

West Linton Street Access Audit

Tweeddale Access Panel

November 2022

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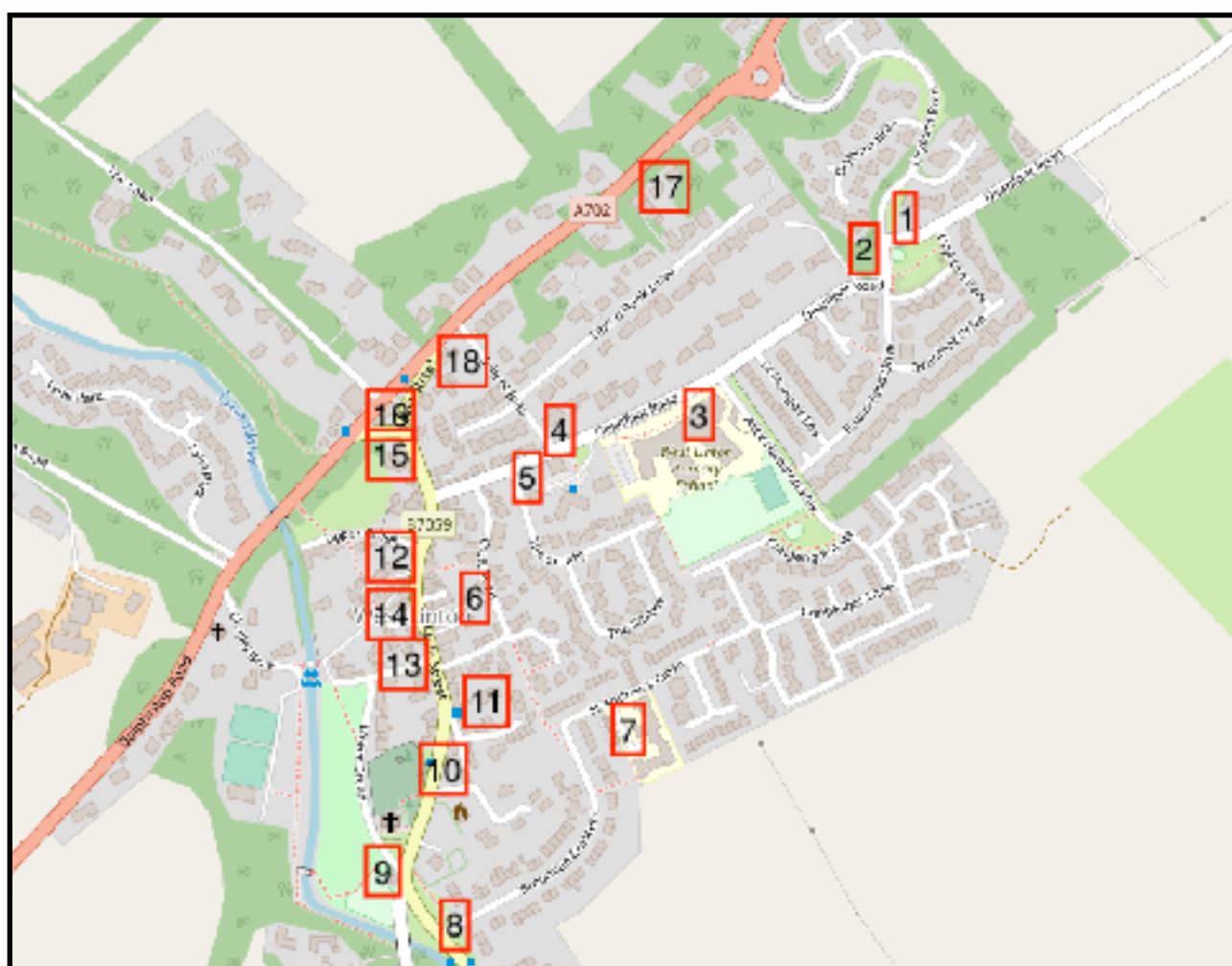
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1. Introduction

This report describes a street access audit of West Linton carried out by a number of local residents associated with the Tweeddale Access Panel (TAP) and the West Linton Community Council on October 7th 2022. The report is part of a programme of audits organised by TAP in small towns and villages with the aim of identifying opportunities to improve accessibility of public spaces.

The route taken is illustrated below, starting from the north east of the village at Dryburn Brae to the Broomlee Crescent area via Croft Street, then returning north through Main Street to the A702.



2. Observations

From Dryburn Brae/Deanfoot Road to the Croft

The pavements in the residential area around Deanfoot Road were found to be of reasonable quality, although the pavement is narrow at 1.3 metres wide and there are a number of wide junction splays (e.g. at the Dryburn Brae/Deanfoot Road junction) which encourage speeding (picture 1). The main issue encountered was of encroaching vegetation which narrows the pavement and could be especially problematic for blind people (picture 2). It is understood that residents cut back hedges and it is recommended that this is maintained frequently. It was reported that while pavements can be slippery in winter the Council does grit footways as well as the carriageway in cold weather.



1. DRYBURN/DEANFOOT JUNCTION



2. DEANFOOT VEGETATION

West Linton Primary School is sited on the south of Deanfoot Road, enjoying some green space with seating away from the road. While there is plentiful Blue Badge parking both in the car park and on Deanfoot Road itself, there is no disabled parking provision adjacent to the eastern entrance to the school - the main public access for community events etc. (picture 3) Consideration should be given to relocating some of the BB spaces to here, along with associated installation of dropped kerbs to provide level access.

There are speed tables to both the east and west of the school, but they do not provide flat access from the footway to the carriageway which would be preferable. Almost next to the school is the health centre, a key resource for the village. A step-free crossing (eg though installation of dropped kerbs) of Deanfoot Road would be useful immediately to the east of the centre (there is one to the west). Some signage would be useful to clearly indicate the pedestrian route into the centre - the entrance shared with vehicles is the most obvious and intuitive route from the east at present. On the south side of Deanfoot Road between the Health centre and the Smithy, a tree root has broken the pavement surface.



3. POTENTIAL BLUE BADGE SPACES



4. SCHOOL BRAE

The junction of Deanfoot Road with School Brae retains an apparently redundant guardrail which should be assessed for removal (picture 4). At the same time, the dropped kerb should be relocated closer to the desire line along the northern pavement of Deanfoot Road. The pavement along the north side of Deanfoot Road is too narrow at 1.1 metres wide especially as the southern footway completely ends abruptly before the Croft Road junction (picture 5). A crossing with dropped kerbs should be installed where the pavement ends at the Smithy to allow people to continue on the footway.

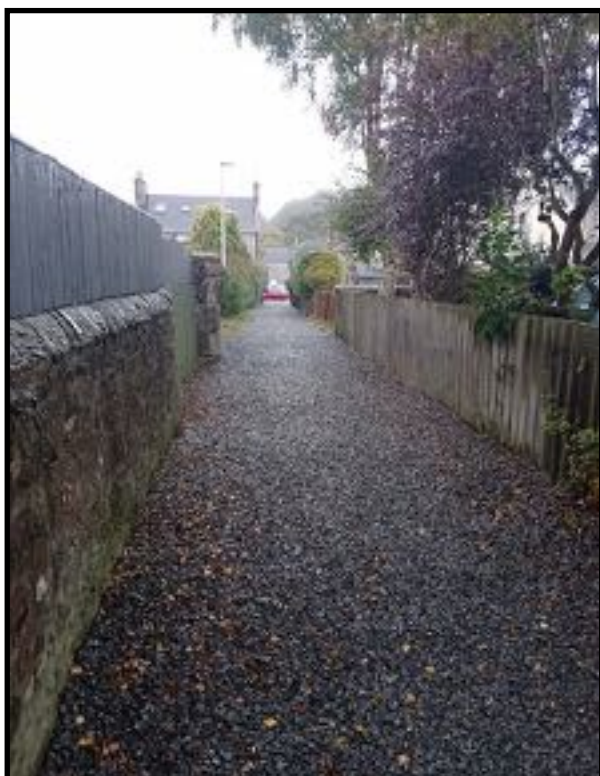


5. DEANFOOT PAVEMENT ENDS

South along Croft Road to Broomlee Crescent

Croft Road itself has no pavements for most of its length, but audit participants felt reasonably safe walking and wheeling as there was little traffic and those vehicles encountered were moving slowly. It is likely that the road would be a hostile place to people with visual impairments. Christina Howieson Close is one of two 'cut-throughs' to Main Street which were reportedly well used, but the surface of loose pebbles is problematic for wheelchair users (picture 6). Consideration should be given to replacing it with an alternative, more stable surface.

At the southern end of Croft Road, a footpath leads to the Broomlee Crescent area, where Broomlee Court provides accommodation for older people managed by the Hanover Housing Association. The southern pavement is not continuous, forcing pedestrians to use a very badly rutted carriageway: resurfacing here would improve accessibility (picture 7). Some pavements have a steep crossfall (camber) and undulate up and down at driveways which can be problematic; ideally at least 1 metre of footway width should be level. It was noted that in this part of town, there is little or no public seating (beyond that which is part of Broomlee Court). Further engagement with Hanover HA may be useful to identify more access improvements in the area including the best location of additional street benches.



6. CHRISTINA HOWIESON CLOSE



7. BROOMLEE CRESCENT

On the approach to Station Road, the pavement deteriorates in condition. On the day of the audit (the weather was intermittent heavy showers) there was significant ponding at the junction where Broomlee Crescent terminates (picture 8).

North to Main Street

There is a wide splay with poor access across Lower Green at the Olde Toll Tea House on the western side of Main Street (picture 9). Ideally this should be 'tightened' with dropped kerbs as appropriate.



8. STATION ROAD



9. LOWER GREEN

The western pavement alongside St Andrew's Church is barely 0.5 metres wide in places and is barely useable by any pedestrian, let alone someone using mobility aids such as a wheelchair, pushchair or sticks (picture 10). This is especially problematic given that the eastern pavement ends abruptly opposite the churchyard (picture 11). It is recommended that options for significant improvement to this area are investigated, including installation of some form of pedestrian crossing. This could include for example, widening the western pavement adjacent to the church by at least a metre, perhaps accompanied by the introduction of a chicane type arrangement on the carriageway, which would permit vehicles to move in only one direction at a time. This would also have the advantage of ensuring that northbound traffic approaching the village centre moves slowly.



10. MAIN ST AT ST ANDREW'S

There are no pedestrian crossings of any type across Main Street; this is possibly the biggest single problem identified in the audit (but see also crossing the A702 below). The other key problem that was apparent from the walkabout on Main Street, and closely related, is the fact that pavements are discontinuous on both sides of the street. It is not possible for pedestrians to travel the length of street on either side of the street without having to mingle with vehicles. In short sections, there are no pavements on either side of the street. Between them, this lack of pavements and of crossings makes for an exceptionally hostile environment for people who have an impairment which affects their mobility, cognitive capacity (e.g. dementia), vision or to an extent, hearing. "This pavement is rubbish" was a comment repeated frequently by one participant. It is recommended that one, or possibly two, crossings of some kind should be installed.

Suggested locations for some kind of pedestrian crossing on Main Street include at St Andrew's Church (see above), at the Post Office and further north (perhaps at the newsagent or butchers?). The pedestrian route across Main Street at the Post Office (picture 11) is a natural desire line to/from the bus stop, but the sight-lines crossing from west to east are very poor, as traffic approaching from the south is difficult to see owing the bend and on-street parking. The Post Office bus stop would also be improved by significantly extending the raised 'Kassel kerb' northward (removing at least one parking space). It is understood that this stop is busy with schoolchildren at times.



11. POST OFFICE BUS STOP

Solutions to the fundamental problem of discontinuous pavements (see for example picture 12) and lack of crossings are not obvious unless there is an appetite to consider

significant changes such as exploring the possibility of removing much on-street parking (possibly relocating spaces to the Green where there is spare street capacity) or making Main Street one way. These options could free up space to be re-allocated to pedestrians but it is recognised that there would be significant challenges associated with such options. One participant favoured investigating a type of shared space street design currently in use in Coldingham.



12. MAIN STREET: ABSENT PAVEMENT

Two disabled parking spaces were noted, at Lower Green and further north also on the western side of Main Street; one was empty, the other occupied by a car displaying a Blue Badge. A car was seen to block the dropped kerb at Lower Green. It was reported that the loading and waiting restrictions at the Co-op were often not observed. It was noted that there is no routine enforcement of parking offences (Scottish Borders Council does not currently have Decriminalised Parking Enforcement). No pavement parking was observed (possibly because the pavements are so narrow!)

It was noted that the northern access to Lower Green has two public toilets which were well-maintained and large enough to accommodate most disabled people's needs (picture 13). Clearer signage to the toilets should be provided from Main Street. The shared-use Lower Green carriageway surface is in poor condition and resurfacing would make both the toilets and Green area more accessible.

The very limited pavement space in the village centre was generally clear of 'clutter', but an advertising 'A-Board' was observed at J&R Newsagent on the western pavement (picture 14) and shop goods obstructed the eastern pavement at the Knot. An 'A-board' can also obstruct the A702 pavement at the Gordon Arms. It would be useful to discourage retailers from placing objects on the pavements, or at least to ensure that they are placed away from the desire lines.



13. LOWER GREEN TOILETS



14. PAVEMENT AREA WITH 'A-BOARD'

In the northern section of Main Street, there are various 'bottlenecks' where north- and south-bound traffic negotiates which vehicle passes first - usually to the detriment of pedestrians. Again, the key issue here is the lack of continuous pavements and crossing opportunities.

At the north end of Main Street, the B7059 splits into two, providing access to the A702 in both west and east directions. The western spur has no pavement and traffic was encountered accelerating from the village centre (picture 15). The possibility of providing a pavement should be explored. Consideration of traffic calming features and tightening the geometry of the junction splays would also be useful.



15. B7059 WESTERN SPUR

Dolphinton Road (A702)

The final stretch covered by the audit was from the Gordon Arms (end of Main Street north to the roundabout junction with Dryburn Brae, the starting point). As with Main Street, there is an absence of opportunities to cross the road safely. One location which would meet pedestrian needs would be from the B7059 western spur to the well-used Edinburgh-bound bus stop at Manor Garage.

Now that 20 mph speed limits have been introduced to Borders settlements on a permanent basis, installation of zebra crossings on the A702 appears to be a solution worthy of further investigation. It is understood that Transport Scotland currently opposes the use of zebras on trunk roads (like the A702) on the grounds that they are not easy for blind people to use, although this policy may be subject to review. Another option would be to install at least one signalled crossing on the A702.

The pavement adjacent to the Gordon Arms (picture 16) is very narrow for a walking space next to a busy road with lots of heavy traffic although vehicles are now subject to a 20 mph speed limit. While some traffic was seen to observe the speed limit, some did not. There is a good case for a fixed speed camera to be installed on this stretch of the A702 and this should be explored with the Scottish Safety Camera Partnership.



16. PAVEMENT AT GORDON ARMS



17. A702 BUS STOP

Further north, there is another pair of bus stops (picture 17). On the eastern side of the A702, the pavement does not continue north, requiring pedestrians to cross the road to access a footway, and then to cross again at the roundabout in order to access the main part of West Linton to the east. These bus stops and the roundabout are other locations where new pedestrian crossing facilities would be very useful.

On the eastern side of the A702, the eastern spur of the B7059 is wide, which encourages fast moving traffic, and would benefit from tightening (picture 18).



18. B7059 EASTERN SPUR

3. Conclusions

There are some significant challenges to improve accessibility in West Linton, especially relating to a lack of proper continuous pavements and a lack of safe places to cross the road, both in the village centre and on the main A702 road. Elsewhere, the village pedestrian space is of reasonable quality although commonplace problems such as narrow pavements, encroaching vegetation, wide junction spays and sections of poor pavement surfaces were all encountered in the audit. There were also noted to be some positive features such as a welcoming entrance to the school, an attractive, historic village centre and accessible and available public toilets.

Overall, the village centre seems very dominated by vehicles, with very poor quality pedestrian space. This has an especially adverse impact on disabled people who must either share space with traffic (which they may not be able to see, hear or evade easily) or make multiple crossings of heavily trafficked streets without the protection of any formal crossing.

Potential 'quick wins':

- cut back vegetation along residential streets (eg Deanfoot Road);
- review parking at West Linton Primary School to investigate the possibility of moving Blue Badge Spaces nearer the eastern entrance;
- provide signage for pedestrian access to the health centre;
- address a tree root which has broken the Deanfoot Road pavement surface between the Health Centre and the Smithy;
- remove guardrail and improve crossing of School Brae at junction with Deanfoot Road;
- consider resurfacing Christina Howieson Close with asphalt;
- resurface Broomlee Crescent, especially where pedestrians use the carriageway;
- investigate ponding at the junction of Broomlee Crescent/Station Road;
- consider potential sites for more public seating in residential areas, perhaps in discussion with Hanover HA;
- provide signage from Main Street to the public toilets;
- ensure that shops and pubs keep pavement space clear of unnecessary clutter such as advertising boards or goods for sale.

More strategic issues to consider:

- investigate the possibility of significantly widening the Main Street footway adjacent to St Andrew's Church, perhaps in conjunction with wider carriageway works such as the introduction of a chicane to reduce carriageway space;
- introduce one or two formal pedestrian crossings on Main Street. This will require more detailed assessment, of both the type of crossing and location but potential sites identified were:
 - at St Andrew's Church, where the eastern footway ceases;
 - at the Post Office;
 - in the northern section of Main Street.
- in association with pedestrian crossing assessment, consider options to provide continuous footways on at least one side, ideally on both sides, of Main Street. It is recognised that this would require significant changes to traffic management and/or parking and would present a number of challenges. However against that, it must be acknowledged just how poor the current experience is for pedestrians, especially disabled pedestrians.
- in association with Transport Scotland, consider opportunities to introduce pedestrian crossings and speed cameras on the A702.

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