

ACCESS ADVISORY SUB COMMITTEE

13 JANUARY 1999

Present: Councillor Harrison (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Clifford (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Miss Haydon
Councillor Mrs Sutcliffe
Councillor Piasecki
Miss M Abbott, Downshire Resource Centre
Mrs C Cowap, Bracknell Council for Voluntary Service
Ms C Dann, Bracknell Users Group
Mrs I Mattick, Triple "A"
Mr M Jackley, Berkshire County Blind Society
Ms T Barker, Forestline Community Transport
Mr M Mace, Forestline Community Transport
Mrs J Plumb, Mental Health Carers Support Club
Mr A Tarry, National Federation of the Blind
Mr Tilbry, Arthritis Care
Mrs Tilbry, Arthritis Care

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Finnie
Mrs V Ashby, Bracknell Carers Group
Mrs Aird, MENCAP
Ms H Hart, Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre
Mrs S Kearton, Bracknell Citizens Advice Bureau
Mr E Mallett, Red Diamond Disabled Sports Association
Mrs P Sanderson, The Ark
Mr M Shrimpton, Berkshire Disability Information Network
Mrs J Simmonds, SCOPE

13 Substitute Members

The Committee noted the attendance of the following substitute member under Standing Order 38:

Councillor Miss Haydon for Councillor Finnie.

14 Bracknell Regeneration Trust (BRT)– Development Proposals for Bracknell Town Centre

Stuart Lyell from Allied London Properties, Tessa O'Neill from Building Design Partnership and Bob Pinkett from Peter Brett Associates gave a presentation to the Access Advisory Sub Committee on the development proposals for Bracknell Town Centre.

BRT submitted a planning application in June 1997, however, the Secretary of State would be looking at the application along with proposals submitted by Legal and General and a public inquiry would be starting in March.

Key issues addressed in the development proposals were based on the following:

- Local businesses
- Public transport
- Pedestrianisation
- Regenerating existing facilities
- Leisure and catering

The proposals provide a mixed-use development, incorporating shopping malls, office accommodation, leisure facilities and housing. The development also included the relocation of current facilities including the Market, Police Station, Library and Citizens Advice Bureau.

Pedestrians

Improved access for pedestrians to the town centre was proposed. Key to this was the removal of subways where possible and the provision of street level pedestrian crossings. Where subways remain, improved security measures would be introduced including lighting and refurbishment plans.

The creation of gateway points to identify access routes into the town centre would be created and a new East/West route through the town centre was proposed, providing a more direct route to the Peel Centre.

Public Transport

BRT reported that there would be improved public transport to and from the new town centre. A partnership agreement would be developed between BRT, the bus company, South West Trains and the taxi trade. A key objective in any agreement would be improvements in the accessibility of vehicle fleets for disabled people, as well as improved services. Discussions had also taken place with community transport operators, as BRT were keen to work with all transport providers in the area to secure choices for disabled people when looking at accessible transport provision.

BRT reported that the bus station would be relocated and a new station would provide direct access to Jubilee Place. Waiting facilities and passenger information would also be improved, including the provision of talking bus stops. A desire to establish a state of the art way of finding system throughout the town centre for people with sensory impairments was also stated.

It was also proposed that community transport operators would have access to key bus stops around the town centre and taxi access points.

Improvements proposed at the rail station included lift access to platforms, ticket office refurbishment, audio signage and tactile paving.

BRT were also negotiating with taxi operators to improve on current services, particularly from an access perspective. The taxi trade would be encouraged to provide a range of accessible vehicles and ranks close to the shops providing seating, shelters and an information point.

Car Parking

BRT were proposing 156 orange badge-parking bays, which would be conveniently situated and appropriately sized. Most parking would be available in the multi-storey car parks, however, on street parking lost, as part of the redevelopment would be relocated.

Shopmobility

The proposed shopmobility scheme would be situated in Jubilee Place next to the bus and rail stations and convenient for car parking. The service would provide scooters, powered and manual wheelchairs, helpful staff and escorts.

Issues Raised by the Access Advisory Sub Committee Members

There was concern expressed by some members of the Sub Committee as to how bus and rail improvements were to be achieved, as operators are private and separate companies. BRT explained that initial discussions with the operators had been positive and that the developers would enter into legal agreements with rail and bus operators to secure improved services and better access for disabled people to those services.

The existing subway system was again highlighted as an important access difficulty in the town centre area, particularly for elderly people. There was concern that some places where difficulties were being experienced were not included in the improvements, e.g. the Priestwood/3M subway. BRT explained that in some cases the physical difficulties of the existing subways were so great that alterations needed were fundamental and therefore extensive and difficult to achieve without huge disruption and financial cost. However, Committee Members welcomed alterations that were proposed as significant improvements.

Members suggested that the disabled persons parking bays be accompanied by wheelchair accessible WC facilities and other amenities which would assist disabled people. Discussion around the provision of bays also included the issue of which vehicles could be accommodated by the proposed multi-storey car parks, as many vehicles used by disabled people were high vehicles. It was also raised that a number of bays were needed with rear unobstructed areas away from traffic for tail gate lifts and rear access vehicles often used by disabled people. BRT stated that they have researched a number of vehicle types used specifically by disabled users and were confident that the majority of vehicles would be able to access the car parks. They noted the point relating to facilities located in the vicinity of disabled persons parking areas.

Office accommodation for voluntary sector organisations was raised as a current problem. Coopers Hill, used by many local organisations, was inaccessible to many people, particularly those organisations located on the

first floor. A new voluntary sector building providing accessible office accommodation would be very beneficial to the local community.

The final comment of the evening was one of support for the proposals and the access improvements detailed in the presentation. The scheme was welcomed as having taken on board a number of key access issues.

The meeting commenced at
7.30pm and concluded at 9.30pm

CHAIRMAN