

Walkability audit of Westbury-on-Trym village

What is this walkability audit ?

Purpose of audit: the purpose of the walk was to assess the quality of the street environment for people on foot. The report describes the issues, so as to inform the consideration of possible solutions.

Definition of walkability: the audit aimed to record anything that affects attractiveness, comfort, directness, and safety for walking. This is defined further in the Department for Transport's Walking Route Audit Tool (WRAT), which was used as part of the audit.

How the audit will be used: The audit is in anticipation of Bristol City Council's planned streetscape improvements in Westbury-on-Trym (W-o-T) village. This is part of a project to improve transport flows along the A4018 from Crow Lane roundabout to the top of Blackboy Hill. The project to deliver this has been developing designs, which will be consulted on in 2019. The project is funded by money from the large housing developments planned in South Gloucestershire. The money is to mitigate the impact of increased traffic arising from the new developments. In W-o-T, the primary aim of the changes is to deter through-traffic from diverting through the village, but there is also an opportunity to make streetscape changes that would improve walkability. The results of the audit have been submitted to the Council as evidence of the issues that need to be addressed, with the aim of influencing the design of the streetscape improvements. Submitting evidence early in the project process improves the chances of influencing the designs.

Scope of audit walk: the W-o-T shopping area in Canford Lane, Westbury Hill, High Street.

Audit walk attendees:

Walk 1 - 19th December 2018: Alan Morris (Bristol Walking Alliance), Alan Aburrow (Facilitator - Westbury Community Forum), Richard Pedlar (W-o-T resident), Keith Yendell (W-o-T resident), Charlie Beaton (Living Streets Bristol).

Walk 2 - 2nd January 2019: Alan Morris, Gordon Richardson (W-o-T resident and Bristol Disability Equalities Forum), Jenny Hodges (RNIB), Jennifer Stirratt (RNIB)

Walks 3 and 4 - 8th May 2019 (Walking festival event): Alan Morris, Gordon Richardson, Richard Harman, Graham Donald, Councillor Steve Smith, Jenny Hodges, Jan Morris

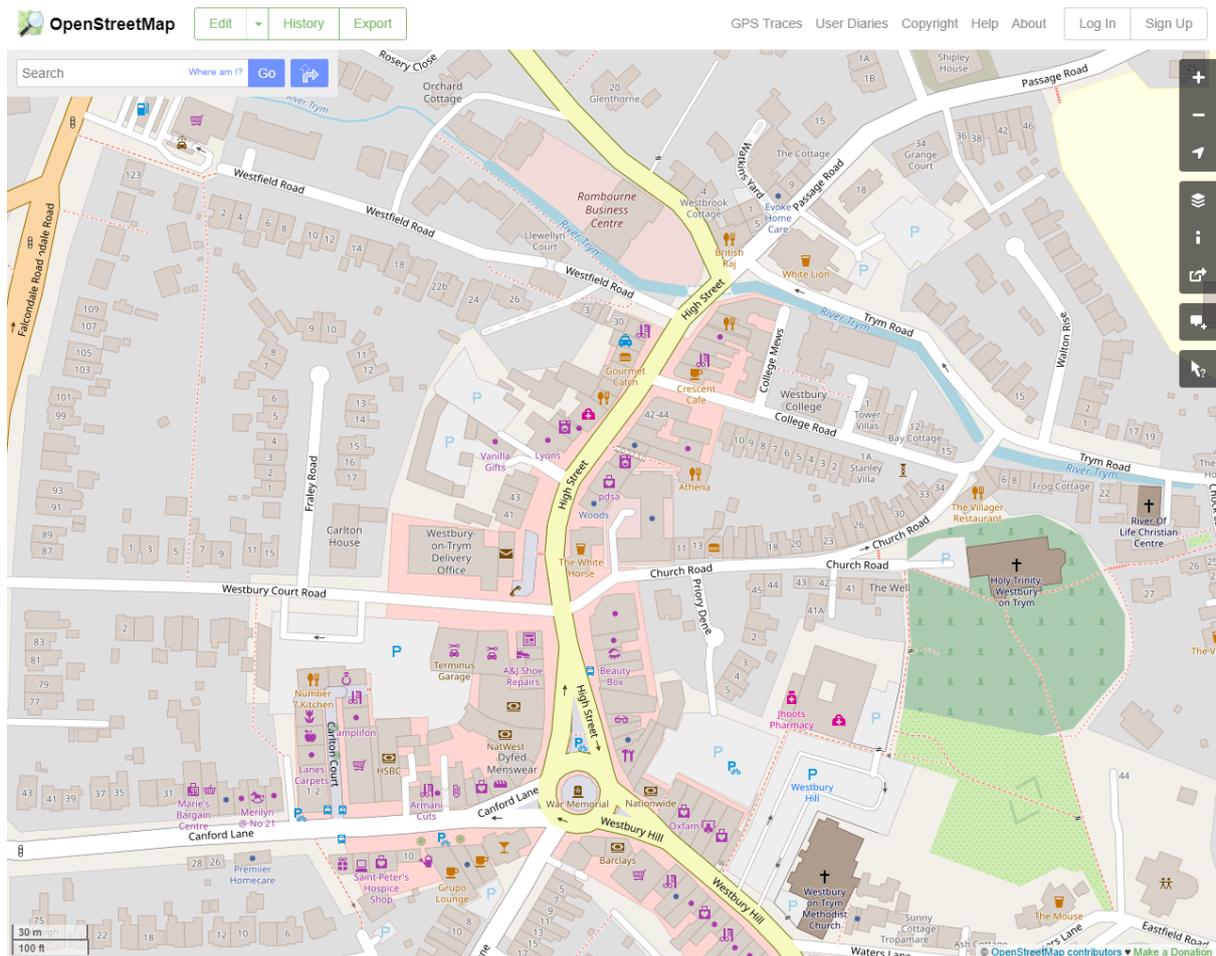
Walkability audit report

1 Context

Westbury-on-Trym is an historic village, and much of the village centre is within the Westbury-on-Trym Conservation Area. It is a significant destination for shopping, churches, pubs, cafes and a health centre. Many of these destinations are situated on three roads – Canford Lane, Westbury Hill, High Street - that converge in the middle of the village, at a roundabout with a war memorial on it. The street environment of Canford Lane was improved as part of the Greater Bristol Bus Network improvements in c. 2012.

The main bus routes use Canford Lane and Westbury Hill, and the main bus stop servicing W-o-T centre is on Canford Lane. There are two (infrequent) bus services that also use Henbury Road and High Street. A cycle route runs north/south through the village – the Downs Way, National Cycle Network route 4.

The village is on an east/west through route – east from Eastfield Road/Waters Lane, west from Canford Lane and Henbury Road. In an easterly direction, there is a rat-run from Eastfield Road via Chock Lane and Trym Road. In a north/south direction, the main road (Falcondale Road) bypasses the village along Falcondale Road, but some through-traffic comes through the village. There are two car parks in the village – Westbury Hill (106 spaces) and Westbury Court Road (c70 spaces). W-o-T is not in a Residents' Parking Scheme area, and at the time of writing none is proposed.



2 Headline audit results

- Canford Lane scored highest for walkability. As a pedestrian experience, it feels pleasant. It has less motor traffic, wider pavements, and a gap in the parked cars where the bus stops are. The wider pavement accommodates a row of trees on one side.
- Westbury Hill and High Street suffer from high traffic volumes, so are noisier and more polluted. On the narrow pavements, pedestrians are hemmed in by a wall of parked cars and vans. The narrow pavements do not allow space for trees. As a pedestrian experience, it feels unpleasant. (Note: the audits were conducted between 10 and 12 on a weekday morning, which demonstrated that high traffic volumes are not confined to the rush hour.)
- pavement clearances in various places are as narrow as 0.5m, 0.8m, 1.1m, 1.3m, 1.5m, 1.8m, with space restricted in some places by lamp posts, A-boards and other obstructions. (2.0m is the minimum clearance in DfT guidance – note clearance, not pavement width.)
- there are adequate pedestrian crossings of the three roads where they approach the roundabout, but there are no pedestrian crossings of the three roads further away from the roundabout.
- around the roundabout, and on it, the width of road for motor traffic seems wide and the pavements are narrow – it seems an unfair allocation of the total highway width. Some of the current road width may be dictated by movements required by buses and delivery lorries.
- there are a number of side junctions along the three roads where the pedestrian is at risk from traffic turning into and out of the junction. The worst junctions are Stoke Lane, the car park entrance on Westbury Hill, Westbury Court Road (the route to/from another car park), Trym Road, Henbury Road.
- the junction with Henbury Road is particularly busy, with motor vehicles using it as part of a west/east route, either via High Street/Westbury Hill/Waters Lane, or a one-way rat-run from Eastfield Road via the narrow back streets Chock Lane and Trym Road.

The main problems are therefore:

- high volumes of north/south through-traffic
- significant volumes of east/west through-traffic
- unfair allocation of highway width - narrow pavements and lack of space for greenery
- too many cars parked on the street
- insufficient pedestrian crossing points
- pedestrian-unfriendly side junctions

For disabled and visually impaired people, there are additional issues, listed below. The issues in Westbury-on-Trym may not be worse than in other town centres, but cumulatively they detract from the comfort and attractiveness, and are deterrents to independent life.

- crossings without tactile paving
- any potential crossing point without a dropped kerb or tactile paving is not a useable crossing point
- A-boards and merchandise on the pavement (a visually impaired person with a stick will tend to navigate via the building line, so any obstruction just outside a shop is particularly annoying)
- steps up into shops

- uneven pavements are more likely to be a trip hazard for the visually impaired. Many of the pavements could do with relaying.
- gradients either side of a driveway entrance may be too steep
- overhanging hedges

If these problems for users of Westbury-on-Trym, both able and disabled, can be addressed, the pedestrian experience could be vastly improved. The shops on Westbury Hill and High Street could benefit from more footfall because pedestrians would find the streets more attractive places. Safety could be improved by better crossing points.

The part of High Street leading up to the roundabout is particularly wide, and at least half of the width could be reclaimed as public realm for the pedestrian, changing its primary role from accommodating movements to place-making.

3 Detailed audit results

The comments are in the order of an anti-clockwise route along the pavements around the village centre.

3.1 Canford Lane (WRAT score 36)

Main points

- The pavement is of good width outside the shops, thanks to GBBN changes in c2012.
- There is no pedestrian crossing except near the roundabout. (There are dropped kerbs on either side of the road near the bus stops, but not directly opposite each other, and without tactile paving.)
- There is less motor traffic than on the other roads, so it is quieter.

North side

Between the zebra crossing and the bus stop, there are A-boards on both sides of the pavement.

Note: west of the bus stop, studs indicate the limit of where shops can put items on to the pavement

A bench in front of the shops west of the bus stop is a welcome asset, but not in the best position – not central to the shopping area and looking on to parked cars.

At the western end of the shops a bollard is missing – a shopkeeper told us that a newspaper delivery van drives on to the pavement every day

There is a step up into most of the shops, restricting access for people in wheelchairs

There is no sign to indicate the footpath leading to Canford Lane from Westbury Court Road

South side

Crossing of Falcondale Road to library – important pedestrian access point to the village – could it be made more pedestrian-friendly ?

Towards the traffic lights at Falcondale Road, the pavement is narrowed by vegetation growth

There is no sign to indicate the footpath leading from Canford Lane to Lampeter Road and on to Stoke Lane shops

Tree roots have made the pavement uneven, which has been repaired with small areas of tarmac.

A bench near the bus stop is a welcome asset.

Outside Garden Trappings, merchandise is left on both sides of the pavement, which is difficult for the visually impaired.

Large A- board outside Grupo Lounge

Over-sized tree-pit outside Connells/ Coffee no 1.

The pavement is narrow (1.6m, tapering to 1.2m) near the roundabout where an historic boundary wall restricts the space available. A Belisha beacon is positioned in the centre of the footpath, reducing the clearance to 0.8m, obstructing buggies and wheelchairs.

The two-stage zebra crossing near the roundabout is fine. But the carriageway width of 4.3m could be reduced slightly to allow a little more width to be added to the narrow pavements.

3.2 Stoke Lane junction

Main point:

- There is a wide mouth at the junction, with no pedestrian crossing, which is hazardous to cross. The junction could be tightened using build-outs, and a crossing provided. No tactile paving at the dropped kerbs. Cars sometimes park illegally on Stoke Lane on the double yellow lines, obstructing the dropped kerbs.

Other:

There is an expanse of tarmac around one tree near the junction mouth

3.3 The roundabout

Main points:

- The carriage width seems unnecessarily wide around the roundabout – it is not clear why it has to be so wide or why a roundabout is needed at all? Some of the current road width may be dictated by movements required by buses (routes 508 and 623 – but 623, run by Eurotaxi, may be a minibus?) and lorries (eg deliveries to the Co-op supermarket on Canford Lane). The main bus routes (routes 1, 11 and 77) pass through the village without using High Street.
- The pavement is very narrow outside Barclays Bank (pavement width 1.3m, with clearance 0.8m by the lamp-post and 1.1m by the Belisha beacon)

3.4 Westbury Hill (WRAT score 27)

Main points

- The pavement on the west side is narrow (1.8m), and the wall of parked cars is oppressive. And at one point, there is a lamp post and litter bin reducing the width. Merchandise is left on the pavement outside the antique shop, reducing the width.
- There is no pedestrian crossing except near the roundabout – even though there are shops on both sides and traffic volumes are high. There is no dropped kerb to enable crossing Westbury Hill by wheelchair over towards the car park.

- High and constant flow of motor traffic, slowed and congested by the traffic conflict arising from movements from the car park and Waters Lane, giving rise to air pollution. Quite narrow road, enclosed by buildings, which exacerbates the traffic noise.

West side

A short distance up from the zebra crossing, the pavement surface is poor, and is a trip hazard.

East side

High flow of traffic passing through the junction with Waters Lane

(A nearby issue: up Waters Lane, the pavement is particularly narrow at a pinch point where the frontage of an old property sticks out.)

Car park entrance: although the pavement continues across the entrance/exit mouths, the pedestrian is likely to be blocked by cars waiting to exit.

The two-stage zebra crossing near the roundabout is fine.

The pavement is narrow near the roundabout by the zebra crossing

3.5 High Street (WRAT score 29)

Main points

- On the stretch leading up to the roundabout the space given to motor vehicles is excessive – a short dual carriageway, with two lanes going south towards the roundabout. On the same stretch, the pavements are narrow.
- Further away from the roundabout, the pavements become narrow, the wall of parked cars oppressive, and with lower footfall it feels a bit run down and unloved. (There is unused car parking space behind the buildings, which might be used for public parking with the agreement of the owners.)
- There is no pedestrian crossing except near the roundabout – even though there are shops on both sides and traffic volumes are high.
- High and constant flow of motor traffic, with congestion exacerbated by the pinch point where the road narrows and there are parked cars on both sides. Long queues of traffic waiting at the roundabout, giving rise to air pollution.

East side

Merchandise is left on the pavement outside Mogfords, reducing the width.

The bus shelter is superfluous and adds unnecessary pavement clutter. Only one bus route stops there (12 times a day), but it also stops on Canford Lane – just 100m further along the route.

The junction with Church Road could be tightened and made pedestrian-priority, possibly as a continuous pavement. There is no tactile paving. The central island is too narrow for a wheelchair.

A-board outside the White Horse, reducing the pavement width

Overhanging ivy just past the White Horse

The pavement in the middle section near College Road is narrow – (pavement width 1.8m, with 1.1m clearance at the A-board outside the White Lion, 1.5m clearance at the lamp-post and 1.3m by the litter bin outside the café).

There is a pinch point for cars in the middle section near College Road. This is good in that it slows down the motor traffic, but also creates congestion and therefore more pollution.

A-board outside the tax advisors.

The junction with College Road could be tightened and made pedestrian-priority, possibly as a continuous pavement.

The wall of parked cars is oppressive.

There is a constant flow of cars coming to the junction with Trym Road from the Chock Lane rat run, and crossing over to Henbury Road. The junction with Trym Road could be made pedestrian-priority, possibly as a continuous pavement.

West side

Opposite the White Lion, there is a point where a house corner juts out, where the pavement narrows to 0.5m !

The junction with Henbury Road could be tightened and made pedestrian-priority, possibly as a continuous pavement.

A short way up Henbury Road, an informal crossing point could be created, where the footpath alleyway from Shipley Road meets Henbury Road.

The junction with College Road could be tightened and made pedestrian-priority, possibly as a continuous pavement.

The junction with Westfield Road (cul-de-sac) could be made pedestrian-priority, possibly as a continuous pavement. There is no tactile paving on the dropped kerbs either side of the junction. The dropped kerb is slightly too steep for a wheelchair.

The pavement in the middle section is narrow (the narrowest clearances are 0.7m between a lamp-post and a drainpipe, 0.9m at the telegraph pole, and the pavement itself narrows to 1.0m at one point in between) and the wall of parked cars and vans is oppressive. Cars tend to park even where there are double yellow lines, including Blue Badge holders misusing/abusing their concession.

Outside the solicitors (the old police station) the pavement needs relaying, and the rise south of the dropped kerb is slightly too steep for wheelchairs.

Overgrown hedge just beyond that point.

The junction with Westbury Court Road could be tightened and made pedestrian-priority, possibly as a continuous pavement. This junction is busy as it leads to/from a car park and can be difficult to cross on foot. Some cars exiting the junction turn right, which conflicts with the main flows and causes build-up of traffic. Cars turning left into the junction have a restricted line of sight because of cars parked on High Street near the junction. Cars approaching the junction along Westbury Court Road often have no sight of pedestrians waiting to cross, because of cars/vans parked illegally on Westbury Court Road near the junction, outside the post office. There is a grille in the middle of the tactile paving on the north side, which is confusing for the visually impaired. There is a dropped inspection chamber in the middle of the junction which is a trip hazard.

The pavement between Westbury Court Road and the roundabout is narrow (2m) and the wall of parked cars is oppressive. Cars tend to park even where there are double yellow lines, including Blue Badge holders misusing/abusing their concession. Where there is an A-board, the pavement is restricted to 1.3m width. Another A-board has a protusion at around waist height, which is awkward for the visually impaired. An inspection cover outside Lloyds Bank is loose, rocking when stepped on.