



September 2021



CIL News

ACCESSIBILITY SPECIAL

We've decided to concentrate on Disabled accessibility this month. This is prompted by the fact that the Government has started the review process of Approved document M vol 2 of the Building Regulations, which is about Accessibility. This has commenced with a survey being run by the Consultants Ove Arup, and details of how you can submit your views are provided later. The Government has also issued a public consultation proposing to retain the temporary arrangements that were introduced during the Pandemic to encourage and enable greater use of hospitality establishments etc. by allowing tables etc on streets. Again, details about are included later.

Turning now to the main discussions of this edition we have articles by a Trustee of CIL who has been involved with Accessibility within MK over many years, Christine Checkley. She has been a stalwart of Accessibility in MK for many years, and she will relate what it was like in the past.

"I moved to Milton Keynes in the mid 80s into a Habinteg Housing Association property, where the disabled tenants within the Association were all invited to attend a meeting at which one of the speakers was Mandy Toward the manager of the Council of Disabled People (CODP). She asked me after the meeting if I would like to join CODP as a committee member.

CODP were at that time based at the Redway School and funded by MK Council. Being a driver and used to public speaking, I had learnt to speak publicly whilst involved with the Friends of Stoke Mandeville and in developing the growth of Stoke to become the world renown hospital it now is, I would often accompany Mandy to different events. My main interest in being in CODP was to develop access and I joined the group within CODP involved with this aspect.

Initially it was more like a social meeting (meetings were held in a pub) and there was lots of chat but no access surveys. When the chair of the group retired, I was asked to take over and jumped at the opportunity.

I changed the meeting venue to the CODP office and focused the group on getting involved in undertaking access audits and providing advice and information to various organisations and groups. This change was not liked by all, and we lost members but we were soon able to gain new with much more desire to further access within MK. Amongst those that joined were Danny Cavanagh and Brian Catchpole, who became very active in furthering awareness throughout MK. The group continued to grow and became much larger and very busy.

A decision was made to leave CODP and become an independent group the Transport and Access Group (TAG). While waiting for support from MK Council we held our meetings in a member's home. At about this time I was asked by Mandy in 1991 if I would become a member of MKCIL Planning Committee. The plan being to develop a new group specialising in help and support to the Disabled Community, something again I jumped at which clearly gave the opportunity to ensure that the disabled community were helped and supported and that their voice could be heard.

Danny took over as TAG chair, then when MK Council agreed to support them, he rented an office at Kingston. I continued being a member of TAG for a while but developing MKCIL was taking up more of my time and involvement.

After a number of years, I decided to take a sabbatical from all voluntary work due to family reasons. A few months later I was called by my friend Jan Phillips and asked if I would return to TAG (now known as The Access Group), this change was brought about by mail (actual letters then) going to MK Transport rather than coming into us. TAG were planning an Access Guide and thought with my knowledge of Building Regulations part M and training I would be able to help.

TAG was now in the Civic Offices. We had our own office area and employed Sean Walsh a young disabled fully qualified architect. Barry Sharp was chair and Margaret Weeks was our fund raiser. Another member was able to read the Council plans. If he thought there was an access problem, he and Sean would discuss it and take it to the architects, Sean worked well with them. If they were not too sure about something they would seek Sean's advice.

The guide took many hours of work. I recruited volunteers to do access visits. All received forms to fill in and a tape measure. I held monthly meetings for feed back and any problems they might have. I personally rang every Church, Doctors and Dentist in Milton Keynes to find out about their accessibility. Margaret spent hours finding people to fund us. Others worked on the layout and what type of photos to use. The best printer for this project was found. It being in the days pre websites and so had to be available in hardcopy for distribution.

The guide was excellent, I have seen many from all over England, but none were up to TAG standard. Without MK Council funding and office space we would not have achieved the result we did.

Sadly we no longer have TAGMK or the Council of Disabled People. We desperately need to revive both with the support of MK Council, for at the moment, the Disabled of Milton Keynes do not have a voice."

Chris Checkley, Trustee

We checked with Chris, and she does still have a copy of this original access guide. But if anybody else has one and is prepared to donate to CIL we will put it on display with suitable detail about it.

It should be noted that this was first printed in 1999, just 4 years after the Disability Discrimination Act came into being and we believe to be one of the first Access Guides in the country.

Things are clearly not like this anymore and we could ponder on where have things gone wrong, one obvious change is that the Council no longer involves the Disabled Community in its planning and clearly does not involve us, either collectively or specifically to certain situations affecting a particular disability. Incorporation of the necessary features in Infrastructure, Process or Procedure at the conceptual and initial stages of development means that a better output is achieved and at a cheaper cost. Saving, in the vernacular Megabucks. The cost of retrofitting is considerably greater than getting it right in the first place. We should add that in addition to the Disabled Community being involved at the concept and initial design phases they should also be consulted about the final design and be involved in the final Commissioning (Putting into use).

Individually I'm aware that this was the philosophy of the London Underground Jubilee Line Extension in the 1990s and for the Olympic Park, now Queen Elizabeth Park, and is adopted by a number of Local Authorities around the country. Most would do that by their Access Officer being involved and liaising with the wider community, but without such a post then a very good relationship has got to be built between the two.

If you are a public building / facility manager this has possibly made you wonder whether the location you are responsible for is accessible and safe for disabled people to use. If you do, we have produced this short questionnaire on page 4, that you could complete to give you a clue. Of course, there are numerous other aspects that need to be considered if you wanted a total 'clean bill' for accessibility, but as said if the issue concerns you then gives you a guide.

Ernie Boddinton, Chair Trustees

Thank you



Special thanks to DHL for their donation of a box of face masks, which has helped us to keep clients safe while visiting us for help with their benefit application forms.

Accessibility Questionnaire

1	Is there disabled (Blue Badge) parking local to the accessible entrance?	
2	Is this entrance clear to see and easy to use, i.e., to open and go through?	
3	Is the route to the entrance obvious, level, even, smooth and step-free?	
4	Is the reception/pay/customer services desk clear to see, if not is there suitable signage directing to where it is? Does it have a lowered section?	
5	Are there hearing enhancement facilities provided at all areas where there is a need? (e.g., reception desk / pay point / meeting / interview / consultation room)?	
6	Do you have anybody available with the ability to converse in sign language, if not do you have arrangements for a video interpretation capability?	
7	Do you have a text phone facility or other suitable arrangement for communication with those with hearing impairments?	
8	If there's a waiting/seating area, does it have a range of different style of seating available and is there suitable provision for assistance dogs and/or wheelchair users?	
9	Is there clear easy to see signage / information displays throughout directing to where you wish to go and is the destination clearly identified when you reach there?	
10	Is seating available dispersed around the building to enable people to rest if longer journeys are involved?	
11	Is the route to wherever you want to go wide enough, sufficient to allow wheelchairs to pass, with no obstructions and well signed?	
12	When you wish to leave can you identify the route to take and does it comply with the points raised above regarding ease of travel?	
13	If the location has more than the one floor is there a suitable wheelchair accessible arrangement to enable movement between floors?	
14	Do stairways have suitable marking on the step leading edge, and the flight has adequate handrails and guarding if appropriate?	
15	Is there sufficient visual contrast between floors, walls, ceilings and any other structural element (e.g., doors) or any furnishings?	
16	Are all areas sufficiently lit so that you can clearly see and are not affected by glare caused by sunlight or artificial light?	
17	If your business needs changing facilities is there a larger room provided with suitable adapted facilities for wheelchair users?	
18	Are there accessible and changing place toilets provided? If so, is it usable i.e., large enough and all facilities clear to see and their location fully identified?	
19	Is a quiet room / space provided for the use of those affected by sensory overload?	
20	Are all emergency exits accessible to wheelchairs and if more than a ground floor are emergency evacuation arrangements in place for other floors?	
21	Does your fire alarm system have visual alarms to alert those with hearing impairments?	
22	Is any information provided available in alternative formats?	
23	If you have a web-site has it been designed to the appropriate accessibility standards in accordance with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and/or British Standards (BS 8878)?	

If you have used this to evaluate your building and you have any concerns or would like to know more about any particular aspect then we're more than happy to expand or clarify, just contact on the e-mail, telephone contact details provided at the end of this newsletter, and we'll get back in touch with you.

A further aspect that may be worthy of consideration is that although this is focused on disabilities a number of issues equally apply to those currently not disabled. The same provision for wheelchairs equally applies to pushchairs and buggies and those heavily loaded. Poor light and glare affects everybody. Wayfinding, signage and navigation, equally apply to all, it's just that the impact of poor provision affects some disabilities more than most of the population. We could go on but hopefully that's enough to indicate that designing to facilitate the disabled is good practice because it makes things better for everybody.

Moving on to wider aspects we've mentioned above the Consultations on Public Buildings and Street Furniture so here's the detail.

Government Consultation on Approved Document M – Access to and use of Buildings other than Dwellings

As such this relates to all public buildings that we use and have entry into so a very relevant and important document and is one of the many statutory documents that Planners and Building Control must ensure that new buildings and developments comply. The consultation is being commenced with a survey being undertaken by Consultants Ove Arup and can be accessed by the following link.

<https://ovearup.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/part-m-research-non-resi>

Government Consultation on maintaining Street Furniture

This press release for the consultation can be found on

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-public-consultation-to-make-outdoor-measures-for-high-streets-permanent>

And access to the on-line survey about can be found on

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/supporting-defence-infrastructure-and-the-future-of-time-limited-permitted-development-rights>

We all might have differing opinions of this and its suitability for still permitting however if you wish to make comment you can go into the survey.

Colourful Crossings

There have also been a number of comments circulating within the National Access Association regarding the growing phenomenon by some councils of making road crossings a work of art! See the examples, your thoughts?



Examples of Colourful Road Crossings

We know this goes beyond belief, the Access Association have made their views known to appropriate Government Ministers and we have alerted MKC to our concern regarding.

Whilst discussing National Disability Access issues the British Standards Institute has recently issued a draft it's new Publicly Available Specification (PAS) on **Design for the mind – Neurodiversity and the built environment – Guide**, which amongst its scope includes neurodivergent and neurodegenerative profiles. Looks an interesting read, especially when taken in conjunction with the review on Building Regulations Part M. We'll update here once we've managed to review and digest. It might also revise the listing included above

As we've led on Accessibility, so we'll continue with our update on the regular items around this topic.

Accessibility issues in MK



Let us	IN to buildings and housing	AND LISTEN TO US
	GET ABOUT on transport and the streets	
	PARTICIPATE get involved with what affects us ie. 'EVERYTHING'	

Equal Pavements Pledge

This now starts to overlap with other issues. Detail of the scheme was passed to a Cabinet member. Hopefully it will be taken it forward with respect to listening to the perspectives of the Disabled Community and to work with experts within that community regarding proposals.

This links us back to what Chris Checkley told us above with respect to what was the practice in the past.

The Council has let a contract for the provision of Electric Vehicle charging points to be installed within the older residential areas of MK, which unfortunately tend to have narrower pavements. In addition, we have chased HMG regarding the proposed ban on Pavement Parking. No date was forthcoming and from the tone of the reply serious consideration is being given to allowing pavement parking due to the narrowness of the roads! So, it would seem that neither London nor Edinburgh, which have imposed a ban, have narrow streets, not something recognisable from the parts of London we know.

Buses & MK Connect (DRT)



Complaints continue to come into us from a range of sources regarding the MK Connect service provision for the Disabled. Some of these have already been forwarded to MKC but the majority have not so far been forwarded as they are just repeats of issues we've already raised without response, so don't hold out much hope by sending them details of the same issue again.

Accessibility Fund / Dropped kerbs

We have now had a meeting with Highways which has clarified how the project is being progressed. We have learnt that there are actually two programmes running in parallel. The first is a one off that will address specific areas of MK in turn. This is the one for which Cllr Alexander gained agreement for at the start of 2020. The second one is a smaller annual fund which addresses where nominations are put forward to the Council. Because of Covid progress has been limited but should be restarting shortly.

Disabled Strategy

We have informed before as to how we have been asked to aid MKC in developing a Physical Disability Strategy, also, as said previously, we continue to argue that any such Strategy should address all Disabilities and not be restricted in its scope. We've reached a stage where MKC have asked that we send out their version for consideration. This we have done, and it has gone to a number of groups for review and consideration with comments to be sent back to us for collation. This part of the programme lasts until the end of this month we will then collate the received comments and discuss with MKC as to how it is progressed.

ZEBRA Scheme

No, we've not gone into the zoo business nor is this about crossings, but it stands for Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas Scheme, and MKC have applied for Government funding from the government to convert the bus fleet to Electric Vehicles. The Government require the support of the Disabled Community which we are more than happy to provide. The fleet we are assured will be fully accessible and we will be part of the design and testing process, as long as the Government cough up

Walking Cycling Infrastructure – Redways

We understand that this will be issued on Public Consultation soon and will make interesting reading. The Government directives on the infrastructure relates to something on the streets, Redways sit outside of that so the review of proposals will make for interesting reading seeing it for the first time.



Advice & Information

Demand continues at the same rate, and we are almost back to pre Covid levels, we should be back to being open 5 days a week again shortly, in fact by the time you read this it should be a reality.

The last few months have seen an increase in the number of people seeking help with their Blue Badge renewal application. We have managed to help them through the labyrinthine forms but have identified a number of specific concerns that we propose to take up with the relevant individuals in MKC with an aim of making the form easier to complete.

A piece of news that has recently hit the press is about the assessments of Personal Independent Payments (PIP). A considerable number of individuals have felt that they were incorrectly assessed and have taken the DWP to a tribunal. 7 out of 10 who did so have proved successful which amounts to a staggering 293,000. We're pleased to say we've done our little bit in this by supporting several individuals who appealed against their assessment.



Other news

Help and Support for MKC

MKC Consultation on a Supported Accommodation Strategy

Milton Keynes Council is consulting on its draft Supported Accommodation Strategy. This strategy contributes to the council's overall Housing Strategy and is the framework through which our supported and specialist housing and housing related priorities for people with care and support needs are set out.

The provision of good quality support and specialist housing is a part of creating a place where all citizens can live in Milton Keynes. The council's vision is to secure the best quality of life we can for our older and vulnerable citizens both now and in the future. This means delivering a range of housing that enables people to live independently, with support and care where necessary.

If you'd like to contribute to the development of this strategy then you can do so through the link given below.

[https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/assets/attach/72819/MKC Supported Housing Strategy CONSULTATION DRAFT July21 .pdf](https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/assets/attach/72819/MKC_Supported_Housing_Strategy_CONSULTATION_DRAFT_July21_.pdf)

Women's Football Euro 22

Some of you will already be aware that MK Stadium is holding 4 matches in next year's tournament including one of the semi-finals.

To help make this a big success MK Council are recruiting volunteers with the aim of getting together a squad of enthusiastic volunteers to help make it this big success.

Volunteers will help in a range of roles in the city centre, at our fan zone and around MK's transport hubs, playing a crucial role in creating our tournament atmosphere and assisting fans from across Europe to find their way around the city and will close on Monday 1st November 2021 at 3.00pm.

For further information and to apply to volunteer visit: www.uefa.com/competitions/uefa-womens-euro-2022/volunteering But don't wait. Too long as applications will close on Monday 1st November at 3pm.

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Upcoming Events



For latest details about MK Gallery visit their website: <https://www.mkgallery.org>
Or phone 01908 676900

Follow the link on the MK CIL website, for further details about upcoming events
- <http://www.mkcil.org.uk/eventlist>



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