



# VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

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*DESTINATION VENTNOR*

*ACCESSIBILITY RISK ASSESSMENT*

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In order to have a professional assessment of the difficulties and dangers of access in the High Street, we commissioned a Risk Assessment from the Island-based consultancy Isle Access.

Their Report is attached.

A copy of *Destination Ventnor* is available by clicking [this link](#).

# **Accessibility risk assessment of Ventnor High Street**

for  
Ventnor Town Council

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## **Section 1: Background**

### **1.1 Reasons for this risk assessment**

#### **1.1.1 The existing High Street**

Ventnor's High Street is the location for many of Ventnor's shops and restaurants. As part of a one-way gyratory system, it also forms part of the principal transport route to and through the town centre, including to / from the Esplanade area. It is also part of the A3055 coastal route.

Ventnor Town Council (VTC) have expressed concerns that the current configuration of the High Street may be causing problems for some users (i.e. that there are barriers to 'access') and that this could also be discouraging potential visitors from coming to Ventnor.

#### **1.1.2 Why is 'access' important?**

It is estimated that at least 1 in 6 of the UK's population has a long term physical, mental or other impairment which affects their ability to carry out everyday tasks.

On the Isle of Wight, this proportion is higher than the national average, partly due to the specific demographics of the island's residents and of many of its visitors.

Good access means being able to get to and around the town centre as independently and as effortlessly / seamlessly as possible. This is vital for everybody, not just for those with impairments / disabilities but also for people travelling with young children or with luggage, etc. This is particularly pertinent to Ventnor because the town is an important tourist destination.

Therefore good access is also vital for those businesses whose livelihoods depend on the patronage of the general public.

#### **1.1.3 Why a 'Risk Assessment'?**

Ventnor Town Council is bound by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which relates to its 'Public Sector Equality Duty'.

This requires public bodies (including VTC) to consider the impact on all individuals (including those with disabilities) when they are carrying out their day to day work, including the management of the town centre and when implementing any changes.

To this end, VTC commissioned Isle Access to examine the existing High Street area and to identify any issues which may present hazards or barriers to access to any persons moving around the town, including those with any specific access needs.

#### **1.1.4 Who are 'Isle Access'?**

Isle Access is an Island-based charity which promotes and encourages greater accessibility on the Isle of Wight.

Isle Access has experience of carrying out access audits of streets and public areas. This includes seeking the views of local disabled people, covering a wide range of impairment(s) and disabilities.

Isle Access also has a proven record of working constructively with local authorities, businesses and services providers in order to improve accessibility on the Island.

## 1.2 Methodology and scope of this assessment

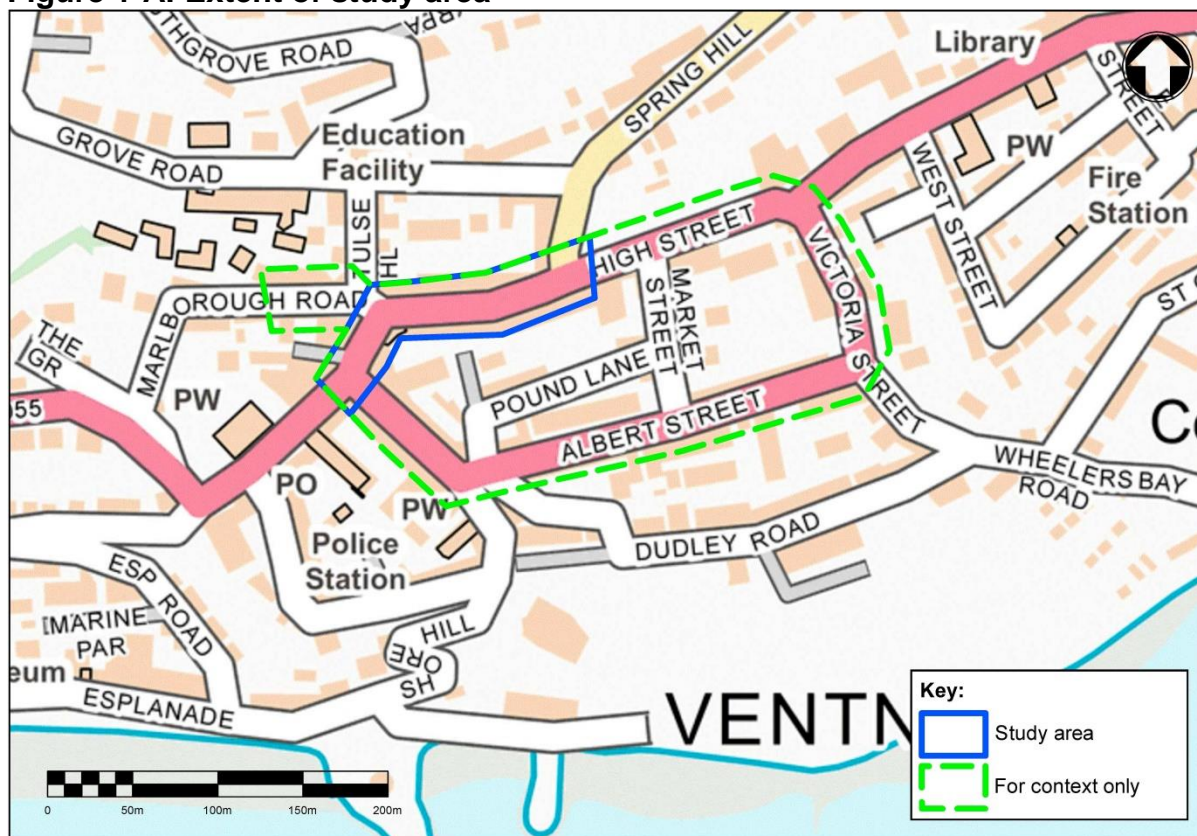
### 1.2.1 Area assessed

This assessment covers the High Street from its junction with Pier Street and Church Street in the West, to its junction with Spring Hill in the East.

It is acknowledged that the High Street itself does not exist in isolation but is part of a wider town centre. Therefore to add context, the assessors also took a cursory look at the surrounding streets (including parts of: Victoria Street, Albert Street, Pier Street, Church Street, Marlborough Road, Spring Hill, Pound Lane and Market Street, in addition to the car parking facilities at the Central Car Park and at Market Street and Pound Lane, all local bus stops and taxi ranks).

Figure 1-A (below) shows the extent of the area assessed.

**Figure 1-A: Extent of study area**



### 1.2.2 When was the High Street assessed (and by whom)?

Site visits were made on the 17<sup>th</sup> April and 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018, in which observations were made and measurements taken. Where appropriate, people in the town were approached and asked for their experiences of accessibility.

The assessors were: Jan Brookes (CEO of Isle Access and a specialist in accessible tourism); and Jim Morey (a highways and transport engineer who specialises in accessibility of streets and transport).

### 1.2.3 What was assessed?

This assessment looks at those issues found in the main section of the High Street which would directly affect its usability for people with any kind of access need. This has been taken to also include methods of arrival to / from the High Street area.

Thus, this report examines (but is not limited to):

- Parking (on and off street) and pick-up / set-down points
- Bus stops and taxi ranks
- Pedestrian crossing points
- Footways (including obstacles, widths and other issues)
- Access to other facilities (e.g. toilets)
- Places to sit / rest
- Wayfinding
- Other hazards

NB The term: 'footway' refers to the pedestrian area adjacent or parallel to a road carriageway, and is distinct from 'footpath' which is a pedestrian path which does not follow a road. In layman's terms, it is common for a 'footway' to be referred to as 'pavement' – however, in highway engineering terminology 'pavement' refers to the highway construction itself (i.e. foundations and surfacing).

### 1.2.4 How to use this assessment

This assessment report seeks to identify the existing issues (risks and hazards) that would be encountered by people moving around Ventnor High Street.

The key risks and potential implications for each identified issue are described in detail in Section 2: . These judgements are based on the experience of the auditors and from any evidence collected while on site. Detailed explanations of applicable principles have also been included.

Ventnor Town Council may seek to mitigate some or all of these issues. If so, then it is recommended that VTC consult with local groups beforehand in order to prioritise the implementation of any mitigation / improvement measures. This would put the risks identified in an appropriate context. See Section 3: for more details.

### 1.2.5 Limitations of this assessment

This risk assessment has been compiled using the same principles as a full access audit, but is more limited in its scope.

It does not constitute a full 'Road Safety Audit', nor is it a 'Vulnerable User' or 'Non-Motorised User (NMU) Audit'. However, it may be used as part of a wider 'quality audit' of the town centre.

Although it may be used as the basis for identifying potential improvements, this assessment report does not make any explicit recommendations.

It is recommended that any proposals for mitigation measures or other improvement schemes are assessed on their own merits. Isle Access would be happy to do this.

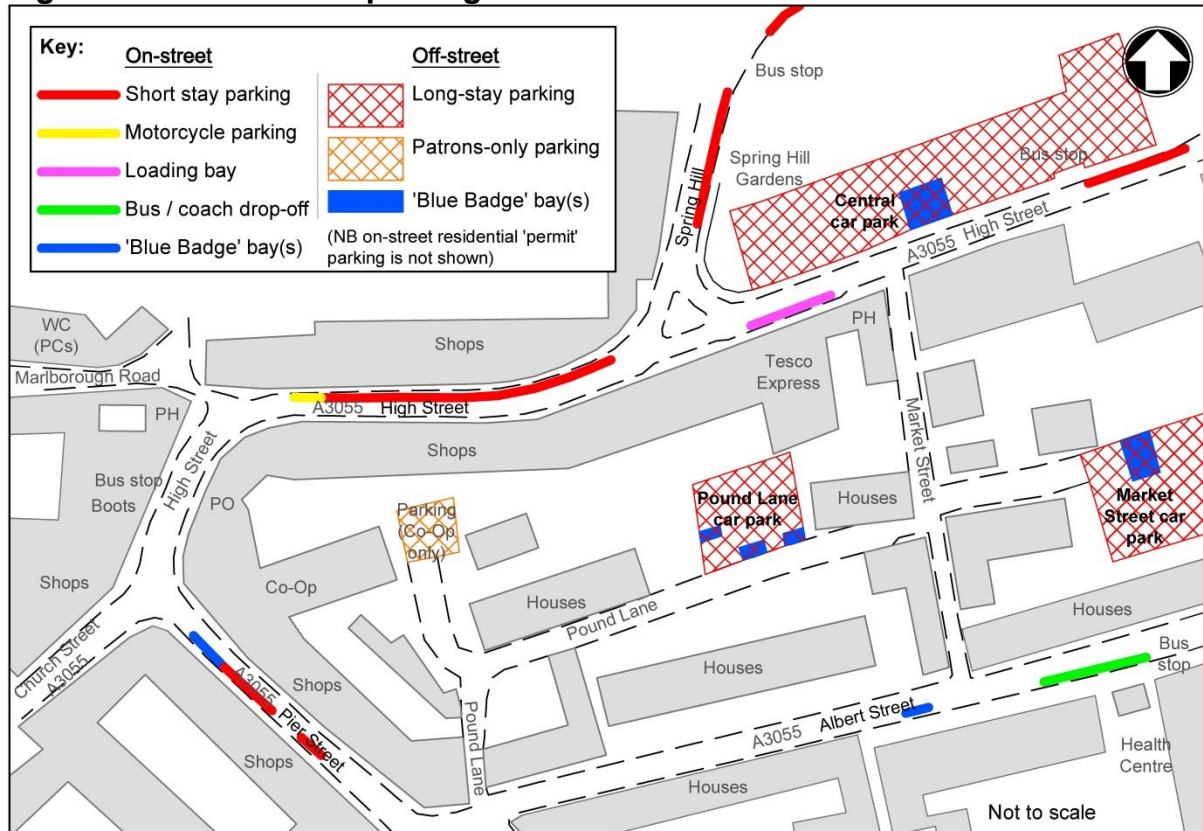


## Section 2: Key issues identified by assessment

### 2.1 Parking (on and off street) and drop-off facilities

Figure 2-A (below) shows the location of the main parking facilities in Ventnor Town Centre. All of the parking in this area is relevant, as people will be arriving into the High Street from multiple directions, often criss-crossing the town during their visit.

**Figure 2-A: Location of parking facilities within the town centre area**



#### 2.1.1 Parking on the High Street

There is space allocated for short-stay (30 minutes) free parking along the north side of the High Street, between Marlborough Road and Spring Hill (see Figure 2-B).

**Figure 2-B: On-street parking in the High Street (short-stay)**



There are no designated 'blue badge' ('disabled') parking bays here. This does not preclude disabled vehicle drivers and passengers from using these bays, but their usability will depend upon an individual's own access requirements. There is also space for solo motorcycles here.

There are no accessible pedestrian crossing facilities in this section of the High Street (see Paragraph 2.3.4 ). Nor are there any dropped kerbs (save for the vehicle cross-over at The Archway on the opposite side). The street is one way, therefore only the passenger's ('near') side will have direct access onto the footway.

This has several implications: firstly, any person alighting from their vehicle on the driver's ('off') side would have no easy step-free route to the footways on either side of the road and may need to walk in the carriageway for some distance in order to reach the footway; secondly, any person using a rear-loading 'wheelchair-accessible vehicle' ('WAV') would not only need extra space behind their vehicles to deploy the ramp, but may also have problems accessing the footways.

#### 2.1.2 Other on-street parking nearby

Figure 2-A also shows on-street parking in Pier Street, including two marked bays for disabled 'blue badge' holders. These bays are adjacent to the controlled crossing which has dropped kerbs, thus they have good step-free access to both sides of Pier Street, Church Street and the Western end of the High Street (e.g. for the Co-Op and the Post Office). These bays appear to be well used.

There are also some parking bays on the east side of Spring Hill. However, these are on a significant gradient and it is likely that many people who have blue badges would find it easier to use the nearby Central Car Park instead.

#### 2.1.3 Central Car Park

This car park has three blue badge parking bays, which are close to the exit. These bays are of standard size and do not have any additional space around them for loading / unloading.

There is level access from the parking bays to the footway along the north side of the High Street. There is also a signal-controlled crossing nearby which can take pedestrians to the South side of the High Street (see Figure 2-J).

Unlike the on-street parking, there are charges for using this car park. The car park ticket machines are not fully accessible. However, parking charges are waived for blue badge holders in this car park, making it a viable, free, short-stay alternative to on-street parking for those who can make the distance to the shops.

The only issue with the Central Car Park is that its most direct connection westwards to the shops and business on the north side of the High Street is by using the crossing at the bottom of Spring Hill. Please see Paragraph 2.3.5 for more details of issues with this crossing.

#### 2.1.4 Market Street and Pound Lane car parks

These two car parks are to the south of the High Street. As with the Central Car Park, there are modest charges but these are waived for blue badge holders.

There are 2 blue badge bays marked near to the entrance / exit of each of these car parks (NB one of the bays in the Pound Lane Car Park has been relocated while building work is taking place – hence Figure 2-A shows 3 bays, not 2). The bays in both car parks have additional space marked around them, although in the Pound Lane Car Park one of the bay margins appears to be habitually encroached upon.

The key issue with both the Market Street and Pound Lane car parks is that they are accessed via a network of small side streets with intermittent or narrow footways and, on those footways which do exist, the dropped kerbs are often sub-standard or non-existent (see Figure 2-C).

Whichever route they take, pedestrians (including wheelchair users and other vulnerable people) will be required to walk in the road for part of their journey to the High Street from either of these car parks. In some areas, the road surface is in poor condition, presenting further problems to those with mobility difficulties.

**Figure 2-C: Access routes to Market Street and Pound Lane car parks**



Depending on the nature of a person's impairment and also on their ultimate destination within the town centre, the issues with connectivity / accessibility of the routes to the Pound Lane / Market Street car parks could limit their suitability as parking for those visiting / using the High Street itself.

#### 2.1.5 Other loading bays and drop-offs

Figure 2-A shows a loading bay on the South side of the High Street, outside of the Tesco Metro. This does have a nearby dropped kerb to the adjacent footway.



However, given the presence of nearby short stay parking, this loading bay is obviously intended mainly for loading / unloading of goods rather than people.

There is a bus / coach pick-up and drop-off point on Albert Street (near to the health centre (doctor's surgery) bus stop). Used by community transport / Dial-a-ride services as well as private hire coaches, it is some distance away from the High Street (from which it may be reached via either Market Lane or the Albert Street / Pier Street junction – both of which routes have accessibility issues).

#### 2.1.6 Other parking issues in the High Street

During all site visits, there were numerous examples of illegal parking (e.g. on double-yellow lines).

Figure 2-D (right) shows a car parked on the High Street just east of the junction with Marlborough Road.

##### **Figure 2-D: Car parked on double-yellow lines**

This car was displaying a valid blue parking badge.

NB there are no blue badge parking facilities in this part of the High Street and all on-street spaces in this area were occupied at the time.



However, the car was parked in this location for over 2 hours and was causing problems for larger vehicles negotiating the corner (including buses).

Badly / illegally-parked vehicles can affect accessibility in a number of ways:-

- Encroachment onto footway (causing an obstruction to pedestrians)
- Blocking crossings (including dropped kerbs)
- Forcing other vehicles to swerve, or to mount the footway, etc, presenting a danger to those pedestrians who are either not aware or who cannot get out of the way. This seemed to be a particular problem both in front and behind the bus stop outside Boots (e.g. with taxis and Royal Mail vans loading / unloading), as well as near to the motorcycle parking and also either side of the crossing opposite the foot of Spring Hill
- Blocking visibility / sight-lines for drivers and pedestrians (e.g. at crossings)

#### 2.1.7 The significance of 'Disabled' parking bays and the 'Blue Badge' scheme

There are two main reasons for having designated parking bays reserved for users with disabilities. These are:

- to enable persons with reduced mobility to park near to their destination (reducing the distance they need to travel)
- to have extra space around the vehicle in order to transfer people, wheelchairs, scooters and walking frames into and out of the vehicle

Eligibility to use these parking spaces is usually restricted to those displaying a valid 'blue badge' international parking permit.

The blue badges themselves do not give the user an automatic concession on parking fees, although on this matter local authority-run car parks and on-street parking tend to be more generous than do operators of private car parks.

Concessions (where they do exist) can include extending the maximum allowable stay in the car park, recognising that many types of impairment may mean that disabled people need longer to access goods, services and appointments.

Blue badge holders may be able to park on-street in areas that are otherwise prohibited (i.e. on double-yellow lines). However, this would only be allowable in certain circumstances where a hazard would not otherwise be caused, and may only be permitted for a limited amount of time.

NB Not all disabled people are in possession of a 'blue badge'.

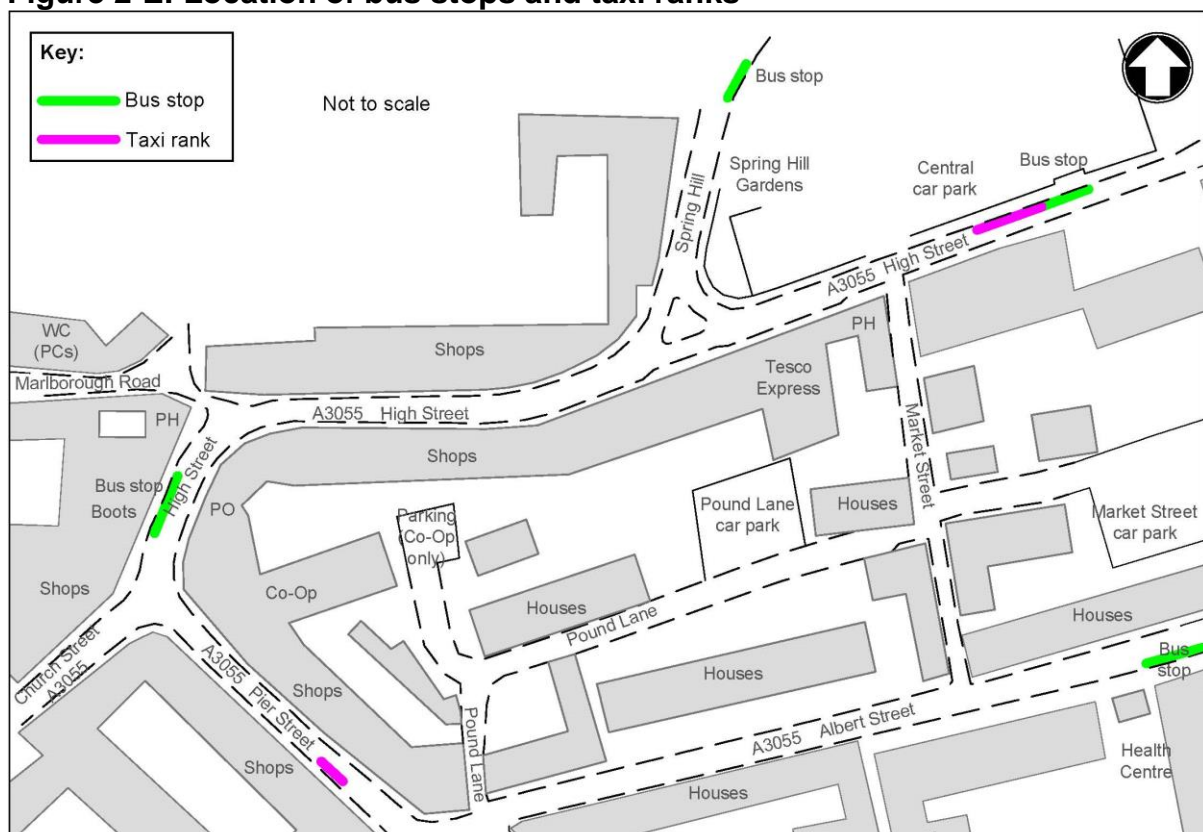
## 2.2 Bus stops and taxi ranks

### 2.2.1 Location of bus stops

The bus stop on the High Street outside Boots is the principle departure point for all scheduled buses in Ventnor, and is the only bus stop within the main study area.

There are other bus stops in the town centre which may also be relevant, particularly when considering any mitigation options. These are: on Spring Hill, on the High Street by the Central car park; and on Albert Street (by the health centre). These are all shown on Figure 2-E. There are also stops on Church Street, just off of this map.

**Figure 2-E: Location of bus stops and taxi ranks**



### 2.2.2 Main bus stop (outside Boots)

This is the principal bus stop for Ventnor. All scheduled bus services call here and some start / terminate here. Consequently it is the busiest stop in the town centre.

Although the bus stop itself is almost straight, the approach is not and can be further impacted by vehicles parked in the bus's path (see Figure 2-F).

**Figure 2-F: Bus approaching stop outside Boots**



This means that buses cannot pull up parallel with the kerb at the front of the stop. The importance of pulling level with the kerb is explained in Paragraph 2.2.6 , including its relevance to accessibility.

Our site visits observed many buses arriving and departing from this stop: only the smaller vehicles used on the No. 31 and the 6 were able to pull in properly, whereas the larger vehicles used on the No. 3 could not. There were a number of occasions when two buses were using the stop simultaneously, although the stop is only long enough to accommodate one maximum length (12m) bus.

Bus drivers have a range of options to deal with this, all of which were observed being employed during our site visits:

- By allowing the front of the bus to overhang the kerb.  
This reduces the stepping distance. However the overhang including the nearside wing mirror (although the mirror sticks out less on the new buses than on the previous types of bus used here) can be a hazard to pedestrians standing near to the edge of the footway when the bus arrives
- By stopping further away from the kerb.  
This increases the stepping distance and may force passengers to step down onto the road when boarding or alighting. This leads to a greater risk of falls and trips, especially amongst passengers with access needs (e.g. the elderly, those with small children, persons with visual impairments / poor depth



perception). The rear of the bus may also be sticking out into the road and blocking traffic

- By pulling forward (i.e. so that the front of the bus is outside the pub). This often happens when there is more than one bus at the stop and the bus at the front moves forward to let another bus pull in behind  
Buses parked forward of the marked stop reduces the visibility for vehicles pulling out of Marlborough Road  
NB illegally parked vehicles in front of the bus can also impact on the bus's stopping position

Another key issue at this bus stop is congestion on the footway and its width in general. Footway widths and obstructions are examined in more detail in Paragraph 2.4.4 .

**Figure 2-G: Bus unloading / loading at Boots stop**



Using the bus's ramp, there needs to be adequate footway width for a person using either a self-propelled manual wheelchair or an electric wheelchair to board or alight from the bus.

However, for those using either a manual wheelchair (being pushed from behind) or a Class 2 mobility scooter (which has a longer wheel-base and larger turning circle) the current footway width may be insufficient and needs to be investigated further.

Accessibility for passengers boarding or alighting from the bus can also be compromised by congestion caused by the sheer volume of people on the footway (as illustrated in Figure 2-G and in Figure 2-U).

This bus stop does not have a raised kerb. Installing a raised kerb would have a limited benefit at this location and would almost certainly cause more problems with a net reduction in accessibility (see Paragraph 2.2.6 ). Therefore we would advise against installing a raised kerb unless the bus stop and its approaches are to be redesigned to allow buses to pull in completely straight.

The nearest crossing point of the High Street is opposite Hurst's / the Post Office, which has a number of safety and accessibility issues (see paragraph 2.3.2 ).

#### 2.2.3 Bus stop on Spring Hill

This stop is not accessible and is on a steep gradient. In addition, the nearby parking often prevents buses from pulling fully into the kerb. However, as it is mostly used to set down passengers arriving from Newport on the No. 3, it is likely that most people with mobility difficulties would use other stops instead.

#### 2.2.4 Bus stop on High Street (by central car park)

This stop is typically used by services heading towards Bonchurch (including the No.3 to Ryde).

The bus shelter is set back from the footway and has limited visibility from within to see the bus coming (mainly due to planting).

The stop has a raised kerb to aid boarding for persons with mobility difficulties. The approach to the stop is straight, meaning that (in theory) buses should be able to pull up parallel to this kerb with a minimum gap. This manoeuvre is assisted by the raised kerb protruding slightly into the road to form a 'half-boarder' (see Figure 2-H).



**Figure 2-H: Bus stop at Central Car Park**

However, there is a taxi rank immediately before the bus stop and if a taxi were to be parked on this rank then it could prevent the bus from coming in parallel to the kerb. We did not observe this taxi rank being used during the day-time, therefore this may only be a problem in the evening and is a relatively minor issue. This risk is also further reduced by the presence of the half-boarder.

This bus stop is on a moderate gradient (of approximately 1:13), but this should not be a problem for most users.

The only other issue with this bus stop is that its most direct connection westwards to the shops and business on the North side of the High Street is by using the crossing at the bottom of Spring Hill. Please see Paragraph 2.3.5 for more details of issues with this crossing.

Otherwise there are easy step-free connections to the South side of the High Street (and beyond) using the nearby signal-controlled crossing (see Figure 2-J).



#### 2.2.5 Bus stop on Albert Street

Although of limited relevance to the High Street, this stop serves the health centre and most buses in Ventnor also call here. It has a shelter and a straight approach and, although it doesn't have a raised kerb, it is otherwise fairly accessible.

#### 2.2.6 The importance of raised kerbs and of straight approaches to bus stops

There are a number of different types of raised kerb for use in bus stops, but they all serve two key functions:

- The kerb edge and the adjacent footway are raised so as to reduce the vertical step for people walking onto the bus. Most buses can also 'kneel' (by letting air out of the suspension) to reduce this gap even further
- When a bus's ramp is deployed for wheelchair users to board or alight, the reduced vertical differential between the kerb and the interior of the bus means that the gradient of the ramp is much reduced, facilitating safe boarding

However, if a bus approaches a raised kerb at too great an angle, then there is a risk that the bus cannot pull completely parallel with the kerb. In addition, if the raised kerb is higher than the overhanging part of the bus's bodywork, then the bus could be damaged.

Buses pulling into stops from a larger angle can have other implications, even at bus stops with normal-height kerbs (or no kerb at all). If the front of the bus overhangs the footway on approaching, then it could knock over a pedestrian, but the wing mirrors have an even greater overhang and can hit a pedestrian in the head.

NB The bus drivers' visibility of this area may be limited.

In these situations, some bus drivers try to avoid collisions such as this by pulling up some distance from the kerb.

This has a knock-on effect on accessibility as passengers may be forced to step from the footway into the road then back up into the bus (or vice-versa). This is a particular problem for those with mobility difficulties or visual-impairments, especially when stepping on or off a raised kerb of up to 200mm upstand (height).

If a bus is not parallel with the kerb, then the ramp is more likely to be laid at a skewed angle, which can be a problem if the footway is not flat. Ramps can be damaged if a heavy load (such as an electric wheelchair and rider) is put on them when they are twisted. In 2015 a local bus company in Hampshire stopped carrying electric wheelchairs on their buses because of the cost of repairing damage to their vehicles. This damage was caused by deploying ramps at bus stops where they could not be laid straight. The situation was resolved by the local highway authority auditing bus stops with the bus company and making improvements to key stops.

These types of problems typically occur at bus stops on non-straight sections of road, or when other vehicles are obstructing the approach to the bus stop. The bus stop outside Boots is an example of these.

#### 2.2.7 Taxi ranks

There are no taxi ranks within the High Street study area, but there are ranks nearby in Pier Street and on the Western end of the High Street near to the Central Car Park.

The Pier Street rank is well-used during the day. There is a nearby dropped kerb (actually a vehicle crossover, but is nearly flush) to assist persons with reduced mobility to access to / from the nearside footway. Figure 2-I shows an accessible taxi at this rank.

The only limitation is that this rank has no sheltered waiting facilities (although some patrons wait under the nearby canopy of the former bus garage). Visibility of traffic coming around the corner from Albert Street may also be an issue, but we advise discussing with local taxi firms when ascertaining the level of risk.

**Figure 2-I: Pier Street taxi rank**



The High Street taxi rank is close to the controlled crossing (see Paragraph 2.3.6 ) and to the bus stop (which has a shelter). As with the nearby bus stop and the Central Car Park, access to the North side of the main part of the High Street is compromised slightly by the issues with the crossing at the bottom of Spring Hill (see Paragraph 2.3.5 ).

## **2.3 Accessible pedestrian crossing points**

### **2.3.1 The importance of accessible, safe, usable pedestrian crossing points**

Crossing points enable pedestrians to move between their point of entry (e.g. car parking / drop-offs, bus stops, surrounding streets, etc.) and their destination (e.g. shops, sea-front, etc.).

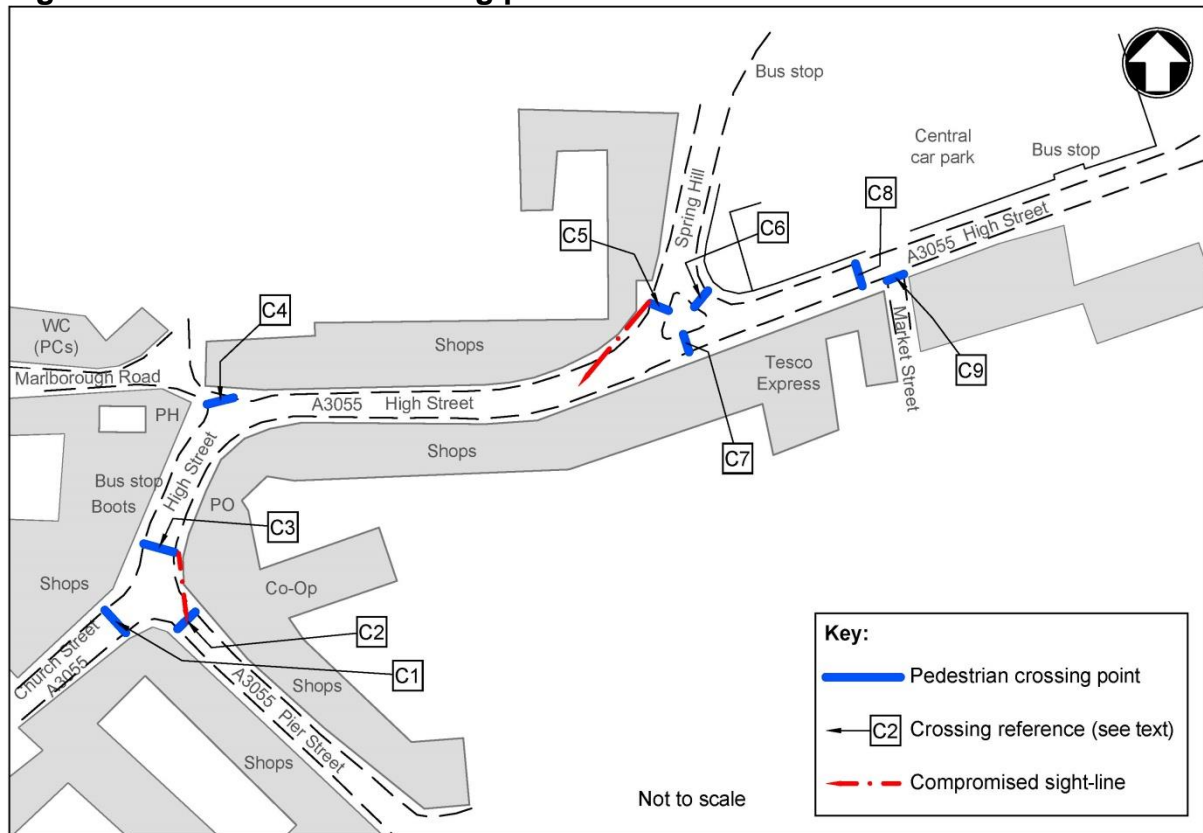
In a highly-trafficked area such as Ventnor (which is on a key 'through' route as well as being a destination in itself), crossings are also essential for pedestrians to navigate around the town centre safely.

For pedestrians with mobility problems or any other kind of access need, the provision of appropriate, safe, usable and accessible crossing facilities is essential.

Figure 2-J shows the location of the pedestrian crossing points in and around the High Street area. The existing crossing points are labelled C1 to C9.

Again, some crossings that are immediately outside the study area have been shown as they are directly relevant to how pedestrians reach the High Street itself.

**Figure 2-J: Location of crossing points**



### 2.3.2 Crossings at the Western end of the High Street (junction with Pier Street / Church Street) – Crossings C1, C2 and C3

Crossings C1 and C2 are integrated into the traffic signal controlled junction of Pier Street, Church Street and High Street. Both C1 and C2 have pedestrian request phases, 'blister' tactile paving and dropped kerbs in adequate condition.

Crossing C3 is uncontrolled. There are dropped kerbs on both sides of the road, but there is no tactile paving on either side. See Figure 2-K for details.

The 'blister' style of tactile paving at crossing points performs four key functions:

- To warn visually-impaired pedestrians that they have reached the edge of the footway (pavement) so that they do not inadvertently walk into the road. This is essential if the kerb upstand is 25mm or below  
For the ease and safety of wheelchair users, 25mm is the accepted maximum upstand for newly-installed dropped kerbs intended for pedestrian crossing use, therefore tactile paving should be present at all new crossings)
- To assist visually-impaired (VI) pedestrians in locating the crossing point
- To help VI pedestrians to align themselves with the corresponding 'landing point' on the other side of the road
- To inform VI pedestrians who are crossing the road that they have reached the other side



**Figure 2-K: Crossing C3 (High Street)**



The dropped kerb on the West side of Crossing C3 is also a 'vehicle crossover' or 'verge crossing' for vehicles entering and leaving via the archway between Boots and Hose Rhodes Dickson. Vehicles using this crossover would be in conflict with pedestrians crossing the road.

The poor condition of the dropped kerb (very uneven, typically 15-30mm upstand, but up to 46mm deep in places) may cause a problem for wheelchair users.

This, added to the presence of the grating over the drainage channel may also be a trip hazard to pedestrians attempting to cross the road.

The dropped kerb upstand on the East side of this crossing is 26-30mm (25mm max recommended).

**Figure 2-L: Visibility from the East side of Crossing C3**

Crossing C3 is uncontrolled, therefore a pedestrian waiting on the East side of Crossing C3 would need to be able to discern traffic



approaching from Church Street and / or Pier Street.

Figure 2-L shows the view towards Pier Street from this point. Clear visibility between the crossing and the main carriageway of Pier Street is restricted to approximately 17 metres and, depending on the phase / stage of the traffic signals, may not be enough to give drivers approaching from Pier Street sufficient stopping sight distance to see pedestrians crossing the road here (and vice-versa).

Pedestrians with any kind of mobility issue are likely to take longer to cross the road, and those with sensory or cognitive issues may take longer to see and to mentally register those vehicles which are coming towards them. Thus the limited visibility has an effect on accessibility.

The above risks associated with Crossing C3 may be offset by the fact that pedestrians are able to make the same movement more safely by using Crossings C1 and C2 instead. However, this would involve a diversion into Church Street and Pier Street and would take more time, particularly for those with mobility issues.

During the site visits, it was observed that many pedestrians (including some elderly and those with apparent mobility impairments) were using Crossing C3.

### 2.3.3 Crossing of Marlborough Road - Crossing C4

Figure 2-M shows Crossing C4 at the bottom of Marlborough Road where it meets the High Street.

There are dropped kerbs on both sides, with upstands of between 10 and 26mm (but not flush). In order to negotiate non-flush dropped kerbs on a slope like this without tipping, some wheelchair users will need to be positioned at right angles to the dropped kerb on the street corners, thus aligning themselves in such a way as would point them into the main carriageway of the High Street.

**Figure 2-M: Crossing C4 (Marlborough Road)**





There is no tactile paving on either side of the crossing to warn VI pedestrians that they are walking across a side road, or to align them with the opposite footway.

#### 2.3.4 The High Street between Crossing C3, Marlborough Road and Spring Hill junctions

There are no designated crossing points of the High Street between Crossing C3 and Crossings C5 / C6 / C7 (at the foot of Spring Hill), a distance of 150m.

The only dropped kerbs along this section of the High Street are across the junction with Marlborough Road (which is designed to cross that road only – Crossing C4 – see Paragraph 2.3.3 ), and at the entrance to The Archway (which is a vehicle crossover, though has a minimal upstand). Neither of these have a corresponding dropped kerb on the opposite side of the High Street.

The net result is that there are no step-free crossing opportunities (either designated or informal) along the main section of the High Street.

**Figure 2-N: No crossing points on High Street between Marlborough Road and Spring Hill**



In addition to this, short-stay parking is continuous along the north side of the High Street between Marlborough Road and Spring Hill (as shown in Figure 2-N). This parking appears to be in constant use throughout the day.

Thus safe crossing opportunities are limited, even for those pedestrians who can ascend / descend kerbs.

### 2.3.5 Crossing points at junction of High Street and Spring Hill – Crossings C5, C6 and C7

These three crossings connect the north and south sides of the High Street across the South end of Spring Hill using a triangular traffic island. These crossings are uncontrolled, with flush (or nearly flush) dropped kerbs and appropriate 'blister' tactile paving.

Visibility at these crossings for pedestrians and vehicle drivers is generally good, except for on the West side of Spring Hill looking back towards the High Street (as shown on Figure 2-O, right), where clear visibility is reduced to 21 metres.

#### **Figure 2-O: Visibility from the West side of Crossing C5**

Visibility is also dependent on the size (height / width) of any vehicle which may be parked in the end parking bay.

As with Crossing C3, this has an effect on the safe usability of the crossing for all pedestrians, especially for those with mobility difficulties who may need extra time to cross.

Unlike C3, there are no practical alternative crossing facilities nearby.



### 2.3.6 Crossings at the Eastern end of the High Street (to Central Car Park and at the junction with Market Street) – Crossings C8 and C9

These crossings are slightly out of the study area, but are pertinent to how the high Street is accessed and used, including the links to nearby car parks and bus stops.

Crossing C8 is a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing and has appropriate dropped kerbs and red 'blister' tactile paving.

Crossing C9 takes connects the footway along the South side of the High Street across the junction with Market Street. Although the condition of Market Street itself is quite poor, the crossing is adequate and has the appropriate dropped kerbs and tactile paving.

## **2.4 Footways – widths and obstacles**

### 2.4.1 Why does width matter?

The minimum necessary footway width is determined by context, pedestrian usage, vehicle volumes in the adjacent carriageway (including speed) and on the space available (see 'Manual for Streets'). When designing for linear paths and footways to be used by all people (including persons with disabilities), it is worth considering how much space people need to safely circulate.

The following minimum widths (see Figure 2-P) have been taken from Manual for Streets, Manual for Streets 2 and from the latest version of BS 8300 (Part 1):

**Figure 2-P: Guide to minimum widths required for persons with access needs**

Access need	Width required (mm)
Person in wheelchair	900
Wheelchair user and ambulant person alongside	1,500
Ambulant person with stick	750
Ambulant person with 2 crutches	1,200
Long-cane user	1,200
Ambulant adult with child	1,200
Adult with pushchair and child alongside	1,500

In new developments with low to medium footfall, 1.8m is used by planning and highway authorities as a bare minimum for footways. This is the minimum width that allows two wheelchair users to pass each other.

#### 2.4.2 Other uses of the footway and consequent demands on width and space

In a town centre environment such as Ventnor, the footway is not only there for pedestrians to walk along and to pass each other, but it is also to do other things such as: look in the windows of shops and restaurants; or to stop and gossip with friends.

Ventnor's footways are particularly busy during the peak tourist season.

The parking along the North side of the High Street means that vehicle doors will be opening onto the footway with people getting into and out of their vehicles (or with loading / unloading), thus also occupying the footway.

The area around the bus stop outside Boots / 'DJ's Café' is particularly congested with passengers waiting for buses as well as boarding / alighting.

In many town centres, it is common to find items of street furniture (such as seating, bollards, lighting and signage columns, litter bins, public planting etc.), but in the main section of Ventnor High Street, these have been kept to a minimum in order to maximise the footway space available for pedestrians. This is also true of tables and chairs that are commonly found outside cafes, pubs and restaurants in other areas, but are absent here.

However, many businesses in Ventnor do place displays, planters and advertising ('A') boards within their curtilage, but which often spill over onto the footway itself.

Most of the shops on Ventnor High Street are not accessible to wheelchair / scooter users. Those who can walk a short distance or who can stand for a short length of time would normally wish to leave their wheelchair outside of the shop when they go inside. These parked wheelchairs and scooters also create obstacles on the footway.

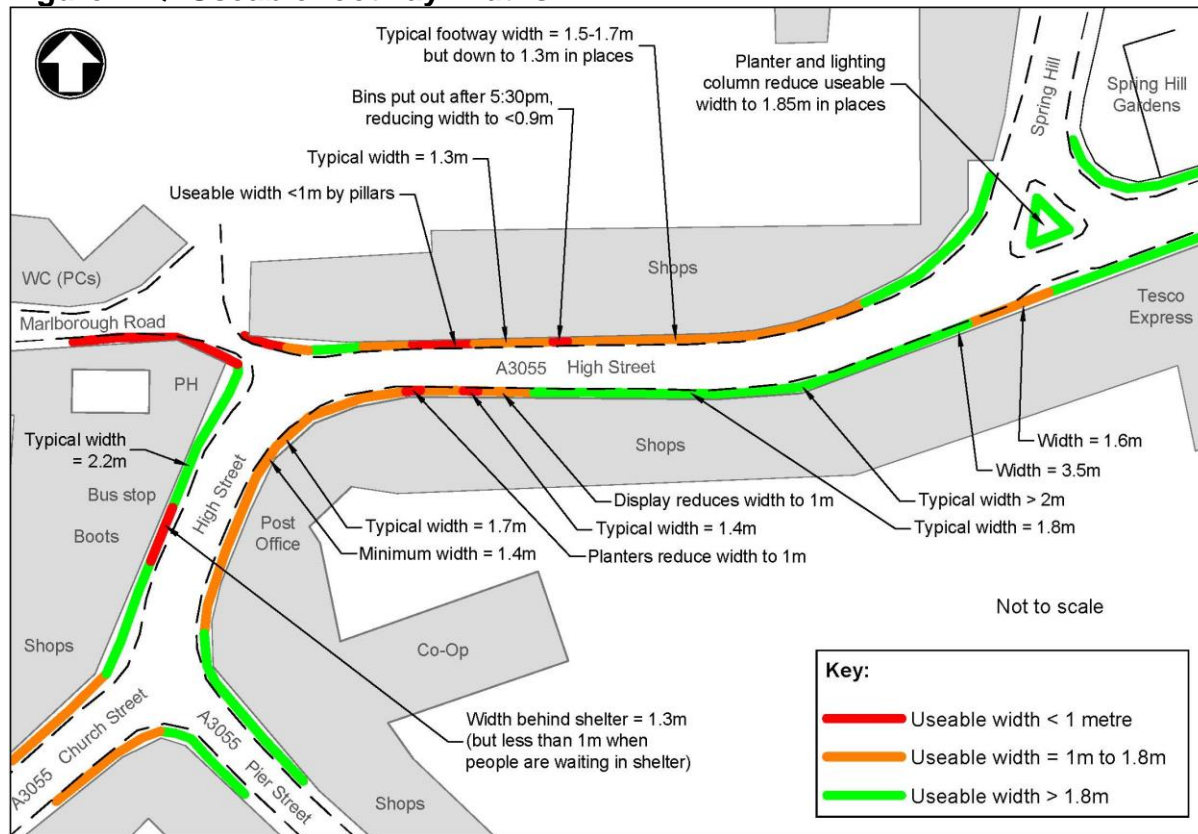
Some forward-thinking shops and restaurants may have a portable ramp that they can employ to help wheelchair users negotiate the step into their premises. However, this relies on there being sufficient space on the footway to deploy the ramp and for the wheelchair user to align themselves with the ramp.



### 2.4.3 How much width do we have available?

Figure 2-Q shows the useable footway widths along the main section of the High Street. It also shows some of the common moveable obstacles.

**Figure 2-Q: Useable footway widths**



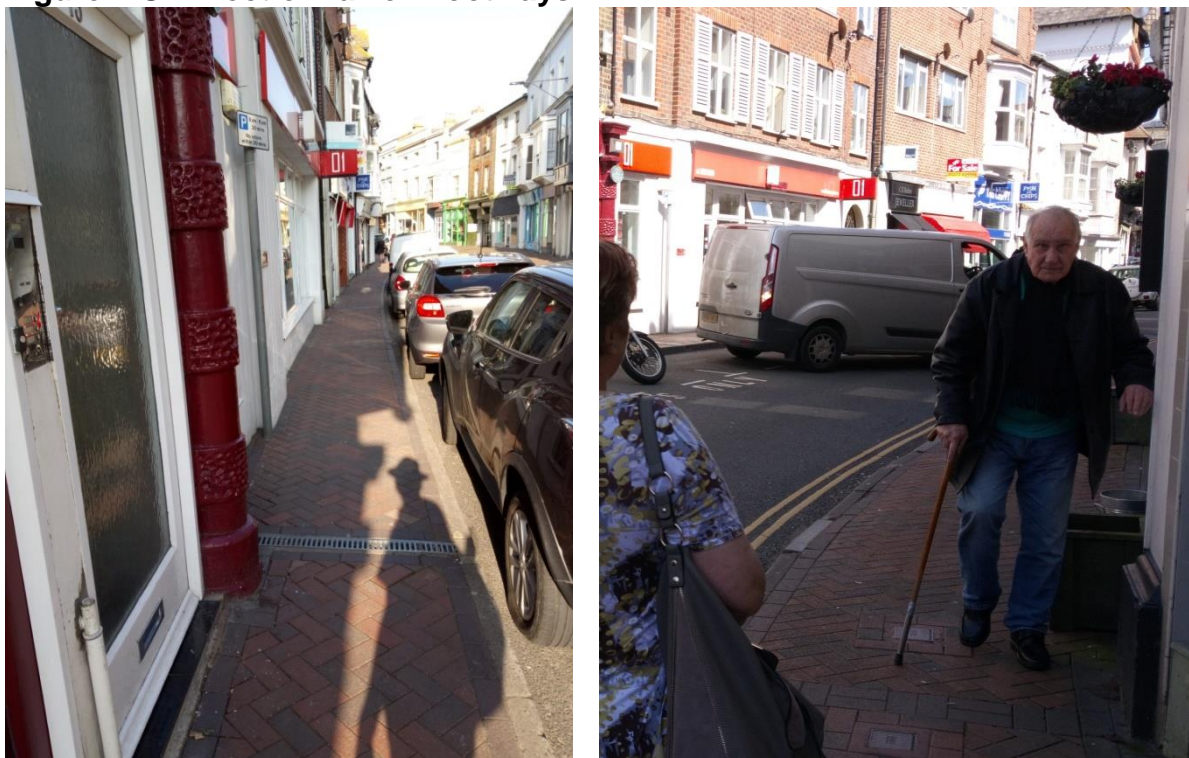
In addition, the shop frontages open directly onto the footway, which in turn adjoins the road carriageway. On the South side, the cross-fall on the carriageway can make high-sided vehicles 'lean' towards the footway and, along with overhanging appendages such as wing mirrors can impinge on the pedestrian zone, making it feel even narrower and less safe.

**Figure 2-R: Congestion on the footway**



The red areas on Figure 2-Q show where the most serious 'pinch points' are (footways widths below 1 metre). Other areas of concern are in orange (1m-1.8m wide). The widths themselves should be taken in context with how they are used (see paragraph 2.4.2 ), particularly when assessing accessibility and risk. Figure 2-R shows congestion occurring at one of the relatively wider (2m) sections of footway.

**Figure 2-S: Effect of narrow footways**



The photo on the left of Figure 2-S shows the narrow section of footway on the north side of the High Street where the width reduces from 1.3m to below a metre by the pillars in this shop-front. Open car doors impinge on the meagre space available. Similarly, the photo on the right of Figure 2-S shows the narrow section of footway on the South side of the High Street where the width varies between 1.4 and 1.7m.

#### 2.4.4 Main bus stop (outside Boots)

Figure 2-T (right) shows the bus stop outside Boots - in a very rare (and brief) quiet period! The footway width is typically 2.2m here, but the bus shelter constricts the available width to 1.3m. This is reduced when waiting passengers are sat in the shelter, and reduced even further when waiting passengers are standing by the shelter.

**Figure 2-T: Main bus stop**





The footway is impassable when buses are loading / unloading (see Figure 2-U) and we have been told that it causes a problem for local people with visual impairments who are trying to get past.

**Figure 2-U: Bus unloading outside Boots**



#### 2.4.5 Other footway obstructions

Overall, the High Street appears to be reasonably carefully managed so as to reduce both fixed and moveable obstructions to the footways, which is a credit to both the relevant local authorities and the traders concerned.

However, the assessments found numerous examples of encroachments, some of which are shown on the plan in Figure 2-Q.

Figure 2-V shows a succession of 'A' boards on the footway, which is approximately 2m wide at this point, but width is further constricted by a bicycle being used as advertising. A visually-impaired person would not be expecting these obstacles and could collide with them. The narrow remaining width would also cause problems for parents with children, persons in larger wheelchairs / mobility scooters and for those using sticks and crutches.

**Figure 2-V: Other moveable obstructions on the footway**



There were other non-fixed obstacles on the footway, many of which were witnessed to be causing obstructions to pedestrians during the assessors' site visits.

Some obstructions (such as traders' waste bins) were present, but these had only been put out at the end of the day when footfall was low and had been carefully placed so as to minimise their impact.

**Figure 2-W: More moveable obstructions**



However, the photograph on the left of Figure 2-W shows an 'A' board which was present on the 17<sup>th</sup> April, and the photo on the right shows a sack which was left on the footway all afternoon during the site visit on the 8<sup>th</sup> May.

## **2.5 Footways and pedestrian areas – other hazards**

### **2.5.1 Gradients and cross-falls**

Although Ventnor is in a hilly area, the High Street has a modest gradient which increases towards the Eastern end to approximately 1:13. The steepest gradient is on Marlborough Road (where the public toilets are located) which is up to 1:4.1.

'Cross-fall' is the transverse slope across a footway or carriageway. These are essential for effective drainage and therefore usually fall towards the drainage channel (gutter). Gradients / cross-falls are notated as a ratio of level rise : distance. Typical carriageway / footway cross-falls should be 1:40-1:50, but it is common to find them steeper depending on local drainage requirements and topography.

Excessive cross-falls can cause problems for wheelchair users. The effect of the slope is to pull wheelchairs downwards, which often means that they are continuously dragged towards the edge of the footway and in danger of rolling into the carriageway. This is also an issue for prams / buggies, especially if somebody has stopped without applying the brakes.

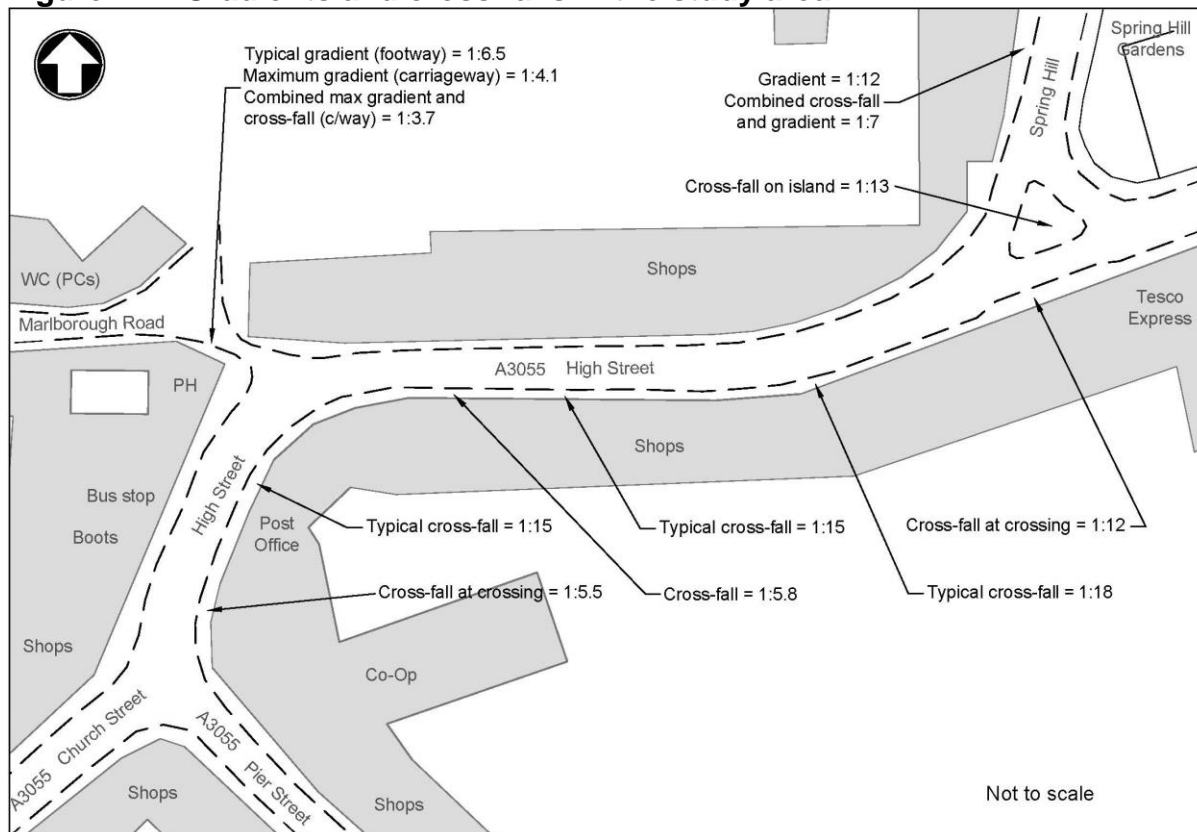
The additional effort required to continue moving in a straight line while constantly being pulled to the side can cause fatigue to those pushing manual chairs and pose a particular problem for self-propelled wheelchair users, causing long-term damage. Steep cross-falls can affect stability. This is a particular problem where there are frequent vehicle crossovers (e.g. in a street with many private driveways).



Wheelchairs with raised seats are less stable and users could be more vulnerable to wobble and lean with varying and steep cross-falls, as are Class 2 mobility scooters.

Excessive cross-falls can also be a problem for those walking, especially in poor weather (e.g. when covered in mud, ice or running water), causing a slip hazard.

**Figure 2-X: Gradients and cross-falls in the study area**



Typical cross-falls on the footways in much of Ventnor High Street are around 1:15 – 1:20, which are manageable for the majority of users. The more severe cross-falls are located on the South side of the High Street (see Figure 2-X and Figure 2-Y).

**Figure 2-Y: Excessive cross-falls**



The cross-fall outside Hurst's (Figure 2-Y – left hand photo) is 1:5.5. This is partly because of the slope for the nearby crossing, but the steep cross-fall extends for some way beyond the crossing (recommended max. cross-fall at crossings is 1:12). The cross-fall outside 'Tramezzini' (Figure 2-Y – right photo) is 1:5.8.

Both of these are on very narrow sections of footway and are close to / on a corner.

During the site visit on 17<sup>th</sup> April, the assessors encountered an elderly couple, one of whom was using a wheelchair. Her partner (who was ambulant) said that he deliberately walked on the 'road side' of the footway so as to prevent his wife's wheelchair from rolling into the road.

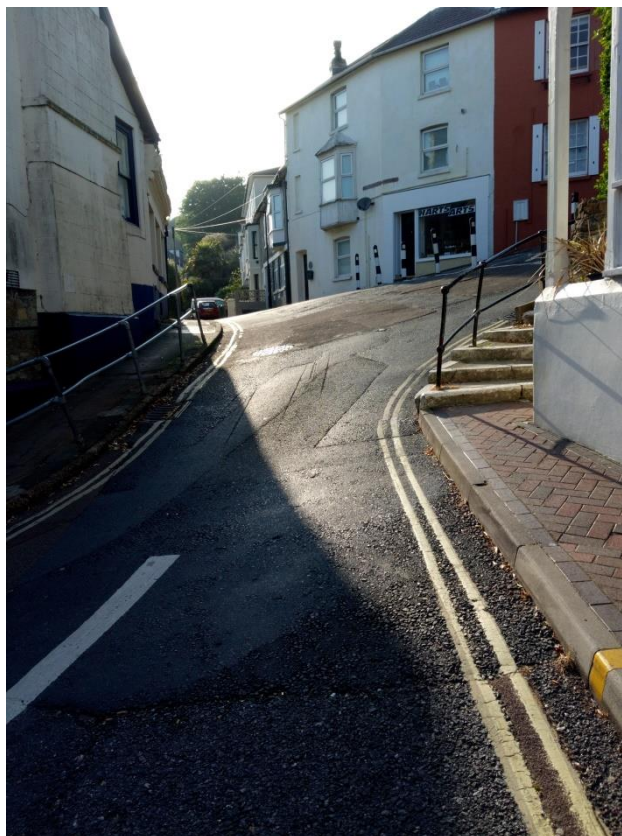
Figure 2-Z shows the steep rise up from the High Street to Marlborough Road. This is the pedestrian route to the only public toilets in the High Street area (see paragraph 2.6.1 ).

#### **Figure 2-Z: Gradients on Marlborough Road**

The typical gradient along the footway shown on the left of this photo is 1:6.5, but the maximum is 1:4.1. Anybody attempting to use the road instead would encounter a combined gradient / cross-fall of 1:3.7 in places.

In reality, this is caused by the topography of Ventnor and cannot easily be remedied.

There are handrails between the footway and the road.



#### **2.5.2 Trip hazards**

There are a number of potential trip hazards within the study area which have not been described elsewhere.

Most are relatively minor and are related to maintenance issues.

The surfacing issue shown in Figure 2-AA is in the road carriageway, but it adds a further impediment to pedestrians crossing the road. It also causes vehicles to swerve in an attempt to avoid it, or to lean towards the footway when driving over it.

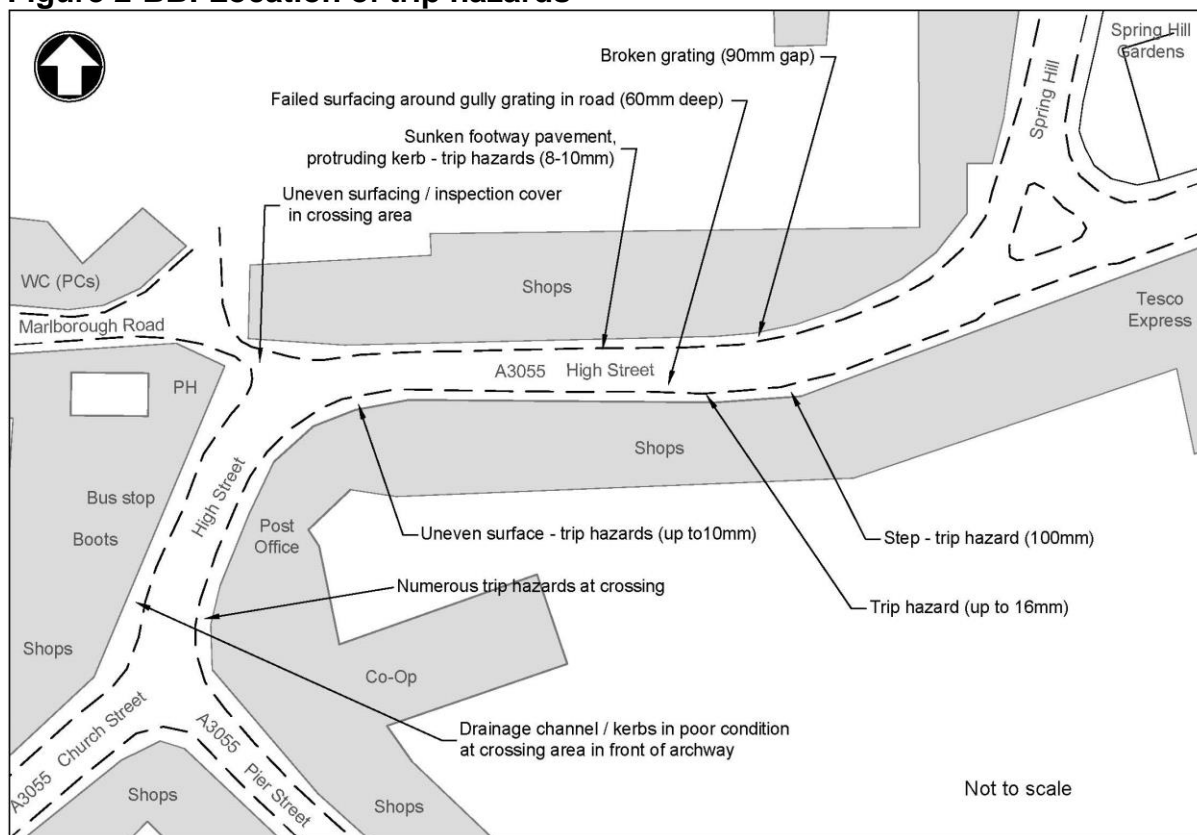
#### **Figure 2-AA: Failed surfacing around drainage gully**





The location of this and other trip hazards are shown in Figure 2-BB.

**Figure 2-BB: Location of trip hazards**



Some of these trip hazards are related to the private premises adjacent to the footways.

The left-hand photo in Figure 2-CC shows a broken grating, which is partially covered up during business hours when the trader has an external display, but is fully-exposed at other times.

The right-hand photo in Figure 2-CC shows an unprotected step outside the taxi office.

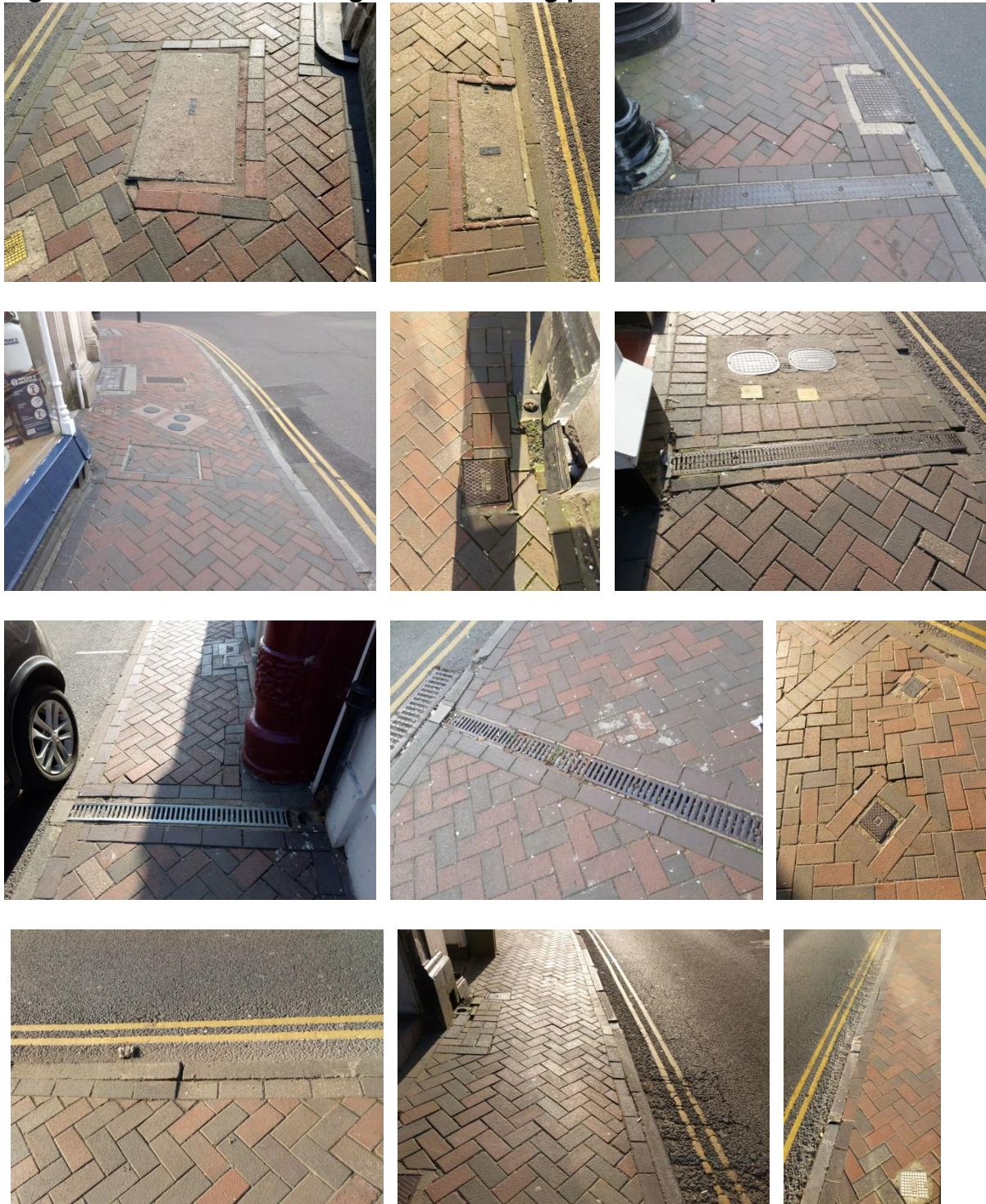
**Figure 2-CC: Trip hazards that are part of private curtilages**





There are a few other surfacing issues which are the result of wear and tear on the pavement surface and kerbs, particularly around inspection covers (Figure 2-DD).

**Figure 2-DD: Other surfacing issues causing potential trip hazards**



### 2.5.3 Other hazards

Within the study area, there are two 'archway' entrances onto the High Street, one by Boots / Hose Rhodes Dickson, and the other adjacent to Randall's Taxis (see Figure 2-EE).



Concerns were raised over vehicles reversing out of these archways when the driver had little or no visibility of either pedestrians on the footway, or of other traffic on the road itself.

**Figure 2-EE: Taxi reversing across footway onto High Street**



This can be treated as a general safety issue, but it should be borne in mind that persons with sensory impairments may not notice that the vehicle is reversing and those with reduced mobility may struggle to move out of the way quickly enough.

#### **2.5.4 Weather and seasonal effects**

The site visits for this assessment were both carried out during periods of dry, sunny weather. Therefore it was not possible to ascertain the possible effects of standing rainwater, ice, snow or high winds, leaf or fruit fall.

Where present, these can present obstacles and trip / slip hazards, sometimes even blocking a route completely.

In the main study area there was no obvious evidence of large puddles having formed recently, nor were there any areas slippery with mould / moss / lichen, etc.

Overhanging vegetation alongside footways and footpaths can also cause an obstruction, and is potentially hazardous for those with visual impairments. However, there were no such issues within the study area or any of its approach routes.

### **2.6 Other facilities (toilets, seating, wayfinding, lighting)**

#### **2.6.1 Toilets**

The only public toilets (public conveniences) in this part of the town centre are on Marlborough Road, which is up a short, steep incline from the High Street (see Paragraph 2.5.1 and Figure 2-Z for more details).

There are accessible toilets and baby changing facilities in both the male and female sections of the building.

The toilets are accessed from the footway on the North side of Marlborough Road. The footway is only 0.7m wide in places. However there is no step-free route onto this footway, making the toilets inaccessible to those wheelchair users who cannot leave their chairs.

The narrow footway, inset inspection covers and road carriageway cross-fall away from the toilets make this a difficult situation to resolve cheaply or sensitively.

**Figure 2-FF: Public toilets on Marlborough Road**



NB the footway on the South side of Marlborough Road (which leads up from the High Street – see Figure 2-Z) has no pedestrian dropped kerb, but does have a vehicle crossover (opposite the toilet building) with a 65mm upstand (which cannot be described as ‘step-free’)

#### **2.6.2 Places to sit / rest**

There is no public seating in the main part of the High Street (i.e. within the study area).

The nearest available seating is in Spring Hill Gardens, on the corner of Spring Hill and the Eastern end of the High Street (by the Central Car Park). This may be reached via a step-free route from the High Street, although please see our previous concerns about the link to the North side of the High Street via Crossing C5 (see Paragraph 2.3.5 ).

This seating is not under shelter.

The bus shelters at the stops outside Boots and by the Central Car Park both have basic seating for passengers’ use (without armrests).

Seating and other opportunities to rest are important, particularly for those with mobility difficulties, the elderly and for those with complex conditions, such as COPD, in which oxygen supply to the limbs may be shut down without warning (in order to conserve supply to vital organs).

It is recommended that seating is provided every 50 to 100 metres. However, the current arrangement of the High Street (including the narrow footways) means that this might not be achievable without compromising footway width.

There are no rest stops in the study area that would be suitable for assistance dogs to relieve themselves.

### 2.6.3 Wayfinding

Signage in the study area has been limited to a few essential road signs. The only pedestrian sign is on the corner of Marlborough Road, pointing towards the public toilets. Again, this is probably deliberate in order to reduce clutter when road and footway space is at a premium.

Signage in the outer area is primarily direction and regulatory signage for vehicles (including for car and coach parks, etc.).

Maps of the town may be found in the Central car park (Figure 2-GG – left) and at in Spring Hill Gardens (Figure 2-GG – right).

However, there is a general lack of clear plans and signage directing people to the High Street shopping area and to the car parks etc. There is no specific 'accessibility' information.

**Figure 2-GG: Existing wayfinding**



### 2.6.4 Lighting

The site visits for this assessment were carried out during daylight hours, therefore no assessment was made of street lighting facilities in the study area.

Because lighting has a significant impact on perceptions of personal security in public areas, we recommend that VTC include a survey of street lighting alongside this report (if they have not already done so).

NB both bus stops are within 10m of nearby street lighting columns and the shelters have clear side / roof panels which allow light in.

If required, Isle Access would be willing to check lighting levels at dusk or at night time.

## **Section 3: Further work**

### **3.1 Recommending mitigation measures**

#### **3.1.1 A 'technical' assessment**

This risk assessment identifies the issues and hazards present in the High Street and associated approach and arrival / departure routes.

It describes the potential severity of any risks presented and posits who might be affected by them, but it cannot 'quantify' the likelihood of issues occurring without doing further work.

This assessment does not seek to make any specific recommendations for mitigating any of the issues / risks found.

#### **3.1.2 A 'holistic' approach**

For some of the issues identified in the text, implementing mitigation measures may be fairly straightforward.

However, the majority of the issues described in this report are of a more complex nature. Any potential solutions will need to be of a much wider scope and will require careful planning in order to not have unforeseen impacts on accessibility elsewhere.

Therefore, we suggest that VTC seeks the views of disabled residents and visitors when considering making any improvements.

### **3.2 Setting up an 'Access Advisory Panel'**

#### **3.2.1 Who is affected?**

What could seem like a major issue on the pages of this assessment report may be of little relevance to many users, whereas something which appears relatively minor could have an impact on many people.

It is recommended that VTC liaise with a broad representative range of local disabled people (with a cross-section of different impairments) in order to find out their views and experiences and to get a more rounded picture.

This would enable VTC to quantify and thus 'weight' the risks identified in terms of their effects on individual users of the town centre.

This additional context will be important when considering allocating resources to mitigate any of the issues identified in this assessment.

#### **3.2.2 Reaching out to all**

It should be borne in mind that there may be people who already find parts of Ventnor to be inaccessible and who have coping strategies which may include coming into Ventnor less frequently or even not coming to the town at all (or not coming without a carer / assistant).

Reaching out to these people will be vital, as their views and needs are all too often overlooked in other types of consultation (resulting in a reverse form of 'self-selection bias').



### 3.2.3 Why set up an Access Advisory Panel

An effective long-term approach would be to set up an independent 'Access Advisory Panel' consisting of local disabled people (including families and carers).

The panel would work closely with VTC in setting priorities for undertaking remedial works, and also advise on future projects.

An access advisory panel (AAP) would also assist in measuring accessibility and usability before and after implementation of any improvements (or larger schemes).

Isle Access would be pleased to assist VTC in setting up an Access Advisory Panel.

### 3.2.4 The benefits of an Access Advisory Panel

A well-run AAP could benefit VTC in a number of ways, such as by:

- Ensuring that any new projects / improvement schemes are worked out to be as accessible and inclusive as possible.  
Getting it right first time reduces the need for retrospectively adding accessibility improvements piecemeal, which is both expensive and disruptive
- Enabling improvements to be prioritised so as to benefit the maximum number of users
- Reducing the likelihood of claims brought against the council under the Equality Act 2010
- Feeding into the 'risk assessment' process for highway and town centre management
- Enabling other accessible infrastructure to function at its full potential (e.g. well-designed bus stops make buses easier to use)
- Assessing an area holistically rather than just standalone schemes  
This would help to avoid unintended consequences such as inaccessible disconnects between projects
- Demonstrating a genuine positive commitment to consult with service users
- Establishing a two-way dialogue with users.  
This would ensure that any problems could be avoided (or at least resolved in a constructive manner)
- Improving the disability awareness of councillors, designers and planners
- Managing users' expectations
- Making Ventnor's infrastructure more accessible would not only feed into council corporate policies on 'place-making' etc, but it would ultimately enable older and disabled people to live more independent lives – and do so for longer, thus reducing the burden on Health and Social Care  
This would enable disabled people to take more of a part in economic and social activity in Ventnor and beyond

The 'Public Sector Equality Duty' of the Equality Act requires public bodies such as VTC to take positive action to remedy any 'non-compliance'. Constructive collaboration with the AAP would be proof of VTC's commitment to this.

It may well also pre-empt any future obligations that could arise from:

- last year's 'Women and Equalities Committee' report (which followed on from a lengthy inquiry into disability and the built environment)
- implementation of the Department for Transport's 'Accessibility Action Plan'