

## Approach to Inclusive Design

### Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

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Please note that the following recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

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#### **1) Recommendation**

That the Committee be asked to note the approach to the inclusive design of walking and cycling infrastructure.

#### **2) Introduction**

Devon County Council is committed to ensuring that its transport network enables mobility for all and prevents barriers to opportunities. Inclusive design is key to delivering this in practice and requires that the needs of all disabled people are considered from the outset of any transport and pedestrian infrastructure.

Following the submission of a supplementary question at Full Council in February 2024, a request was made for a written statement relating to how Devon County Council considers inclusive design within their transport schemes, particularly relating to people with visual impairments. This report outlines how Devon County Council ensures new walking and cycling infrastructure is accessible to people with a range of disabilities.

#### **3) Main Body**

##### Design guidance

When developing transport schemes, there are a number of national guidance documents which are referred to by Devon County Council's engineering teams. These set the standards for various scheme elements and are used across the country.

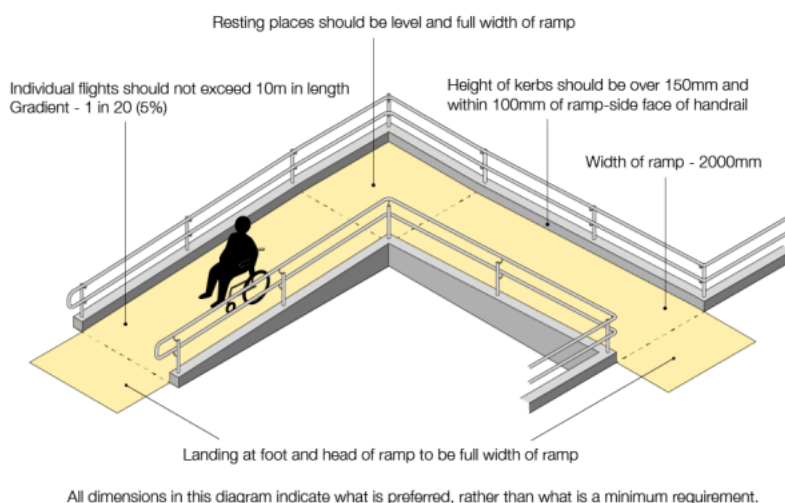
The Department for Transport's Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) is the national guidance document for the design of walking and cycling infrastructure. The document underpins the responsibility of Local Authorities to ensure built environments are accessible for all, in that inclusive design and accessibility best practices are followed throughout the design process. It details the various design approaches that can be implemented dependent on the location, purpose and the population using the facilities, including measures to help reduce conflicts between people walking and cycling. For example, infrastructure should provide sufficient width to accommodate non-standard cycles, which may be used by some disabled people, and where appropriate and feasible, people cycling should be segregated from people walking and vehicular traffic. Additionally, ramps should have gradients suitable for wheelchair users and other disabled people.



*Landscaped quiet street environment achieved through traffic management measures*

**LTN 1/20**

In addition to LTN 1/20, the Department for Transport's 'Inclusive Mobility: A guide to Best Practice on Access and Transport Infrastructure' guidance is also utilised. The level of pedestrian activity and the needs of disabled people are considered throughout the guidance. For example, new infrastructure and street furniture should contrast the colour and tone of the surrounding area so that visually impaired people are made aware of them. Colours that appear to be different from one and other can be similar tonally and may be difficult to distinguish against their surroundings.



***Ramp access design considerations***

**Inclusive Mobility**

**Public engagement**

Public engagement occurs throughout the design process and construction of walking and cycling infrastructure, which involves discourse with various stakeholders and governing bodies. Devon County Council seeks to engage with these groups in a variety of formats

such as by offering virtual events and circulating hard copies of documents upon request. In person meetings are also held when these are requested. Devon County Council makes use of local links with representatives from the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and 'Living Options Devon', working with their clients on a variety of individual projects. The level of engagement will be proportionate to the scheme and level of change possible.

In addition to stakeholder engagement, Devon County Council will often hold public consultation periods for specific schemes, encouraging local communities to share their experiences and views of proposals. These representations can help shape schemes as they develop towards delivery. Feedback can often include suggestions to enhance the inclusivity of designs and provide a local lived experience.

### Impact assessments

Equality Impact Assessments for schemes are undertaken by the Transport Planning team, as part of their Project Sponsor role. This process involves consideration of schemes' potential impacts on people with protected characteristics<sup>1</sup>, including disabled people. It can be documented using a form (the template for which is available at [Toolkit – Impact Assessment \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/transport-planning/transport-planning-toolkit-impact-assessment)); these are live documents that are updated during the lifecycle of a scheme, and are published alongside committee reports when schemes are seeking approval. Published impact assessments can be found at: [Published Impact Assessments – Impact Assessment \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/transport-planning/published-impact-assessments).

### Decision making

When designing a scheme, many factors need to be balanced, including the issues highlighted in the Equality Impact Assessment, cost, environmental factors and public acceptability. It can be the case that different factors are in conflict with each other; for example, issues were raised over significantly widened footways at London Inn Square, potentially making it more challenging for visually impaired people to navigate their way along Sidwell Street. A combination of measures were implemented to assist people using the pavement such as contrasting coloured surfacing, tactile paving on crossings, use of drainage channels which can be followed with a guide cane and aligning trees with benches and cycle parking at the edge of the footway, away from the main pedestrian thoroughfare. In this case, the Council will seek to reduce the potential for disadvantage to people with particular protected characteristics, and enhance potential benefits, as far as practicable.

In addition, many schemes will be taken to committee where they are discussed by Devon County Council Members, who decide whether to grant approval for construction. In coming to a decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires these decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding;

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<sup>1</sup> These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (for employment), pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

in relation to the protected characteristics. The officers' report seeking approval to construct a scheme should highlight key equality considerations arising from the Impact Assessment.

Committee meetings are often live streamed to the public, and minutes documenting discussion points and decisions are published online. The Public Reports Pack published in advance of such meetings detail provisions to enable people to participate in and observe meetings, including information on visiting County Hall and requesting reports in alternative formats.

#### **4) Summary**

Devon County Council fully support the vision that transport networks should have inclusion and equity at its heart and endeavours to embed this philosophy into our policies and scheme delivery. The Council endeavours to meet the needs of all people, ensuring that walking and cycling infrastructure is accessible for individuals with protected characteristics and follows appropriate guidance documents during the design process. Impact Assessments highlight residual disbenefits and indicate where there are disproportional expected impacts. Moreover, Devon County Council continues to engage with key stakeholders representing disabled people to make sure their opinions are taken into account during design and construction of current and future projects. The resultant decision making process must take into consideration a range of factors, including the inclusivity of the design and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

#### **Meg Booth**

Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

**Electoral Divisions: All**

#### **Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers**

Background Paper: Nil

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