

## Addressing Accessibility in Southwell: 21<sup>st</sup> August 2024 meeting

First-hand Draft Report: August 21<sup>st</sup> 2024

Follow Up Full Draft Report: September 24<sup>th</sup> 2024, added to 12<sup>th</sup> October 2024 with email excerpt and supplementary photographs.

Jamie Bostock met with users of Thrive Mobility, a company in Southwell that provides a variety of wheel-based accessibility and transport solutions to residents.

Users and community members wish to be able to get around the main routes of Southwell as safely as possible, without being impeded poor quality pavements, inappropriate parking, badly maintained hedges, and lack of flat access to basic community amenities. This meeting was held in order to facilitate more open communication between the Town Council and Thrive users, as well as other residents that have accessibility concerns.

### **Key concerns:**

Access to local facilities:

- Ensuring the safety of customers and users when accessing key locations within Southwell. This includes enabling access to garden centres, the Post Office, the medical centre and shops. This also concerns promoting good accessibility to places of community value – the memorial recreation ground, and also the various places of worship found across the town.
- Areas such as the pavement around Gascoine’s estate agents and the Old Theatre Deli with its seating arrangements in conjunction with the seats around the tree and the bollards, making the area exceptionally difficult to navigate for those who use scooters, wheelchairs, rollers and sticks. The map accompanying this document illustrates areas where the Town Council should take particular note of accessibility concerns.
- Pavement Parking: Cars parking with wheels mounted on pavements can cause an obstruction to those who use mobility technologies. This can cut them off from the necessary routes that they use to access areas of Southwell. Discussion was had about the potential to design a polite notice to place on windscreens or elsewhere to deter pavement parking. Residents reported that due to inappropriate parking, they feel unsafe crossing the road at the Coach House corner of Church Street/Fiskerton Road. Suggestion was made of placing a poster in the Coach House toilet or behind the bar.
- Issues of pavement parking were also reported at the burgage crossroads, obscuring the view on Station road so that path users couldn’t see what was coming.
- Some Thrive users reported having to go onto the fire station forecourt to avoid impediments outside of the fire station.

Hedge and Path Maintenance:

- The need to stress good hedge maintenance to Southwell residents was also discussed. Sometimes, during ‘No-Mow-May’, signs can be obscured and thus can be difficult to read or to spot. Hedges and overgrowth were reported to impede access to the Workhouse National Trust property, and to Riverside Walk.
- The Leeway Road alleyway was reported to be in a bad condition and had large dips.
- There was a desire for road users and drivers to have greater awareness that those who use mobility scooters and technology.

- There were reports of the pathway beside the housing estate on Allenby Road being relatively inaccessible.
- Need for greater tarmac maintenance.
- Parking in the Library is limited but essential, it can be hard to get to the shops when walking isn't an option.
- Cars often park in the Co-op and block the path to and from the Co-op by reversing too far back.
- There are classes of mobility scooter with Class 2 being for pavement use and Class 3 for road use. They have different widths which makes access to different areas a challenge.
- Noted that if there was police enforcement power, inappropriate pavement parking could be deterred.

#### **Actions already undertaken:**

- Jamie Bostock's discussion on Town Environment Committee regarding the meeting with Thrive Mobility users. This encompassed issues such as the impact of 'no mow may' on accessibility of certain areas – paths, pavements and open spaces in particular. Discussion of access concerns regarding the Minster Field hedge. Stressing the importance of keeping pathways clear within the town so that access for those with wheelers, chairs and scooters can be maintained. Maintaining an open conversation about access to amenities in the centre of Southwell. Discussion of a potential dropped curb at the skatepark, and alternative routes to make this fully accessible in future. Discussion of the Parks and Open Spaces working Party, and that this should include residents who have access concerns. This working party should focus on access alongside environmental responsibility and promoting biodiversity. Discussion of areas i.e. highways, where accessibility falls squarely within the remit of the County Council, and how a constructive dialogue can be maintained between the County Council and the Town Council on this issue. The need to raise awareness of access issues consistently and with proper evidence and perspectives from residents. Discussion of pavement maintenance.
- Clarification sought from Roger Jackson (County Councillor) at Southwell Town Council Full Council Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> September as to how residents can report pavement parking. Cllr Bostock stressed the impact that this can have on residents who can sometimes be 'trapped' at home if access routes are blocked by careless parking. This should be reported on 101 to the police, but Cllr Jackson explained that enforcement was often difficult.

#### **Future Planned action:**

- Event where Cllr Bostock attempts some routes around Southwell on a mobility scooter with a go pro filming his route to raise awareness of issues of accessibility.
- Continued engagement with Newark and Sherwood District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council on the issue of accessibility around Southwell, particularly considering that a lot of measures that can be implemented to improve accessibility would need to be enacted by these two larger councils due to their greater powers, resources and scope, compared to the Town Council.

- To continue to use Town Council as a forum to raise accessibility issues and to lobby relevant stakeholders to seriously consider accessibility as part of their usual mode of working.
- Not every issue discussed requires enforcement, there is much the Town Council can do with regards to continued conversation, dialogue and promotion of accessibility awareness within the town. This can be done through videos, social media and print media like the Advertiser, Bramley and Southwell Life.
- Action in this area, and a greater understanding of the importance of accessibility can enable residents to fully access services within the town, and participate fully in the life of the town. This can boost mental and physical health as well as promote independence.
- There could be a digital mailbox set up to enable direct reporting of accessibility issues to the County, District or Town Council.
- There should be a way for residents to share accessible routes.

#### Appendix 1:

Excerpt from email from Mark Sawula:

'Informing you of the second reported accident at the same spot where a mobility scooter user has come off his scooter and crashed into the fence on the left hand side.

Footpath between The Ropewalk and Leeway Road - at the Leeway Road end.

This particular area has been mentioned numerous times by different residents as being unsafe to use for people with mobility difficulties.

Some residents have previously got stuck here and now avoid the route.

This is the main route to the medical centre, Coop and town centre for residents that live on Springfield Road, Leeway Road , Silvey Avenue and beyond.

There is a concentration of bungalows in this area where there are many residents with mobility difficulties.

Obvious main problems here are;-

-Pavement damage and in poor condition

-Severe slope/gradient at junction with Leeway Rd pavement creating a severe and dangerous camber

-Possible - newly installed street light that may have restricted the entrance/exit to the path (maybe why the new fence panel and post installed and fresh grass/broken paving) obviously after the rest of the fence on the right hand side making it a tighter turn to safely navigate.

-Path does not seem to be edged and has soft verges to each side

- Some local residents have been commenting on this for a while and are now having to take longer, less convenient routes which are far from ideal.

Hope this is something that can be addressed.

Happy to meet at the location to discuss further.

Best regards

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**Supplementary Photographs:**













## Appendix 2: Map

Map of Southwell provided by Mark Sawula. Thrive User Group have marked areas of concern in yellow. Higher resolution map can be provided on request.

