

## **Experience of shared space design areas: Vehicles and cyclists**

All of the participants reported greater difficulty using shared surface areas than areas where there is a pavement separated from the road.

Several participants considered that most vehicle drivers reduced their speed in shared surface areas and that most vehicle drivers and cyclists were considerate of pedestrians using shared surfaces.

However one participant commented that

**“9 out of 10 cars would stop for me.  
My difficulty is recognising the 10th”**

## **Use of shared surface areas**

All except one of the participants regularly used local shared surface areas alone, without a sighted companion, but found this difficult. One participant commented that:

“We have to use these areas or we will lose our independence”

One participant, older than the others, reported that he no longer used shared surface areas unless he was with a sighted companion.

## **Learning and sticking to a route**

All the participants who used their local shared surface area reported that they had learned a route and they stuck to this route when alone, moving from one orientation clue to another. If they want to visit premises that are not on their learned route they would wait to do this when with a companion.

They had all lost their bearings at times, even though following a learned route. There was emphasis on the difference between losing their way in a pedestrian only area and losing their way in a shared surface area where there was fear of walking into the path of a vehicle.

## Visiting unfamiliar areas

Most of the participants would not visit an area they did not know well without a companion. Reasons given for this related to difficulty in finding their way.

Shared surface was not the only reason given but most participants commented that if there was more consistency between towns they would be more likely to try it on their own. Particular mention was made of recognisable tactile clues. Again the comment was made by several participants that getting lost was a concern in itself but this, combined with the fear that they could inadvertently walk into the path of traffic, added to this concern.

## **Helpful design features or layouts**

All participants were agreed that there should be clear demarcation between the pedestrian area and the road. If there is no kerb this should be a consistent recognised tactile surface. All agreed that a pavement with kerb was the preferred option.

In relation to tactile surfaces participants wanted these to be consistent both within a town and between towns. Several participants reported that hard tactile tiles, which were acoustic when walked on, were better than rubber tiles.

Participants with some sight stated that colour contrast was useful, both on tactile surfaces and street furniture, but this was often not consistent even within a town.

Several participants referred to a crossing point in Drachten where a tactile line leads to the crossing. While it was considered that this could have been useful it was too narrow and so could easily be stepped over and missed.

Also the tactile line ran near to an ATM (cash point facility) and so there were often people standing on the tactile surface while queuing to use the ATM.

## **Problem areas**

All participants reported that they tried to keep to a straight line close to the building line. However obstructions outside premises such as shop displays made this difficult. There was often no 'outer shore line' (such as kerb edge or tactile surface). If they veered off their straight line because of avoiding an obstruction they either did not realise until they were in the road or if they did realise it was difficult to get back on a straight line.

Several participants commented that they are not aware of entering or leaving a shared surface area. Where a sighted person would immediately notice he/she has to share the road with motor vehicles and cyclists, the visually impaired pedestrian will not. Participants highlighted the need for tactile clues that make the blind pedestrian aware of entering/leaving a shared surface area requiring special attention.

## **Consultation**

One of the participants who worked as a Mobility Officer had been asked for her views through this role. However she considered that her views had not had any effect on the design. None of the other participants were aware of any consultation on street design in their areas.<sup>4</sup> As one person said:

**“If we had been asked what we wanted  
we would not have asked for this”**

## **Accessibility standards and guidance**

Access standards say that public spaces should be accessible to all.

## **Impact on blind and partially sighted people and other disabled people**

Participants were not aware of any research to evaluate the impact of shared surfaces on blind and partially sighted people or other disabled people.

The blind person loses control in an area where they can't orientate and relies more on sighted assistance.

Asked about other consultation with local disabled people the Keuning Institute representative replied that he was not aware of any. He reiterated that the shared space concept was about civility, attitude and behaviour, not design standards. However he added that the concept relied on the use of eye contact to inform behaviour and that he recognised this would be a problem for blind people. He admitted that 'we forgot about the blind' and that this had been a mistake.















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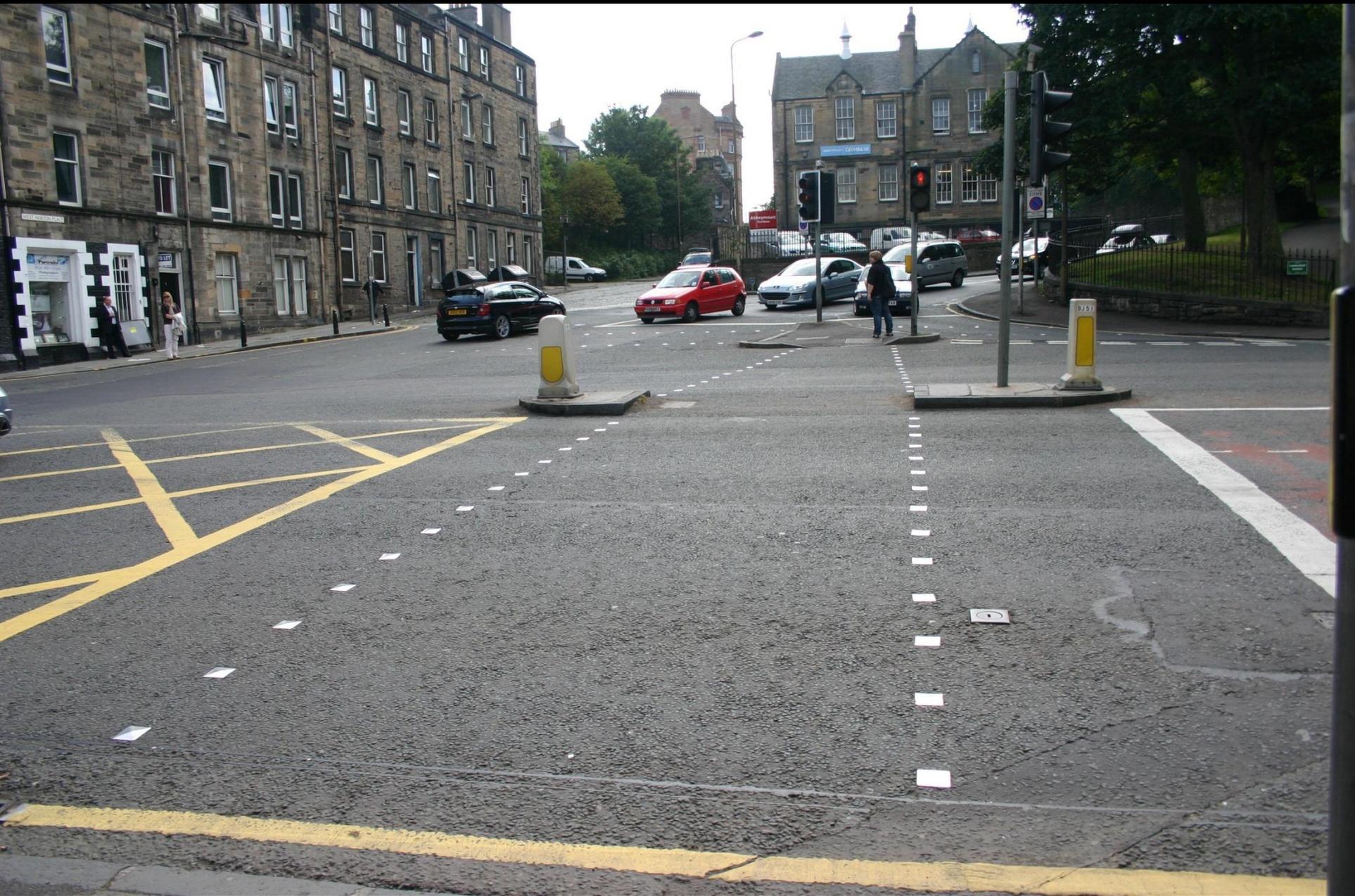
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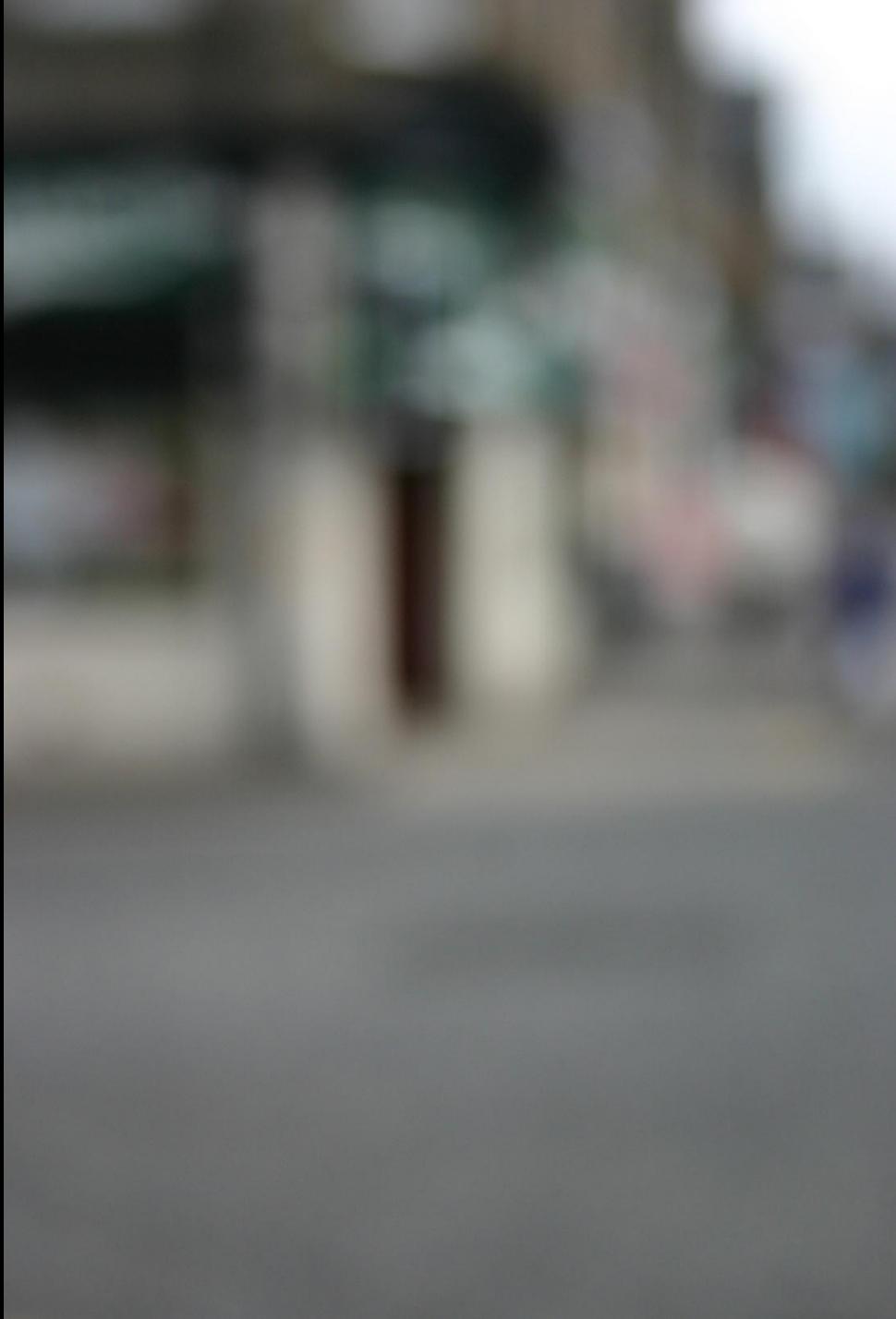
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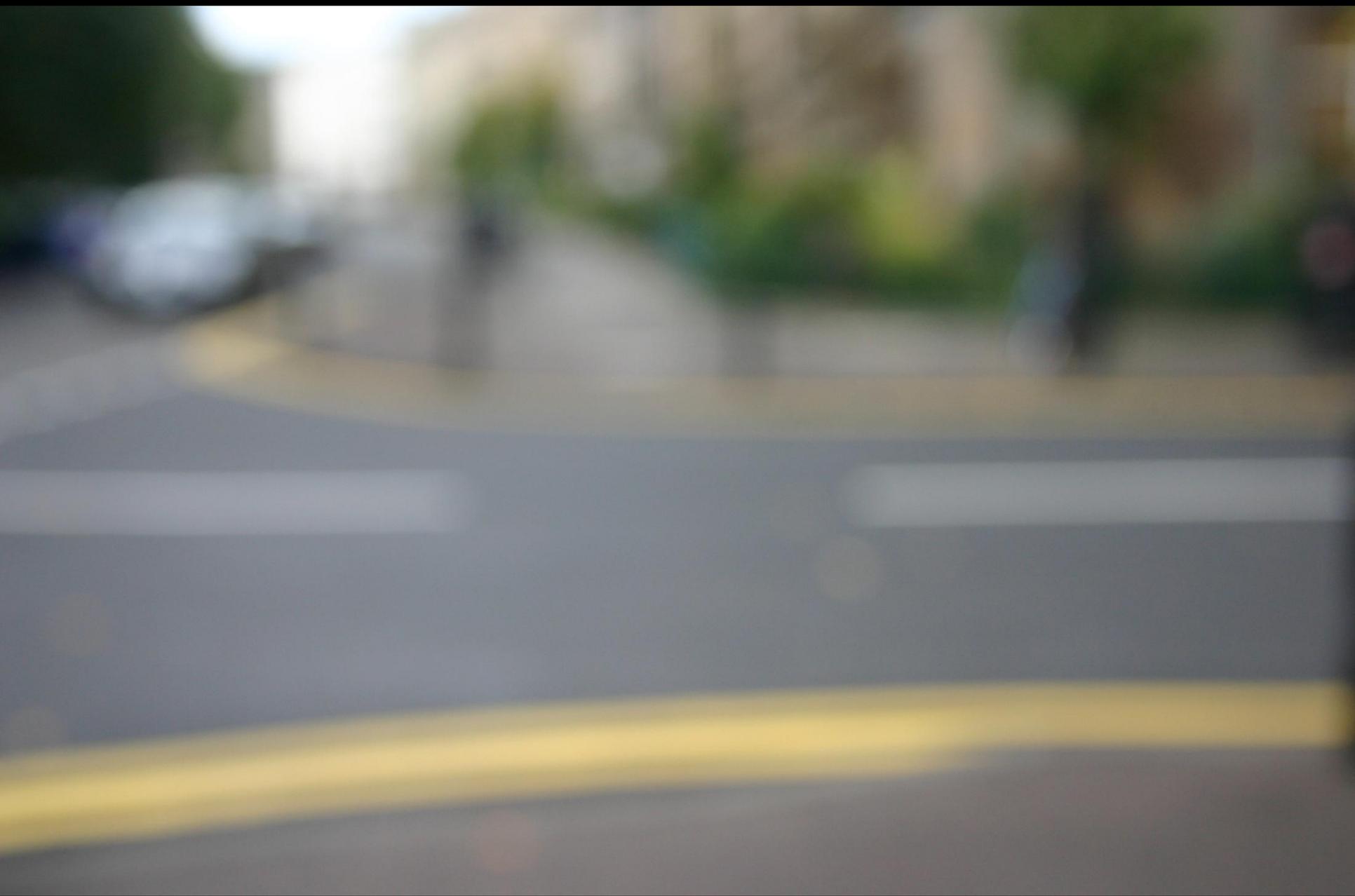




















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