

**DISABILITY ADVISORY & ACCESS FORUM
7 OCTOBER 2020
6.00 - 7.00 PM**



Present:

Councillor Mrs Isabel Mattick, Bracknell Forest Council (Chairman)
Councillor Michael Brossard (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Lizzy Gibson
Councillor Mrs Sandra Ingham
Mark Sanders, Healthwatch
Samantha Wood, Bracknell Forest Council
Philip Bell, Involve
Harjit Hunjan, Bracknell Forest Council

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Bracknell Forest Access Group meeting held on 4 March 2020 were approved.

Arising from the minutes, it was noted that the Befriending service formerly run by Involve was now being run by Age UK since March 2020, under an alternative scheme. Befriending service users under Involve had been informed of the handover, and many service users had transferred across to Age UK's service.

2. The Deck accessibility

Chris Mansfield, Town Centre Regeneration Manager updated Forum members on plans for The Deck.

Planning permission had been granted in January 2017, for a complete redevelopment of the former Bentalls store. The new development would include mixed retail, leisure, and community spaces.

The scheme permitted in 2017 showed a radically redeveloped site, including a roof covering, open space for events, and units to support a vibrant night-time economy.

The level access from the High Street to The Ring would be of a lesser gradient than currently.

Publically accessible lifts were available with external access to ensure that the steps were not the only access to The Deck space. It was noted that the new lifts would be more obvious than those in Bond Square.

The 'at level' connection from High Street car park would be maintained into the Deck, as was currently the case at Princess Square.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- There were suitable refuge points for those with disabilities to wait for the emergency services to provide assistance.
- The walkway past the old McDonalds would be the same width as currently.

- It was noted that cyclists were already not allowed to cycle in the town centre, but that enforcement of this remained an issue.
- The flexible event space would be in the form of seated steps like in Bond Square.
- There would be a flat level entrance into each unit. In units which were double height, it would be the responsibility of the tenant to ensure the building complied with building regulations and accessibility requirements.
- It was understood that the flexible event space could be used as a rest space without buying food or drink.
- Forum members were reminded that the new space was wholly owned by The Lexicon and Bracknell Regeneration Partnership.
- Textured floor space was planned into the final hard landscaping detail to help those with sight impairments.
- Forum members asked Chris to raise their concern around the lack of public toilets planned for the Deck with the developer and architect, and in particular the lack of a Changing Places toilet. Members felt that the existing Changing Places toilet in the Lexicon would be too far away for users of The Deck, and the existing toilets in Princess Square were too far away as they were on the third floor.
- Bracknell Regeneration Partnership were working on the configuration of tenants and occupiers; however this work had been delayed by difficult economic circumstances as a result of COVID-19. The 24 month development timescale was caveated by these extraordinary circumstances.

Forum members thanked Chris for the update.

3. **Items for Future Meetings**

- Community Response Scheme – Healthwatch and Involve
- Changes to Blue Badge scheme

4. **Any Other Business**

Forum members noted that there was no quick route for people with disabilities to access doctors' appointments, as doctors' appointments were in high demand for the general population at the moment.

Sam Wood reported that new Access Able guides were available, and the new guides would include a COVID-19 secure check

Harjit Hunjan reported that the COVID resident impact survey was on its way to the Council's Executive, and the results would be published on the Council's website shortly.

Councillor Mrs Mattick queried whether The Deck would include any units which supported the Safe Place scheme.

CHAIRMAN