



A FIGHT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

DANGERS IN OLD SWAN - ROAD AND PAVEMENT INACCESSIBILITY



REPORT COMPILED BY OLD SWAN AGAINST THE CUTS

Supported by: Liverpool TUC, Disabled People Against Cuts

INTRODUCTION

Old Swan Against the Cuts (OSAC) believes that the health and safety of the public is put at risk due to the state of the pavements in Old Swan. For disabled people: wheel chair users, partially sighted, frail and their families and others the problem is acute and could easily be remedied.

The letters contained in this document are from Albert Mitchell (Mitch). He and many others have to contend with the problem of getting from one part of Old Swan to another.

It should not be a problem but as these letters, diagrams and photographs show there is a big problem, a problem of access and safety.

We are demanding Liverpool city council maximises independent living and choice for all people, which includes safe access for all to the local environment.

Disabled people are some of the most vulnerable and in terms of the physical environment in the residential areas of the city, are often forgotten about or ignored by the council. They are also amongst the hardest hit by government and council cuts including health, social care and benefit cuts.

The bedroom tax discriminates against people who are disabled who receive housing benefit and who are living in social housing. The bedroom tax penalises those who have "spare" bedrooms yet disabled people need extra space. We support the fight against the bedroom tax and those organisations like Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC).

The situation facing disabled people has become much worse after the banking and economic crisis in 2008. The crisis was caused by housing bubbles, banks and capitalism. But all the main political parties agree that the cuts must be imposed on public services, jobs and benefits. The government tried to say we are all in it together, but austerity hits the vulnerable the hardest and some have even committed suicide.

Local authorities are now talking of cuts from 25 per cent to 50 per cent cuts, such as in Liverpool.

For an inclusive environment

According to "Planning and access for disabled people: a good practice guide" that was published in 2003 by the Department for Communities and Local Government, an inclusive environment is:

"...one that can be used by everyone, regardless of age, gender or disability... It recognises and accommodates differences in the way people use the built environment and provides solutions that enable all of us to participate in mainstream activities equally, independently, with choice and with dignity.

"Developing an inclusive environment will have a substantial and positive effect on society as an estimated 20% of

the adult population, some 11.7 million people, have a disability".

These and other guidelines from the government have been ignored by government and local authorities.

We agree with DPAC, "Disabled people are not "the disabled" – we are a diverse social group of people with a variety of impairments who continue to face unequal and differential treatment resulting from systems, structures and cultures which fail to take disabled people into account". www.dpac.uk.net

Fight for access for all

We have organised four public meetings in Old Swan in 2013. At the last public meeting Billy (a wheel chair user) spoke on the issue concerning disability access (alongside speakers from the UCU concerning the fight for public education and a speaker from Reclaim about the fight in Bootle against the bedroom tax imposition). A presentation of the material compiled by Mitch was made at the meeting.

Mitch and Beryl Mitchell have tried for a year to get some progress on the issue. They have written and telephoned the council with many promises to meet them or get back in touch, but since July their calls have rarely been returned. The council take business interests seriously (see back page), so why ignore those they ask to vote for them?

The pavements and access from pavement to road must be made safe for disabled people. Access must be improved. We are sure that the issue does not exist only in Old Swan, but also in many parts of Liverpool and Merseyside.

OSAC have agreed to campaign on this issue. It needs the support of the communities, social organisations and trade unions. We are willing to speak at meetings on this issue and to any disabled organisations.

This report has been compiled because of the work done by Mitch and Beryl. Some of the diagrams have been done by Billy, who did a powerpoint presentation from the material contained here. The writing of the report has been assisted by Sue Ferguson (a wheel chair user). The report has been written by Martin Ralph, an OSAC spokesperson.

We ask for your support for the report and its demands. On 16 January Liverpool TUC agreed their full support and gave OSAC £100 to help print the pamphlet. If your trade union branch can contribute to help further printing and publicity please contact us.

Please contact:

Martin Ralph at oldswanagainstthecuts@liv.com or leave a message at Old Swan Youth Centre. Telephone 0151 228 1574.

January 2014

We are demanding equal access for all to the streets of Old Swan & Liverpool

Letters from Albert Mitchell who has been campaigning since January 2013 for improvements in disability access.

This is an edited letter from Albert Mitchell (Mitch) that was sent towards the end of October 2013

Dear Mr Anderson,

Please find enclosed photos and details of one road in Old Swan, which is called Derby Lane.

The illustrations show why I have trouble up and down this road and there are many more access problems in the area.

You can find money to put posts on every street telling motorists that they are going from a 20 mph road to 30 mph road limit. But concerning the hazards, I and many wheelchair users face – well we just have to live with them.

I have enclosed a copy of the letter I have sent to the Liverpool surveyors office. If nothing is done about the situation, I will send it to the Liverpool Echo.

I'm sorry it has come to this but in a year has gone by and I have made no progress.

Yours sincerely

A. W. Mitchell

Letter to councillors in October 2013

I am a totally disabled wheelchair user, and I find it very difficult commuting down the roads in Old Swan.

In January, 2013, this year I took members of the City Council to Derby Lane, a road in Old Swan. The pavements are very bad and in some parts are very dangerous, especially for the disabled and old pensioners.

I have enclosed diagrams and photos of the pavements and roads that need attention and photos of the curbs that need to be dropped. On 5 January 2013 I went to see Gary Miller at Old Swan library about the lowering of curbs in old Swan. He said he will telephone me on 7 January 2013 which he did.

The obstacles

My wheelchair is my legs and arms and I cannot function without it.

I would like to state that my wheelchair is only 40 mm off the ground therefore the underside will scrape the

ground and damage my wheelchair. The yellow level seen in the photographs is 55 cm deep.

On 9 January 2013 I had a phone call from Kristy Littler meeting with other council members and get back to me. On 17 January 2013 Kirity Littler and Tony Langley came to my house and I took them to Prescott Road and Derby Lane.

I showed them all the obstacles I had to climb or go round and there were 16 obstacles and I pointed out all of them. When we got to the end of Derby Lane they said we are sympathetic but "we have no money to do the work".

They said they would get me the key to the alley gates opposite my house leading to Derby Lane and that will cut the time and distance to the Lane.

On 10 March 2013 the keys were dropped off to the delegates. But the entry is bad with dog muck and it is like going through a minefield.

By September, from the 16 obstacles I pointed out, only two have been done. They have put in dropped curbs at the end of Derby Lane and Derwent Road – see diagram number six.

The pavements and Derby Lane are disgusting, I'm sure if the councillors took a walk down Derby Lane they will see what I mean. The tree roots are lifting the tarmac and it is dangerous. Are they waiting for someone to fall before doing something about it?

I have lived in Old Swan all my life and all I have done is to see it go downhill, every road you walked down needs some repairs to the paved paving or curbs, again it is disgusting.

Dangerous

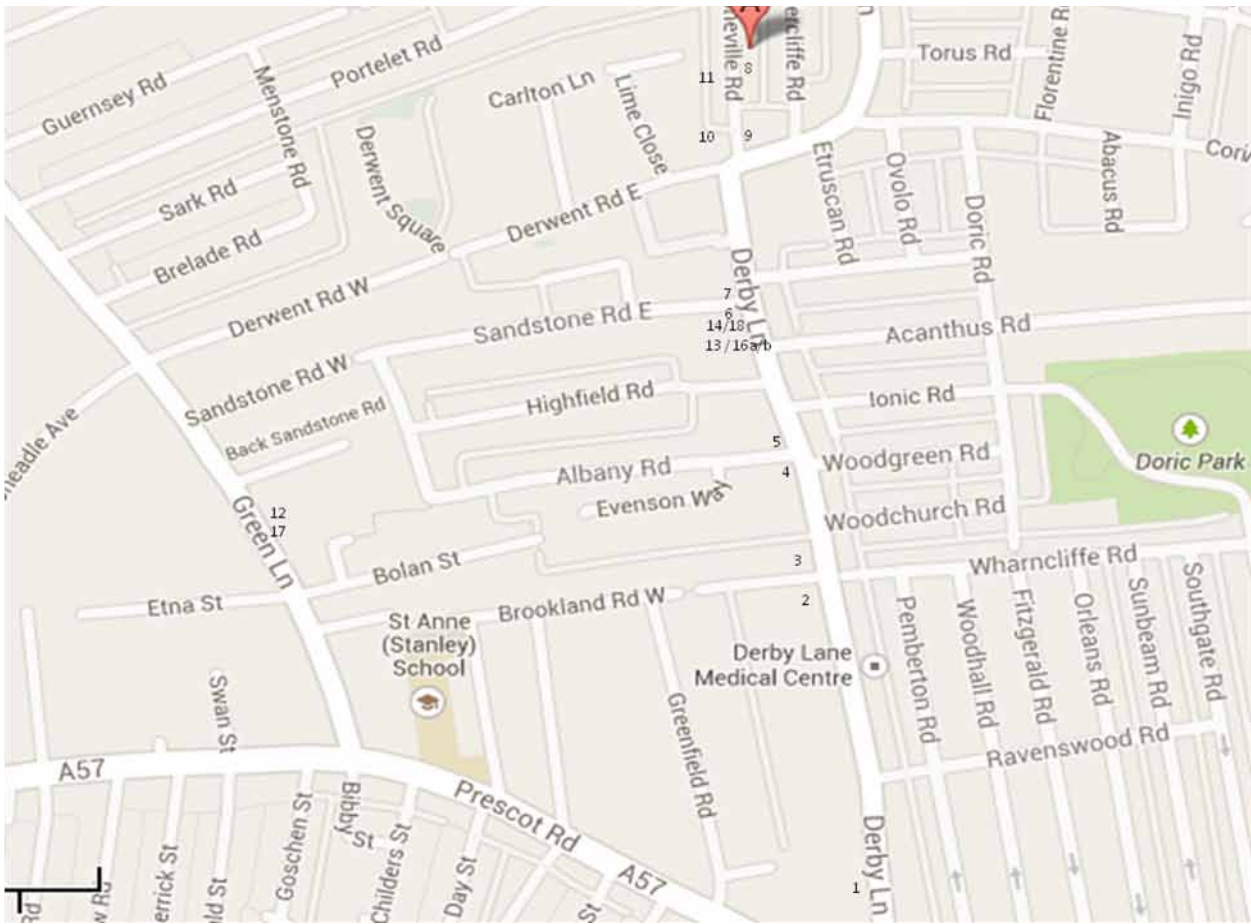
Sometimes I have to leave the pavement and go on to the road in my wheelchair. If I'm involved in an accident who will be to blame? Me from going onto the main road or city council for not providing the dropped curbs?

As I go down Derby Lane I see old people going to the bingo and they tell me they have to be very careful when they're walking down the lane. They think it is very bad the way that the pavements are up and down and are not level.

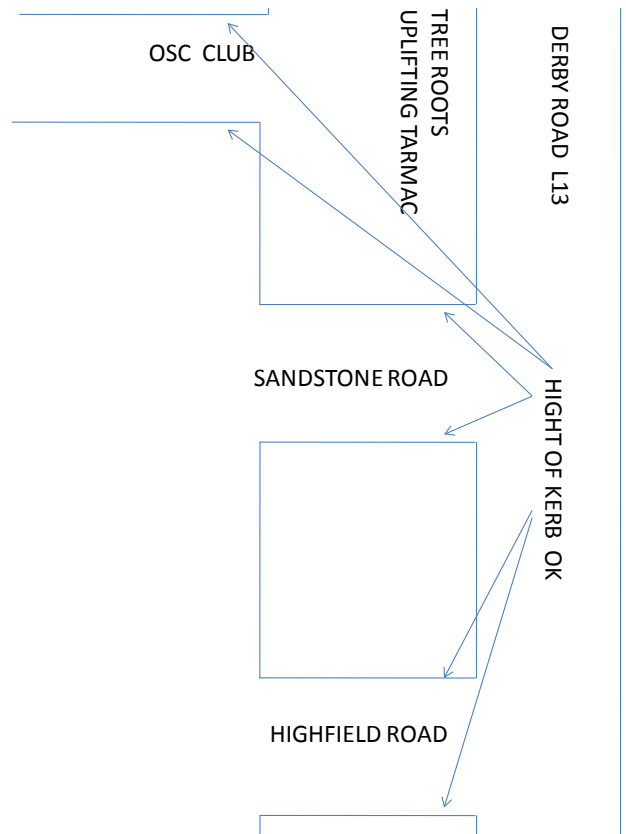
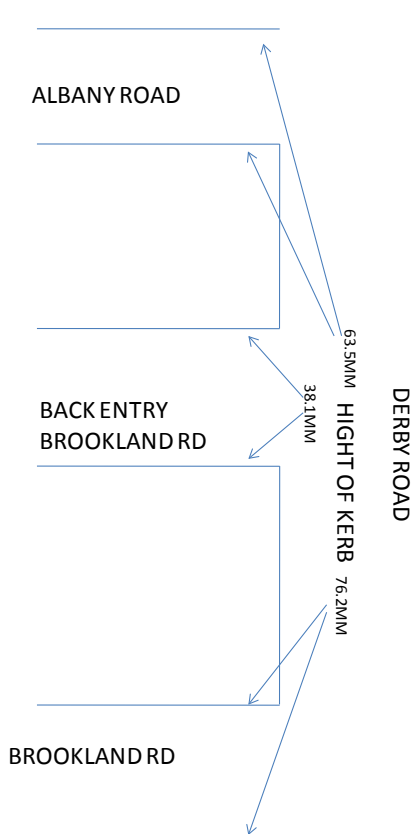
I have seen an old man with a walking stick walking on the main road when I asked him why he said look at the state of the pavement, I'm safer on the road.

I said why don't you complain to the council and he said what's the use they do not take any notice.

Map that locates photos in Derby Lane and other streets nearby



The map shows the location of problem areas in one part of Old Swan, the following diagrams and photographs are samples that show the type of problem that exist



The photographs shown here illustrate a small part of the problem

Brooklane RD Derby Lane right side L13



Albany Rd Derby Lane left side



Outside No.9 Derby Lane right side L13



Sandstone Rd Derby Lane L13 left side



Pavement on Derby Lane L13 left pavement



Pavement Outside Garage on Derby Lane L13



Stoneville Rd opposite a Health Centre Derby lane L13 right side



Green Lane

Outside Jems Builders yard Green Lane L13 right side



The council says it wants to be an “age friendly” city...

“Liverpool has joined a network of “age-friendly” cities with a ground-breaking new approach to supporting older people.

The Mayor’s Cabinet has approved a recommendation that Liverpool applies to become a member of the World Health Organisation (WHO) network of “age-friendly cities”.

It is based upon the principles of active ageing, in which key partners work together to make sure the quality of life for people is enhanced as they age.

The standards include requirements around issues ranging from outdoor spaces and buildings through to transportation, housing and social participation.

Mayor Joe Anderson has signed a pledge committing Liverpool to becoming an age-friendly city.

The city council will undertake a five year planning, implementation and evaluation programme which will see it share best practice with other age-friendly cities.

Local people will be involved in assessing the city’s strengths and gaps, and how the checklist of features matches their own experiences.

And through a £7.7 million programme called DALLAS (Delivering Assistive Living Lifestyles at Scale), 200 Community Champions will be recruited to raise the profile of activities and services available to people in neighbourhoods, in order to address issues of loneliness and promote social inclusion.

The scheme will also make use of extended use of assistive technology such as telecare to enable people to continue living at home in safety.”

The long quote is on a website http://www.liverpoolvision.co.uk/news/liverpool_named_age-friendly_city.aspx

Liverpool council say they want to create a world class city for business. But perhaps they are not concerned with access for the elderly in the working class housing areas in the city.

They also say “Liverpool is a city on the up”.

We expect they were not talking about the rising tree roots and dilapidated state of pavements in Old Swan and elsewhere in the city when they said this.

Visit Liverpool Information

Visit Liverpool are working in partnership with DisabledGo to help you find detailed information about disabled and wheelchair access to all kinds of places including hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions - the list goes on! <http://www.visitliverpool.com/travel/access-for-all>

DisabilityGo

“We are the leading provider of access information for disabled people in the UK, featuring over 120,000 places of interest. Every single venue featured has been visited in person by one of our own specialist surveyors.”

A place for business and not local communities!

Liverpool city council’s Corporate Access Forum says

“The Corporate Access Forum exists to give members of disability groups the opportunity to engage with council officers and developers in order to influence the design of major regeneration projects in the city”.

It says very little about the local communities in Liverpool and their rights of access outside their own homes.



Billy speaking on behalf of Old Swan Against the Cuts on the problems of disabled access

