Recommendations from Imtac on public realm proposals for Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 5

(November 2018)

Imtac is committed to making information about our work accessible. Details of how to obtain information in your preferred format are included on the next page.

Making our information accessible

As an organisation of and for disabled people and older people Imtac recognises that the way information is provided can be a barrier to accessing services and participation in public life. We are committed to providing information about our work in formats that best suit the needs of individuals.

All our documents are available in hard copy in 14pt type size as standard. We also provide word and pdf versions of our documents on our website – www.imtac.org.uk. In addition we will provide information in a range of other formats. These formats include:

- Large print
- Audio versions
- Braille
- Electronic copies on disc or via email in PDF or word
- Easy read
- Information about our work in other languages

If you would like this publication in any of the formats listed above or if you have any other information requirements please contact:

Michael Lorimer
Imtac
Titanic Suites
55-59 Adelaide Street
Belfast BT2 8FE

Telephone/Textphone: 028 9072 6020
Email: info@imtac.org.uk

Website: www.imtac.org.uk
Twitter: @ImtacNI

About Imtac

The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac) is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Its role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

The aim of the Committee is to ensure that older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Infrastructure (hereafter referred to as the Department).

About this report

This report has been prepared by Imtac in response to a request from the Department for Communities (DfC) for a street audit of the area covered by Belfast Streets Ahead Phase 5. Three separate audit surveys were undertaken in October 2018, each looking at current provision for pedestrians in sections of the streets involved. A number of individuals and organisations took part in the audit including representatives from Dementia NI, Guide Dogs NI, RNIB, the Department for Infrastructure and Imtac.
The report includes 3 sections. The first section is a report on the street audits, highlighting current pedestrian provision on each street. The second section is an overview of issues and challenges for pedestrians identified by the audits. The third and final section sets out recommendations designed to inform the development of design proposals for Streets Ahead Phase 5. In addition Appendix A contains specific comments from Dementia NI members who participated in the audits.

The following streets were included in this audit: College Square East, Great Victoria Street, Shaftesbury Square, Bradbury Place, Dublin Road, Ventry Street, Bruce Street, sections of Hope Street, Bedford Street, Clnce Street West, McClintock Street, sections of Franklin Street, Amelia Street, Brunswick Street, James Street South, Howard Street and Donegall Square South. Two crossings close to Shaftesbury Square on Donegall Pass and Botanic Avenue also form part of the audit.

Street audit findings

College Square East

There is a controlled crossing at the northern end of College Square East with across College Avenue at the junction with College Street and College Square North. The crossing from the eastern footway leads to a central traffic island on this dual carraigeway. The crossing should have a tactile tail leading to the building line.

From the traffic island the crossing across the northbound traffic lanes leads to a smaller traffic island. This traffic island is also the island for the crossing of College Square North connecting to the western footway of College Square East to College Avenue. The size of this island, the positioning of control boxes and connection to multiple crossings make this a confusing and hazardous location for some disabled people.

On the eastern footway there is a wide uncontrolled crossing across College Street. The radius of the kerb line means there is insufficient depth of tactile paving, particularly on the southern side.

A large A-Board obstructs the eastern footway shortly after this crossing.

The footway surface is rough and uneven. Approaching the junction with Wellington Place a vehicle entrance without dropped kerbs interrupts step free access and creates a potential trip hazard.

There is controlled crossing across the southbound lanes of College Square East at its junction with Wellington Place. It is part of a staggered crossing providing access to the western footway via a traffic island. On the eastern footway the positioning control box on the right hand side may make it difficult for people with a visual impairment to locate.

There is a control crossing across Wellington Place. Whilst the tactile paving and positioning of control boxes is good, some of the tactile paving is loose and unstable. Also during the audit vehicles repeatedly blocked the crossing during the pedestrian phase.

There is a second controlled crossing across the northbound lanes of College Square East to the large central traffic island. The use of tactile paving and control boxes is again good but some tactile paving is loose and unstable.

Trees roots have damaged the eastern footway and are a potential hazard.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Wellington Street. The granite kerbing is not flush with the carriageway on the section of dropped kerb on the northern side of the crossing.

Although broad the footway between Fisherwick Place and Howard Street is damaged and uneven in parts. Deep dish drainage channels are used frequently.

There is a staggered controlled crossing across via a small traffic island College Square North at its junction with College Square East. The positioning of control boxes on the island is problematic.

The footway in front of John Bell House is broad with street furniture located in a line. The orientation of cycle parking hoops could potentially create a hazard when cycles are parked and extend into the footway.

The steps at the entrance to John Bell House extend into the footway creating a potential hazard. Corduroy hazard paving has been provided at the top but not the bottom of the steps. A-Boards in the area can create an additional hazard.

To the south of this point there adjacent to the entrance of RBAI is a controlled crossing across the northbound lanes of College Square East to the large central traffic island. Both the provision of tactile paving and location of control boxes is excellent at this crossing.

At the vehicle entrance to RBAI the kerb has been dropped and tactile paving provided. Although of sufficient depth the tactile paving does not extend the entire length of dropped kerb.

The broad footway has outside RBAI been narrowed by the recent installation of a Glider halt. However a clear path has been left to the rear of the halt.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Murray Street. Although tactile paving has been provided it does not extend along the entire length of the dropped kerb.

There is controlled crossing across the junction with Grosvenor Road providing access onto Great Victoria Street. Although laid correctly the tactile paving is damaged, loose and uneven in places on the northern side.

Great Victoria Street

The tactile paving on the southern side of the controlled crossing across Grosvenor Road is again loose and uneven in places.

There is a staggered controlled crossing across Great Victoria including a traffic island. Although the tactile paving and control boxes have been installed correctly the tactile paving is loose and uneven in places. Although improved recently the traffic island is still narrow given the level of pedestrian usage.

A-Boards associated with the Grand Opera House obstruct the western footway. Deep dish drainage channels are also an issue.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Glengall Street. A section of the kerb on the northern side is dropped without tactile paving.

At the Europa Hotel there is a vehicle exit which includes an uncontrolled crossing with tactile paving. However there is a substantial area of flush surface without tactile paving. Bollards and trees create multiple hazards.

There is a wide controlled crossing across Great Victoria Street. The tactile paving and control boxes are installed correctly but paving is loose and uneven in places. Multiple bollards close to the crossing on the western footway create hazards. Participants in the audit felt crossing times at this busy crossing are insufficient.

There is an uncontrolled crossing across the vehicle entrance to the Europa Hotel. Although the kerb has been dropped and tactile paving provided, bollards and general design does little to make this area attractive and accessible for pedestrians.

The footway on the western side of Great Victoria Street is broad, however its surface is rough and uneven. A van and motorcycles parked on the footway create potential hazards.

The footway outside the Lincoln Building has a considerable cross fall from the kerb to the building line which makes using it difficult for some disabled people.

There is a deep dish drainage channel in the centre of the footway approaching the uncontrolled crossing at the junction with Hope Street. On the northern side there is a dropped kerb without tactile paving over its entire length. Greater depth of tactile paving should be provided on both sides of the crossing.

There is a controlled crossing across Bruce Street leading to a triangular traffic island. Tactile paving and control boxes have been installed correctly.

There is controlled crossing across Great Victoria Street at this point. Tactile paving and control boxes have been installed correctly. However a van parked on the footway on the eastern side obstructs the crossing.

The footway on the eastern side of Great Victoria Street is obstructed by works to the building at its junction with Hope Street. There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across Hope Street. Tactile paving is damaged and not sufficient in terms of depth. The dropped kerb on the southern side of the crossing is not flush with the carriageway.

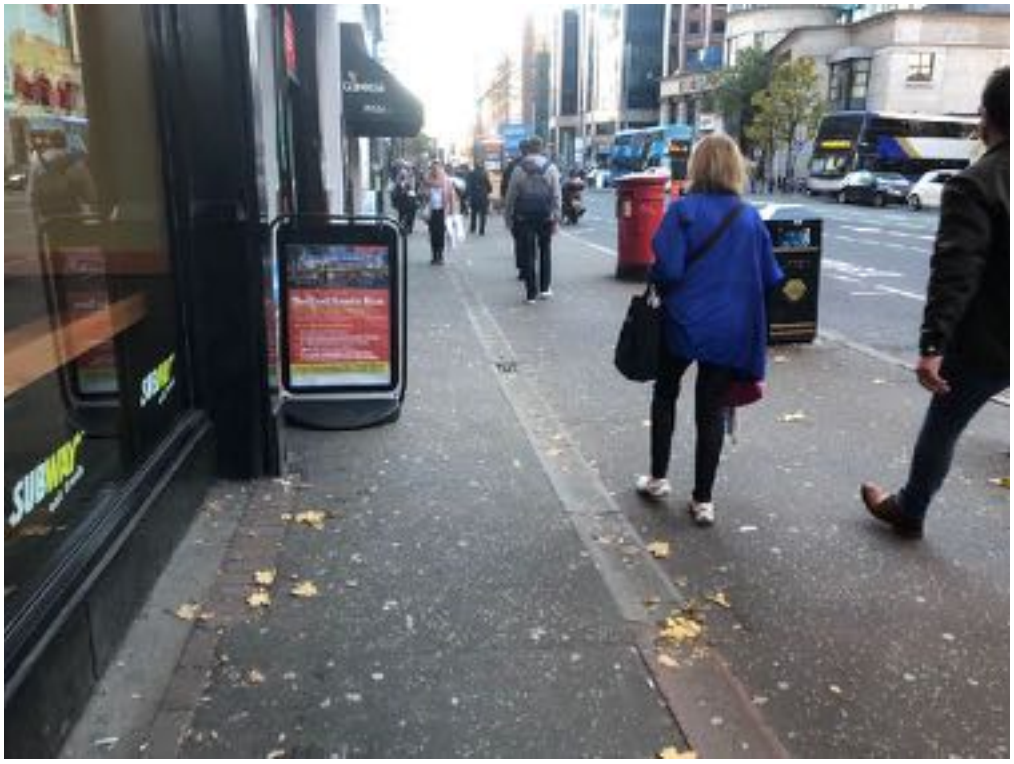
The eastern footway is broad from Hope Street to Amelia Street. A Boards and a dish drainage channel close to the building line create potential hazards.

Bus stops outside Dorchester House narrow the footway significantly. A clear but narrow path is provided to the rear of the shelters, however a dish drainage channel means it is not obstacle free.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Amelia Street. Sections of the dropped kerb on both sides of the crossing have no tactile paving. An A Board associated with the Crown obstructs the footway on the northern side.

There is a wide controlled crossing across Great Victoria Street at this point providing access to the Europa Bus Station. Although installed correctly feedback from participants indicates crossing times are too short.

The eastern footway towards Howard Street is broad but very busy. A Boards are a frequent potential hazard along this section.



Dish drainage channels are used throughout this section presenting a significant potential trip hazard in some locations.

There is a staggered controlled crossing across Great Victoria Street close to its junction with Howard Street. Although installed correctly the location of a lighting column close to the centre of the crossing creates an obvious hazard. The traffic island is to narrow for the level of pedestrian usage.

Returning to the western footway at the junction with Hope Street there is a controlled crossing from the triangular traffic island across the slip lane off Great Victoria Street onto Bruce Street. Tactile paving and control boxes have been installed correctly.

There is further controlled crossing across Great Victoria Street from this traffic island to a second triangular traffic island. Using this type of infrastructure creates a challenging environment for some disabled people. Due to the number of crossings in close proximity no audible signal is provided, although tactile cones are provided with control boxes.

Continuing south towards Queens there is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the entrance to a disused car park. This should be removed and a continuous footway provided.

Although broad the footway is obstructed by parked cars and A-Boards. Dish drainage channels create additional potential hazards.

There is a controlled crossing across Great Victoria Street close to the junction with Wellwood Street. Tactile paving and control boxes have been installed correctly.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across Wellwood Street. Bollards on the northern side create potential hazards. The depth of tactile paving is insufficient on both sides of the crossing and contrast is poor on the southern side.

The footway beyond this junction is very broad but parked cars, A Boards and multiple bollards create potential hazards. There is also a significant cross fall on the footway and a central dish drainage channel along its length.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Stroud Street. A bollard creates an obvious hazard on the northern side. Contrast between the tactile and surrounding paving is an issue as is the depth of the tactile on both sides. A section of the kerb on the southern side is dropped without tactile.

There is a controlled crossing from the triangular traffic island across Great Victoria street to the eastern footway at its junction with Bruce Street. Tactile paving and control boxes have been installed correctly.

The broad eastern footway is narrowed significantly between Bruce Street and Ventry Street by a line of bollards (indicating a boundary between shop frontages and the adopted footway?). Trees and traffic signs create additional hazards.

Bollards and traffic signs create multiple potential hazards approaching the in-line uncontrolled crossing across Downshire Place. Tactile paving depth is an issue at this crossing. The footway on the southern side is obstructed by bollards, a pavement cafe and A-Boards.

There is a controlled crossing across Great Victoria Street approaching its junction with Ventry Street. Although correctly installed bollards again create hazards.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Ventry Street. Tactile paving depth is an issue. A BT kiosk obstructs all large part of the footway on the southern side of this crossing.

There is a wide entrance/exit to the filling station on Great Victoria Street. This entrance is flush with the footway but no tactile paving has been provided to warn pedestrians.

Continuing towards Shaftesbury Square the eastern footway is rough and uneven and a deep dish drainage channel runs up its centre. Derelict buildings with security fencing mean this area is unattractive. Participants in the audit felt they would avoid using this area.

Bollards reappear to obstruct the footway on the approach to Shaftesbury Square which together with tress and street furniture reduce the useful pavement width.

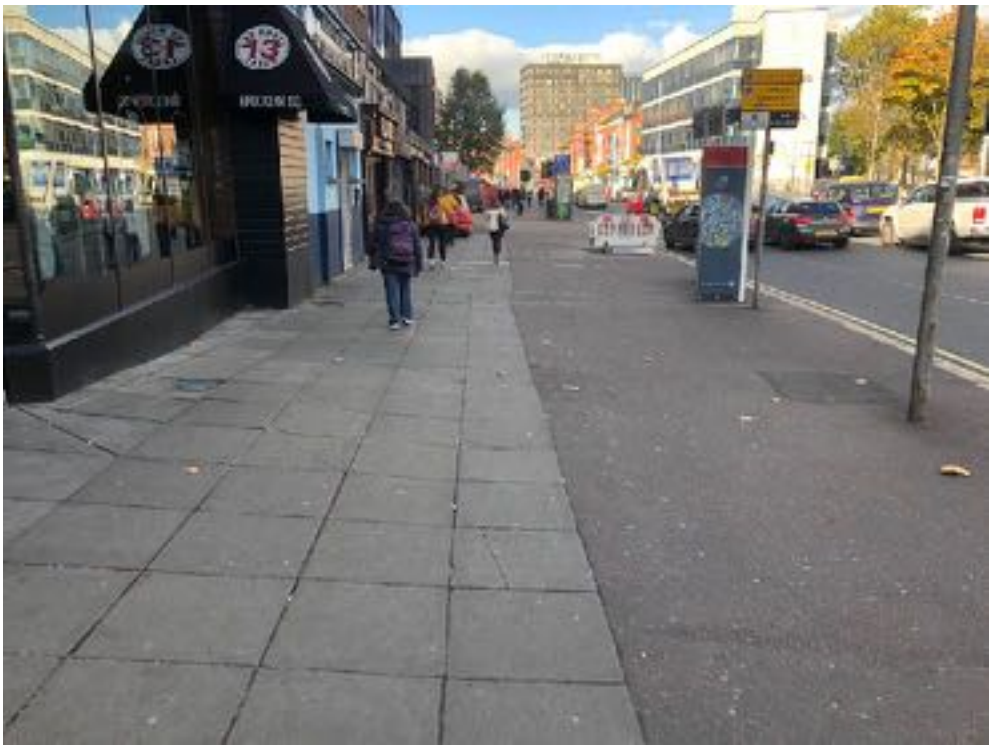
Shaftesbury Square

This section includes crossings on Donegall Pass and Botanic Avenue close to Shaftesbury Square.

There is controlled crossing on the western side of Shaftesbury Square beside the offices of Volunteer Now. The tactile paving on both sides has been laid incorrectly with the tail to the left rather than the right, however control boxes are included on both left and right signal columns.

There is another controlled crossing from the western footway of Shaftesbury Square across the northbound traffic lanes to the large central traffic island. Again the positioning of the tactile paving is incorrect with the tail to the left.

The western footway approaching the junction with Donegall Road is broad. The surface is rough and uneven. Parked cars, vans and a skip create potential obstructions.



There is a controlled crossing between Shaftesbury Square and Bradbury Place at its junction with Donegall Road. The tactile paving has been laid incorrectly on the southern side and the control box incorrectly positioned on the southern side. The tactile paving is loose and uneven in places.

There are two large central traffic islands and several smaller island/refugees providing pedestrian access across Shaftesbury Square. These islands through a series of controlled and uncontrolled crossings provide pedestrian connections from the west and south footways to the northern and eastern footways. Navigating this space independently will be a challenge for some disabled people.

There is controlled crossing connecting the larger central islands. Tactile paving does not contrast with surrounding paving. Tactile paving and control box have been installed incorrectly on the western island.

There is another controlled crossing connecting the eastern traffic island with the southern footway of Shaftesbury Square. Once again there is an issue with contrast and the positioning of tactile paving and the control box.

An inline uncontrolled crossing provides access between the eastern traffic island and the eastern footway of Shaftesbury Square. Condition of footways and tactile paving is poor.

Access from the large western island is provided to the northern central footway of Shaftesbury Square via two inline uncontrolled crossings situated at each end of the single lane link road. One of these crossings has been blocked by development works.

The footway on eastern side of Shaftesbury Square outside Equality House is broad although rough and uneven.

There is an inline uncontrolled crossing across the side street between the eastern footway of Shaftesbury Square and Dublin Road. Different colours of tactile paving slab have been used.

A Zebra crossing has been provided across Donegall Pass close to its junction with Shaftesbury Square and Botanic Avenue. The tactile paving is damaged, loose and uneven in places.

A staggered Zebra crossing has been provided across Botanic Avenue close to its junction with Donegall Pass and Shaftesbury Square. The tactile is damaged, loose and uneven in places and provides no contrast with surrounding paving.

Obstructions on the footway including a large A-Board and delivery pallets associated with a nearby business create potential hazards for pedestrians travelling from Botanic Avenue along the southern footway on Shaftesbury Square towards Bradbury Place.

Bradbury Place

There is an uncontrolled crossing across Albion Lane at its junction with Bradbury Place. The tactile paving does not contrast and is not in line.

There is controlled crossing across the northern end of Bradbury Place just after this point. The tactile paving on the eastern footway does not contrast and is loose and uneven in parts. The tactile paving and control box have been positioned incorrectly.

A-Boards restrict width on the busy eastern footway which also accommodates street furniture, trees and a bus shelter.

Deep dish drainage channels as used across the footway.

Problems with pavement clutter including numerous A-Boards intensify close to the crossing at the junction with University Road.

There is a staggered controlled crossing across Bradbury Place at its junction with University Road. The tactile and control box have been correctly installed on the eastern footway but not on the island. Contrast remains an issue.

The positioning of control boxes and provision of tactile does not meet acceptable standards on the western side of the crossing.

There is a controlled crossing across the junction with Lisburn Road providing access to the western footway of Bradbury Place. The provision of tactile paving and location control boxes is extremely poor at this crossing particularly on the southern side and does not meet acceptable standards.

A-Boards in places reduce the broad footway width on the western side of Bradbury Place.

A deep dish drainage channel runs down the centre of the footway approaching the junction with Donegall Road.

Tactile paving at the crossing across Bradbury Place is damaged, loose and uneven. The control box has been installed in the wrong location.

Dublin Road

There is a controlled crossing across Dublin Road at its junction with Shaftesbury Square. There is no tactile tail on either side of the crossing.

The footway on the western side is rough and uneven with deep dish drainage channels across the footway. The location of street furniture narrows the footway unnecessarily.

Tree roots have caused extensive damage to the footway in this section of footway, creating a hazard for all pedestrians.

The orientation of cycle parking hoops creates unnecessary additional hazards on the footway.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the southern junction with Ventry Street. The tactile doesn't extend the length of dropped kerbs and is of insufficient depth.

The orientation of cycle parking hoops and temporary road works signage create potential hazards on the footway.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the northern junction with Ventry Street. Tactile paving is missing from the northern side and does not extend the full length of the dropped kerb. Depth of tactile is again a issue. A picnic bench on the northern footway creates a potential hazard as do bollards adjacent to the tactile paving.

There is a controlled crossing across Dublin Road north of Ventry Street. Tactile paving and the control box have been installed incorrectly on the western footway. A deep dish drainage channel runs along the footway through the centre of the paving.

The western footway narrows considerably due to roadworks. A large A-Board almost completely obstructs the footway.

There is an in-line controlled crossing across Harmony Street. The depth of the tactile paving is an issue. There are multiple obstructions on the western footway including a pavement cafe, A boards and vehicles parked on the footway despite adjacent on-street parking.

There is a single dropped kerb with tactile paving leading onto Dublin Road near the junction with Bruce Street. There is no similar arrangement on the eastern footway.

A van belonging to Chest, Heart & Stroke obstructs the footway approaching the junction with Bruce Street.

There are three controlled crossings across the junction of Bruce Street with the Dublin Road and to the eastern footway of Dublin Road. Access to the across Bruce Street and to the eastern footway is via a triangular traffic island. The installation of the control box and tactile paving on the southern part of the crossing on the western footway is incorrect.

The crossing from the northern side of the western footway uses the correct arrangements for tactile paving and control box. However the paving does not contrast with tactile and the positioning of control boxes on the island is incorrect.

The tactile paving and control box on the crossing on the eastern footway have been installed correctly. However some tactile paving is damaged, loose and uneven.

The footway around Wetherspoons is rough and uneven but provides a broad and uncluttered approach to the junction with Bedford Street.

There is a controlled crossing across Dublin Road to a large triangular traffic island at its junction with Bedford Street and Ormeau Avenue. The crossing has by and large been installed correctly, however the tactile tail on the eastern side could extend further back from the kerbline.

There is an uncontrolled crossing across the westbound lane of Ormeau Avenue. The tactile has been installed incorrectly and the crossing is not in line. Some of the tactile paving is loose and uneven.

The eastern footway of Dublin Road is broad from Ormeau Avenue to Bankmore Street. The orientation of cycle parking hoops does create an unnecessary hazard.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Bankmore Street. The depth of the tactile paving is an issue on both sides of the crossing as is the contrast on the northern side.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing on the eastern footway across Marcus Ward Street with a traffic island/refuge at the mid point. The positioning of the crossing on the radius of the junction reduces tactile depth in places. The position of bollards is also an issue.

At the controlled crossing towards Shaftesbury Square the tactile paving and control box have been correctly installed.

The busy footway between the crossing and Salisbury Street is narrowed significantly by outdoor seating and street furniture.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Salisbury Street. The crossing has been indented away from the radius of the junction. Tactile paving is damaged and there is a significant section of dropped kerb on the southern side without tactile.

There is another in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Hartington Court. Located on the radius of the junction the depth of tactile is problematic. Some tactile tiles are cracked and broken.

A-Boards and temporary traffic signage restrict footway width between Hartington Court and Pakenham Street. A large dish drainage channel also runs down the centre of the footway.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Pakenham Street. Again located on the radius of the junction the depth of tactile paving is an issue.

Approaching the junction with Shaftesbury Square the condition of new paving associated with student accommodation contrasts starkly with the poor condition of existing footway surface.

Ventry Street

The surface of the northern footway is rough and uneven. Bollards line the kerb line adjacent to Fanum House and bins and rubbish obstruct the footway ahead going towards Dublin Road.

There is a car park entrance just after this point. The kerbs are not completely dropped and no tactile paving is provided to warn pedestrians.

The northern footway continues to be be narrowed by bins and other obstructions. Traffic and lighting columns create additional potential hazards.

Parked cars and A-Boards obstruct the southern footway.

There is no in-line crossing with appropriate tactile paving across Ventry Street at the T junction approaching the garage. Continuing towards Great Victoria Street a section of the footway has been dropped beside the garage but no tactile paving provided to warn pedestrians.

Bruce Street

Footway width on the southern side of Bruce Street is obstructed by trees and traffic sign poles.

A road works signs is a further obstacle approaching the junction with Dublin Road.

The footway on the northern side of Bruce Street is obstructed by a parked car and signage close to the junction with Dublin Road.

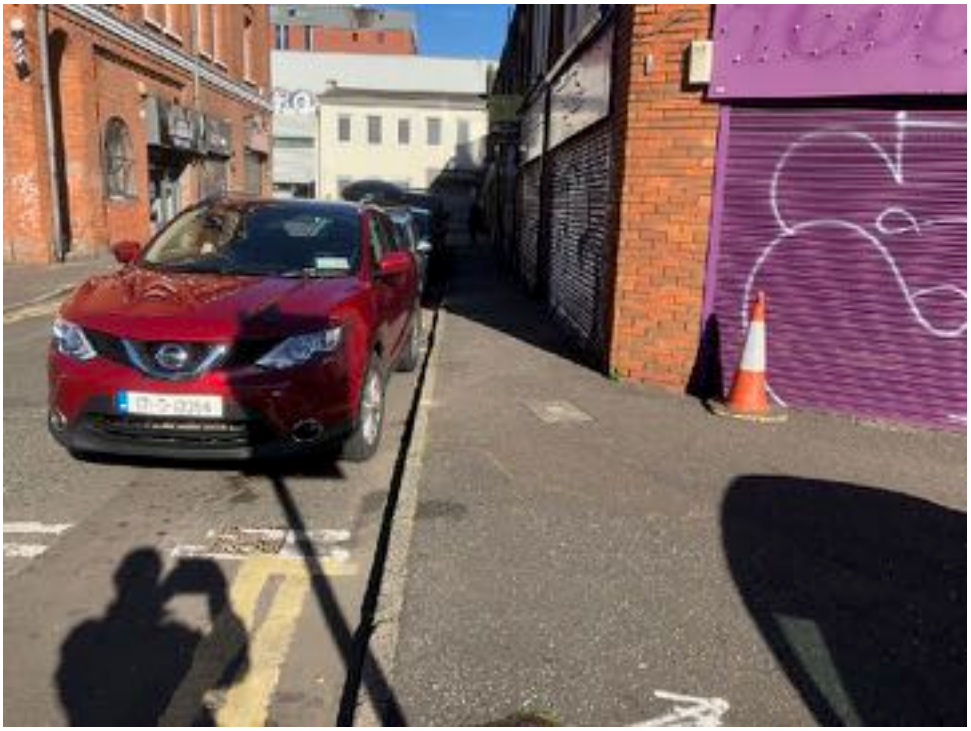
At the end of this wide footway there is a vehicle entrance with no dropped kerbs provided. The footway on the west side of the entrance narrows.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Holmes Street. Tactile paving depth is insufficient on both sides. Kerb heights are also an issue. Tactile paving leads directly into a large brick planter with footway either side.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Hope Street. Located on the radius of the junction tactile paving depth is insufficient. Cars partially obstruct the footway on the western side approaching the junction with Great Victoria Street.

Hope Street

The footway on the eastern side of Hope Street is narrow but uncluttered.



The footway on the western side is similar but includes dish drainage channels across the footway.

Hope Street turns sharply. Pedestrian access at a vehicle entrance at the corner of this turn are unsatisfactory.

Although the surface is rough and uneven the remaining footway on the northern side of Hope Street is uncluttered.

The footway on the southern side is again rough and uneven and contains deep dish drainage channels across the footway.

Bedford Street

There is a controlled crossing across Ormeau Avenue to the traffic island linking the eastern footway on Bedford Street to Dublin Road. The tactile paving and control boxes have been installed correctly. However contrast between tactile and surrounding paving is poor and the tactile is loose and uneven in places.

As part of Better Bedford Street some work has been undertaken to improve large brick planters beside the BBC building. The conversion of an existing planter to seating is welcome, however the location of trees in temporary wooden planters does narrow footway width.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Linenhall Street West. Some of the tactile paving is loose and uneven. The radius of the junction reduces the depth of the tactile to unacceptable levels in places and contrast is poor.

The footway between Linenhall Street West and Clarence Street is relatively broad and uncluttered. Participants in the audits were not complimentary about the pavement art with people with dementia in particular feeling it could make the street more confusing and difficult to navigate.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Clarence Street. Different colours of tactile paving is used on the southern side. On the northern side tactile leads directly into pavement cafe screening.

An in-line uncontrolled crossing is provided across Bedford Street outside Deane's includes a small traffic island midway. The tactile paving on the east side is laid incorrectly extending all the way to the building line. Contrast is poor on the western footway.

Participants in the audit welcomed the additional footway width provided as part of Better Bedford Street particularly around Harlem Cafe and the BT kiosk. However it was felt these benefits were to a degree reduced as street furniture was now located in the middle of the new footway.

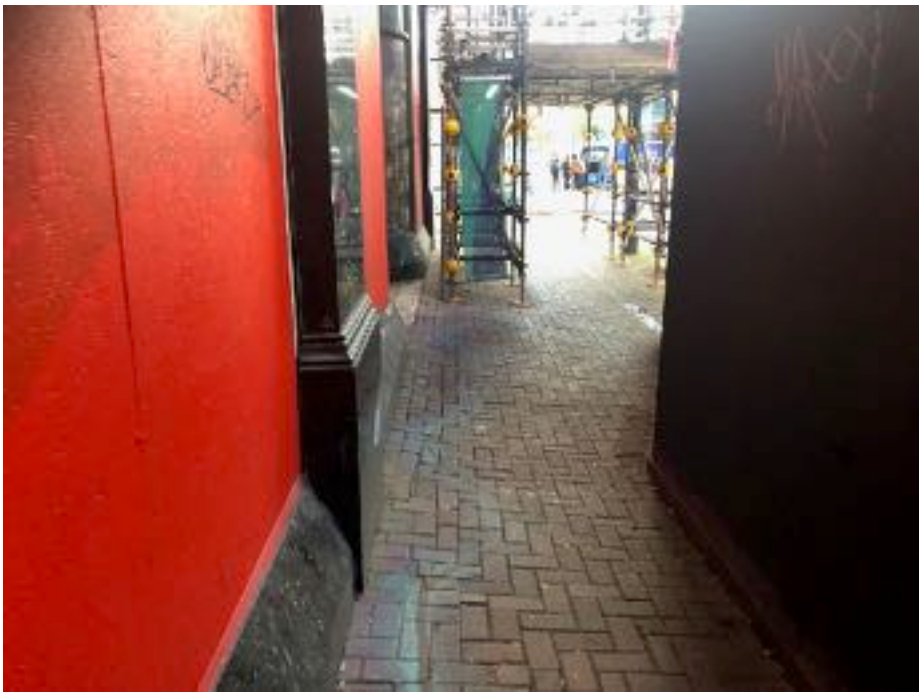
There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across tFranklin Street. Tactile paving on the southern side is the wrong colour and there loose and uneven slabs. Dish drainage channels across the footway on Franklin Street is an issue.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across Bedford Street north of Franklin Street which includes a small traffic island. The tactile paving has been laid incorrectly on the eastern footway, extending to the building line. Although laid correctly outside the Grand Central contrast is not good.

The eastern section of footway between Franklin Street and James St South is broad but obstructed in places by A-Boards and a parked vehicle.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with James Street South. The tactile on the northern side is obstructed completely by scaffolding although there is a section of the kerb has been dropped to provide temporary access.

The remainder of the eastern footway on Bedford Street is narrowed considerably by scaffolding and hoarding associated with the hotel development. This area would be difficult for some disabled people to navigate through.



There is a controlled crossing across Bedford Street at its junction with Donegall Square South and Howard Street. The crossing from the eastern footway is partially obstructed by building works. The right hand control box should be closer to the kerbside.

Tactile paving on the same crossing on the western footway is loose and uneven in places.

The section of footway between Howard Street and James St South is the main set down for many Metro and other bus services from outside Belfast. Frequently buses can access this stop and passengers must disembark onto the carriageway. Bus infrastructure is inadequate to meet the frequency of services using the street and the volume of disembarking passengers.

There is continuing along the western footway an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with James Street South. Tactile paving and kerb levels are an issue on the northern side of the crossing.

The footway around the new Grand Central Hotel has been upgraded to provide a high quality level surface. New tactile paving has been provided and correctly installed although contrast could be stronger. The in-line uncontrolled crossing across Franklin Street is partially obstructed by hoardings around works to the Ewart Building.

Temporary step free access has been provided for pedestrians around the Ewart Building. Although narrow this is an improvement on provision at many other city centre developments.

The footway beside the Invest NI building is broad and relatively clutter free.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Clarence Street West. The tactile paving is damaged and uneven and different coloured tiles have been used.

Frequent A-Boards, benches and a pavement cafe are major obstacles on the remaining section of Bedford Street.

Clarence Street West

A vehicle entrance without dropped kerbs prevents step free access along the southern footway of Clarence Street West.

An A-Board, planters and another kerbed vehicle entrance create further obstruction along the footway.

The northern footway is rough and uneven but largely clutter/barrier free.

McClintock Street

The entrance to the BBC Studios at the corner of Clarence Street West and McClintock Street has a partially dropped kerb with no tactile paving.

The western footway has been recently been re-laid following a new development. Whilst the surface is improved tactile paving at the vehicle at the vehicle entrance lacks depth in place due to the radius of the kerb. The provision of bollards reduce footway width.

The surface of the eastern footway surface is rough and uneven. Trees and street furniture unnecessarily restrict footway width to a low standard.
At the entrance to the underground car park a dropped kerb has been provided. However the tactile paving is damaged and lacks depth in places due to the radius of the kerb.

A van blocks the already narrow eastern footway approaching the junction with Franklin Street.

Signage provides a further obstruction adjacent to the entrance to the second car park. The depth and condition of tactile paving are again issues at the entrance.

Franklin Street

Parts of the southern footway have been closed due to the Ewart Building redevelopment.

An in-line uncontrolled crossing has been provided to provide pedestrians with alternative step free access across to the northern footway on this section.

There is an uncontrolled crossing across the junction with McClintock Street. With damaged assorted coloured tactile paving on the eastern side and a significant kerb show on the eastern side as well as issues with tactile depth this is a very unsatisfactory crossing.

Part of the northern footway has been upgraded as part of the Grand Central Hotel development. There is a cross fall on the footway which become more significant along the footway towards Brunswick Square. This makes using the footway difficult for some disabled people.

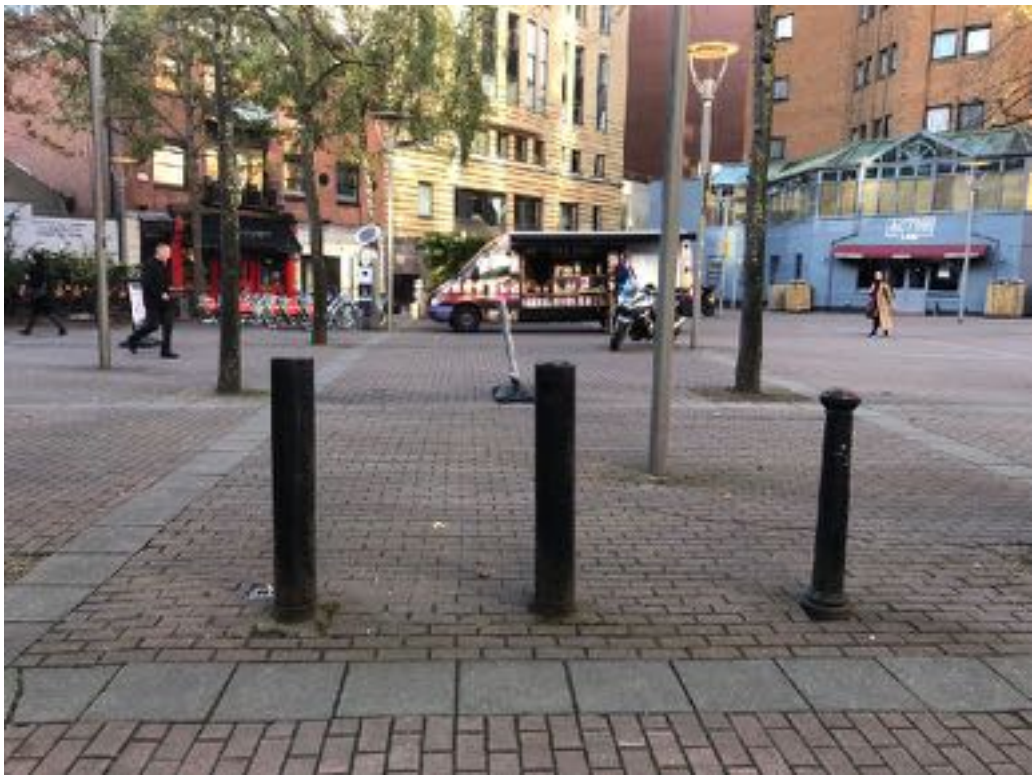
The remainder of the northern footway is rough and uneven. Traffic signs and an A-Board obstruct the footway approaching Blackstaff Square.

Brunswick Street and Blackstaff Square

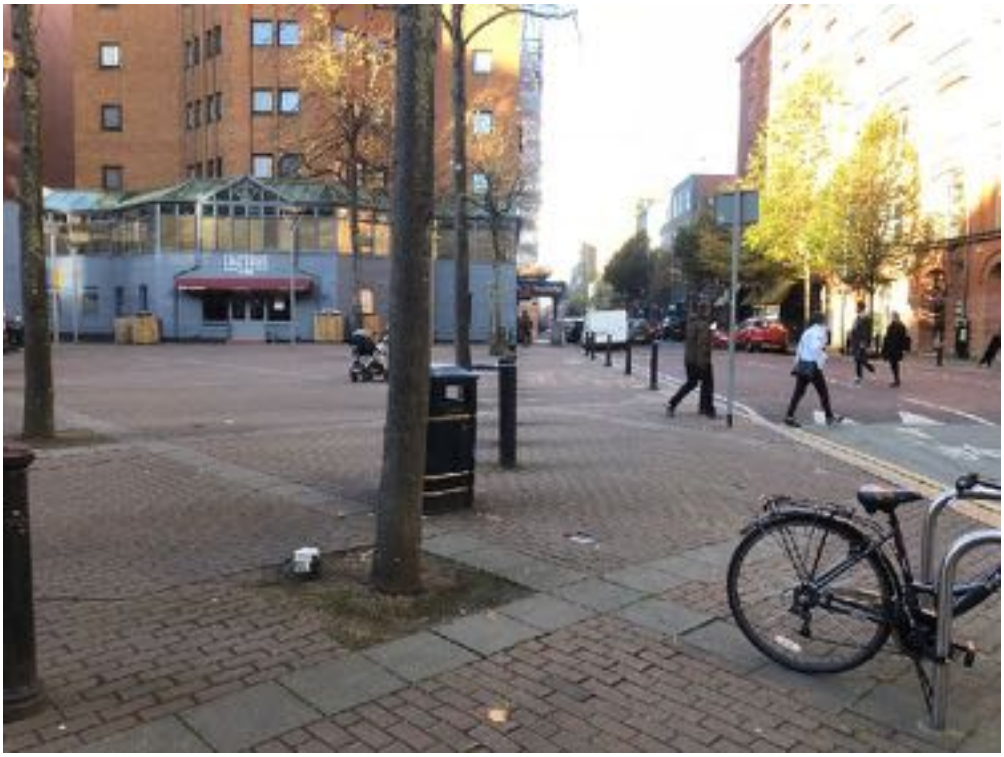
There is a table junction where Franklin Street, Amelia Street and Brunswick Street meet Blackstaff Square. Although tactile paving has been provided to highlight crossing points along the extremes of the raised table, there remain large sections of flush access between the footway and carriageway without any tactile surface.

The design of the junction makes its safe use by people with a visual impairment difficult or impossible. Other participants in the audit felt the layout was confusing and unsafe.

Blackstaff Square is one of a few public spaces in the city centre. Currently its layout is inaccessible and uninviting. All participants in the audit indicated it was not an area that felt safe.



The Square is littered with obstructions including multiple bollards, trees, lighting columns, A Boards, bins and cycling infrastructure. There is no obstacle free route through the area. There is also no seating emphasising this is a space where people are discouraged from lingering.



There is an inline uncontrolled crossing across Brunswick Street at its junction with Franklin Street. As well as issues previously highlighted about this table junction an A-Board has been positioned on the tactile on the northern footway.

The eastern of footway Brunswick Street is broad but tables and chairs which are not screened do represent a hazard.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across t James St South. Low kerb heights on southern side beside the crossing extending beyond the tactile paving are a hazard.

The remaining footway on the eastern side approaching Howard Street is broad but rough and uneven and includes dish drainage channels across the footway and a vehicle entrance with no tactile paving which appears to be in use.

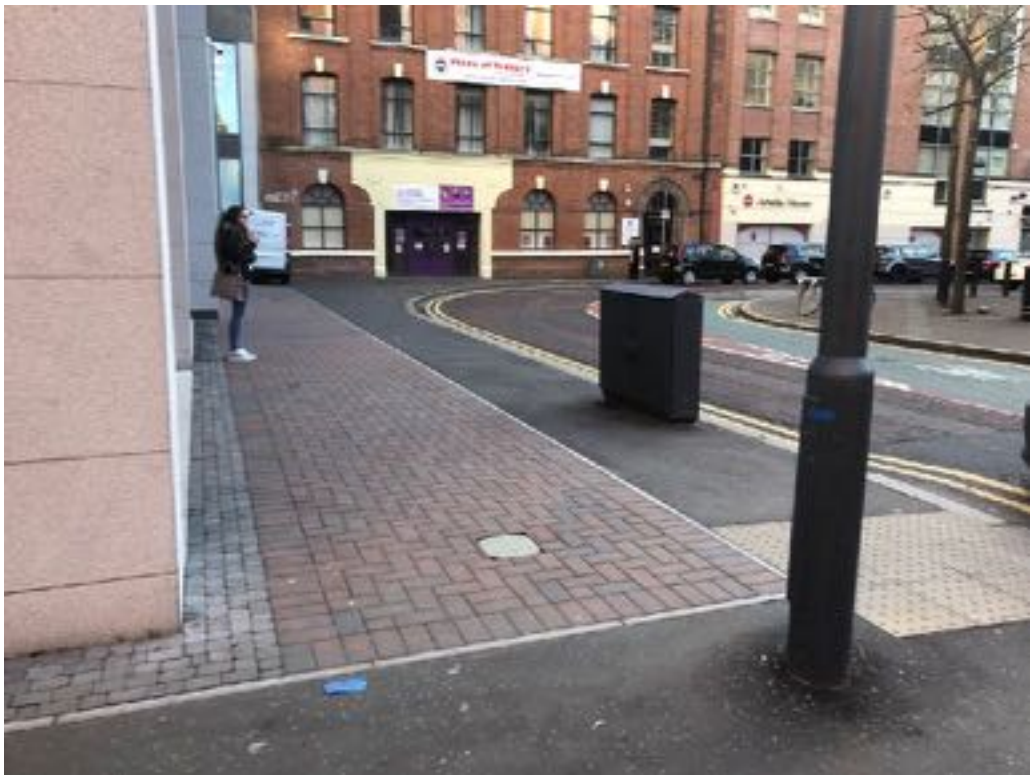
The footway on the western side is broad but rough and uneven in places.

The western footway is narrowed considerably by hoardings associated with building works. An unused vehicle entrance includes only partially dropped kerbs.

An A-Board obstructs the footway approaching Blackstaff Square.

Amelia Street

The eastern footway on Amelia Street is broad and has been recently upgraded as part of a hotel development. The positioning of a CCTV column creates a potential hazard in a very busy pedestrian location.



Amelia Street turns sharply. The southern footway narrows and is obstructed completely by A-Boards and a pavement cafe.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Bains Place. The carriageway surface is rough and uneven. Temporary road works signage narrows footway width approaching Great Victoria Street.

In addition to the uncontrolled crossing across the junction with Great Victoria Street another indented crossing has been provided. The kerb on the northern side has not been dropped and leads to the taxi rank on the southern side. Very confusing!

A-Boards obstruct the northern footway.

There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the side street between Amelia Street and Blackstaff Square. The condition of the tactile paving is poor and the depth of tactile paving is an issue on the eastern side.

James St South

The southern footway is narrow but uncluttered. A van obstructs the footway approaching Bedford Street.

The footway around the Grand Central Hotel has recently been upgraded. There is a significant cross fall on the flush footway at service entrances.

The northern footway is narrow, rough and uneven and contains frequent dish drainage channels across the footway. Bins obstruct the footway approaching Bedford Street.

Howard Street

There is a good example of a controlled crossing across Howard Street at its junction with Great Victoria Street and College Square East.

The surface of the southern footway between Great Victoria Street and Brunswick Street is rough and uneven. There are major issues with clutter including street furniture, businesses bins, A-Boards and pavement cafes.

The orientation of a cycle parking hoop creates an additional hazard on an already cluttered footway.

There is a good example of a controlled crossing across Howard Street at the western arm of its junction with Brunswick Street and Upper Queen Street.

There is a controlled crossing across the junction with Brunswick Street. Tactile paving is damaged, loose and uneven in places.

There is a further controlled crossing across Howard Street across the eastern arm of its junction with Brunswick Street and Upper Queen Street. Tactile paving is damaged loose and uneven in places.

The very broad footway between Brunswick Street and Bedford Street is narrowed by bus shelters, a series of A-Boards and a pavement cafe.

Large A-Boards continue to obstruct the footway approaching the junction with Bedford Street.

There is a controlled crossing across Howard Street at the junction with Bedford Street and Donegall Square West. Tactile paving is damaged, loose and uneven.

The section of Donegall Square West immediately surrounding this busy pedestrian crossing is extremely cluttered.

Large, unscreened tables on the northern footway on Howard Street pose a real hazard for people with a visual impairment. Deep dish drainage channels across the footway create additional hazards.

Large A-Boards obstruct the controlled crossing across the junction with Upper Queen Street.

Poles associated with a myriad of traffic signage obstruct the footway approaching the junction with College Square East. Deep dish drainage channels are also an issue.

Donegall Square South

There is series of controlled crossings across Donegall Square South at its junction with Adelaide Street and Donegall Square East.Access to Donegall Square East and the northern footway on Donegall Square South is via a small triangular traffic island, the design of which is confusing for some users. The positioning of a CCTV column is particularly problematic.

The northern footway along the back of City hall is broad and largely uncluttered.

There is a good example of a staggered controlled crossing across Donegall Square South at the junction with Linenhall Street. A central island with guardrails has been provided.

There are two vehicle entrances to the back of City Hall. Although long sections of the entrance kerbing are flush only partial tactile paving has been provided.

There is a controlled crossing across Donegall Square South at its junction with Bedford Street and Donegall Square West. Tactile paving is damaged, loose and uneven in places and the controlled box is obstructed by scaffolding on the southern side.

There is a controlled crossing across Donegall Square West. Tactile paving is loose and uneven in places. Clutter is an issue on the western side of the crossing.

The scaffolding obstructs the southern footway with the positioning of a pole associated with traffic signage creating an obvious hazard.

The footway is significantly narrowed by the outdoor seating associated with Ten Square which appears to be permanently screened.

There is a controlled crossing across the junction with Linenhall Street. Tactile paving is damaged, loose and uneven in places. Tactile paving of the western side of the crossing leads directly into an obstruction.

Tactile paving associated with the southern side of the staggered controlled crossing across Donegall Square South is damaged, loose and uneven in places.

The remaining section of footway between Linenhall Street and Adelaide Street is uneven. A bus shelter significantly reduces available width.

Signage and wayfinding

Distinctive wayfinding signage has been installed by Belfast City Council across all the street audited. Signage includes finger directional signs and site specific information and a combination of both.

Participants in the audits felt that much of the directional signage was too high and the volume of information too much to be useful. No participants understood the relevance of the different coloured arrows used in signage.

Participants found the design of information signage problematic. The size of text used and the lack of good contrast between the writing, images and background made the information difficult to read.

Key issues and challenges

A large area has been covered by this street audit. Many of the streets have differing characteristics, but there are significant common issues and challenges to the current design of all the streets which create barriers for pedestrians generally and for older people and disabled people in particular. Addressing these issues and challenges must be a priority for Streets Ahead Phase 5 in order to ensure all pedestrians benefit from improvements.

The general **condition** of footways in the streets audited is of major concern. Surfaces across the footways surveyed are in poor condition, mostly rough and uneven due to many utility reinstatements and wear and tear on ageing surfaces. There is almost universal use of deep dish drainage channels, both transversely and along footways, which makes them hazardous and uncomfortable for many people. Kerbing and kerb heights vary from location to location, creating an uncertain and unsafe environment for some pedestrians.

In addition to their condition, **clutter and obstructions** on the footways create additional barriers for pedestrians. The poor siting of street furniture including litter bins, trees, street lighting columns, traffic signs and cycle parking narrows footways for all and creates numerous barriers for people with a visual impairment. The ubiquitous use of A-Boards by businesses is a major concern on most streets. Unregulated pavement cafes create hazards on some of the streets as do bins belonging to businesses. Parking on the footway is not uncommon on some of the streets. Finally widespread new development in the city centre and associated temporary works, hoardings and scaffolding frequently impacts on the accessibility of footways. Combined with the condition, widespread clutter and obstruction on footways create an environment which is inaccessible and/or inhospitable and where disabled people, older people and others feel unsafe.

Another not immediately obvious but equally difficult barrier to pedestrian journeys across all the streets audited is the volume and impact of **traffic**. Many of the streets concerned are key traffic routes in and around the city centre and involve pedestrians sharing space with multiple lanes of motorised vehicles. This is not an environment where pedestrians in general feel welcome or safe, but impacts of traffic are much greater on groups such as older people and disabled people. During the street audits participants felt unsafe and anxious in many areas due to oppressive traffic levels. Moreover the air quality on the streets concerned has the potential to have detrimental impact on the health of any pedestrian using the area. By way of illustration a participant with a pre-existing lung condition experienced breathing difficulties for a number of weeks after taking part in one of the street audits.

Crossings are another area of significant issues and concerns. There are frequent controlled crossings across all the streets audited. However many of these crossings fall short of what are acceptable inclusive design standards with tactile paving and control boxes incorrectly installed. In other areas recent investment has meant crossings do meet design standards but the poor condition of tactile paving is a recurring issue. The use and provision of controlled and uncontrolled crossings using small triangular traffic islands is a particular concern for Imtac. This infrastructure is confusing for many older people and disabled people to use and is almost impossible for many people with a visual impairment to use independently. Finally the quality and provision of tactile paving and dropped kerbs at many uncontrolled crossings is poor and does not meet standards and in some locations neither dropped kerbs or tactile paving has been provided.

Many of the worst examples of poor crossing facilities occur at the most heavily trafficked locations including around Shaftesbury Square and at the Bruce Street/Hope Street/Great Victoria Street and College Square/College Avenue junctions. It is clear, in the opinion of Imtac, that in these areas the movement of traffic has been prioritised over the movement of people/ pedestrians. The current design of these areas creates a significant physical barrier for disabled people and older people using the pedestrian environment.

People who took part in the audit indicated there were other factors that made them feel **unsafe and anxious** in areas in addition to factors such as traffic, footway provision and crossings. Boarded up buildings and dereliction in parts of Great Victoria Street was cited as a reason why people would avoid the area. The uninviting design of the public space in Blackstaff Square presents another area where people felt unsafe and didn't wish to dwell. Creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment in many locations must also be a priority for Streets Ahead Phase 5.

Finally none of the participants found the current provision of wayfinding and information signage useful. This was largely due to design issues including the text size use and the lack of contrasting colours. It is important that Streets Ahead Phase 5 gives consideration to making signage and wayfinding in the city centre more inclusive.

Recommendations

This audit has illustrated how the existing layout and design of many of the streets in Belfast city centre creates an unpleasant, inhospitable environment for all pedestrians but also creates specific barriers that make pedestrian journeys difficult or impossible for many disabled people and older people. Imtac recognises that many of these are as the result of historic development and the piecemeal implementation of many individual projects over the years. This has been compounded by the lack of available resources to maintain and update infrastructure. Resolving these issues will not be easy and will require input and collaboration between a number of agencies including the Department for Communities, the Department for Infrastructure and Belfast City Council. Imtac has developed the following key recommendations.

All footways in the audited areas must be upgraded to provide step free, level, accessible surfaces with kerb heights including crossing provision at vehicle entrances consistent with current design standards. Particular attention must be paid to drainage solutions that promote a barrier free level surface on footways.

Clutter must be addressed on all footways through:

- Removing unnecessary and redundant signage and poles and relocating any necessary signage and mounting poles
- Removal of trees that obstruct or damage current footways, only replacing where width allows
- Rationalising the location of all street furniture including street lighting columns, traffic signage, bins, seating and cycle parking to create a consistent line that minimises obstructions and maximises clear footway width
- Street furniture should be designed to take account of the access requirements of a range of users eg cycle parking should incorporate a tap rail

Obstructions created on footways by the behaviour of others must be addressed through:

- A city wide ban of the use of A-Boards on pavements similar to that recently announced by Edinburgh City Council
- A zero tolerance approach to all parking on footways in Belfast City Centre
- A fully regulated pavement cafe licensing system, based on guidance which prioritises the requirements and safety of all pedestrians
- Better regulation and enforcement to ensure obstruction of footways by commercial bins is kept to a minimum

- Better regulation and enforcement on developers, utility companies and their contractors to provide accessible routes whilst works are taking place.

Making it easier to cross busy roads and streets must be addressed through:

- Replacing or repairing existing controlled crossings to ensure compliance with inclusive design standards
- Replacing uncontrolled crossings on heavily trafficked streets such as Bedford Street and Shaftesbury Square with controlled crossings
- Replacing Zebra crossing with Puffin crossings
- Replacing controlled and uncontrolled crossings on small triangular traffic island with a safe and accessible alternative
- Replacing or repairing existing uncontrolled crossings to ensure compliance with inclusive design standards
- Replacing the table junction at Blackstaff Square with a safe and accessible alternative

Streets Ahead Phase 5 should also make the most of opportunities to make streets feel more safe and welcoming through:

- Developing designs for making Blackstaff Square an inclusive and welcoming space
- Reducing the visual impact of dereliction on streets such as Great Victoria Street
- Reviewing and improving street lighting provision across all streets

Belfast City Council should undertake a review of current provision of wayfinding and information signage, specifically engaging with disabled people and older people about improvements to its accessibility and inclusivity.

Finally measures should be explored to reduce the current impact of traffic on all streets concerned including:

- Reallocating road space to pedestrians through broadening footways in certain locations - this could involve removal of some on-street car parking whilst still allowing access for Blue Badge holders
- Enhancing bus priority and passenger infrastructure on Bedford Street and other streets - this again could involve the removal of some on-street parking whilst still allowing access for Blue Badge holders
- New bus stops should include the use of bus boarding kerbs to reduce step heights and aid getting on and off
- Dedicated cycling infrastructure, separate from pedestrians and motorised traffic, accessible to disabled people and older people who use non-standard or adapted cycles

- Introducing measures to deter the most polluting vehicles from using the city centre roads

Appendix A - Feedback from Dementia NI members

Directional signage

“These signs are too high.”

“The images and writing need to be bigger.”

“I do not like to colour contrasts – The colour of writing on the coloured background makes it difficult to read.”

Tactile paving

“Good because you know you are close to the road.”

“They are in very bad condition.”

“I feel unsteady on this as it is wobbling around.”

Puffin Crossings

“These Puffin crossings are a nightmare. There are no beepers now, how can I tell how much time I have left to cross the road? I can’t see the green man anymore, this is dangerous for me.”

Footway condition

“The surface is very wobbly. I am already unsteady on my feet so this makes it even more difficult for me to balance.”

“There are too many loose and uneven pavings.”

Obstructions and clutter

“These sandwich boards (A Frames) are awful, they are everywhere. I fell like I am on an obstacle course.”

“ There is too much outside seating everywhere. This bar (Washington) is the perfect example, look how much space that they have taken up outside here.”

“Look here. Too many A-frames, yellow board signs, bins, too much café culture, bike racks, menu boards. Just look at this one small area.” (Howard Street)

Staggered crossings/junctions

“It is really confusing to cross here. (Outside old Belfast Met building) It’s really noisy and busy, I feel really disorientated here.”

“I’m not sure which green man or red man I am meant to be concentrating on here.”

Better Bedford Street

“There needs to be a place for this, this isn’t the place for it here.”

“This is not for functional use.”

“There is too much street clutter around here already, this makes it even worse, I don’t know where to walk.”

“I like it but just not on normal streets, it wouldn’t make me walk along it, in fact I am more likely to try to avoid it.”

“I wouldn’t walk down here anymore, that makes my eyes go all funny. I can’t concentrate on where I am trying to go.”