York Access Forum
(Formerly the Disability Independent Advisory Group)
24th May 2023, 10:00–12:00
Hudson Room, West Offices and on Teams
Meeting Minutes

Present:

Name	Organisation (if applicable)
Dave Smith (DS)	Access Officer, City of York Council (CYC)
Lauren Talbot (LT)	YorSensory (Wilberforce Trust)
Scott Jobson (SJ)	MySight York
Flick Williams (FW)	Independent
Sian Balsom (SB)	Healthwatch York
Tom Baynes (TB)	Representing SEND groups
Laura Brown (LB)	Local Offer & Participation Officer – Special Educational Needs (CYC) – supporting Tom Baynes
Stan Fairclough (SF)	Representing SEND groups
Catherine Fairclough (CB)	Supporting Stan Fairclough
Anne Norton (AN)	York Disability Rights Forum
Rachel Barber (RB)	Living 4 Moments
Diane Roworth (DR)	Independent
Hannah Hardcastle (HH)	Accessible Arts and Media
Joanne Ellis (JE)	Shopmobility
Will Orpin (WO)	Apprentice, Access Team (CYC)
Gareth Arnold (GA) (part)	Development Management Team Leader (CYC)
Helen Kane (HK) (part)	Access Consultant, Access Included
Naomi Demsash (ND)	Work experience student (observing)

No.	Item
1	**Welcome and introductions**
	DS welcomed all attendees (in person and online via Teams) to the meeting of the group and everyone introduced themselves.
2	**Minutes from last meeting**
	Minutes reviewed and agreed as correct apart from one omission:
	Apologies received from Iain Mitchell (Thomas Pocklington Trust) but not recorded.
	All actions completed apart from action 2 in item 8 – Claire Foale is finding out if the accessibility specification for the new platform can be shared with the group initially.
	Matters arising from the minutes:
	Supplementary Planning Group (SPG)
	• FW raised points which were discussed under the existing agenda item 3 below.
	Purpose of the access forum
	• FW sought clarification around the purpose of the group. **DS** explained that the group would be a two-way channel for group members to raise issues with **DS** and for **DS** to bring items to the group for discussion and consideration. Specifically, FW stated that following the last meeting, she and another attendee had raised the issue of the Blue Badge application process. DS stated that all members (including those unable to attend a meeting) may ask for any issues to be added to the agenda in advance of the next meeting.

3	**Presentation – Supplementary Planning Group (SPG)**
	Purpose of the SPG
	FW explained that her understanding of the SPG is to draw up the supplementary planning document (SPD), as passed in the council meeting in October 2022.
	DS – proposed that the aim of the group is to work on the SPD at the same time as reviewing planning applications and offering advice and guidance on how they may be improved from an accessibility perspective. The SPD can then be informed by this process and drawn up so it can be applied by the planning teams to new applications, reducing the reliance on the SPG in the future. DS stated it was important that we continue to try to influence planning decisions at the outset to try and avoid or minimise the impact of decisions, in order to get it right first time, and there is a commitment from **GA** on this.
	FW asked how having a planning document that is reviewed and commented on by members of the SPG differs to a group of people that may object to planning applications (as separate from the SPG).
	GA stated that legally there is no difference between the two. However, the SPG will be recognised by the council as having been set up specifically for the purpose of feeding into applications and giving the planning team advice on accessibility issues. As such, the group would have its own part of the agenda as consultee to the committee. Consultees set out the parameters of what they are interested in and what they will comment on. This will only be in relation to buildings that the public has access to and planning applications in the public realm.
	Hostile vehicle barriers are not subject to planning permission as Highways have special powers to carry out those works.
	DS confirmed that individuals may also still continue to comment on applications as they have done in the past.
	The process
	Need to identify the planning applications the SPG are interested in.

Options proposed by GA to manage this:

1) The planning officer determines (based on a list of criteria set by the SPG) whether a planning application comes within the remit of the SPG; or

2) The SPG chooses from the weekly list of applications which they want to contribute to.

For the SPG, it would be preferable to have face-to-face/Teams/hybrid meetings to review the applications of interest and provide comments for consideration.

DS felt it important that the SPG has direct engagement with the relevant planning officer on whatever plans are chosen.

Time commitment for the SPG – This will depend on how many applications the group wants to look at, the size of the group and how the group chooses to manage this from a resource perspective.

Due to the potentially huge time commitment and the fact that other organisations (e.g. the YDRF) already submit comments on applications, it would be preferable to prioritise creating the SPD (see below). The group agreed this was a priority.

AN asked what commitment the council will give that the SPG will be listened to.

GA explained that the council has a statutory obligation to take into account comments raised on planning applications. Where a relevant policy exists, this carries more weight, as the law says that a decision must be made in accordance with that policy.

SB suggested that part of the way forward may be to remind the council of its commitment to adopt the social model of disability. Suggested the YAF may wish to ask the council to confirm its commitment through their pledge and ask for this to be added into the planning policy for the city. This would ensure it is built into the council's planning systems and processes. This may offer a means of ensuring a commitment to, for example, accessible housing (where none currently exists). There would need to be agreed minimum standards of accessibility that are guaranteed to be in place.

DS stated that it should be a goal of the YAF generally (including the SPG) to encourage the council to create new policies by bringing areas of concern and suggestions of how such policies can be developed that will prevent issues arising that impact on disabled people.

LT - asked that consideration is given to how accessible the planning process is i.e. can someone read it, use the internet to get on it, is it in their preferred language or method, and the same for how comments are gathered. By removing the barriers of people being able to make comment it may gather momentum from a broader demographic whose voices may not have been heard before. If creating new policies, then ensuring the process is accessible for all initially is a proactive approach.

The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The group asked what status the SPD will have. Will officers be obliged to ensure it is followed in all applications?

GA confirmed it depends where it fits in the suite of development planning documents the council has. If an SPD is prepared that is outside the local plan with no local planning policy to attach it to, it will carry less weight, but will still be taken into account. GA made a distinction between the 'legal' strength of a SP document and the 'actual' strength. An SPD not linked to a planning policy can only ever be a 'draft'. However, where it includes well-made criteria, the council will still give it more weight. So even though a draft, officers will get used to using it and it can become a 'go to' document for consideration.

FW proposed the need to produce supplementary planning guidance that every new developer must comply with (as has been adopted in the City of London).

SF stressed the importance of accessibility in plans being considered from the outset and gave changes to the Wheelchair Centre as an example of where this has not happened.

DS confirmed that the document will be for planning to consider at the outset when setting up the scope of a project.

RB highlighted the strong economic argument for inclusive design from the outset, so projects are 'right first time' in terms of accessibility.

RB suggested that, as a starting point, the SPG could pull together a checklist of things the council needs to consider for every planning application.

SF proposed that the document be drawn up in collaboration with the planning team.

Monitoring of consideration of the SPD by planning officers

DS suggested the SPG could carry out dip checks to ensure compliance or that the SPG feeds back collectively on whether the SP document is acceptable.

Training for the SPG

If any members of the SPG wish to still comment on behalf of the group on new planning applications, there may be a training need in terms of how to read plans that can be addressed by the planning team.

Accessibility training for the planning officers

The group agreed that planning officers should receive training in inclusive design (including planning guidance) to ensure consideration from all impairment perspectives, not just those that are represented in the SPG.

Though not the job of the group to train officers, the SPG can discuss what training the group feels it would be beneficial for officers on GA's team to have, and this training requirement can be incorporated into the SPD. GA will then be asked to source funding for this training.

GA left the meeting.

Actions:

- **DS** asked that those who wish to be part of the SPG who have not yet told him, to let him know.

- **DS** to set up an initial meeting over Teams to look at best practice of what the council should be doing, based on research into existing practice elsewhere.

- **All** to send **DS** any examples of best practice from elsewhere, for consideration by the group.

4	**Post-election – Blue Badge City Centre Access**

Pavement obstruction affecting accessibility.

Discussion around the Hostile Vehicle Measures (HVMs, i.e. bollards) being installed on Lendal and High Petergate.

Lendal – concerns raised around the lack of space around the bollards and the 'bottleneck' they create making the pavements very cramped, unsafe (especially in an emergency) and unacceptable. The planning team has confirmed that the passageway is compliant with the minimum width and that

once the bollards have been installed, there will be space between to reduce pinch points. However, during footstreets hours when the barriers are closed, there will be minimal space.

FW and DR stated that the already narrow Lendal pavement has been made worse by topiary and A-boards placed outside businesses, for which proper enforcement of the policy is needed.

High Petergate – FW pointed out that no allowance has been made for the stone jutting out from the adjacent building, narrowing the width to the bollard sensor.

Access to the city centre post-election

DS informed the group that the new administration are listening and that he has made it clear that the YAF wants to make its own contribution in terms of how blue badge holders can once again access the city centre.

Following feedback from several group members, **DS** confirmed with the group that the minimum level of acceptance to be requested in terms of access is the equivalent of that in place in 2019, with the proviso of a full review of blue badge parking in the city centre. It was acknowledged that, for several reasons (including the HVMs and extending the footstreets), exactly the same access will not be possible. **DS** confirmed that the newly elected council has committed to restoring access (during their administration over the next five years), but that the future beyond that cannot be predicted or guaranteed.

Actions:

- **DS** agreed at the request of the group to identify the relevant person, share these concerns and request that the HVM installation be paused. Agreed to feed back the response to the group.
- **DS** to share with the newly elected members the request of the YAF to restore an equivalent level of access to the city centre as was in place in 2019, with the proviso of a full review of blue badge parking in the city centre.

5	**Any other business**
	Coney Street Riverside Project **HK** explained that she is working with the developers.

An engagement event was held on 9th May 2023 where the developer's designs were presented for comment by the public. All comments will be collated into an Access Statement and HK has completed an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), which she will summarise and bring to the next meeting in July.

Several members of the group expressed finding the event very helpful and it was hoped this would act as a model for the council in the future.

HK offered to bring to the next meeting the tactile model and images and comments for the group to add any further comments if wished. She was also happy for people to email her directly at helen@access-included.co.uk

Actions:

- **HK** to bring tactile model and images to July YAF meeting when she will talk further about the project.

Planning for events in the city centre

AN asked what planning for disabled access there is for large events (e.g. the King's recent visit).

DS confirmed we tried to provide this but there was not enough notice on the latest occasion for the landlord (of the area chosen) and for security. However, there is a commitment to come up with a solution for future events.

CYC Blue Badge Team

DS is awaiting feedback and statistics from the team. This item will be carried over to the next YAF meeting.

Actions:

- **DS** agreed to ask if a member of the Blue Badge Team can attend the next YAF meeting.

Terms of Reference

Actions:

- **DS** agreed to email a draft Terms of Reference document to the group for comments.

11.	**Next meeting**

The meetings for the rest of 2023 were confirmed as:

26 July   10:30 to 13:00

19 September 10:30 to 13:00

	22 November 10:30 to 13:00 All at West Offices and online (Teams)