

Shared Spaces Seminar 2017

Final Report

Produced by the Scottish Disability Equality Forum

On behalf of the Transport Research Institute at Edinburgh Napier University, and Transport Scotland



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Shared Space Seminar took place in Edinburgh on 25 April 2017. It was attended by a range of delegates representing disabled person's organisations, local authorities, planners, and street designers. The purpose of the seminar was to discuss shared spaces from a range of perspectives, including disabled people and public authorities responsible for designing and maintaining streets. The aim was to agree on how future shared space schemes could be designed to ensure access for all.

Following a series of presentations, workshop discussions took place. Delegates talked about their experiences of shared spaces, the features that determine a shared space, the objectives of shared spaces and discussed consultation and the best ways to achieve this successfully.

This report documents the key findings from seven workshop discussions on the day. It is not intended to be a report on Shared Spaces in general, but a record of discussion and opinion on the day. It has been produced by the Scottish Disability Equality Forum on behalf of Edinburgh Napier University and Transport Scotland.

The key findings from the seminar include:

- It was recognised that the majority Scotland's streets, shared space or not, are not friendly places for disabled people at present. It was therefore agreed that there needs to be a general shift in culture, where pedestrians are given more prominence, which then alters driver behaviour and reduces vehicle and cycle dominance.
- The phrase "shared space" was not felt to be helpful. Rather, we should talk about the overall idea of designs that make streets 'better people places' for all users, rather than just movement spaces where motor vehicle traffic dominates, as in the majority of Scotland's streets today.
- The terminology of shared spaces should change. Delegates agreed that when improving street design, the use of the street should be explored so the focus can shift to how it can be improved.
- There was strong agreement that a 'shared space' should not be created as an easy compromise in street design, to avoid upsetting

motorists - or any other street user. It should only be used if there was a clear rationale for it. Other options (such as pedestrianisation, or wider footways) can be more appropriate. This shows the context-specific nature of street design.

- It is necessary to incorporate traditional features such as controlled crossings and kerbs if visually impaired people are to feel confident about negotiating the street safely. A kerb or other delineation between 'pedestrian areas' and 'vehicle and cycle areas' is necessary in a way that can be recognised by people of all ages and by disabled and non-disabled people alike.
- The idea of shared spaces was more suited to a residential area, but becomes less appropriate when introduced to busier street environments. However, there was a general understanding that no 'one size fits all' and that the design and implementation of shared spaces must consider the context of that specific street, taking account of the volume of motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic, what kinds of buildings front the street, and how the street is currently used by people walking.
- Consultation is fundamental to the successful production of a shared space scheme. From the earliest point, right through the process, to quality checking at the end, specific community groups, disabled people's organisations, and disability groups, including Blue Badge holders, should be involved in meaningful, two-way discussions and 'what-if' explorations, rather than presentations. When consultation is effective it will help designers and the public bodies they work for achieve designs that do not unlawfully disadvantage disabled people, to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010.

1 INTRODUCTION

About this report

- 1.1 This report sets out findings from the Shared Space Seminar, which took place in Edinburgh on 25 April 2017. This report is not intended to be a report on Shared Spaces in general, but a record of discussion and opinion on the day. The day began with presentations from different organisations and concluded with extensive workshop discussions about different aspects of shared spaces. Transport Scotland commissioned the Transport Research Institute (TRI) at Edinburgh Napier University to organise the seminar, and Scottish Disability Equality Forum to produce this report of the day (although the report has also been reviewed and edited by TRI). The report findings will help inform future discussions and consultation on the issue of shared spaces in Scotland.

Introducing Shared Space

- 1.2 Robert Goodwill MP, in his previous role as Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department for Transport, has defined a shared space as follows:

"This is a design approach which aims to reduce the impact of motor traffic in places used by pedestrians. Courtesy crossings can form part of a shared space scheme, but they are not a requirement and there will be places where provision of formal crossings is more appropriate."

Robert Goodwill MP

- 1.3 There is no single definition of 'shared space' - it covers many types of design, which aim to reduce the impact of motor traffic in places used by pedestrians. The term 'shared space' is often used to describe a 'level surface' - the situation where kerbs are removed and there is a single surface used by pedestrians and vehicles. However, this can be misleading as a level surface is not a requirement for a shared space scheme. Kerbs can still be retained, and the decision on whether to do so is for the local authority to make.

- 1.4 Shared space is an umbrella term, rather than a definition of a particular road type, and as such, there are no specific rules (including any for who has priority) associated with it. Road users should treat it as any other road, using the advice given in the Highway Code.
- 1.5 Therefore shared space can be seen as one amongst several forms of streetscape design and management that can transform a street from a place for moving traffic to a place for people. This however brings with it design challenges in ensuring that the space can be used safely by all.

Research Context¹

- 1.6 A petition was launched in December 2015 by Alexander Taylor, representing the East Dunbartonshire Visually Impaired People's Forum in response to a proposed shared space in Kirkintilloch. The petition asked the Scottish Government to "place a moratorium on all shared space schemes until safety and equality concerns have been addressed".
- 1.7 The petition stated that, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful for a public authority to discriminate, either directly or indirectly, in the exercise of its public functions – and this includes highways. The petition said that "where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a person who is not disabled, an Authority is required to take such steps as is reasonable to have avoid the disadvantage." The petition stated that the current arrangements in place in Kirkintilloch indirectly discriminated against visually impaired and other disabled people.
- 1.8 In response to this petition, the Minister for Transport and the Islands, Humza Yousef committed to this seminar to examine the concerns around shared spaces.

Aims and Objectives

¹ To note, on the morning of our seminar (25 April 2017) the recommendations of a Parliamentary Select Committee were published, which called for a halt to shared space schemes that remove kerbs and signal controlled crossings. The report can be found here:
<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/631/63102.htm>

- 1.9 The purpose of the Shared Spaces Seminar was to discuss shared spaces from a range of perspectives, including disabled people and public authorities responsible for designing and maintaining streets. The aim was to agree on how future shared space schemes could be designed to ensure access for all.
- 1.10 This report summarises the key points raised during the seven workshop discussions, in accordance with the objectives set for the discussions.

2 WORKSHOP DISCUSSION GROUPS

Introduction

- 2.1 Following the series of presentations, delegates divided into workshop groups. These were allocated before the event to ensure a mix of organisations and viewpoints.
- 2.2 Groups had just over two hours to discuss the issues and to try and come to a consensus.
- 2.3 Delegates remained in the same discussion group for the entire session and each group discussed the same issues.
- 2.4 A facilitator at each table kept the discussion on track and a scribe captured the discussion, including verbatim comments. The findings in this report have been compiled based on the scribe notes as well as discussion points raised in the facilitator session which took place on the day. This was to allow facilitators to confer before a final feedback session.
- 2.5 This report will now outline responses to the key topics discussed by each workshop group. They are as follows:
 - Chapter 3 - Experience of shared spaces
 - Chapter 4 - Features of shared spaces
 - Chapter 5 - Objectives of shared spaces
 - Chapter 6 - Appropriateness of shared spaces
 - Chapter 7 - Improvements to shared spaces
 - Chapter 8 - Consultation on shared spaces
- 2.6 A list of delegates is at Appendix 1.

3 EXPERIENCE OF SHARED SPACES

- 3.1 Delegates were asked to discuss whether they had ever used or been in a shared space environment and to describe the ‘feel’ of a shared space.

How does a shared space feel?

- 3.2 Shared spaces in residential areas had a ‘different feel’ than other driving areas. In residential areas, it was suggested that drivers’ behaviour is naturally different as it is a more complex area to negotiate, with more likelihood of children and pedestrians.
- 3.3 There were two examples of shared spaces in residential, rural areas which were positively received by residents. In Highland region, one shared space area reportedly had a low volume of traffic and a high incidence of pedestrians, but was working well, although some improvements could be made to ensure greater use by visually impaired residents. Another (Perth) had railings around trees so visually impaired people could easily locate obstacles.
- 3.4 Another workshop group reported more positive experiences of shared spaces. Wheelchair users found the level street helpful and made their journey easier and smoother, with no kerbs or obstacles to negotiate. Perth, Livingston and Glasgow were cited as good examples of spaces easily accessed by wheelchair users.
- 3.5 There were also positive comments about the ‘look’ of shared spaces, in that visually, they are pleasing, however there were comments about how they instinctively felt more dangerous with no delineation between pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. In one workshop group, an example was given of using the same road before and after the implementation of a shared space scheme. The perception was that the shared space was “more risky” due to the lack of delineation.

Example: Leonard Circus, Shoreditch

This example of a shared space was described as a ‘positive’ experience overall. Wider pathways and narrow roads made the space feel safer. The space was also used to create a welcoming environment, with pop up coffee shops and places to sit. This delegate felt “very comfortable”.

- 3.6 One workshop group described shared spaces as “no-go” areas for guide dog owners and disabled people. In one shared space example, it was reported that attitudes had changed and speeds had reduced; but that it was mostly non-disabled people that used the shared space. (*no note of where this was.)
- 3.7 Visually impaired participants were most likely to describe their shared space experience negatively. For example, one participant described it as “shocking” and “scary” that there was no distinction between road, car park and pavement (space near Edinburgh University). This participant said, “it was easy to gravitate towards the middle of the road, then be surprised when the car approaches.” Another delegate with visual impairments spoke of the “terrifying experience” he encountered in a shared space, after not being able to detect where the pavement ended and the road began (North Berwick).

Example: Poynton, Cheshire

Visually impaired delegates familiar with the shared space scheme in Poynton said they were “petrified” at the mix of cars and people. The courtesy, zebra and staggered crossings were not considered safe. Delegates said there was confusion surrounding who had right of way, which led to feelings of uncertainty and risk.

- 3.8 In general, non-disabled people commented that their experience of shared spaces would have been ‘impossible’ as a visually impaired person. For example, one non-disabled delegate described the shared space in Exhibition Road, London as ‘uplifting’, ‘pleasant’ and ‘attractive’ where cars were driving at reduced speeds. Another disabled delegate felt ‘uncomfortable’ in this space as she had not realised it was a shared space, until she came close to a vehicle.

4 FEATURES OF SHARED SPACES

Introduction

- 4.1 Delegates were asked to discuss what features shared spaces should and should not incorporate to make it easy for everyone to access. Discussions also covered whether every shared space scheme needed such features.
- 4.2 There was consensus across several groups about what should appear in a shared space to make them inclusive for everyone. These are discussed in turn below.

Tactile paving

- 4.3 Tactile paving was thought to be essential for visually impaired people and should have high tonal contrast in colour, both in the dry and the wet. The paving must also extend to the edge of the pavement. Two groups raised concerns about paving not being correctly installed.

“Individuals with a visual impairment know when they reach blister paving that they are to cross the road, however without this getting to the edge of the road, becomes a problem.”

Delegate

Kerbs

- 4.4 Kerbs were discussed by each workshop group as a much-needed feature of shared space, although there were mixed views as to the minimum height requirement. For example, one group suggested a minimum of 30mm, while another said that 60mm was “too much” for those pushing a wheelchair. Others felt that the minimum kerb height should be at least 60mm but indicated a preference for 120mm. With kerb heights of this nature it was emphasised that dropped kerbs would be essential in some areas to allow easier access for many other street users including people in wheelchairs/mobility scooters, those with walking difficulties, people with pushchairs, and those encumbered with luggage etc.
- 4.5 The width of the pavement was also discussed. A recognisable feature of a shared space is to have a wider path and a narrow road. There was clear support in all groups for in general providing more uncluttered space solely for pedestrians, space to which vehicles do not have access.

“Designated routes and kerbs are vital for some people, including people with visual impairments.”

Delegate

Controlled crossings

4.6 Participants in the group discussions stated that shared spaces should not exclude features that everyone has the “right to use”, specifically clear, signalised controlled crossings. Research quoted by one representative of Guide Dogs UK stated that 92% of people considered a controlled crossing a necessary feature – not zebra crossings, but lights.

“At least one signalised crossing should be provided as research shows that signalised crossings are the only ones individuals with a visual impairment want.”

Delegate

4.7 One example was given about shared spaces originating in the Netherlands, where vehicle speeds were restricted to walking pace – and yet there was an understanding that even here, controlled crossings had to be reinstated to ensure safety for pedestrians.

4.8 In another discussion, the implementation of controlled crossings out with the shared space would not work, as “research has shown that disabled people will only detour 50 meters before taking a risk.” Therefore, there was some consensus that controlled crossings were a necessary feature of shared space.

Pedestrian only area

4.9 Four workshops discussed the need for a designated area, only for pedestrians and delineation between ‘safe’ pedestrian areas and vehicle areas using street furniture.

“People and cars cannot be in the same place as this creates unequal footing for both parties. An element of separation is required.”

Delegate

Signage and directions

- 4.10 Three groups discussed that there was a need to have clear signage ensuring that both drivers and pedestrians understand they are entering a shared space area. There is currently a great deal of uncertainty regarding access and priority. Even if there is no priority, signs stating this would help to clarify and perhaps diminish the assumption that motor vehicles always take priority.

“While driving over a shared space, I was shocked as I didn’t know what was going on, or what to do. Therefore, a clarity of roles of space for drivers and cyclists must be clear.”

Delegate

- 4.11 However one group agreed with the concept of reducing ‘clutter’ created by signage, and that a shared space should be clear in its use, and therefore not require any signage.

Street furniture

- 4.12 There were mixed views from the discussions about the look and feel of a shared space that contains street furniture, such as seating and planters. Two groups felt these elements help to make the area feel more welcoming and can be used to create a safe route through the scheme by delineating between ‘safe’ pedestrian routes and vehicle areas. Two other groups felt that shared spaces should not contain street furniture as visually impaired people find them difficult to navigate.

- 4.13 Others felt that one of the positives of shared spaces to date is that they have ‘de-cluttered’ the area of street furniture.

“Height position and use of street furniture is a good way to create a safe route through the schemes.”

Delegate

Speed Limits

- 4.14 There was some discussion about whether a shared space should have a maximum speed limit imposed on vehicles and cyclists. Five groups agreed that it was important to impose a speed limit and 20mph was felt to be appropriate, although a few delegates felt even 20mph was too fast for a shared space.

“This will still allow for sharing but everyone will feel safe.”

Delegate

- 4.15 There were some views that shared spaces have been successful at reducing vehicle speeds; Seven Dials in London was cited as a good example of where speed had been reduced.

Parking

- 4.16 Delegates discussed the need for shared spaces to still be accessible for those who rely on their cars for travelling. Therefore, it was important that shared spaces still retained accessible parking bays either in the scheme or extremely close to it. Removing these completely would lead to some disabled people being unable to access the space. Perth was cited as a good example of a shared space that had reduced parking, but retained accessible bays.
- 4.17 Designated parking bays were an important feature to retain to ensure there is no parking where kerbs have been removed. It was also noted that there is a need to control parking in shared spaces so that vehicles do not park on the areas adjacent to buildings where most people tend to walk.

Culture change

- 4.18 Overall, one feature that is required to make shared spaces work is a cultural shift. The delegates described the UK as ‘vehicle dominant’ compared to other northern European countries.
- 4.19 One group discussed the shared space in Germany and the perceived reasons for its success. The main reasons were that drivers’ behaviour was thought to be different to drivers’ behaviour in Scotland. The group stated that there was an imbalance in priorities between cars and pedestrians on Scottish roads.

“Shared space does not work because of culture. This is because in [continental] Europe, people are used to a large amount of cyclists on the roads, but the culture in Britain doesn’t include this.”

Delegate

- 4.20 In the Netherlands the driver/pedestrian ‘dynamic’ was described as being very different, in that all road users seem to understand that pedestrians have priority and drivers give way very well, compared to the UK.

4.21 This culture also applies to cyclists, who were described as “respected” in other countries, but not in the UK. Several groups commented that shared spaces needed to also accommodate cyclists, as well as pedestrians.

4.22 Therefore a change of culture was perceived by delegates as a feature of a successful shared space. Some groups also agreed the need to back up such a culture change with a change to road traffic law based on presumed liability, where the onus is on the motor vehicle driver to prove that they were not at fault in any collision with a pedestrian or cyclist.

Will every shared space need these features?

4.23 Several workshop groups discussed that the design of shared spaces depends on context, so a specific shared space feature might work in some instances, but not in others. The clear message was that “context is all”, and therefore there is a real need to fully understand that context and then design for it. A key aspect of the context is the (probable) balance between the numbers of pedestrians and motor vehicles who (will) use the street.

“Each space should be designed specifically for that area, as not all features of a shared space will be needed or be appropriate for each area or user group.”

Delegate

“Use of shared spaces is not about the type of streets that could have them, it is about the levels of traffic and how it is currently used.”

Delegate

5 OBJECTIVES OF SHARED SPACES

Definition: What is shared space trying to achieve.

- 5.1 The workshop groups were presented with a number of objectives that shared spaces aim to achieve. Discussions focussed on whether shared spaces met these objectives.

Creating vibrant places, that attracts users to spend time here

- 5.2 Suggestions from delegates familiar with the Kirkintilloch shared space suggested that individuals with a visual impairment go elsewhere, perhaps even to another town, to do their shopping because they do not feel safe negotiating the shared space. Visually impaired residents here were described as “fearful” to use the area because of the inaccessibility shared space had caused.
- 5.3 It was suggested that the streetscape of shared spaces gave a more “continental” atmosphere to towns and encouraged more social spaces. The perception among one workshop discussion was that this ‘socialising’ element worked well in areas with high density pedestrians and low vehicle numbers.
- 5.4 Another feature discussed in groups was the ‘café culture’ that shared spaces can create, which contributes to a more positive atmosphere, but can cause difficulties with street furniture for disabled people, especially for those who are visually impaired.

Improving pedestrian movement and comfort

- 5.5 One example was given of Leonard Circus, in Shoreditch, London. This was felt to be a positive experience overall, with features such as wider spaces and narrow roads. Here, it was described that the vehicles were “visitors” and pedestrians felt “comfortable” as a result.
- 5.6 Another example given was from Belfast, where multi-story car parks were removed from the city centre and placed just outside, encouraging people to walk, and reducing vehicles in the city centre.
- 5.7 Delegates discussed that the higher the volume of people, the more comfortable they felt in a shared space; however, this does

increase the likelihood of obstacles for disabled people to negotiate.

Adding economic value

5.8 Shared spaces could create economically viable areas, and encourage people to come into more open and friendly areas. However, others suggested that the rejuvenation and regeneration of town centres benefits only when there are already low vehicle numbers.

Vehicle behaviour change

5.9 In one group, the delegates agreed that the goal of shared spaces was to change driver behaviour, especially in town centres and residential areas. This group felt that this objective was not being achieved because everyone still assumed that the vehicles have priority.

5.10 This group has also touched on the need for a cultural change among drivers, to understand that in a shared space, they are not the dominant force, but must adapt their driving to the situation. Groups talked about the need for a 'balance' between vehicles (such as cars, buses and service vehicles) and pedestrians.

Providing a safer environment for all users

5.11 The objective should be for shared spaces to provide an environment for all users, be they pedestrians, cyclists or drivers, but one that has with greater priority and more space for pedestrians in comparison to the "average" street of today. One workshop discussed that designing for the hierarchy and placing pedestrians at the top is commendable, but vehicles cannot be ignored as they are still part of that hierarchy. One example given was to narrow the road, and make corners sharper to reduce vehicle speed – but this could make it harder for buses, or bin lorries to use the space.

5.12 Shared spaces can encourage more people to walk. One group gave the example of shared spaces in residential areas create a safer environment for children to walk to school.

5.13 However, there was also a point raised in several discussion groups about the impact shared spaces can have on children's understanding of road safety, as well as other vulnerable road users, such as those who use assistance dogs. Without crossings

or distinguishing features, some groups felt that road safety was compromised, although no delegates were able to present rigorous data to either support or refute this view.

“Taking away kerbs as part of shared space will result in guidance for guide dogs being taken away. There is not enough thought given regarding how shared space will affect other disabled groups.”

Delegate

Comments on objectives

- 5.14 Discussions from the workshops implied that the overall aim of shared spaces was to change driver behaviour, particularly in town centres and residential areas. Delegates felt that, in general, this had not been achieved as vehicles still assumed priority in the majority of shared spaces with which they were familiar.
- 5.15 It was also agreed that shared spaces are more appropriate in residential areas and that it is very difficult to implement them in city centres or high streets. There was a view in several groups that the success or otherwise of shared space in such streets depends greatly on the context and how well the scheme is designed for that context.
- 5.16 One workshop group felt that the objectives of shared spaces were not currently being achieved, as people were not using the space as frequently as intended, due to lack of clear parking and few safe controlled crossings.
- 5.17 One group suggested a new objective of shared spaces should be to create a balance between vehicles and pedestrians in towns. It was felt that full pedestrianisation was not always necessary and that shared spaces could be better for businesses by making parking and access easier for disabled people.
- 5.18 Flexibility was important and external factors such as time of day should be considered in how they could influence shared spaces. For example, the use of a street in the morning is likely to differ from its use at mid-day or at night. Discussions covered whether the street scape could be designed so that it was only a shared space at specific times of the day, and closed completely to vehicles at other times.

Example:

In Dundee, there is an area that can become fully pedestrianised at the weekends, by adding planters at each end, but are removed during the week to make the road usable.

6. APPROPRIATENESS OF SHARED SPACES

Introduction

6.1 Participants were asked whether shared spaces were appropriate in any context. Overall, all groups agreed that shared spaces were not a 'one size fits all' approach and whether they were appropriate had to be determined on a 'space specific' basis. High quality intelligent context-specific design was crucial in all schemes. For example;

- Shopping streets were only appropriate locations for shared space schemes if there was a high volume of pedestrians and low volume of cars, otherwise, without controlled crossings it is extremely difficult (some groups said "impossible") to make them fully accessible for all. There was a general suggestion that a 20mph limit (or lower) should be imposed in this context too.
- Residential streets were thought to be appropriate for shared spaces, if designed well. Other groups also discussed, and agreed with this point. It was felt by some participants that shared spaces helped children feel safer in residential areas.
- Shared spaces were not thought to be appropriate for main, arterial roads, as controlled crossings would have to be in place.

6.2 Overall, the appropriateness of a shared space depends on the individual areas, the volume of traffic, and how the street is currently used.

6.3 The idea of taking an existing road network and implementing some of the shared space principles was felt to be more complex than designing a shared space from scratch.

"A shared space should not remove what features are already there but do better with it and improve what is already there."

Delegate

Improvements to shared spaces

6.4 There were some suggestions as to how we can improve the way shared spaces operate. These are outlined below:

- Shared spaces should be used in conjunction with a 20mph (or lower) speed limit (and that, therefore, there is a need to review the ease with which local authorities can set a speed limit lower than this).
- Create 'safe' space that is always clear of traffic, using street furniture and traffic calming. This should include creating parking free zones.
- Shared space schemes should be promoted in the community along with appropriate signage and marketing of the scheme explaining how it works. One suggestion to include information about shared space in the Highway Code, and ultimately the driving test also.
- Introducing the continental style zebra crossing without belisha beacons (as used already in many business parks and shopping centres, including outside the front door of the Scottish Government building at Victoria Quay) as a standard road marking.
- More research is necessary to determine the 'good practice' examples of shared spaces to provide clarity on success factors that could be replicated. Of course, success will be measured differently, depending on the type of user; motorist, pedestrian, disabled person, etc.
- As local authorities work independently, and are subject to their own departmental funding arrangements there is a need for an overview of current shared space activity. One workshop discussion group suggested a website, similar to 'Place Making' site where information and case studies could be shared.

Measuring success of shared space places

- 6.5 In one discussion group, there was a debate about how the success of a shared space scheme is measured. One delegate perceived this was based on the number of casualties, and had to change. One suggestion was to measure the volume of pedestrians and the cross-section of people (children, young, old, people with different disabilities) in the street before and after a shared space to determine success.
- 6.6 This type of 'road audit' could form part of the planning and consultation process, to better understand the environment and how the street scape could be improved for those who use it.
- 6.7 Another group discussed that evaluation is required from people who use the shared space and measure this against a 'normal' street scheme.

7 CONSULTATION

Genuine, not tokenistic

7.1 The important elements of consultation discussed by the workshop groups were that it had to be genuine, and not tokenistic. Several discussion groups talked about consultation being a ‘tick box’ exercise, where local authorities had made decisions, and in some cases, purchased materials for the shared space, before the ‘consultation’ process began.

“Decisions are already made by authorities and they meet stakeholders for a tick box exercise only. Materials have already been purchased so there is no opportunity for peoples’ voices to be heard.”

Delegate

- 7.2 Genuine consultation must also be in layman’s terms, without the use of design jargon for it to be inclusive. The proposed plans should be explained to the community as well as the reasons behind the proposals. It was suggested the Scottish Government’s Place Standard tool² could help here.
- 7.3 Visuals were thought to be very important in helping people imagine how the scheme will be and how they would use it. The consultation process should also provide alternative formats as well as tactile diagrams and models to assist those with a visual impairment in understanding what is being proposed.
- 7.4 Equally important is to host consultation events in buildings and at times of the day that allow for different groups of people to participate.
- 7.5 Delegates expressed a need to understand the ‘process’ and why a shared space evolved to its final form. One suggestion was for the planners to conduct an audit of the street or area to understand how it is currently used, find out how the existing streets work, or don’t work for different groups.

² <https://placestandard.scot>

Timing

- 7.6 It is important to start discussions with interested groups at the earliest stages of the planning of a shared space and for feedback from consultations to be timely. But it was felt equally important to continue consultation throughout the process, such as at construction stage, and at quality control stage to assess the quality of the workmanship.
- 7.7 Post consultation engagement was also suggested by one workshop group, who felt that it was important for the local authority to feedback on decisions they took, and why points may not have been taken on board.
- 7.8 Also discussed was that genuine co-production with disabled people takes longer, and so time should be built into consultation plans to accommodate the needs of disabled people.

Need to be flexible

- 7.9 Groups discussed the need for planners and street designers to be flexible and willing to listen to the views and needs of disabled and vulnerable users, and potentially change their designs as a result.

“A willingness to adapt along the way, as drawings may not meet expectations.”

Delegate

Specific consultation groups

- 7.10 It was suggested that consultation with representative groups is necessary in order to improve the quality and inclusivity of the design. Suggestions included Access Panels, who are groups of disabled volunteers must be involved. Also, shared space scheme designers should consult with Blue Badge holders, visually impaired groups, national organisations representing disabled people, and people with other protected characteristics, local schools, nurseries and the over 60s. Each of these groups should have a say in the proposal of a shared space scheme, as otherwise this can lead to “ill-feeling” towards shared space schemes when they are implemented. There also needs to be consultation with the residents and end users at an early stage to help shape the scheme.

“The inclusion of an access panel is vital.”

Delegate

7.11 One group felt that a good example of consultation was in Perth, where vulnerable users were in discussions with the local authority before the shared space was implemented. This was in contrast to East Dunbartonshire, where it was felt that there had been a lack of consultation and inclusion. It should be noted that East Dunbartonshire Council were not in attendance, but that consultation had taken place.

How to move forward

7.12 This section of the report sets out some of the suggestions that delegates made for taking the idea of shared spaces forward.

Move away from the term ‘shared spaces’

7.13 There was a general agreement that all streetscapes need to improve to be more accessible and livable. It was suggested that there should be a move away from the term ‘shared spaces’ and more towards how to make streets better places to live for everyone but especially for people on foot. This involved understanding how the current street is used, what works and doesn’t work and then planning to make it a better environment for everyone.

“What’s important is which techniques and methods are used to design a pedestrian friendly street, not how we name it.”

Delegate

Include disabled people in the design

7.14 All the workshop groups agreed that there was a fundamental need to have disabled people involved in the planning and design of future shared spaces, to ensure that they would be inclusive environments.

Changing attitudes

7.15 Overall, delegates suggested there is a need to change the attitude and behaviours of drivers. Some suggestions included having narrow roads and tall buildings, which can cause drivers to slow down, as they may feel restricted by these surrounding features.

Learn from international examples

7.16 This report has already touched on the cultural differences identified between pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists in continental Europe, compared to the UK. Delegates suggested that we should learn from continental European examples and try to replicate the elements of good practice, including the legal framework that underlies it.

Produce guidance

7.17 There was a suggestion that some guidance was necessary around shared spaces, which could recommend traffic speeds and volumes of traffic suitable for share spaces (such as relative numbers of pedestrians and vehicles per hour). One group discussed the idea of having a flow chart or process map which would help decide whether a shared space scheme is the best decision.

7.18 Guidance could also include best practice around design and consultation, at every stage of the process. As well as information on public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010.

7.19 A working group, perhaps led by a professional organisation such as the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) was suggested to draft suitable guidance on shared spaces although this may not be necessary depending on the current CIHT (Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation) work to produce a guidance document.

Future proof design

7.20 Two groups mentioned the need to 'future-proof' the design of streetscapes so that they are fit for the future and not just reflect current behaviours, usage, and car ownership. Important to this is the increase of electrical vehicles. There were concerns about safety, in that electric vehicles can be undetectable by sound and therefore be dangerous in a shared space environment.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The following are some key points that sum up the discussions from the Shared Space Seminar.
- There was a general acceptance of the need to improve the streets of Scotland to make them safer and more inclusive, particularly for people on foot. This could include adopting a 20mph limit in general in urban areas, and slower in some areas.
 - The phrase “shared space” was not felt to be helpful and should be replaced by a broader and more inclusive term that summarises the overall idea of designs that make streets ‘better people places’, rather than just movement spaces where motor vehicle traffic and cycles dominate, as in the majority of Scotland’s streets today.
 - Context is very important, in terms of what can be done, and can be sought to be done in a given location – the specifics of the area in terms of volume of traffic, volume of pedestrians and current use of the street are all important considerations in street design.
 - It is necessary to incorporate traditional features such as controlled crossings and kerbs if visually impaired people are to feel confident about negotiating the street safely. A kerb, or other delineation between ‘pedestrian areas’ and ‘vehicle and cycle’ areas is necessary in a way that can be recognized by people of all ages, and by disabled and non-disabled people alike.
 - Change is needed in the culture and education of drivers – ensuring they recognise that they cannot continue to be the dominant road users. This should be backed up with legislative changes.
 - When designing public spaces, disabled people and local communities should be involved from the beginning. There was a suggestion for “compulsory evidenced involvement” when designing and reforming public spaces³. Co-production of

³ In Scotland, Equality Impact Assessments are required to be made and deposited with the Scottish Government under the Equality Act 2010.

objectives should be the aim, not for communities to be 'presented' with a plan by local authorities.

- There should be formal guidelines on street development that ensure that road safety risks are identified and appropriately managed. Designing and implementing new designs should be an iterative process, with consistent reviews with communities about what needs improved.
- Linked to the introduction of formal guidance, was the idea that there should be revised education for drivers, such as including awareness of shared spaces into the driving test and Highway Code.
- More research was also a requirement, so that planners have case studies to work from, highlighting best practice from Scotland, the UK and internationally.
- Other delegates were of the strong opinion that shared space schemes should be scrapped altogether in favour of 'inclusive design'.

Afternote

On the morning of the seminar (25 April 2017) a Parliamentary Select Committee Report was published calling for an immediate moratorium on Shared Space roads due to the impact on disabled and vulnerable people. It called for the retention of kerbs and controlled crossings, for all schemes to be audited and remedial work undertaken to ensure access for all. The Report also called for the underlying guidance to be withdrawn and re-written to ensure inclusive access for all.

Specifically, this Report concluded:

“The Government should not shy away from the debate on shared spaces and take leadership. In light of the evidence that such schemes are excluding disabled people from the areas in which they are used, urgent action is needed.”

“We recommend that the Government requires local authorities to call a halt to the use of shared space schemes pending clear, national guidance that explicitly addresses the needs of disabled people. This should, in particular, instruct local authorities that controlled crossings, and regular height kerbs are to be retained and that they should undertake an urgent review of existing schemes, working with disabled people in their area to identify the changes that are necessary and practicable.”

“We recommend that the Scottish Government takes a clear lead and urgently updates the Designing Streets guidance on shared spaces with new guidance, founded on an inclusive design approach to ensure that any resultant schemes are inclusive, navigable and welcoming for disabled people. This guidance should:

- Be developed with disabled people;
- Explicitly address the needs of all disabled people, including but not limited to people who are blind and partially sighted, people who have ambulant mobility difficulties and people with a neuro-diverse condition or learning disability;
- Lay down consistent national standards so that disabled people can navigate, learn and independently use such schemes anywhere in the country.

- Be clear that safety and usability requirements, such as controlled crossings and kerbs are not optional;
- Provide details on how the requirements of the public sector equality duty and the duty to make reasonable adjustments apply to the design and implementation of such schemes.

The full report 'Building for Equality: Disability and the Built Environment' can be accessed here:

<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/631/63102.htm>

APPENDIX 1 DELEGATE LIST

Wayne	Duerden	Department for Transport
Sally	Gibbons	Department for Transport
Stuart	Hay	Living Street
John	Dales	Urban Movement
James	McKay	National Fed of Blind UK
John	Whitfield	DeafBlind Scotland
Mic	Ralph	SCOTS - Glasgow City Council
Susan	Fulton	East Ayrshire Council
David	Hunter	Edinburgh Napier University
Keith	Lynch	People First (Scotland)
Caroline	Kingston	People First (Scotland)
Paul	Ruffles	Sustrans
Sandy	Robinson	Scottish Government
Ken	Aitken	Transport Scotland
Sandy	Taylor	East Dunbartonshire Visually Impaired People's Forum
Robert	McComb	East Dunbartonshire Visually Impaired People's Forum
Una	Lee	Highland Council
Brian	Whittle MSP	Scottish Parliament
Catherine	Fergusson	Scottish Parliament
Mike	Harrison	SATA
Paul	Matthews	Sustrans
James	Miller	Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS)
Donna	Turnbull	Transport Scotland

Amanda	Birt	SATA
David	Gear	East Dunbartonshire Council
Keith	Robertson	Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland
Douglas	Gilroy	National Fed of Blind UK
Morven	Brooks	Scottish Disability Equality Forum
Aisling	Doyle	Edinburgh Napier University
Karen	Russell	CH2M
Alastair	Hamilton	Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS)
Ken	Reid	RNIB Scotland
Kevin	Argue	East Dunbartonshire Council
Tom	Rye	Edinburgh Napier University
Susan	Morris	Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland
Clare	Byrne	Spinal Injuries Scotland
Ian	McCall	Paths for All
Iain	Smith	Inclusion Scotland
Sarah	Gayton	Independent Campaigner
Tracy	McKen	TS Active Travel
Nick	Brian	Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS)
Margaret	Hutchison	East Dunbartonshire Visually Impaired People's Forum
Bryan	Mackie	City of Edinburgh Council
Nazan	Kocak	Edinburgh Napier University
Julie	Taylor	Pamis
Graeme	McQuaker	Transport Scotland
Suzanne	Meade	Edinburgh Napier University
Johnny	Cadell	Architecture & Design Scotland
Robert	Huxford	Urban Design Group

Helen	Aluko- olokun	Guide Dogs
Emma	Scott	Scottish Disability Equality Forum
Greg	McDougall	City of Edinburgh Council
Richard	Llewellyn	Edinburgh Napier University
Jenny	Miller	Pamis
Peter	Monk	Independent Planner
Rona	Mackay MSP	Scottish Parliament
Stephen	Fricker	Scottish Parliament
Graham	Thomson	Transport Scotland
Matthew	Simpson	Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS)
John	Shelton	Guide Dogs
Susan	Morris	Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland
Stuart	Douglas	Paths for All
Doug	Farnan	SCOTS - Dundee City Council
Emily	Alfred	Transport Scotland
Andrew	Barnes	SCOTS - Angus Council
Tom	Lister	People Friendly Design