

Mobility Aids in Sheep Street on Market Days - Transport Decisions 22.01.26

I read in the Clarion that OCC is considering a permit scheme to allow Disabled cyclists to access Sheep Street on Fridays.

Being allowed to use Sheep Street to cycle to and from the station for the past 10 months has been pleasant and stress-free. But for me, Friday isn't about getting to the station, it's about getting to the shops and stalls in Sheep Street.

My wife and I shop on a Friday because it fits with our schedules and the weekly market. I take my electric trike to carry the shopping and prior to the ETRO we would regularly stop at the bread stall, flower stall, cheese stall and fish van, as well as Bicester Green at one end of the street and Holland & Barrett at the other. I would cycle my trike while my wife pushed her bike from place to place. We did this for the best part of three years.

Ironically, post ETRO, that became unpleasant to the point that now I only cycle there with my hand-cycle on Fridays. I can't carry very much on my hand-bike though, let alone a week's shopping and some flowering plants, so shopping there doesn't include me when it comes to Sheep Street. Consequently, my wife doesn't go there as often either, sticking to Sainsburys.

From my experience people don't have a problem with a Disabled person cycling when it's made obvious, like when I'm riding my hand-cycle. What would really help is a general understanding that many Disabled people make the best of their constraints by using other cycles as mobility aids too, and that if someone is cycling slowly and carefully in a place where most people wouldn't, they likely have a good reason for doing so. A person's impairment isn't always obvious, especially when cycling.

This proposal recognises that, and it's heartening to see a transport authority thinking beyond blue badge parking when it comes to Disabled people's mobility. The problem I see is, how best to foster that awareness among people generally in Bicester and beyond? What's reasonable and what isn't in a space like Sheep Street?

Personally I would apply for a permit if they were introduced, but such a scheme raises issues of its own when it comes to accessibility and enforcement.

During temporary roadworks in London recently, two local authorities chose exemption rather than permission. For schemes in Wandsworth and Greenwich, signs telling cyclists to dismount unless their cycle is a mobility aid were used, recognising that to dismount and push a cycle through such works isn't possible or safe for some people to do. In addition, Marshalls managing the works were given advice on how to enforce the cycling restriction in a way that was friendly but firm.

Also, the government's current consultation on changing the law regulating mobility aids could have a bearing on this, and the Council might like to participate in that debate to help shape a workable outcome that is reasonable for all of us.

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