

Dear Rachel

I would be grateful if you could forward the following to the Outer London Commission as a submission on residential parking standards.

We feel very strongly that the London Plan as regards parking provision has either failed to take into account Equality Act requirements regarding the consideration and inclusion of disabled people, or that the guidance needs to be rewritten as a matter of urgency. We are based in the London Borough of Newham, where all of the dedicated arts facilities are located in Stratford along with other key services. However, only 12 Blue Badge parking spaces are now available in central Stratford (in the Cultural Quarter), and these are seldom free after 8.30am 7 days a week (we have been urging the council to carry out a proper survey, but with no success).

The London Plan has been used as a reason to remove the open-air carpark in the Cultural Quarter (which aside from the BB spaces provided the only parking for vehicles over 2.1m high - many adapted vehicles require 2.3m+ clearance). It has also been used as a reason to remove the associated yellow lines and ban dropping off in the Cultural Quarter (which latter has also meant that taxis will no longer take disabled people to the Cultural Quarter), citing the benefits of 'pedestrianisation'.

Most seriously, the Mayor's Plan has been used as a reason to build the new university building in the Cultural Quarter without even a loading bay, meaning that students and staff who rely on BB parking are effectively excluded from studying or teaching there. This in the main Host Borough for the Paralympics, and in 'old' Stratford which is already struggling to maintain its facilities and visitor numbers against competition from Westfield. Meanwhile Westfield itself offers no parking concessions for disabled people, making it prohibitively expensive for most Blue Badge users to use.

Stratford station may well be accessible, but this does not mean that there are accessible stations linking to it in large parts of Newham and the majority of the rest of London. Meanwhile many of us will never be able to use public transport however accessible it becomes to our mobility aids. Planners need to be given the correct guidance to understand both this and local authorities' and others' legal obligations regarding social inclusion.

Blue Badge parking and taxi drop-off points need to be an essential part of all developments, and local authorities should be given clear guidance on the numbers of spaces that should be provided. Central London is already a no-go area for Blue Badge users because of the refusal of central boroughs to recognise the Badge and the paucity of official BB spaces, despite so many national publicly funded institutions being based there and the resulting cultural deprivation it causes to people needing to drive in from outer London.

In more residential areas, the London Plan has been used to justify the introduction of parking charges across most of the borough. Again, this has a major impact on disabled and older people, since it is now costly for carers and support workers who rely on cars to pop in, and much more time-consuming for carers and support workers if instead they have to rely on public transport. This means that contact has been and continues to be reduced significantly, just when statutory services have been cut drastically too.

We hope that the Outer London Commission can take up this issue with due priority.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Ju Gosling, Artistic Director**

Together! 2012 C.I.C.

Disability Arts, Culture and Human Rights

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