

# **MK CIL LIMITED**

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## **Polling Station Surveys Bletchley, Lakes Estate Locations Report number 2018-1**

**December 2017/January 2018**

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## Contents:

1. Introduction and Scope of Work
2. Spotlight Building, Lakes Estate, Bletchley
3. Community Centre, Lakes Estate, Bletchley

### 1.0 Introduction and Scope of Work

On 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017 MK CIL were commissioned by Milton Keynes Council to undertake Accessibility Surveys of 8 current or potential Polling Stations, Bow Brickhill Pavilion, Lakes Estate Community Centre, Spotlight Building Lakes Estate, Little Brickhill Village Hall, Netherfield Meeting Place, Studio 1 Woughton Leisure Centre, The Meeting Room Great Linford and Windmill Hill Golf Centre.

Priority was requested for the two locations on Lakes Estate, Bletchley (The Community Centre and The Spotlight Building) and it was agreed that these be reported on by 14<sup>th</sup> January 2018 with that for the remaining 6 to follow by 16<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

This is the first of these reports for the two Lakes Estate locations.

Each survey will review and assess the accessibility to the location itself, the entrance to the building, the route to the polling area itself and the associated facilities and provisions at the location.

Although elections are normally held in May and external lighting is therefore not generally a concern, they can, and do, occur at other times so we have included comment on the lighting at each of the particular locations. Internal lighting will of necessity be addressed as for the visually impaired this is of obvious relevance.

Each individual survey report comprises six sections

- 1) Getting to the location, comprising three aspects
  - a) Arrival by car and associated parking provision
  - b) Making way by foot or wheelchair and
  - c) Using public transport, if available local to the location.

As both the latter alternatives can be from a multitude of directions we have restricted the surveys to those aspects immediately local to the location.

For parking we only consider designated parking at the location or drop-off facilities if provided and do not consider on-street parking as these are unsuitable for disabled users unless a designated bay.

- 2) The route to the location entrance i.e. from the street boundary or parking facility to the building entrance.
- 3) The entrance into the location together with any associated lobby area.
- 4) The internal route from the entrance to the actual polling area and aspects within that area
- 5) Other considerations e.g. presence of a disabled toilet, emergency escape provisions and anything else pertinent that is observed.
- 6) Conclusions and suggestions.

Each individual survey was conducted on the basis that a mobility impaired person could be either on their own or in the case of a manual wheelchair user accompanied by a personal attendant and that the wheelchair used could be either manual or powered, the latter also covering those on a mobility scooter. Access for individuals using walking sticks or crutches was also taken into consideration.

For visual impairment we have taken the degree of disability as that which would be sufficient for them to be registered blind.

As at some locations entrance and internal doors could be held permanently open we have considered both modes of operation particularly with regard to their visibility.

We have assumed that specific signage with respect to the actual polling station will be placed in and around the location on the day and we have therefore only considered signage identifying the location itself and access to it and that relevant to any facilities provided or emergency provisions.

When considering the polling area we obviously cannot consider the impact of the actual furniture configuration which it is assumed will be addressed by a site manager at the time.

## 2.0 **Spotlight Building**    Serpentine Court, Lakes Estate, Bletchley

Date of survey 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017

### 2.1 *Getting to the Polling Station*

#### 2.1.1 *Parking*

The Spotlight Building is down a small roadway off of Fern Drive, access is not signed and anybody attending would need to know where the entrance road is.

There are a small number of parking bays/spaces off of this roadway, these are however for general parking and are not designated Disabled bays. All spaces are on a hard level tarmac surface. There is a single street light in the area but there are a number of overhanging trees which will cause considerable shade and reduce lighting levels at road/eye level.

#### 2.1.2 *Making way on foot/wheelchair*

There are dropped kerbs at the entrance road but these do not have tactile paving and are in need of some attention. There is also an uncontrolled crossing to the opposite pathway by the entrance road with a tactile paved dropped kerb on both this pathway and the opposite one. The pathways themselves along Fern Drive are generally level and even but are in need of some maintenance, especially at dropped kerbs where slabs have been used and they have become uneven and in need of some attention. The pathway along Fern Drive is also not continuous along one side and lengths have wide grass verges between the path and road. In consequence crossing between pathways apart from the one mentioned above requires crossing at corners which with side roads not generally opposite means having to go along the roadway itself. Only a limited number of dropped kerbs have tactile paving.

#### 2.1.3 *Public Transport*

Buses operate along Fern Road and the stops have raised humps.

### 2.2 *Access to the entrance*

The access area in front of the building is a part paved part tarmac area totally raised from the road and with no dropped kerbs apart from that mentioned at the entrance to the service road. It is generally level and even. However the disabled access to the building is through a back door, there is though no indication of this fact external to the building and any wheelchair user without any prior knowledge would just go back to the dropped kerbs at the entrance to the road and come back along the pathway to the main entrance.

The disabled entrance is through a rear door that leads directly into the area that would be used for polling but this is a stepped entrance and so access requires a ramp to be positioned. The paved area leading to the doorway is level and even and has lighting available from a light above the door and three adjacent light columns, and as a result the area is better lit than the front area. There is no doorbell and so anybody aware of this being the entrance would still have to go to the front entrance first to alert of their presence.

### *2.3 Entrances*

The front entrance has a pair of double swing doors which are comparatively light to operate and do hold back in the fully open position. They are though not highly contrasted from their immediate surroundings. Also should the door be left in an intermediate position the leading edge has no contrast from the faces, they do not have a powered close mechanism fitted. The door threshold is level and should pose no problem to wheelchair users.

The rear, disabled access, doorway is, as has been said, stepped and ramps would have to be positioned to enable access. The doorway itself is relatively narrow and the slope of the ramp would need assistance to go up apart for the strongest manually operated wheelchair user.

### *2.4 Internal circulation*

Entrance through the front door leads directly into a reception area with a doorway into a corridor leading to the polling area. This doorway during occupation is normally held open back against the wall and as such does not pose a problem. Unfortunately the narrowness of the corridor and the limited width of the doorway means that a wheelchair of any type would be unable to access the corridor.

For those walking with sticks and other disabled individuals access from the corridor is directly into the polling area which is of a suitable size but facilities would have to be sited so that the rear door access is fully maintained. All areas are well lit although contrasts between structural elements could be stronger for those with visual impairments.

### *2.5 Other considerations*

The location has no disabled toilet nor the availability of a 'hearing loop'. There are sufficient emergency exits but wheelchair users, as they would be unable to exit through the front door, would need the ramp positioned to be able to exit and would need assistance to do so.

### *2.6 Conclusions and suggestions*

The location and it's access are not really suitable for wheelchair users or in certain circumstances without the provision of a hearing loop for those with hearing impairments. To overcome these the following suggestions are made.

- a) That a disabled bay is installed within the parking area in front of the main doorway together with a suitable dropped kerb.
- b) That a procedure for wheelchair access be established and that that be suitably displayed by the front door. If the process is to progress immediately to the rear doorway a communication system be installed at the doorway.
- c) That consideration be given to contrasting both the entrance door structure from it's surroundings and the leading edge from the faces.
- d) That the route to the rear (disabled access) be fully and correctly signed.
- e) That a portable hearing loop be made available on site.

## **3.0 Lakes Estate Community Centre** Fern Drive, Bletchley

Date of survey 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017

### *3.1 Getting to the Polling Station*

#### *3.1.1 Parking*

The building is located off of a side road from Fern Drive which serves the back entrance to Sir Herbert Leon Academy, and its location is signed when approaching from the local Drayton Road turning into Fern Drive. There is a private car park in front of the building with a dedicated Disabled Bay, this is not marked to modern standards, and the markings are fading, but is of an acceptable size. The bay does have a driver's eye level sign which is helpful should the road markings not be visible for any reason. The parking area is of a bricked construction and is level and even. The area is lit by lighting columns and would have lighting levels consistent with a public car park.

#### *3.1.2 Making way by foot/wheelchair*

The pathway at the entrance to the serving roadway has dropped kerbs but no tactile paving and utilises paving slabs set into a tarmac surface which are both uneven and sloping across its width. The condition of the pathways along Fern Drive are as for the Spotlight building above, with the exception that there is no crossing facility at this location.

#### *3.1.3 Public Transport*

Buses operate along Fern Road and the stops have raised humps.

### *3.2 Access to the entrance*

The routeways within and from the carpark and from the entrance are firm and even with a slight gradient towards the building. There is a sloped kerb onto the pathway surrounding the entrance lobby of the building which is a struggle for an unassisted manual wheelchair user but would not be a problem for a powered or assisted wheelchair. The two areas have contrast coloured bricks and the kerb between should not compromise a major trip hazard to anybody with visual impairments. The area is lit by ceiling lights within the overhanging roofing surrounding the entrance area to the building which has two entrance doorways on adjacent sides of the entrance area.

### *3.3 Entrances*

The doorways have swing doors which are light to use and open fully through 180 degrees to enable them to be held back fully open if required. Both doorways contrast fully from their surroundings and are easy to see. The fact that they lock open fully means that the lack of contrast of the doors leading edges should not be a major issue unless the doors are left in an intermediate position, they do not have powered operation.

The doorways have a level threshold and therefore provide no obstacle to a wheelchair user. The doors lead into a large lobby area with similarly designed doors leading into the corridor area.

### *3.4 Internal circulation*

The lobby provides access to two corridors, one leading to the polling area the other to other facilities. The corridors are wide, well lit and have good contrast between structures. There is a similar set of doors leading into the polling area which can be held back against the corridor walls. The polling area is large and well lit, because of the presence of a nursery at the time of surveying

inspection was cursory but the contrast between structures was not strong and could be improved, the reasons for this were explained to me.

### *3.5 Other considerations*

The location has a disabled toilet which although not fully compliant to modern standards is of a sufficient size and is equipped with all the essential facilities. The location also has well signed emergency exits which lead to a pathway surrounding the building and with level access to and through. There is no 'hearing loop' available on site.

### *3.6 Conclusions and suggestions*

The location should offer no impediment to wheelchair or visually impaired users but in certain circumstance the absence of any hearing enhancement facilities could disadvantage anybody with a hearing impairment.

The following improvements are suggested

- a) That consideration be given to fitting contrasting strips to the leading edges of doors.
- b) That a portable hearing loop be made available for polling
- c) That the markings of the disabled parking bay be brought up to modern standards when remarking becomes necessary.

Close

*Document history*  
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