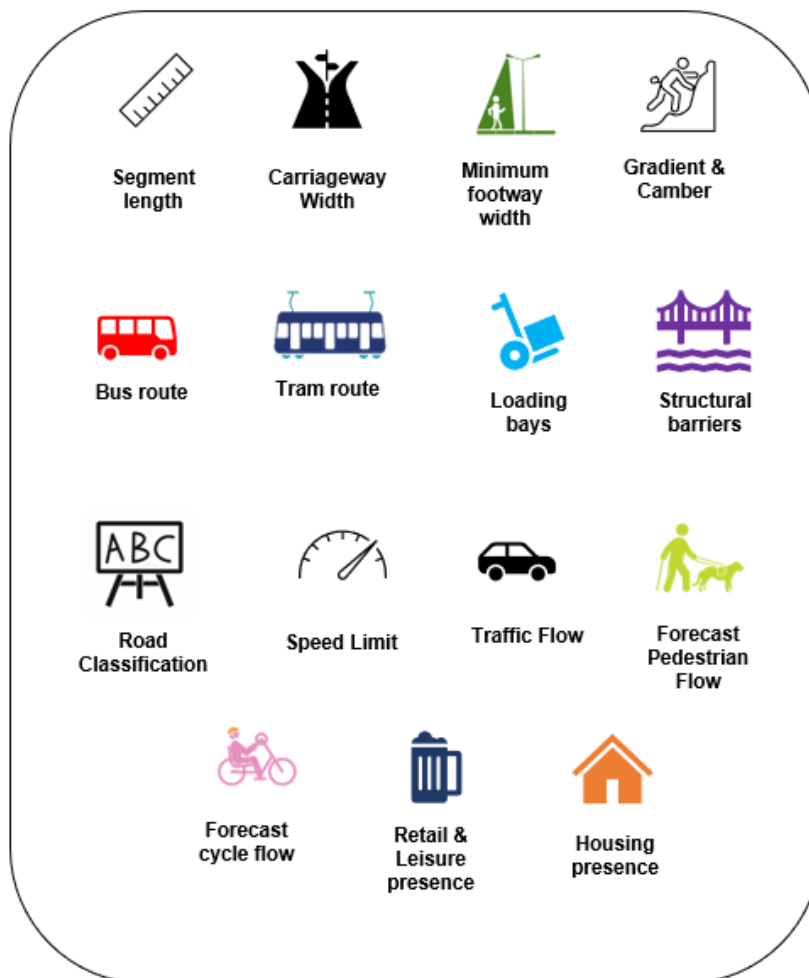
Our Vision:

- An Inclusive City: Where streets are designed for all users.
- Improved Quality of Life: Making daily journeys easier and more enjoyable.
- Economic Benefits: More people can access businesses, boosting the local economy.
- A Model for Others: Setting a standard that can be applied across Birmingham and the West Midlands.

Chapter 6: A Guide to Improving Street Accessibility

Understanding the Criteria for Street Accessibility

To make our streets more accessible for everyone, especially people with disabilities, we need to identify what makes a street easy or difficult to use. We have developed a set of 15 key criteria to help evaluate and improve different streets. By focusing on these criteria, city planners and transport professionals can prioritise interventions that will have the most significant impact on accessibility.



The 15 Key Criteria for Street Accessibility

| Icon | Why This Criterion Matters |
|---------------------------|---|
| Segment Length | The length of a street segment affects how people move through it. Longer segments may need more rest areas and interventions to ensure safety and accessibility over greater distances. |
| Carriageway Width | The width of the road impacts how easy it is for pedestrians to cross. Wider roads can be more dangerous and may encourage speeding. Narrowing roads can free up space for wider pavements or dedicated bus and tram lanes. |
| Minimum Footway Width | Sufficient pavement width is essential for all pedestrians, especially those using wheelchairs, mobility scooters, or walking aids. Narrow pavements can lead to congestion and obstacles |
| Gradient & Camber | Steep slopes and sideways tilts (camber) can make it challenging for people with mobility impairments to navigate streets safely |
| Bus Route | Streets that serve as major bus routes require careful planning to balance pedestrian safety with efficient public transport |
| Tram Route | Tram lines can pose specific risks, especially at crossings. Well-designed tram infrastructure should integrate safely with pedestrian areas. |
| Loading Bays | Areas with frequent loading and unloading can create conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, often leading to blocked pavements and reduced accessibility. |
| Structural Barriers | Bridges, underpasses, and overpasses can be obstacles if they lack features like ramps, lifts, or proper lighting. |
| Road Classification | The classification (e.g., A-road, B-road) indicates the volume and speed of traffic, affecting the type of safety measures needed. |
| Speed Limit | Lower speed limits generally enhance pedestrian safety, particularly for vulnerable users. |
| Traffic Flow | High volumes of traffic increase risks for pedestrians and may necessitate interventions like crossings or traffic calming measures. |
| Forecast Pedestrian Flow | Anticipating the number of pedestrians helps in designing spaces that can accommodate foot traffic comfortably and safely. |
| Forecast Cycle Flow | Knowing how many cyclists use a street allows for appropriate cycling infrastructure that doesn't impede pedestrians. |
| Retail & Leisure Presence | Streets with shops and entertainment venues attract more people, requiring wider pavements and amenities like seating. |
| Residential Presence | Residential areas with many walkers and wheelchair users need safe and accessible routes for daily activities. |

Ten Types of Streets and How to Improve Them

Based on these criteria, we've identified ten types of streets, or "typologies," each with specific challenges and recommendations. For each type, we'll explain the context, key focus areas for improvement, and how these changes benefit different user groups, especially those identified by the City of London Street Accessibility Tool (CoLSAT).

Type 1: Semi and Fully Pedestrianised Zones

Example: Temple Row



Context: These are areas where vehicle access is restricted or eliminated to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists. Despite reduced traffic, they can still present challenges due to uneven surfaces, clutter, or lack of accessibility features.

Key Recommendations:

| Recommendation | Focus | Benefits |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Wide, Unobstructed Footways | Ensure pavements are at least 3.5 to 4 meters wide. | Provides enough space for wheelchair users, mobility scooters, and pedestrians to move without conflict. |
| 2. Continuous, Smooth Surfaces | Maintain even pavements without sudden changes in level or texture. | Reduces trip hazards and makes it easier for people with mobility impairments. |
| 3. Clear and Tactile Wayfinding Systems | Use tactile paving and clear signage, including braille and auditory cues. | Assists visually impaired users in navigating the area safely. |
| 4. Regular Resting Places with Accessible Seating | Install benches every 50 meters with varying seat heights, armrests, and backrests. | Provides rest opportunities for those who tire easily or have mobility issues. |
| 5. Quiet and Low-Sensory Spaces | Create areas with minimal noise and visual clutter. | Helps neurodiverse individuals who may be sensitive to sensory stimuli. |

Type 2: High-Traffic A and B Classified Roads

Example: Constitution Hill

Context: These busy roads carry significant traffic, posing risks for pedestrians and cyclists due to higher speeds and wider carriageways.

Key Recommendations:



| Recommendation | Focus | Benefits |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Segregated Cycle and Walking Infrastructure | Separate lanes for cyclists and pedestrians. | Reduces conflicts and enhances safety for all users. |
| 2. Frequent and Accessible Crossings with Tactile and Audible Cues | Install crossings every 50–75 meters with tactile paving and audible signals. | Assists visually and hearing-impaired users and ensures safe crossing points. |
| 3. Narrowed Carriageways to Reduce Speed | Reduce lane widths to encourage slower driving. | Makes the area safer for crossing pedestrians. |
| 4. Raised Crossings and Junction Treatments | Implement raised pedestrian crossings. | Slows down vehicles at critical points and improves visibility. |
| 5. Buffer Zones and Kerbside Space for Mobility Aid Users | Create safe spaces between traffic lanes and pavements. | Provides a safer environment for wheelchair and mobility scooter users. |

Type 3: Bridges, Subways, and Overpasses (Superstructures)

Example: Great Charles Street Queensway



Context: These structures often have steep ramps, poor lighting, and narrow pathways, making them challenging for many users.

Key Recommendations:

| Recommendation | Focus | Benefits |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Ramps with Shallow Gradients and Frequent Resting Places | Keep gradients no steeper than 1:20 and provide rest areas every 30 meters. | Reduces fatigue and makes navigation easier for those with mobility impairments. |
| 2. Consistent Lighting for Safety and Visibility | Install high-quality lighting throughout. | Improves visibility for visually impaired users and enhances safety at night. |
| 3. Step-Free Access and Wide Pathways | Ensure all areas are accessible without steps and pathways are at least 2.5 meters wide. | Accommodates wheelchairs and reduces crowding. |
| 4. Enhanced Wayfinding with Tactile and Visual Cues | Use tactile paving and high-contrast signage. | Assists users with sensory impairments in navigating the space. |
| 5. Noise Reduction and Sensory-Friendly Design | Use materials and designs that minimise noise and sensory overload. | Creates a more comfortable environment for neurodiverse individuals. |

Type 4: Major Public Transport Routes

Example: Colmore Row



Context: Areas with heavy bus or tram traffic that require careful integration of pedestrian, cycling, and transit infrastructure.

Key Recommendations:

| Recommendation | Focus | Benefits |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Fully Accessible Boarding Areas with Level Access | Provide level boarding at bus and tram stops. | Makes public transport accessible for wheelchair and mobility scooter users. |
| 2. Segregated Pedestrian and Cycle Zones | Clearly separate walking paths from cycling lanes. | Reduces accidents and conflicts between users. |
| 3. Tactile and Audible Wayfinding Solutions at Transport Hubs | Install tactile paving and audible cues. | Assists visually impaired users in navigating busy transport areas. |
| 4. Safe and Accessible Cycle Parking | Provide parking for all types of cycles, including adapted ones. | Encourages cycling among users with different needs. |
| 5. Priority Boarding for Disabled and Neurodiverse Individuals | Implement measures like priority boarding and quiet zones. | Reduces stress and makes public transport more inclusive. |

Type 5: Narrow Footways in High-Demand Areas

Example: Edmund Street



Context: Busy streets with limited pavement space, leading to congestion and obstacles.

Key Recommendations:

| Recommendation | Focus | Benefits |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Clear Footway Management and Removal of Obstacles | Keep pavements free from clutter like signs and café furniture. | Allows safe passage for mobility aid users. |
| 2. Tactile and Visual Wayfinding in Congested Areas | Use tactile paving and high-contrast signs. | Assists sensory-impaired users in navigating crowded spaces. |
| 3. Wider Pedestrian Crossings and Level Access Points | Ensure crossings are at least 2.5 meters wide with smooth transitions. | Facilitates safe crossing for all users. |
| 4. Segregated Passing Zones for Mobility Aid Users | Create areas where users can safely pass each other. | Reduces anxiety and improves flow. |
| 5. Frequent Resting Spots Along Narrow Footways | Provide benches every 50–100 meters. | Offers rest opportunities in congested areas. |

Type 6: Steep Gradients and Challenging Topography

Example: Temple Street



Context: Areas with steep slopes or uneven terrain that can be difficult for many users.

Key Recommendations:

| Recommendation | Focus | Benefits |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Gradients with a Maximum Slope of 1:20 | Limit slopes to no more than 1:20 where possible. | Makes inclines manageable for mobility aid users. |
| 2. Resting Points Every 30 Meters | Install benches with accessible features. | Allows users to rest frequently on steep paths. |
| 3. Handrails and Support Features | Provide handrails on both sides of ramps and paths. | Offers support for those with balance issues. |
| 4. Camber Reduction for Stability | Keep the sideways tilt (camber) minimal. | Prevents mobility aids from tipping over. |
| 5. Alternative Routes with Gradual Slopes | Offer routes with gentler inclines. | Provides options for those who cannot manage steep paths. |

Type 7: Retail and Leisure Corridors

Example: New Street



Context: Busy shopping and entertainment streets with high foot traffic and potential obstacles.

Key Recommendations:

| Recommendation | Focus | Benefits |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Unobstructed Footways Free of Street Furniture | Ensure pavements are wide and clear. | Facilitates easy movement for all users. |
| 2. Consistent, Level Surfaces with Smooth Transitions | Maintain even pavements without gaps or bumps. | Reduces trip hazards and aids mobility aid users. |
| 3. Dedicated Crossing Points with Tactile and Audible Cues | Provide well-equipped crossings. | Enhances safety for sensory-impaired users. |
| 4. Accessible and Secure Cycle Parking | Offer parking for various cycle types near venues. | Encourages active travel options. |
| 5. Resting Areas with Benches and Accessible Seating | Place seating every 30–50 meters. | Provides rest opportunities and caters to neurodiverse users. |

Type 8: Residential Areas with High Walking and Wheeling Demand

Example: Ludgate Hill



Context: Neighborhoods where many people walk or use mobility aids, requiring safe and accessible routes.

Key Recommendations:

| Recommendation | Focus | Benefits |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Community-Based Active Travel Hubs | Establish local centers offering mobility aid rentals and repairs. | Supports active travel within the community. |
| 2. Play Streets with Inclusive Design for Disabled Children | Create safe, vehicle-free areas for play. | Provides inclusive spaces for all children. |
| 3. Tactile Gardens and Sensory Walks for Wellbeing | Design sensory-rich recreational spaces. | Enhances wellbeing for residents with sensory impairments. |
| 4. Accessible Cycle and Mobility Aid Parking Near Key Facilities | Place parking near schools and community centers. | Encourages active travel to important destinations. |
| 5. Flexible Street Furniture and Adaptive Public Spaces | Use adjustable furniture to meet various needs. | Creates adaptable environments for all users. |

Type 9: Loading and Delivery Zones

Example: Snow Hill Queensway



Context: Areas with frequent deliveries that can interfere with pedestrian and cyclist movement.

Key Recommendations:

| Recommendation | Focus | Benefits |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Dedicated Loading Zones with Physical Barriers | Separate loading areas from pedestrian paths. | Prevents vehicles from blocking walkways. |
| 2. Timed Delivery Windows | Schedule deliveries during off-peak hours. | Reduces conflicts during busy times. |
| 3. Pavement Parking Prohibition with Enforcement | Enforce rules against vehicles parking on pavements. | Keeps footways clear for pedestrians. |
| 4. Accessible Drop-Off and Loading Bays for Mobility Aid Users | Provide designated spaces for safe disembarking. | Facilitates access without hindering pedestrian flow. |
| 5. Clearly Marked and Tactile Paving at Crossings | Enhance crossings near loading zones. | Improves safety for sensory-impaired users. |

Type 10: Tourist and High-Visitor Areas

Example: Victoria Square



Context: Popular destinations that attract large numbers of people, requiring careful planning to accommodate diverse needs.

Key Recommendations:

| Recommendation | Focus | Benefits |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Multi-Lingual, Accessible Wayfinding and Tourist Information | Provide information in various languages and formats. | Assists international visitors and those with disabilities. |
| 2. Temporary Accessibility Measures for Seasonal Events | Implement ramps and accessible facilities during events. | Ensures inclusion during peak times. |
| 3. Multi-Modal Access Points for All User Types | Offer entry points for pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility aid users. | Accommodates diverse visitor needs. |
| 4. Mobility Aid Rentals and Charging Stations | Provide rentals and charging options. | Supports visitors who require mobility aids. |
| 5. Enhanced Accessibility for Night-Time Economy and Events | Improve lighting and signage for evening activities. | Ensures safety and accessibility after dark. |

Conclusion

By focusing on these ten typologies and their specific recommendations, we can create a more accessible and inclusive urban environment. Implementing these interventions requires collaboration between city planners, transport professionals, businesses, and the community. Together, we can make our streets safer and more welcoming for everyone.

Note: While these recommendations go beyond the basic guidelines provided in documents like the Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20, they align with best practices from the CoLSAT tool, Inclusive Mobility Guidance, and the Wheels for Wellbeing Guide. Incorporating these strategies will help cities not only meet but exceed current accessibility standards.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Opportunities for Action

Final Thoughts

This report highlights the urgent need for Birmingham and the wider West Midlands to improve streets and public spaces for people with disabilities. While some parts of the city center are becoming more accessible, many areas still make it difficult for disabled individuals to move around safely and comfortably. This challenge is likely even greater in residential neighborhoods, and we must consider how disabled people travel from their homes to the city center.

Key Points:

- **Inclusive Design Matters:** We need to design streets that meet the diverse needs of all disability groups. By implementing the suggestions in this report, Birmingham can set a high standard for other cities to follow.
- **Economic and Health Benefits:** Improving accessibility not only helps disabled residents and visitors but also brings economic advantages. It can lead to savings in healthcare by preventing issues that arise from poor accessibility.
- **Collaboration is Essential:** Working together with local authorities, transport agencies, and community groups is crucial. Involving disabled people in the planning process provides valuable insights into real-world challenges.
- **Immediate and Long-Term Actions:** Quick fixes like improving tactile paving or rearranging street furniture can make a big difference now. However, long-term changes require ongoing commitment and the involvement of disabled people in planning and decision-making.
- **Wider Impact:** The findings of this report can help other cities in the West Midlands and beyond. By adopting these best practices, we can create more inclusive public spaces everywhere.

Conclusion:

The Colmore Business District Accessibility Audit is a significant step toward making Birmingham a leader in accessible urban design. By embracing the recommendations and continuing to work together, we can ensure that everyone, regardless of their mobility needs, can move freely and safely in the city. This commitment will not only improve lives but also contribute to a more vibrant and equitable urban environment. Additionally, enhancing

accessibility can boost the economy by tapping into the "Purple Pound"—the spending power of disabled people—and increasing employment opportunities.

Opportunities for Action – A Collaborative Approach

Background

This report focused on Birmingham City Centre and developed ideas that can be used to improve infrastructure across Birmingham and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). We present opportunities for action at different levels:

- Business Improvement Districts (BIDs): Like Colmore BID, representing local businesses.
- Local Authorities: Such as Birmingham City Council (BCC).
- Combined Authorities: Including the WMCA and its transport arm, Transport for West Midlands (TfWM).

We recognise that these recommendations will take time, resources, and political support to implement. Organisations like Sustrans and Colmore BID will continue to support TfWM and BCC as "critical friends," helping to shape and prioritise these actions.

Recommendations for Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

| Recommendation | Action | Who |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Keep Pavements Clear | Ensure pavements are free from obstacles like café seating outside designated areas, advertising boards (A-boards), and delivery vehicles. | Colmore BID street team can work with building owners to promote safety and accessibility. |
| 2. Provide Accessible Seating | Install and maintain benches and rest areas suitable for people using mobility aids or those who need frequent rests. Consider turning parking spaces into seating areas or small parks (parklets). | Colmore BID can influence future street designs in consultation with Birmingham City Council (BCC). |

| Recommendation | Action | Who |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| 3. Conduct Accessibility Audits | Continue hosting sessions where business representatives experience accessibility challenges firsthand, helping them understand and address issues. | Colmore BID can include disability considerations in their regular travel audits. |
| 4. Work with Local Businesses | Encourage businesses to have step-free entrances, keep pavements clear, and support accessible delivery options. | Colmore BID can communicate the findings of this report to businesses. |
| 5. Improve Signage | Develop and install signs that help all pedestrians navigate the area, including tactile (touchable) and visual cues. | Colmore BID can use its influence to improve wayfinding in collaboration with BCC. |
| 6. Enhance Parking and Loading Zones | Work with businesses to create accessible parking and loading areas for people using mobility aids. | Colmore BID can develop a plan to encourage positive business practices. |
| 7. Promote Better Delivery Methods | Collaborate with delivery services to prioritise eco-friendly options like cargo bike deliveries and enforce loading time restrictions. | Colmore BID can continue efforts to implement environmentally friendly delivery methods. |

Policy Recommendations for Birmingham City Council and TfWM/WMCA

To create a fully accessible network across the city and region, significant updates and new construction are needed. Here are three main policy initiatives:

1. Create an 'Accessible Integrated Transport' Working Group:
 - Purpose: Bring together professionals and people with lived experience to guide planning and policy.
 - Who: TfWM and local authorities like BCC can establish this group.
 - Benefits: Aligns with regional priorities and provides valuable insights for policy and scheme development.
2. Use Accessibility Assessment Tools:
 - Action: Incorporate tools like the City of London Street Accessibility Tool (CoLSAT) and the Healthy Streets framework in future projects and audits.
 - Who: BCC and TfWM can integrate these into their evaluation processes.
 - Benefits: Ensures that infrastructure meets the needs of all users and helps identify areas needing improvement.
3. Update Traffic Regulations to Support Inclusive Mobility:
 - Purpose: Amend Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to allow cycling, walking, and wheeling anywhere, accommodating disabled people who use cycles as mobility aids.
 - Who: BCC and TfWM can work on updating regulations.
 - Considerations: Trials may be needed, and care should be taken to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy or disadvantaging visitors.

Detailed Policy Recommendations

We have identified 24 policy recommendations, split into two categories:

- Infrastructure and Design Policy and Process (IDPP): Physical changes to streets and infrastructure.
- Wider Supportive Policy and Process (WSPP): Broader policies that support accessibility.

Infrastructure and Design Policy and Process (IDPP)

| Reference | Policy Recommendation | Lead Authority | Notes |
|-----------|--|---|---|
| IDPP1 | Upgrade City Center Accessibility Improve accessibility in city center areas using tools like CoLSAT and Healthy Streets. | Birmingham City Council (BCC); possible funding from Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) | May need to work with private landowners. |
| IDPP2 | Create Standard Accessible Signage Develop clear, accessible wayfinding signs for everyone. | TfWM to lead regionally; BCC to establish local standards if needed. | Requires agreement from all local authorities. |
| IDPP3 | Map Accessibility Features City-Wide Create a detailed map showing all crossings, kerbs, and pavements, noting their accessibility. | BCC to collect and update data; TfWM to use data for funding decisions. | Data collection is resource-intensive; start with busy areas. |
| IDPP4 | Promote Cargo Bike Deliveries Encourage delivery companies to use cargo bikes for local deliveries and improve delivery practices. | TfWM for freight strategy; BCC to engage local businesses. | Requires collaboration with various stakeholders. |
| IDPP5 | Enhance Pedestrian Crossings Upgrade crossings with instant buttons, audible alerts, and countdown timers; adjust timings for mobility aid users. | BCC to implement; TfWM to support. | Ensure consistency across the region. |

| Reference | Policy Recommendation | Lead Authority | Notes |
|-----------|--|---|--|
| IDPP6 | Remove Barriers on Paths and Parks Eliminate physical barriers on public paths and in parks to improve access. | BCC responsible for public paths and parks; TfWM may provide funding. | Funding may be available from organisations like Sustrans. |
| IDPP7 | Regularly Audit Routes Using Mobility Aids Use mobility aids and adapted cycles to audit streets and paths regularly. | BCC for audits; TfWM for multi-modal schemes. | Requires resources like assistive cycles and trained staff. |
| IDPP8 | Improve Cycle Parking Standards Review and promote best practices for accessible cycle parking. | BCC for public areas; TfWM for transport hubs. | Coordinate with planning departments and transport operators. |
| IDPP9 | Provide Accessible Toilets Along Routes Ensure accessible toilets and changing places are available along cycling and walking routes. | BCC for planning and public spaces; TfWM for transport stations. | Align with planning policies and involve local businesses. |
| IDPP10 | Trial a Pavement Parking Ban Work with the government to test a ban on parking on pavements. | BCC and TfWM/WMCA with political support. | Needs coordination with law enforcement and other authorities. |
| IDPP11 | Assess Bridges and Underpasses for Accessibility Check all bridges and underpasses for accessibility and plan improvements. | BCC for their structures; TfWM where applicable. | Work with National Highways for their assets. |
| IDPP12 | Improve Pavement Maintenance Enhance maintenance schedules to keep pavements accessible all year. | BCC responsible for pavements; TfWM to help set standards. | Consider existing maintenance agreements. |

Wider Supportive Policy and Process (WSPP)

| Reference | Policy Recommendation | Lead Authority | Notes |
|-----------|---|--|--|
| WSPP1 | Create Online Maps of Accessible Facilities Develop public maps showing accessible toilets, parking, and other facilities. | TfWM to lead; BCC to provide data. | Requires collaboration and resources. |
| WSPP2 | Map Buildings with Step-Free Access List buildings with step-free access and encourage more to become accessible. | TfWM and BCC to collect data; Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to help. | Start with public buildings and expand. |
| WSPP3 | Implement a Clear Streets Policy Reduce Street clutter like A-boards and ensure café seating doesn't block paths. | BCC to manage street policies; TfWM to promote regional standards. | Enforce regulations and work with utility companies. |
| WSPP4 | Allow Adapted Cycles on Public Transport Work with transport operators to accommodate adapted cycles on buses, trams, and trains. | West Midlands Rail Executive; BCC and TfWM as stakeholders. | Influence policies through franchise agreements. |
| WSPP5 | Recognise Cycles as Mobility Aids Remove "Cyclists Dismount" signs where appropriate and update regulations to allow cycling for disabled users. | BCC to change regulations; TfWM for transport schemes. | Ensure fair enforcement. |
| WSPP6 | Consider a Disabled Cyclist 'Blue Badge' Explore creating a permit for disabled cyclists for priority parking and recognition. | TfWM to lead; BCC to support. | Would be a new initiative; could set an example. |

| Reference | Policy Recommendation | Lead Authority | Notes |
|-----------|---|---|---|
| WSPP7 | Lobby for Cycles in Mobility Schemes Advocate for including cycles in national mobility assistance programs. | BCC and TfWM to lobby the government. | Requires political support. |
| WSPP8 | Include Adapted Cycles in Bike Hire Ensure public bike hire schemes offer adapted cycles for disabled users. | TfWM oversees bike hire; BCC to support. | Could be an innovative program. |
| WSPP9 | Address Concerns About Benefits and Activity Communicate that engaging in physical activity won't affect disability benefits. | BCC and TfWM to work with the Department for Work and Pensions. | Important to encourage participation. |
| WSPP10 | Represent Disabled People in Media Ensure that promotional materials include disabled people proportionally (about 1 in 5). | BCC and TfWM communications teams. | Promotes inclusivity and awareness. |
| WSPP11 | Provide Accessible Cycling Lessons Offer cycling instruction for disabled children and adults. | BCC for children's programs; TfWM for adults. | Collaborate with organisations like Midland Mencap. |
| WSPP12 | Subsidise Access to Mobility Aids Explore programs to help people afford assistive cycles and mobility aids, possibly through employers or Motability schemes. | BCC and TfWM to initiate discussions. | Aim to include those not in paid employment. |

Extra Information

EI1: Glossary: Easy Read Version

Accessibility Terms

| Term | What It Means |
|------------------------------|---|
| Accessibility | Making things like buildings and services easy for disabled people to use. |
| Assistive and Adapted Cycles | Bicycles or tricycles changed to help people with disabilities ride them. |
| Barriers to Access | Things that stop disabled people from using services or going places. |
| Blue Badge Parking | Special parking spots for disabled people with a Blue Badge permit. |
| Dropped Kerb | Lower parts of the curb to help wheelchairs and strollers get on and off sidewalks. |
| Changing Places Toilet | Special toilets with extra features for people with complex disabilities. |
| Equality Act 2010 | UK law that protects people from being treated badly because of their disabilities. |
| Inclusive Mobility Guidance | UK rules on making transport and walking areas easy for disabled people. |
| Lived Experience Sessions | Meetings with disabled people to learn how to make places better for them. |
| Social Model of Disability | The idea that society makes it hard for disabled people, not their disabilities. |

Active Travel Terms

| Term | What It Means |
|--|--|
| Active Travel Connections | Streets made better for walking, using wheelchairs, and cycling. |
| Average Annual Daily Flow (motor vehicles) | How many cars use a street each day on average. |

| Term | What It Means |
|---|---|
| Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit (AMAT) | Tools to check how walking and cycling changes affect people. |
| Active Travel England | Group that promotes walking, cycling, and using wheelchairs in England. |
| Active Travel England Route Check Tools | Tools to design safe and easy walking and cycling paths. |
| Cargo Cycles | Big bikes that carry heavy things, used for deliveries or by families. |
| City Centre Active Travel Connections to Interchange (CCATCI) | Project to connect city centers with transport stops for walking and cycling. |
| Contraflow Cycling | Allowing cyclists to go against traffic on one-way streets. |
| Cycle and Scooter Hire Stations | Places where you can rent bikes and scooters for short trips. |
| LTN 1/20 | UK rules for designing bike paths and cycling areas. |
| Modal Filter | Rules that limit cars but allow bikes and walking. |
| National Cycle Network | A big network of bike paths across the UK managed by Sustrans. |
| Parallel Crossing | Separate crossings for pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely. |
| Segregated Cycle Infrastructure | Bike paths that are separate from car roads for safety. |

Urban and Street Infrastructure Terms

| Term | What It Means |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Walking and Cycling Index | A report that looks at how people walk and cycle in UK cities. |
| Accessible Cycle Parking | Bike racks designed for everyone, including disabled riders. |
| Bus Gate | Areas where only buses, bikes, and taxis can go to reduce traffic in cities. |
| Camber, Crossfall, and Gradients | Slopes and tilts of roads that affect how easy they are to walk or cycle on. |

| Term | What It Means |
|--|---|
| Collision Mapping | Tracking where accidents happen to make streets safer. |
| Footway | A path on the side of a road for people to walk. |
| Freight Hubs and Last Mile Delivery | Places where goods are prepared for delivery using bikes or other green methods. |
| Healthy Streets | Making streets nice and safe for walking, biking, and spending time outside. |
| Highway and Carriageway | A highway is a public road; a carriageway is the part for cars. |
| Loading and Delivery Management | Plans to control where and when goods are delivered to reduce traffic and improve safety. |
| Pavement Parking | Parking cars on sidewalks, which blocks paths for walkers and disabled people. |
| Pedestrian Island | A safe spot in the middle of the road for people to wait while crossing. |
| Pedestrianisation | Turning streets into walking-only areas by removing cars. |
| Public Realm | Public spaces like streets, parks, and squares that everyone can use. |
| Street Furniture | Items on the street like benches, bins, and signs that should not block paths. |
| Tactile Paving | Special tiles that help blind or partially sighted people feel their way. |
| Tapping Rail | Low rails that help blind people know the edge of a path or road. |
| Traffic Calming | Measures like speed bumps to slow down cars and make streets safer. |
| Toucan Crossing and Associated Signals | Crossings for both pedestrians and cyclists with special signals. |

Transport and Planning Bodies Terms

| Term | What It Means |
|--|---|
| Business Improvement District (BID) | Areas where businesses work together to make the local area better. |
| Canal and Rivers Trust | Charity that takes care of rivers and towpaths for walking and cycling. |
| City Centre Movement and Access Strategy (CCMA) | Plan to make moving around city centers easier for walkers and cyclists. |
| City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) | UK funding for projects that make transport greener and better for everyone. |
| Department for Transport (DfT) | UK government department in charge of transport rules and infrastructure. |
| National Highways | Company that looks after motorways and major roads in England. |
| Road Classification | System to sort roads by their use and traffic, from big motorways to small streets. |
| Spatial Scope | The area that a project or study covers. |
| Typology | How streets are grouped by their type and use in urban planning. |

Data and Tools Terms

| Term | What It Means |
|---|---|
| Census 2011/21 | UK surveys done every ten years that collect information about people and homes. |
| City of London Street Accessibility Tool (COLSAT) | Tool to check how easy streets in the City of London are to use for walking and biking. |
| Collision Mapping | Tracking where traffic accidents happen to make roads safer. |
| Equality Impact Assessment | Checking how a new rule or project affects different groups of people, especially those protected by the Equality Act 2010. |
| Wayfinding | Helping people find their way using signs, maps, and other markers. |

EI2: Accessibility and Active Travel Terms Picture Library

Pedestrian zone



Bus Gate



Hostile Vehicle Mitigation barriers and bollards



Segregated cycleway



Bus Stop Bypass



Side Road Zebra



Standard Bicycle

Tricycle



Handcycle



Cargo Cycle



Mobiity Scooter



Manual wheelchair



Electric wheelchair



Side by side tandem



Wheelchair clip-on cycle



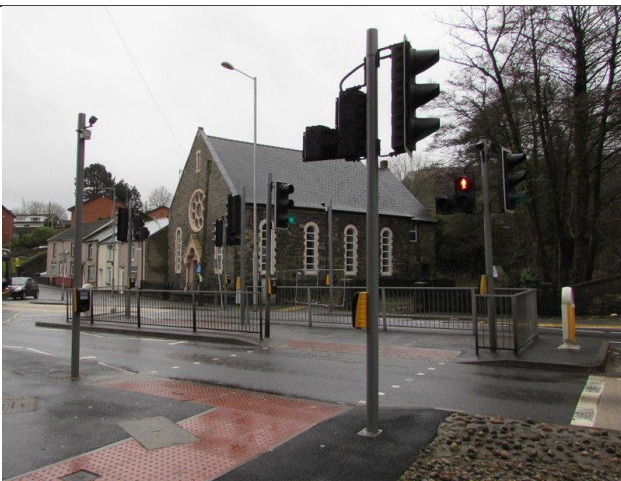
Long Cane user



Pelican Crossing



Toucan Crossing



Zebra Crossing



Copenhagen Crossing



Rotating cone crossing



Count Down Crossing



Pedestrian refuge Island



Tactile Paving (red for controlled crossing, Buff yellow for uncontrolled)



Tactile Wayfinding

Tactile Stem



Dropped kerb with Tactile (Under 3mm depth)



Dropped Kerb without tactile and over 3mm depth



Absence of dropped kerb at crossing point



Steep and narrow dropped kerbs



York Stone paving



Sett Paving



Asphalt (heritage coloured)



Patterned Paving



High contrast between footway and carriageway



Lines at the edge of footway



Kerb Edging



Narrow Footway (absolutely under 1.5m)



Narrow footway due to street clutter (under 1.5m)



Street Clutter next to building line



Café tables without protection



Café Tables with protection



Chapter 8 temporary obstacles



Non Chapter 8 temporary obstacles (i.e. 'A' Boards)



Accessible seating



Steep gradients



Non accessible seating



Steep camber/ sloping footpaths



Designated taxi parking



Disabled parking



Vehicle crossover



Bus stop Perch Seating



Bus Stop Flag only



Bus Stop Proper Seating



Accessible Toilets



Changing Places Toilet



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Thank you for reading.



