



ENGLISH HERITAGE



Easy Access to  
Historic  
Buildings



# English Heritage access policy

English Heritage is the lead advisory body on providing access to historic buildings in England. We believe access should be celebrated with high-quality design that is also sensitive to the special interest of historic buildings.

English Heritage seeks to ensure that its programmes and activities are accessible to everyone, wherever practicable. It aims to provide easy, dignified access to its own estate whenever this can reasonably be done and encourages others who own or manage historic buildings, or other heritage properties, to adopt access plans that are consistent with the special architectural, historic or archaeological interest of the property concerned.

“Attitudes to disabled people have changed significantly...From seeing disabled people as the passive recipients of charity, society has come to recognise the legitimate demands for disabled people to have equal rights. However, traditional preconceptions and long held prejudices still prevail. Barriers that prevent full participation in society confront disabled people every day of their lives. Activities that the rest of society take for granted are denied to many disabled people.”

*From Exclusion to Inclusion*  
*The Disability Rights Task Force*  
*December 1999*

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# Introduction



Ludlow Castle



Shop in Corsham, Wiltshire



John Rylands Library, Manchester



Bank in Norwich

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) sets out duties for employers, service providers and educational institutions with respect to the rights and expectations of people with disabilities. These guidelines are intended for those who own, manage or occupy historic buildings in England and who, under the service provider, employer and education provisions of the DDA, have particular responsibilities towards people with disabilities. They are also intended for those who will be professionally involved in planning alterations to historic buildings or in advising on alternative forms of service provision – for example architects, planners and access consultants. Service providers in historic buildings may well be involved in commissioning access auditors or architects; they will certainly be involved in thinking about the relationship between access and conservation in the context of the building they manage and the services they provide. These guidelines are intended to inform that process.

The aim should always be to reconcile the interests of conservation and access in the light of the *reasonable adjustment* provisions in Parts I, III and IV of the DDA, the inclusion of existing buildings within *Approved Document Part M* (2004) of the Building Regulations (2000), and the provisions of the new British Standard on Access: BS 8300 (2001) *Design of Buildings and Their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People: Code of Practice*. These guidelines offer advice on how to develop a framework in which the requirements of each property, and the needs of its users, can be assessed and an access strategy agreed. They deal primarily with proposals affecting listed buildings, but the principles and advice embodied in them will be applicable to all historic buildings and landscapes, and to the historic environment as a whole. *Easy Access to Historic Properties* was first published in 1995, in anticipation of the DDA; this revision takes into account subsequent changes in the regulatory framework and draws upon an emerging body of experience and good practice.

It is important in principle that disabled people should have dignified access to and within historic buildings. If it is treated as part of an integrated review of access arrangements for all visitors or users, and a flexible and pragmatic approach taken, it should normally be possible to plan suitable access for disabled people without compromising a building's special interest. Alternative routes or reorganising the use of space may achieve the desired result without the need for damaging alterations. *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment* (1994)

These guidelines focus on physical access issues because these often pose the greatest challenges as well as opportunities for historic buildings. Other issues such as lighting, tone, colour contrast and signing are touched upon, while acknowledging the excellent guidance on these aspects of good access design which exists elsewhere. The guidance also focuses on the challenges and constraints posed by buildings whose function is not directly related to their historic status – shops, offices and civic buildings – rather than those preserved and opened to the public purely as historic attractions. Although the guidelines are relevant to both categories of building, the latter raise significant issues in relation to interpretation (sometimes referred to as intellectual access), which are largely beyond the scope of this document.

The guidelines do not deal with those aspects of the DDA which relate to broader policies, practices and procedures,

or with general design issues. These are covered in detail in other publications – good, comprehensive design guidance is available in BS 8300 and in *Approved Document Part M* of the Building Regulations. The guidelines do, however, contain significant detail on the nature of historic buildings, their features and the challenges they pose.

The first part of these guidelines looks at the DDA itself and the framework in which changes to historic buildings must be made – the principles that underpin the conservation of historic buildings and the statutory controls that govern changes to historic buildings and landscapes. The second part looks at the mechanisms for planning, agreeing and implementing change, centred upon an understanding of the nature of the building and the needs of its users. The final section considers practical examples of adaptations to and within historic buildings.

# Part 1

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The construction of a new visitor centre at Whitby Abbey – containing a passenger lift within the ruined shell of the 17th-century mansion – provided the opportunity to resolve the long-standing difficulty of wheelchair access to the abbey ruins. Consent was obtained to open up a blocked doorway at upper-floor level and to form a bridge from the opening onto the elevated abbey precincts.

## Conservation principles

Buildings, landscapes and monuments, the physical survivals of our past, are protected for their own sake and for ours. They are an integral part of our cultural identity and contribute towards a strong sense of place, whether in a local, regional or national context. They are irreplaceable, but sometimes they need to be changed. The survival of most historic buildings depends upon their continued, viable use. Changes to improve access may well contribute to a building's continued viability. Decisions reached in collaboration with users about alterations to improve access must balance these very real benefits against the potential damage those same alterations might cause to the significance of the building itself.

Appropriate or sensitive alteration will have due regard for what it is that makes a particular building special or significant. Significance may arise from a building's distinctive physical features, from its layout and relative completeness, from the materials and methods of its construction, or from its association with particular personalities and events. Significance may also lie in the hidden archaeological remains that survive below ground.

Many buildings in older towns will sit on top of Roman, Saxon or medieval remains. Ground disturbance on such sites is potentially destructive, and it is important to seek archaeological advice as part of the process of planning access improvements. Understanding the significance of a building is a vital first step in thinking about changes.

There is a general presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings, except where a convincing case can be made for their alteration. This principle is embodied in current listed building legislation, which seeks to prevent unnecessary demolition and inappropriate or insensitive alteration.

In most cases access can be improved without compromising the special interest of historic buildings. There are only rare occasions when nothing can be done to improve or facilitate access. By undertaking a careful process of research, brief-taking, consultation and creative exploration of alternatives, good quality solutions that add a new layer of history to our historic buildings are usually possible.

Those responsible for advising and granting consents for altering historic buildings should not feel compelled to accept poorly designed proposals, but should have the confidence to challenge designers to come up with solutions worthy of our finest buildings. The key lies in the process of gathering information about the significance and vulnerabilities of the building and about the needs of people with disabilities.



Consent for the insertion of a new passenger lift at Colchester Castle was dependent upon the outcome of an archaeological investigation. The cost and time to conduct an investigation needs to be anticipated in the building budget and programme.

## The statutory framework

### The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The DDA defines disability as 'a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [an individual's] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. It is important to remember that the DDA is about people and not buildings. The Act does not include standards for accessible building design, though the relevant Codes of Practice do refer to Part M of the Building Regulations as a reasonable standard.

#### Employers

As from October 2004 all employers have a duty to make *reasonable adjustment* to avoid substantial disadvantage to an employee. The duty to make these changes is not speculative, but relates to the actual needs of a specific individual who has a qualifying disability. It may, however, be more cost-effective to consider access improvements as part of a programme of planned refurbishment, and so facilitate the future employment of people with disabilities.

#### Service Providers

Service providers will have to comply with all the requirements of Part III of the Act from October 2004 and have a duty to make *reasonable adjustments* to any physical features, including furniture and displays, which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use the service provided. Unlike the duty imposed on employers, this is an *anticipatory duty* – service providers are required to anticipate the needs of people with disabilities and

to accommodate them in a wide variety of ways. The duty to make reasonable adjustments is also a continuous one, and service providers will need to review the changes they have made at periodic intervals.

#### Educational institutions

Post-16 educational institutions have a duty to make *reasonable adjustments* for students with disabilities, as set out in Part IV of the DDA (amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001). This duty is similar to that imposed on service providers, although educational institutions may make greater use of ad hoc or temporary solutions, as the needs of individual students may dictate. Where the use of educational buildings also gives rise to service-provider duties such as conferences and banquets, there is a greater need to consider access issues.

The DDA does not override other legislation such as listed building or planning legislation, and the need to obtain appropriate approvals still applies in the case of changes made to improve access.

### Planning permission

Permission is required for the development of land. This includes most building work involving material alteration to the external appearance of a building and most changes of use. Planning permissions are administered by local authorities.

**The Building Regulations 2000:  
*Approved Document Part M* (2004)**

*Access to and use of Buildings*

Part M of the Building Regulations has been revised to incorporate the new standards established by BS 8300 (2001). Part M, which is a minimum standard, now applies to ‘an existing non-domestic building [which] has been extended, ... undergone a material alteration, or a material change of use other than to a dwelling or number of dwellings’.

Part M requires *reasonable provision* to be made to ensure that buildings are

accessible to, and usable by, all those who could be expected to use them, including the elderly and carers with young children. Compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations can be used to establish *reasonable provision* under the DDA. Non-compliance does not, however, automatically imply discrimination, as there may be other ways of providing reasonable access to the service. This provision harmonises Part M and the principles underpinning the protection of listed buildings, in that it seeks to avoid the potential removal of those features of a building which contribute to its significance, and thus to its listing.

BS 8300 (2001) *Design of Buildings and their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People: Code of Practice* sets out good practice standards based on ergonomic research. It explains how the restrictions that prevent people with disabilities from making full use of buildings can be anticipated and overcome. The extent to which the standards apply to historic buildings will be determined on an individual basis. It should be noted that in certain respects the British Standard does differ from the Building Regulations (2000): *Approved Document Part M* (2004).

**Access Statements under Part M of the Building Regulations**

Departure from the guidance set out in *Approved Document Part M* must be justified by an ‘Access Statement’ which should be provided at the time plans are deposited, a building notice is given or details of a project are supplied to an approved inspector.

In the case of existing buildings, other than dwellings, and particularly in the case of historic buildings, such a statement will allow a designer to identify the constraints posed by the existing structure and its immediate environment. Where full access proves to be impracticable or only achievable at disproportionate cost, compensatory measures can be proposed.

The statement should set out most of the information needed by a building control body, thus assisting the dialogue between the applicant and those responsible for administering the regulations. The statement should be kept updated as works continue so that it acts as a record of decisions that have an impact on accessibility.

Essentially the Access Statement is a way of demonstrating that every effort has been made to provide an inclusive environment and that the applicant is not simply using it as a tool to justify lower standards of access provision.

**Listed building consent**

Consent is required for any works of demolition, alteration or extension which affect the character of a listed building, including any associated structures and fittings within its curtilage. Listed building legislation applies to both internal and external changes, irrespective of whether features are identified separately in the list description. The advice of the local planning authority should be sought on the need for consent at an early stage in the design process.

In seeking listed building consent it is important to provide information about the architectural and historical significance of the building and to assess the likely impact of the access proposals in relation to this. The application must demonstrate why any potentially damaging works are necessary or desirable, and thus establish that a balance between conservation and access has been struck. If a detailed proposal is refused consent it may still be possible to achieve alternative and acceptable design solutions through negotiation and resubmission.



The stone-paved entrance forecourt at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford incorporates symmetrical access ramps. Particular care was given to the selection and detailing of the stone used in the scheme.

It may also be necessary to apply for listed building consent for temporary access measures, including those made in advance of permanent solutions being adopted, if these will affect the character of the building; the local planning authority will advise on the need for consent. Portable ramps which are not fixed in place and which are removed after use do not require consent.

Scheduled monument consent

As well as being listed, some historic buildings and their surroundings may be protected as scheduled ancient monuments. Consent is required for any work to an archaeological site or building that has been registered as a scheduled ancient monument. Applications for consent are dealt with by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, acting on advice from English Heritage.

Where consent has been refused, there is likely to be a means of appeal. Whether or not the service provider's duty to take such steps as it is reasonable to take includes pursuing an appeal will depend on the circumstances of the case.

The **Disability Rights Commission**, which promotes inclusive design, nevertheless encourages service providers to explore alternative options for overcoming physical barriers to access. By redesigning the proposed alteration it may be possible to meet both access and conservation requirements and thus allow for the appropriate approvals to be given.



Stairlifts are intrinsically visually intrusive. However, at Winchester Cathedral a stairlift has been carefully positioned at the side of the north transept. The huge scale and complexity of the background architecture help reduce the contrast and visual impact.



All Souls Church, Langham Place, London. An inconspicuous handrail leads up the side of the porch steps and a shallow ramp to a side entrance leads to a lobby and passenger lift that serves the church above and the refectory and hall in the crypt. Visual impact upon the porch, which is of critical significance to the streetscape and the church, is minimal.

Ecclesiastical buildings

Some Christian denominations do not need listed building consent under the 1990 Act, because they have consent procedures of their own which have been accepted by the Government as providing an appropriate level of protection for their historic buildings. For the Church of England, all places of worship (not just those which are listed) are subject to the Faculty Jurisdiction system, which balances the needs of worship and mission with care and conservation of the buildings. Other denominations with their own control systems are the Church in Wales, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain. However, the service provider provisions of the DDA cover activities within places of worship, irrespective of the denomination.

The consent procedures will include key principles: an application to an independent body, consultation with amenity bodies, consideration being given to the significance of the buildings themselves, and a right of appeal. Under the Church of England's Faculty Jurisdiction Rules, parishes proposing significant alterations to their listed church should provide a Statement of Significance and Statement of Need to be taken into account when changes to the buildings are proposed. This emphasises the principle, also set out in the Church of England's case law of consistory court judgements, that where changes are proposed to a listed church there should be a clear need for the works which is sufficient to outweigh the normal assumption against alteration. Disabled access of course should be considered in this context, in the light of what is reasonable.



At Stourhead the ramped path provides an alternative route adjacent to the garden steps.



The ramped access at the Geffrye Museum has been designed as part of the sunken herb garden.

Providing access to historic buildings can be made difficult by the need to reconcile differing and sometimes contradictory legislation. BS 7913 (1998) *Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings* gives guidance on achieving balances between different interests.

### Historic gardens and landscapes

The parks, gardens and other designed landscapes associated with historic buildings may also be of special historic interest and included on English Heritage's *Register of Parks and Gardens*. The Register contains a diverse range of sites; gardens, squares, cemeteries and parks. If planning permission is required for any proposed alterations, the local planning authority must consult the Garden History Society in all cases, and English Heritage in the case of gardens registered as grade I or II\*.

Where planning permission is not required but the proposed changes may affect the character or appearance of the garden or landscape, it is advisable to seek professional guidance. Historic landscapes not included in the Register may still be of considerable local value, and any changes to their design, layout, character or appearance should be considered in this context.

Where a building within a historic landscape is listed, changes to that landscape may also impact upon the setting of the building and should be considered in relation to the significance of both. Planning permission may be required for such changes, and the advice of the local planning authority should be sought.

## Part 2

### Determining reasonableness

#### Establishing an access strategy

Any organisation, be it a high street retailer, a museum or a restaurant, that is required to make reasonable adjustments under the DDA needs first to establish an access strategy. This requires a strategic commitment at a high level in the organisation to making the service more inclusive either through design or management measures, or more often a combination of the two.

A timescale and budget need to be considered, and someone must assume responsibility for overseeing, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of any measures that are subsequently identified in the access planning process.

It is important that organisations and professionals do not undertake works involving access improvements without a good understanding of the needs of people with disabilities and the options available to meet those needs.

#### The access audit

The first step in planning access improvements is to undertake an *access audit*. This will assess and document the barriers to access which exist within a building and its surroundings. The audit should be carried out in advance of any

proposals to improve access and should consider the access needs of all users.

The audit should follow the sequence of the whole journey from arrival on foot, by car or public transport, through entry into the building, access to each of the services it provides and finally the exit route. Someone experienced in assessing access issues should carry out the audit. Reference could be made to the National Register of Access Consultants.

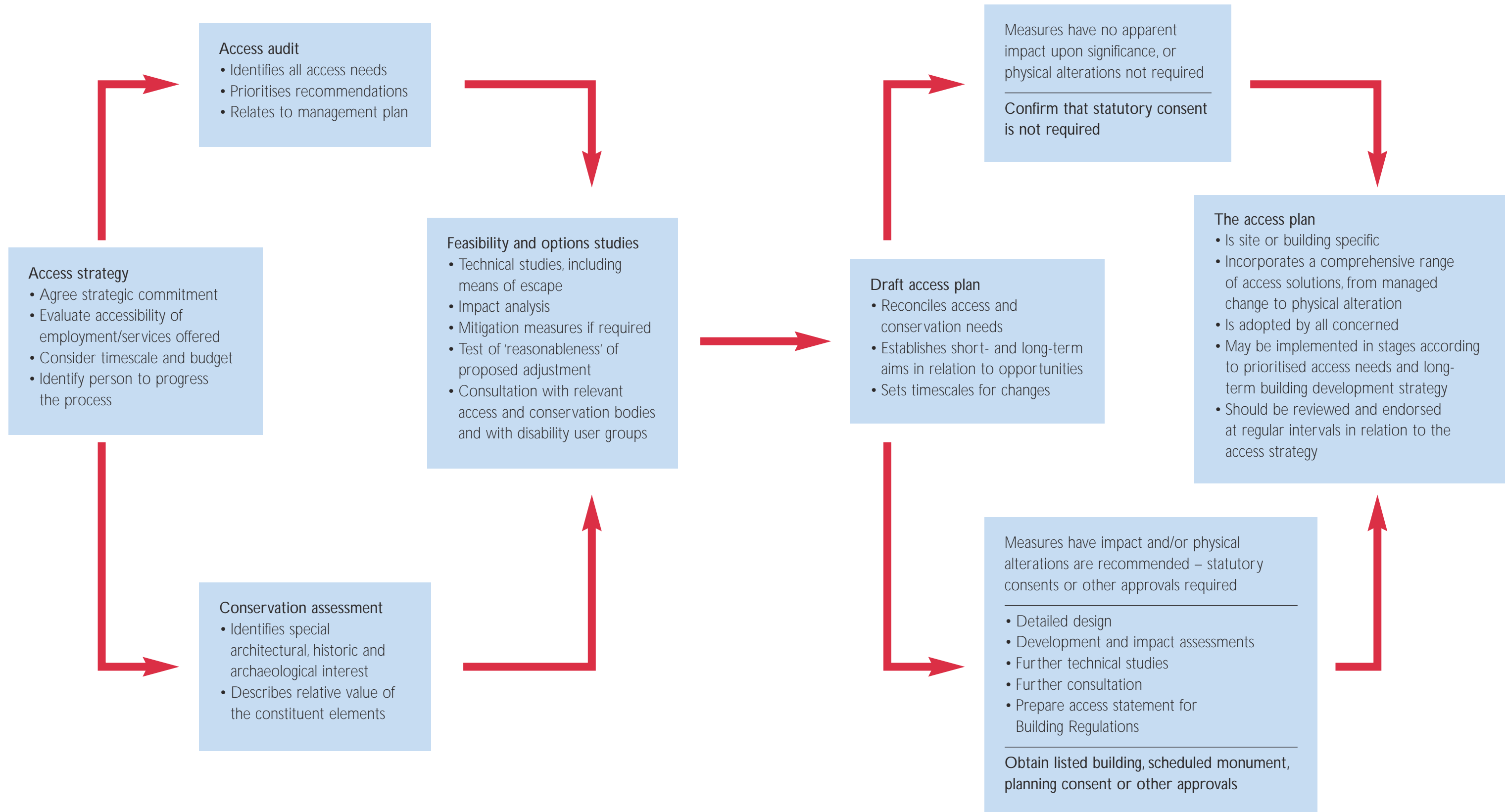
#### The conservation assessment

The complementary part of the process will be to review or prepare a *conservation assessment* that will establish the relative significance of a building or site and its constituent parts in terms of its special architectural historic or archaeological interest. Architectural historians or conservation architects usually prepare these although amenity societies and local authorities may also be a source of guidance.

#### The access plan

Once an access audit and conservation assessment has been completed, an *access plan* can be prepared reconciling, where necessary, the needs of access and conservation. This will involve, on the one hand, assessing the significance of the building

# The access planning process



and its setting and, on the other, the access needs of its users. The plan and the audit that informed it should form part of the access file for the building, so that all decisions and subsequent changes are properly tracked and recorded and the whole process is transparent. The plan should be reviewed at regular intervals and compared with the access strategy objectives.

### The access planning process

Preparing an access plan, and working through the issues it raises, is fundamental to the process of determining the need for changes to a historic building, including those requiring listed building or scheduled monument consent. The process should consider the options available (including the provision of the service by other means), the priorities for implementation and the likely impact of each proposal on the building's significance. In reconciling access and conservation, the access plan can seek to embody best practice in access design and building conservation. It should be recognised that, for financial and operational reasons, it may be necessary to phase any works over a period of time, and that alternative service provision may be necessary during any physical works.

The access plan should not be restricted to the needs of wheelchair users but should also consider the requirements of people with restricted mobility, sensory impairments and learning difficulties. The plan should be central to any organisation's strategic commitment to improving access. It needs to be reviewed regularly, so that the current provisions can be kept up-to-date and take account of changes in regulations and in available solutions. Focus

groups made up of people with disabilities, or drawn from a local access group, can be invaluable in testing proposals before they are incorporated into the access plan. The plan can also be used to inform any Access Statement required under *Approved Document Part M* of the Building Regulations.

### Management issues

A key element of all access provision, and a fundamental aspect of the access plan, is the ownership of a policy at the top of any organisation backed up with staff awareness and training, together with continuing management support for best practice. An accessible WC used to store cleaning materials rapidly ceases to be accessible; a cluttered reception desk with a profusion of leaflets and notices offers clear information to no one – good access is thus dependent upon the effective management of the whole service. In many instances a change in management or operational practices can overcome a physical access issue.

### Funding for access improvements

At present neither English Heritage nor the Heritage Lottery Fund offer funding to the owners of historic buildings for specific access improvements. The Heritage Lottery Fund will fund physical access improvements to historic buildings, sites or landscapes only where the improvements form part of a wider project. The Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme jointly funded by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund may grant-aid the completion of an access audit but not the implementation of any improvements, which the access plan may subsequently recommend.

## Access improvements and architectural character

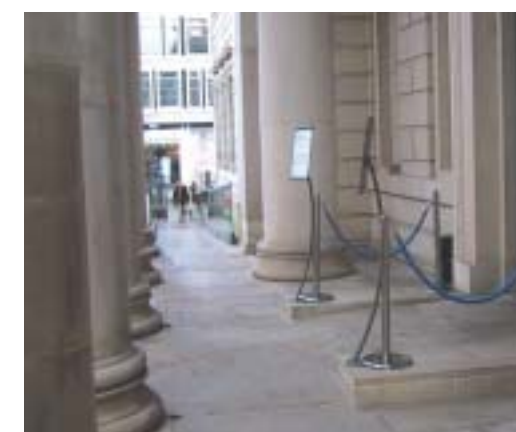
### Making an entrance

The preferred aim in terms of access is to make a building's main entrance accessible to everyone on a permanent basis. Conservation constraints will arise primarily from the design and character of the building's façade and setting, and each building will have its own characteristics which should, as far as possible, be respected in considering alterations for access.

Classical buildings, for example, are usually built to a single, unified concept, which follows strict rules of symmetry and proportion. Derived from the idea of a temple, the entrance is often set upon a base and approached by a flight of steps. Alterations to such buildings need to respect these rules, although sometimes relatively small-scale changes may break them without significantly affecting the appearance.



At Huddersfield station the asymmetry of a single ramp rising to the portico is insignificant when seen against the heroic scale of the larger design.



At Manchester Art Gallery the symmetrical composition of the main façade is not obviously disturbed by the ramp, which rises to the portico entrance on one side only. It does so behind a screen of railings and the street width does not permit a relevant head-on view of the building.

As part of an extensive scheme including full access improvements, the entire courtyard at the Royal Academy has been relaid to a slope to take out the kerb and four steps leading up to the portico. Symmetrical ramps have been inconspicuously inserted along the back wall of the portico to complete the route up to the main entrance.





Asymmetrical elevations can accommodate alteration more easily. The addition of this significant ramp at Ealing Town Hall does not upset the balance of the overall composition and the design and use of materials is sympathetic.



At Ripon Town Hall the whole pavement has been ramped up to threshold level over the original steps, part of an overall scheme that included the addition of a lift and accessible toilets inside. The increase in kerb height has necessitated railings but no handrail has been provided for the steps.



At the John Nash-designed Park Crescent near Regent's Park the space within the porch was deep enough to allow a short ramp over the single doorstep but insufficient to allow a level landing in front of the door. The handrails are utilitarian but they are integral with the ramp – a cheap but reversible solution.



Many entrances to 18th-century and 19th-century terraced town houses have steps up to the front entrance, along with a basement area. An external platform lift was installed within the basement area of this London house, the steps and landing altered and the railings adapted in keeping with the existing design. A lift was installed within the house. The house has since been sold and the platform lift removed.

Composition in Gothic and less formal architecture does not usually involve symmetry. Proportion and balance will still be important, but greater flexibility may exist and allow, for example, the insertion of a single asymmetrical ramp.

In urban locations, space in front of buildings will frequently be restricted. Where it is available, it may be possible to regrade the existing pedestrian approach up to or within a porch or portico.

Georgian and Victorian terraced houses with steps up to the front door can pose seemingly intractable problems in relation to access. Alternative entrance points such as a mews may be available or, where a basement 'area' exists between the building and the pavement, it may be possible to incorporate a platform lift to provide access from street level to the ground or basement floor. Platform lifts can often be visually less intrusive than ramps over basement 'areas'. Service providers may also have to consider making alternative arrangements.



King's Bench Walk, Inner Temple, London. A short-rise platform lift is positioned behind railings where it descends to basement level and connects to the primary circulation routes.



King's Bench Walk, Inner Temple, London.

With a minor adjustment to liturgical practice, a church member in a wheelchair receives communion in the nave at the church of St James the Great, Colchester.



Inside the building

Large secular buildings were often designed with a hierarchy of spaces and a prescribed sequence of movement through the building – the entrance hall, principal staircase, primary corridor and principal rooms. The form and decoration of each of these spaces may be part of the building's special interest and the introduction of visually intrusive ramps or mechanical devices must be carefully considered. In smaller buildings, on the other hand, there may be insufficient space for ramps or lifts, while the visual impact would be equally damaging.

In dealing with level changes and restricted space, the conservation concerns are likely to centre on issues of scale, proportion and continuity in materials, design and finish, as well as structural factors affecting corridor widths and floor levels.

In places of worship, changes in floor levels may have historical and liturgical significance. Where level changes are not great, a portable ramp may be more

appropriate than permanent intervention unless the latter can be carefully designed to respect the historic integrity of its surroundings. However, the use of portable ramps does have management implications which need to be carefully considered if this solution is adopted.

Determining reasonableness – considering physical features

All service providers covered by the DDA are required to make *reasonable adjustments* to the physical features of a building and the external environment, where these constitute a barrier to access. Physical features include:

- External physical elements and the setting of the building, including landscape features, kerbs, exterior surfaces, paving, parking areas, building entrances and exits as well as emergency escape routes



Brougham Castle. Cobbles and setts are particularly difficult for people with limited mobility, especially if they are rough, uneven or open-jointed. It may be possible to create a new route with the use of sympathetic paving stones set within the cobbled or setted areas.

- Any feature arising from the design or construction of a building; architectural details (such as plinths, column bases, staircases, ironwork and door openings), fixtures, fittings, furnishings, furniture, equipment and other materials

It is important that each feature is properly understood, both in its own right and in the context of the whole building. Every effort should be made to disturb or obscure these features as little as possible where they contribute to the building's significance, character or composition.

The type of service or activity that takes place within the building will also be

a major factor in determining the appropriate level of access and the required degree of alteration. Similarly, the nature of the organisation and its relative financial resources should be taken into account.

Where a 'change of use' is proposed for a particular building and that use involves service-provider or education functions then careful consideration needs to be given to the resultant access requirements and how these could be accommodated within the existing structure in order to make the service accessible.



At the Royal Academy the permanent scheme which replaced unsightly temporary ramps involved the modification of the plinth to accommodate the raised courtyard levels.



An accessible visitors' entrance has been formed by lowering external levels at the Queen's House, Greenwich. This has involved adding a base to the existing external horseshoe stairs.

The DDA outlines four options for making adjustments to physical features. These are:

- 1 Removal of the physical feature
- 2 Alterations to the feature
- 3 Providing a reasonable means of avoiding it
- 4 Providing the service by a reasonable alternative method



The stone balustrade has been cut through on one side of the entrance to the Seaman's Hall at Somerset House to provide a ramped access.



The Christopher Wren-designed church of St James sits between Piccadilly and Jermyn Streets, which are at different levels. Level access has been achieved from Jermyn Street by altering a window to form a doorway, which is located in a 19th-century addition to the original body of the church and deemed less sensitive. It was not possible to make adjustments for the level change from Piccadilly.



At the Strand Theatre in London there was no scope for sympathetic alteration in order to aid customers unable to use the steps to the box office. Therefore a help bell inside the lower-level foyer will facilitate box office services delivered inside the main entrance.

The DDA does not prescribe which option should be considered first, but the Code of Practice recommends that service providers should start by considering whether the physical feature which creates a barrier can be removed or altered. This represents an 'inclusive' approach to access, which makes services available to everyone in the same way.

Dialogue and discussion

English Heritage encourages early pre-application consultation with local authority conservation, building control, access and archaeology staff, with local access groups and, in the case of major buildings undergoing potentially substantial alterations, with its own staff. In many planning departments, applications involving access provisions are reviewed by an access officer who should be able to advise on the suitability of the proposed access solutions, or recommend alternative sources of advice and guidance. Continuous dialogue and effective feedback from users can ease the handling of applications for listed building and other consents, and help to achieve solutions which satisfactorily combine access and conservation.



These before and after photographs show the removal of steps and the lowering of the entrance levels at the United Church, Winchester.

At St Michael's House in Cambridge an access scheme has been carried out as part of its conversion to a café and exhibition space. Although the scheme does not meet all the provisions of *Approved Document Part M* of the Building Regulations, it still provides a reasonable standard of access provision.



**Option 1 – removing the feature**

In the context of building conservation it may be the case that those features which form a barrier are also those which make up the special interest of the building – its narrow doorway or staircase for example. In this case, removal is unlikely to constitute a reasonable adjustment. Additive change is more likely to be appropriate than destructive change. It may be the case that when balancing the long-term future of the building with the short-term needs of its occupants a reversible semi-permanent solution may be most appropriate.

To determine reasonableness, it will be essential to assess the relative contribution such features make to the building as a whole, and to set this against the costs and benefits which removal might bring. Frequency of use could also be a significant issue when making this assessment.

**Option 2 – altering physical features**

It may be possible to make alterations without also adversely affecting the historic fabric or quality of the building. Alternatives that look beyond standard solutions might include the sympathetic reduction, rather than removal, of physical features. Where it is not possible to adhere completely to the design standards recommended in British Standard 8300 or *Approved Document Part M* of the Building Regulations, the Access Statement should be used as a way of reconciling the access issues in order to achieve reasonable adjustment.

© Peter Cook / VIEW



At the Queen's House in Greenwich level access has been provided at basement level by forming a gently dished semicircular forecourt in front of an existing central door opening on the north front. The new paved route forms the access for all public visitors and is not a separate route for people with disabilities.



At Morley Town Hall a new level principal entrance has been created at the side of the building to avoid existing stepped entrances.

**Option 3 – finding ways round barriers to access**

It may be reasonable to avoid the feature that creates a barrier by changing the way in which a building is managed, perhaps by providing access via a side route or by opening up a secondary main entrance. The principal entrance may still be available, but the preferred option would be to ensure that everyone uses the secondary entrance. This may require further changes to the management of the building and to the use of its internal spaces.

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At the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight a new public entrance with a ramped approach has been formed at basement level for all visitors. Adapting the steps to the main portico entrance was considered to be unfeasible.

**Option 4 – providing the service in another way**  
This option becomes applicable where physical changes have been considered and rejected. It represents the minimum level of provision and may not be considered reasonable if one of the other options would have permitted the delivery of an integrated service for all users. In considering option 4, service providers might investigate, for example:

- Relocating public services from the upper to the ground floor, in order to overcome barriers to access
- Using print and computer technology to provide access to the service, where physical barriers cannot be overcome
- Adjusting circulation routes to avoid barriers such as stepped thresholds and narrow doorways.

Disabled users should be consulted to establish the acceptability of providing the service in a different way to that offered to others.



At Bolsover Castle adaptation to the main entrance steps of the Little Castle was not feasible, nor was the insertion of a lift. A high-quality video for visitors shows internal images and provides dialogue about the rooms and surviving structure. This forms part of the general interpretation of the site and is not a separate arrangement for visitors unable to use steps.

# Part 3

## Practical advice and examples

Access improvements require the designer to select from a range of solutions that will provide unrestricted horizontal movement through a building and accommodate changes in level. Horizontal movement is likely to be constrained by floor surfaces, existing doors and openings, thresholds and small changes in level. Larger changes in level will usually involve the introduction of ramps or mechanical devices, and may well demand alterations to steps, stairs and

handrails. All of these can impact upon the appearance and significance of the building. What follows is an overview of those areas where difficult decisions often need to be made. Some of the examples may not strictly conform to *Approved Document Part M* of the Building Regulations, but they do succeed in achieving a balance between reasonable adjustment and the sensitivities of historic places.

It is important that service providers do not assume that the only way to make services accessible to disabled people is to make a physical alteration to their premises (such as installing a ramp or widening a doorway). Often, minor measures such as allowing more time to serve a disabled customer, will help disabled people to use a service. Disability awareness training for staff is also likely to be appropriate. However, adjustments in the form of physical alterations may be the only answer if other measures are not sufficient to overcome barriers to access.

*Code of Practice Rights of Access Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises, Disability Rights Commission*

# Horizontal movement

## Floors



A Minton tile floor, such as this one at Osborne House, is particularly vulnerable to both foot traffic and wheelchairs and needs to be protected.

The levelling or alteration of historic floors is usually possible. Pits and openings for lift shafts should be carefully located to avoid loss or damage to significant timbers, other structures, archaeological remains or decorative surfaces.

If the historic floor surface is particularly fragile, it is likely to require protection against foot traffic and wheelchairs, especially the heavy electrically-powered ones. A temporary covering, removable for occasional viewing may be the only appropriate answer. In such cases, fully accessible information about the floor and its importance should be available nearby.

Over-polished floors and carpets or rugs without any underlay to anchor them can be of particular risk to vulnerable walkers.

## Doors and openings

Door and window openings establish the character of an elevation and form an integral part of the façade; they should not generally be altered in their proportions or detail.

Where the principal entrance is a key element in the design of a building façade, the door frame or surround can rarely be altered without upsetting the design relationship. The door itself is likely to be significant. In the case of heavy doors, the addition of automatic opening mechanisms may be worth considering, or alternatively a help bell added.



Standard guidance recommends an 800mm clear opening for a head-on approach, although the practical minimum width required by the majority of manually propelled wheelchairs can be less than this. Thus a compromise may be possible, subject to consultation. *Approved Document Part M* suggests a minimum clear width of 750mm in existing buildings.

Manoeuvring space alongside the leading edge of a door is particularly important. Where space is inadequate and an alternative route is not feasible, electromagnetic hold-open devices should be considered.

Wheelchairs and other mobility aids can inadvertently damage narrow doorcases and joinery. Applied protection may be necessary to safeguard the historic fabric.

Double doors with leaves less than 800mm in width pose a problem. The use of electromagnetic catches to hold doors open is one solution, linked to a fire alarm



system if necessary. Automation of the doors may be possible, although this can cause damage to floors as well as the joinery itself. It may be possible to fix the leaves together to act as a single door. Sometimes leaves may have to be replaced with ones of unequal width, to provide a clear 800mm opening on one side.

Adaptation to form vision panels in important historic doors is rarely acceptable. It is more usual to use electromagnetic hold-open devices to achieve improved access.

Historic door furniture or traditional ironmongery may be integral to the design and character of the door. If so, every effort should be made to retain it. It may be feasible to automate the door or to rely on staff assistance rather than to replace significant fittings with lever-type handles. There are a number of aids available that can be used with existing door furniture to assist those with limited strength and grip.

Picture to the left: Royal Opera House, London. In planning the circulation between the new Piazza entrance and the historic Bow Street portico, the change in level was in excess of two metres. The entire circulation core rises from the Piazza level to the Bow Street entrance to avoid the need for short-rise lifts or dedicated access ramps.

Picture to the right: Power assisted doors located in the returns of the portico at the Royal Opera House provide an easy access route.

Removal of original timbers in significant old buildings should be avoided, especially when integral to the frame construction. Exposed sill plates across thresholds – such as this one at Deal Castle – typically pose problems. A temporary timber ramp is likely to be preferable to raising the floor locally.



Consideration should be given to the height, ease of use and contrast between the handle and door colour. Automatic door-closing mechanisms with an abrupt or heavy action must be adjusted to accommodate wheelchair users, people with pushchairs, children and the elderly.

Thresholds

25mm is the generally accepted maximum raised threshold over which an independent wheelchair user can manoeuvre, although in practice many people can negotiate a slightly higher one, especially if the leading edge is bevelled. Portable bevelled leading edges or short ramps can be provided.

In timber-framed buildings every effort should be made to avoid cutting sill plates or other framing members as the structural integrity of the building should be respected. A bevelled fillet on either side can resolve a small difference in height. If sill plates are to be covered by a raised floor or ramp, care should be taken to maintain ventilation and protect against moisture entrapment, which can lead to timber decay.

Corridors

Circulation routes must allow easy movement and provide a sense of location and direction. The preferred unobstructed width of a corridor is 1.2m. In places intended for public assembly, this increases to 1.8m.

Vertical movement

Ramps

Ramps are often preferable to platform lifts because they do not break down and can also be used by ambulant disabled people, the elderly and people with pushchairs. The exceptions include larger changes in level which would involve extensive ramping and/or where there is inadequate

space, or, where there is an established need to protect architectural or archaeological features. If it is not possible to overcome these obstacles through the insertion of a carefully designed ramp and handrails, mechanical devices may be considered.



New access improvements at the Almeida Theatre have been incorporated as part of a larger project. A new foyer ramp provides a non-stepped approach to the stalls seating area.



The addition of a carefully detailed external structure to a civic building in the centre of Corsham has improved access while not compromising the appearance of the building.



Barnard Castle. Modifications to the relatively modern bridge to the Inner Ward, which forms the main visitor route, replaced steps with a ramped solution. The use of circular section tubular steel handrails – although *Approved Document Part M*-compliant – is rather utilitarian.



A ramp made from paving stones at the west front of Winchester Cathedral creates an accessible route into the building.

Simple temporary timber ramps, such as this one to Brinkburn Priory Church, can provide a suitable solution where fabric constraints may not permit a permanent intervention.



Any slope of 1:20 or more is defined by *Approved Document Part M* of the Building Regulations as a ramp. Gradients should be as shallow as practicable as steep gradients create difficulties for some wheelchair users and ambulant disabled people. Standard guidance advises a maximum of 1:12 (rise to going) over 2 metres. In exceptional circumstances, steeper grades over shorter distances may be preferable to no ramp at all, although these will not be suitable for some wheelchair users without assistance. Electrically powered wheelchairs can generally cope with steeper slopes than can manually propelled ones. The case for a steeper ramp to that recommended in the *Approved Document Part M* would need to be made in the Access Statement.

In forming permanent ramps and raising floor levels, account should be taken of design features such as skirtings, plinths or dado rails. These can often be important elements in establishing the scale and proportion of the room.

Temporary ramps can have a detrimental visual impact and are unlikely to provide a satisfactory long-term solution to access problems. However, they may be appropriate and considered a reasonable adjustment if they form part of a long-term strategy prior to providing a permanent solution, or where access may be needed for a relatively short period in a building's life, or where use is infrequent. Where the frequency of use is much greater a permanent high-quality intervention may offer a more acceptable solution. Temporary measures should be made to the same standards of design and construction, particularly as they may also require formal approval. They, too, should seek to minimise visual impact and to provide the greatest possible degree of integration and independence.



Removable ramps tend to remain in place for several years. They rarely represent a satisfactory architectural solution but can be used out of necessity while a well-designed permanent solution is agreed.



Portable ramps are a 'managed solution' that involve staff intervention to erect and remove the ramp as required; they may be used from time to time for a single visitor, or periodically for an event lasting several days. This avoids the risk of visual intrusion, and may be preferable for smaller properties or those where wheelchair use is infrequent. Appropriate staffing arrangements, training and storage space are integral parts of the solution, together with the provision of a suitably located and labelled help bell. A temporary or portable ramp is frequently the most acceptable solution while a long-term solution is being prepared.

Many ambulant disabled people do not find ramps easy to use. Unless, therefore, a ramp is short, has a shallow gradient and the rise is no more than the minimum that can be provided by two risers, steps should be provided as well as a ramp.

Stairs and landings

The principal staircase is often the major element in the most important public space within a building, and as such is of considerable architectural and historic importance. Such staircases often do not comply with current standards, and changing them is likely to be contentious. There may not be a problem if there is a secondary staircase where alteration would be practical and acceptable. In this case, handrail design becomes a particular issue.



At St James' Church, Colchester, the level change at the north porch is more than a metre. The use of a removable ramp at the south door provides an adapted route during an interim period while a longer term solution is studied and funds raised to complete the alterations.



Portable ramps used on an occasional basis may be appropriate in some circumstances. They should be removed after use and stored nearby, and their availability should be advertised in advance. Ramps such as these can pose a hazard to the partially sighted if left in place.



The addition of a second handrail improves access for ambulant disabled people on the historic staircase to the library at King's College Cambridge, though this does not fully comply with *Approved Document Part M* of the Building Regulations.

Handrails

Handrails are highly visible and so represent a critical design issue. The introduction of new handrails to ramps or stairs will inevitably impact upon the character of existing spaces and features, even when designed with great care and sensitivity. Here, as elsewhere, detailed design studies, supported by accurate drawings and visualisations, are essential if such interventions are to be properly planned and their impact fully understood.

In older buildings, handrails were not generally designed to extend 300mm beyond the first or last riser, or to have the currently recommended profile. Where handrails are too thick or thin to grip comfortably (ie more than 50mm or less than 40mm in diameter), it may be possible to insert an additional handrail.

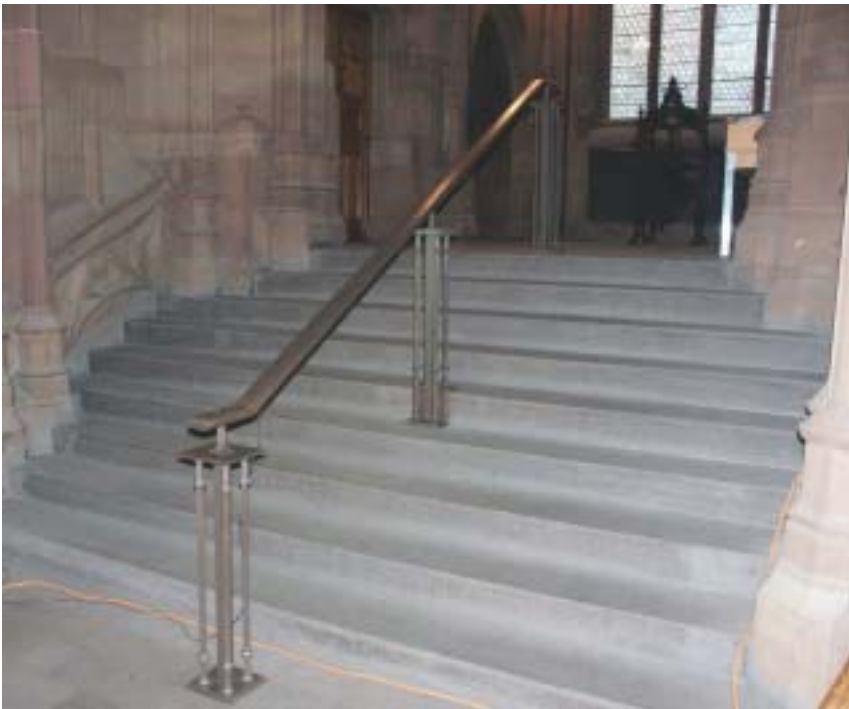
Current standards require flights of two or more steps to have handrails on both sides, with a 1m unobstructed width between them. On wider steps, it can be less intrusive to install a single, central handrail which gives the desired left- and right-hand option. On stairways narrower than 1m, one good handrail is better than none.



The new handrail at Huddersfield station is in keeping with its context.



The original handrail at the Walker Art Gallery does not comply with current profile recommendations and does not project 300mm beyond the top riser because it abuts the pilaster. No changes have been proposed as a nearby lift provides alternative access.



This photograph shows a mock-up of a proposed handrail for the staircase at the Grade I-listed John Rylands Library, Manchester. The handrail has been designed to relate to the very high-quality bronze work at the library and it is proposed that concealed lighting will be incorporated in the handrail to increase illumination of the stairs. Producing a mock-up provides a good way for all parties to assess the visual impact.



Manchester Town Hall. Although the original balustrade is to one side only and does not comply with standard guidance, the provision of a second handrail was deemed unnecessary because lift access is available within reasonable proximity to the primary circulation route.



As can be seen with this handrail at the Bank of England, it is possible to form new handrails that match existing designs and materials.



The historic context of a staircase may suggest the replication of an existing handrail design which does not fully comply with the *Approved Document Part M* of the Building Regulations, but which could nonetheless be regarded as a reasonable

adjustment. Where alterations are proposed, and conservation and aesthetic considerations require the retention of non-compliant but historic handrails, then this issue should be raised in the Access Statement.

Picture to the left:  
At the Victoria and Albert Museum in London symmetrical long shallow ramps have been combined with steps that complement the scale of the Cromwell Road frontage. There is one central handrail to the steps.



Picture to the right:  
As part of the Centenary Development at Tate Britain a new entrance has been formed with wide steps and ramps thus making the building fully accessible.



Royal Institute of British Architects, London  
This view illustrates an elegant well designed solution to a relatively small-scale level change.



The once derelict Grade I-listed church of St Luke in London has been converted into rehearsal and recording space and a community outreach centre for the London Symphony Orchestra. The entrance has been made fully accessible while remaining sensitive to the architectural importance of the building.



The refurbishment of the Government Offices, Great George Street, in Westminster has included disabled access at both entrances. High-quality design complements the refurbishment of the historic elements.

Surface texture and contrast

Access design guidance recommends the external use of tactile hazard warning surfaces at the top of flights of steps and on landings, together with contrasting nosings on external and internal steps. This may be undesirable in historic buildings but it might be possible to use carpeting to improve contrast. Where stairs represent a safety hazard for people with visual impairments, it may be possible to use reversible paint to identify the edges of steps and landings; or to use lighting to create shadow contrast.

Mechanical lifts

Where possible, the installation of an integrated and suitably sized passenger lift is the preferred option. This is more likely to be feasible in larger buildings; in smaller ones where space is at a premium a platform lift may offer a more viable solution. Both passenger and platform lifts are best located in the less sensitive parts of historic buildings – for example, secondary staircases and light wells – or in areas which have already been disturbed or altered. However, with any type of lift, maintenance and management implications should not be overlooked.

An evacuation lift, which can be safely operated in an emergency by trained staff or the fire brigade, is the preferred form of passenger lift. It must be an integral part of the protected escape route.



At the Queen's House in Greenwich a new staircase replaced a service stair that had already been replaced more than once and therefore had potential for further change. The new stair allowed for the construction of a lift in the stairwell. Although this lift does not meet the prescriptive standards laid out in *Approved Document Part M* of the Building Regulations, for the first time in its 370-year history everyone can enjoy the interior of the building.

The external lift at Norwich Castle provides access to the Norman keep entrance. The path leading to it is finished with resin bound gravel at a gradient of 1:15.

A lift at Blickling Hall has been located within one of the turrets without damage to the internal structure.



At St Luke's Church the rebuilding of an unsafe staircase allowed space for a lift, making all levels accessible.



The new 'link' formed in the well between the buildings at the Manchester Art Gallery now contains primary access to buildings. The design of the new passenger lifts and the bridge uses glass in a way that provides good contrast and avoids unwanted transparency.



Substantial rebuilding at the rear of the Fan Museum in Greenwich provided the opportunity to add a rear lift shaft.

Lift controls should be designed for ease of use by all, incorporating Braille, large print and illuminated buttons. Voice information within the lift helps visually impaired users to orientate themselves within the building.

The lift car should be large enough to accommodate any type of wheelchair with at least one other passenger. Lifts with a clear turning circle of 1.5m are desirable for heavy visitor use and will accommodate most scooters.

In some historic buildings, a smaller car may be the only option. Approximately 80 per cent of wheelchair users can cope with a smaller lift and some can transfer from their wheelchair to use the lift; these are of clear benefit to other users as well including ambulant disabled. The minimum car size for a passenger lift is 1.4 x 1.1m, to accommodate one wheelchair user and one companion. Wherever possible and acceptable, the lift should operate as a through lift, with doors on opposite sides so that the wheelchair user does not have to turn round or reverse on exit. This also applies to short-rise platform lifts.

Partially enclosed cars specially designed for wheelchairs can be used in lieu of more conventional passenger lifts and have a reduced impact on historic fabric. These hybrid platform-passenger lifts typically travel a maximum distance of 4 metres. They offer an integrated form of access, and are of benefit to people other than wheelchair users.

The use of modern lift technology can reduce or avoid the need for overruns or lift pits. Short-rise platform lifts offer scope for level changes of up to 4m if contained within an enclosed lift shaft. The minimum platform size required to accommodate a wheelchair is 1.05m wide x 1.25m long. They are generally more suitable for internal rather than external use as they require high levels of maintenance and supervision. External use is increasing, however, as technology improves. Platform lifts are often less intrusive than a long ramp with handrails and are worth considering for any change of level of between 1m and 4m.

Traditional stair or platform lifts that follow the incline of a stair should only be used where standard passenger or platform lifts cannot be installed. They tend to be unpopular with people with disabilities since they can create a spectacle in use, and because transfers from wheelchairs to seat-only lifts can be difficult, undignified or impossible for some people. They can rarely be used by ambulant people, and the cost of installing them may be disproportionate to the benefits. They may also create unacceptable visual intrusion and cannot be fitted to a staircase on an escape route if they constitute a hazard or reduce the width of the stairway to less than the acceptable minimum. They should only be considered as a last resort, when it is impossible to accommodate a vertical lift or ramp, or where alternative routes are not available.



At Eastbury Manor the entrance lobby area can be raised as a ramp to overcome the existing level change while allowing the entrance doors to open inwards when the ramp is not in use.

This platform lift at Lambeth Palace has been carefully designed with glass sides and matching floor finish to blend with the adjoining stairs.

The platform lift on the top floor of the Wellington Arch – situated at Hyde Park Corner in the centre of London – gives access to the roof-top viewing platforms. The monument has been opened to the public and includes exhibition spaces, a passenger lift to all floors and facilities for people with disabilities.

The improved reliability of external lift systems makes them dependable. At St George's, Brandon Hill, in Bristol two external hydraulic lifts provide access at two level changes between the upper churchyard car park and the floor of the church (now a concert hall). The lifts have also proved useful in moving heavier equipment and large instruments.

Stair climbers are attached to wheelchairs, and must be operated by trained staff, not all of whom may be comfortable with this responsibility. They do not serve all types of wheelchair, nor resolve the access problems of those who have difficulties with steps. They may also cause embarrassment and can give rise to anxiety

on safety grounds; the damage they may cause to stair treads may make them unsuitable for use on significant historic staircases. However, the technology is constantly evolving and some stair climbers are now available that allow for an upright position to be maintained.



Stair climber supplied by Wheelchair Corporation Ltd

Stair climber technology is improving and this version maintains an upright position for the user.

## Emergency egress

Access design and statutory regulations require that everyone in the building is provided with a means of escape in the case of fire or other emergency, whether disabled or able-bodied. This responsibility rests with the building management or service providers. Evacuation plans should allow for evacuation without reliance on the fire service, having been drawn up following consultation with the fire officer and disabled users so their needs are taken into account. All staff who may be expected to aid the evacuation of disabled people should receive appropriate training.

Guidance on facilities and the management of assisted escape is given in British Standard 5588 Part 8: *Code of Practice for Means of Escape for Disabled People*. On upper levels which are not served by an evacuation lift places of refuge adjacent to staircases or lifts may be required, together with appropriate communication devices such as fire alarms, intercoms and visual signals. BS 5588 Part 8 sets out standards for evacuation lifts; these are used increasingly as an alternative to carrying a wheelchair user down the stairs or to the use of stair climbers. The revised Part M of the Building Regulations states that where a lift is to be used to evacuate disabled people in an emergency then it should conform to the relevant recommendations of BS 5588 Part 8. It is essential that mechanical systems or controls are managed by well-trained staff who are familiar and confident with current escape procedures.



This view of Halifax Town Hall shows how a fine 19th-century staircase can be negatively affected by visual intrusion. As technology develops, more sympathetic intervention may become possible.



Incline stairlifts are inevitably intrusive and cannot be used by those unable to transfer from their own wheelchairs. However, the scale of the staircase here means that the lift is less intrusive than it might be elsewhere.

# Lighting, signage and information

## Lighting

Good lighting enables partially sighted people to move easily and safely into and around buildings. The effective use of lighting can make obstacles more obvious.

Lighting should avoid glare, pools of bright light and areas of deep shadow. Interior lighting schemes may need to be supplemented by sensitively positioned additional fittings to ensure that appropriate levels of illumination are achieved, particularly where there are stairs or changes in level. The introduction of window blinds can be a useful method of eliminating glare or confusing shadows at certain times of the day. Sudden changes in light levels should be avoided, and areas of transition from bright to dimly lit space should be created where possible. In these cases, assistance should be given, for example by providing seating so that people have a place to rest or pause and become accustomed to the lower levels of lighting.

## Signage

Exterior signage must identify the accessible entrance if this is not also the main entrance. Where necessary, it should also indicate distances to key features or areas, the presence and grade of inclines, and how assistance may be obtained. Signage within the building should be considered for position, location, local clarity and visual contrast. Braille and embossed signing may be incorporated with sensitivity in a historic interior, but will always be most effective as part of an integrated communication scheme.

Wherever signage is to be positioned, careful consideration needs to be given to fixings and the impact on the character of the space to which it is being added. Free-standing signage may be more appropriate in some cases.



## Information

Comprehensive access information, in a range of accessible formats, may be most effectively provided in advance of a visit by leaflets or the internet and service providers should consider provision in relation to user needs. An 'Access Guide' can be sent out to allow people to plan their visit, giving details of how the building can be reached by public transport and what parking facilities are available. Such a guide should also detail how the building can be accessed internally, highlighting any restrictions to independent and full access.

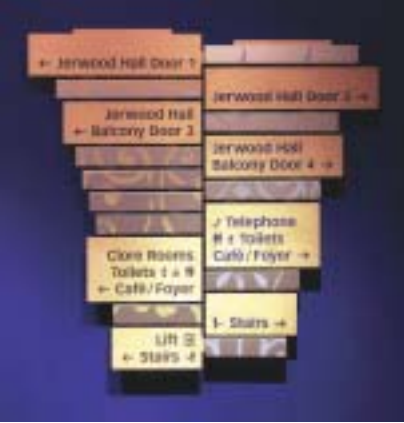
All staff, and especially those who deal with the public, should be familiar with the requirements of people with disabilities, and with the facilities available to them. Such training requires a strategic commitment on the part of any organisation and is particularly effective when it is specifically targeted for each person's role.



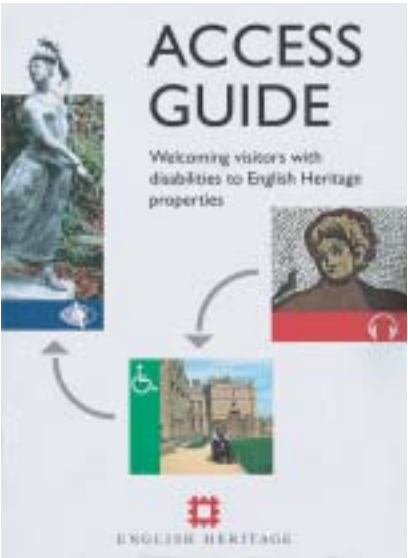
Interpretation panels need to follow recommended guidance on font and colour contrast for visually impaired people.



This signage panel for unstaffed English Heritage sites gives key information on history, health and safety and access from the point of arrival. The panel incorporates Braille and a tactile map.



At St Luke's Church carefully designed signage make the building easy for all to use.



Picture above: Use of trained staff to provide guided tours can be part of an overall access strategy.

Picture to the left: This guide gives information on facilities for visitors with disabilities when visiting English Heritage properties.

# Landscapes and settings

English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund are developing a new best-practice guide on achieving and improving physical and sensory access to historic landscapes. This will be titled *Easy Access to Historic Landscapes* and will be available in the autumn of 2004.

English Heritage is also compiling a series of regional *Streets for All* volumes. These will cover access issues in the public realm and will supplement the original volume for London published in 2000 under the title *Streets for All: A Guide to the Management of London's Streets*.



The use of natural stone is retained in the formation of the dropped kerbs in this sensitive location. There is no tactile surface.

The insertion of machine-finished tactile pavers at a dropped kerb contrasts with the rough finish of the lias stone setts in this section of Corsham High Street. Although tactile paving is required, such changes between modern precision and rough traditional surfaces can represent both a visual intrusion and a potential hazard to those expecting a continuation of the more level surface.



Access to a building and its surroundings, or to historic landscapes, should be considered from the point of arrival, whether by foot, car or public transport. Many historic paths and drives are made of materials such as cobble and sett paving, riven stone slabs and gravel, all of which can represent a barrier to access. These materials are nevertheless often an integral part of the significance and character of the landscape.

As with buildings and built structures, access to landscapes and the settings of historic buildings is best achieved by

understanding their significance and the needs of their users, and by balancing the demands of access and conservation. The following all represent solutions to be assessed and evaluated:

- Replacing existing gravel surfaces with self-binding gravel or by adding binding agents such as bitumen or resin
- Relaying stone setts with tighter joints, or pointing them to form a less recessed joint, or incorporating a level surface within them
- Introducing alternative routes through a park or to a building, and signing them accordingly
- Introducing alternative routes which give access to certain key features and views within the landscape, while acknowledging that full access may not be possible
- Using interpretation and alternative media to provide intellectual access to those areas that will remain physically inaccessible
- Taking full advantage of the sensory qualities of all gardens and landscapes, and of seasonal changes
- Providing handrails, electric buggies and frequent resting places to maximise access for as many people as possible
- Use of trained staff and guided tours as opposed to making physical changes



These two photographs illustrate tactile paving formed in natural stone.



The hoggin path to the South Terrace at Kenwood House in London has been designed so that it provides a suitable surface for all to use while still being appropriate for the historic landscape context.



These two photographs show gravel paths in different locations at Audley End House. Not all visitors with a disability find gravel surfaces difficult.



At the Tower of London an alternative route has been designated through the use of paving for those who have difficulty with the surface of setts. However, riven paving has been used so this surface is also not entirely flat.



Carefully positioned level areas provide resting places on visitor routes.

## Street and other furniture

To maintain free and safe access to buildings and landscapes, service providers should think carefully about the design and location of, and sometimes the need for, potential hazards such as interpretation panels, bollards, sculpture, cycle racks, free-standing signs, lamp-posts and waste bins. These should be set away from main thoroughfares to minimise congestion and obstacles. Benches and internal seating should be selected to provide a choice between those incorporating back and armrests and those without. Tables, where they are provided, should be wheelchair accessible.



This interpretation panel at St Augustine's Abbey is carefully positioned to allow use by all visitors.



This sign clearly indicates a route suitable for wheelchair users.



Carefully positioned seating provides resting places on visitor routes.

# Published sources of information

## Primary legislation

<i>Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.</i> London: HMSO	<i>Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.</i> London: HMSO
<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1995.</i> London: HMSO	<i>Town and Country Planning Act 1990.</i> London: HMSO
<i>Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.</i> London: HMSO	

## Official guidance documents

British Standards Institute 1998. <i>Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings (BS 7913).</i> London: BSI	Department of the Environment 1990. <i>Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning.</i> London: HMSO
British Standards Institute 1999. <i>Fire Precautions in the Design, Construction and Use of Buildings. Part 8: Code of Practice for Means of Escape for Disabled People (BS 5588).</i> London: BSI	Department of the Environment and Department of National Heritage 1994. <i>Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment.</i> London: HMSO
British Standards Institute 2001. <i>Design of Buildings and Their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People: Code of Practice (BS 8300).</i> London: BSI	Disability Rights Commission 2002. <i>Code of Practice: Rights of Access, Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises.</i> London: Disability Rights Commission
Department for Education and Employment 1996. <i>Code of Practice for the Elimination of Discrimination in the Field of Employment Against Disabled Persons or Persons Who Have Had a Disability.</i> London: HMSO	Disability Rights Commission 2002. <i>Code of Practice for Schools.</i> London: Disability Rights Commission
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Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (formerly Re:source) 2003. *Disability Portfolio* (a collection of 12 guides on how best to meet the needs of disabled people as users and staff in museums, archives and libraries)

Penton, J 2001. *Widening the Eye of the Needle* (2nd edn). London: Council for the Care of Churches/ Church House Publishing

Royal National Institute for the Blind 2003. *Museums, Galleries and Heritage Sites: Improving Access for Blind and Partially Sighted People (Talking Images Guide)*

## Sources of official publications and information

British Standards are available from the British Standards Institute at: [www.bsi-global.com](http://www.bsi-global.com)

Disability Rights Commission publications are available on-line from: [www.drc.org.uk](http://www.drc.org.uk)

English Heritage free publications are available from: [customers@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:customers@english-heritage.org.uk)

HMSO and Stationery Office publications are available on-line at: [www.hmso.gov.uk](http://www.hmso.gov.uk)

For general enquiries about statutorily protected listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and registered parks and gardens in England: [customers@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:customers@english-heritage.org.uk)

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (formerly Re:source) publications are available on-line at: [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)

## General reading

*Access by Design*. The quarterly journal of the Centre for Accessible Environments

*Access Journal*. The quarterly journal of the Access Association and JMU Access Partnership

Barker, P and Fraser, J 2000. *Sign Design Guide: A Guide to Inclusive Signage*. London: JMU Access Partnership and the Sign Design Society

Brereton, C 1995. *The Repair of Historic Buildings: Advice on Principles and Methods* (2nd edn). London: English Heritage

# Where to go for further help

## Access organisations

Access Association  
Walsall MBC  
Civic Centre  
Darwall Street  
Walsall WS1 1TP  
[www.access-association.org.uk](http://www.access-association.org.uk)  
01922 652010

The Adapt Trust  
Wellpark  
120 Sydney Street  
Glasgow G31 1JF  
[www.adapttrust.co.uk](http://www.adapttrust.co.uk)  
0141 556 2233

Age Concern  
Astral House  
1268 London Road  
London SW16 4ER  
[www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)  
020 8765 7200

British Council of Disabled People  
Litchurch Plaza  
Litchurch Lane  
Derby DE24 8AA  
[www.bcodp.org.uk](http://www.bcodp.org.uk)  
01332 295551

Centre for Accessible Environments  
70 South Lambeth Road  
London SW8 1RL  
[www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)  
020 7840 0125

Church Action on Disability  
50 Scrutton Street  
London EC2A 4XQ  
[www.charitiesdirect.com](http://www.charitiesdirect.com)  
020 7452 2085

Disability Rights Commission  
DRC Helpline  
Freepost MID 02164  
Stratford Upon Avon CV37 9BR  
[www.drc.org.uk](http://www.drc.org.uk)  
08457 622633

DPTAC (Disabled Persons Transport  
Advisory Committee)  
Zone 1/14  
Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DR  
[www.dptac.gov.uk](http://www.dptac.gov.uk)  
020 7944 8011

Help the Aged  
207–221 Pentonville Road  
London N1 9UZ  
[www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk)  
020 7278 1114

JMU Access Partnership  
105 Judd Street  
London WC1H 9NE  
[www.jmuaccess.org.uk](http://www.jmuaccess.org.uk)  
020 7391 2002

MENCAP  
123 Golden Lane  
London EC1Y 0RT  
[www.mencap.com](http://www.mencap.com)  
020 7454 0454

National Register of Access Consultants  
70 South Lambeth Road  
London SW8 1RL  
[www.nrac.org.uk](http://www.nrac.org.uk)  
020 7735 7845

Radar Access Advisory Committee  
12 City Forum  
250 City Road  
London EC1V 8AF  
[www.radar.org.uk](http://www.radar.org.uk)  
020 7250 3222

Royal National Institute for the Blind  
(RNIB)  
105 Judd Street  
London WC1H 9NE  
[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)  
0845 766 9999

Royal National Institute for Deaf People  
(RNID)  
19–23 Featherstone Street  
London EC1Y 8SL  
[www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)  
0808 808 0123

Scope  
PO Box 833  
Milton Keynes MK12 5NY  
[www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)  
0808 800 3333

## National amenity societies

Ancient Monuments Society  
St Ann's Vestry Hall  
2 Church Entry  
London EC4V 5HB  
[www.ancientmonumentsociety.org.uk](http://www.ancientmonumentsociety.org.uk)  
020 7236 3934

Council for British Archaeology  
Bowes Morrell House  
111 Walmgate  
York YO1 9WA  
[www.britarch.ac.uk](http://www.britarch.ac.uk)  
01904 671417

Garden History Society  
70 Cowcross Street  
London EC1M 6EJ  
[www.gardenhistorysociety.org](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org)  
020 7608 2409

Georgian Group  
6 Fitzroy Square  
London W1T 5DX  
[www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)  
020 7529 8920

Society for the Protection of  
Ancient Buildings  
37 Spital Square  
London E1 6DY  
[www.spab.org.uk](http://www.spab.org.uk)  
020 7377 1644

Twentieth Century Society  
70 Cowcross Street  
London EC1M 6EJ  
[www.c20society.org.uk](http://www.c20society.org.uk)  
020 7250 3857

Victorian Society  
1 Priory Gardens  
Bedford Park  
London W4 1TT  
[www.victorian-society.org.uk](http://www.victorian-society.org.uk)  
020 8994 1019

## Church bodies

Baptist Union of Great Britain  
129 The Broadway  
Didcot  
Oxon OX11 8RT  
[www.baptist.org.uk](http://www.baptist.org.uk)  
01235 517700

Cathedrals Fabric Commission  
for England  
Church House  
Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BL  
020 7898 1863

Catholic Bishops' Conference of  
England and Wales  
Liturgy Office  
39 Eccleston Square  
London SW1V 1BX  
[www.liturgy.demon.co.uk](http://www.liturgy.demon.co.uk)  
020 7901 4805

Council for the Care of Churches  
Church House, Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3NZ  
[www.churchcare.co.uk](http://www.churchcare.co.uk)  
020 7898 1866

The Methodist Property Office  
Central Buildings  
Oldham Street  
Manchester M1 1JG  
0161 236 5194

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)  
Friends House  
173–177 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BJ  
[www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)  
020 7633 1000

Other bodies

Association of Local Government  
Archaeological Officers (ALGAO)  
5 Marine Terrace  
Skinningrove  
Saltburn-by-the-Sea TS13 4BJ  
[www.algao.org.uk](http://www.algao.org.uk)  
01287 205863

Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)  
Crown Building  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff CF10 3NQ  
[www.cadw.wales.gov.uk](http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk)  
020 2050 0200

Department of Environment, Food  
and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)  
Ergon House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
08459 335577

Unitarian General Assembly  
Essex Hall  
1–6 Essex Street  
London WC2R 3HY  
[www.unitarian.org.uk](http://www.unitarian.org.uk)  
020 7240 2384

The United Reformed Church  
Church House  
86 Tavistock Place  
London WC1H 9RT  
[www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)  
020 7916 2020

English Heritage  
23 Savile Row  
London W1S 2ET  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)  
020 7973 3000 (London office)  
0870 333 1181 (Customer Services)

Heritage Lottery Fund  
7 Holbein Place  
London SW1W 8NR  
[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)  
020 7591 6000

Historic Scotland  
Longmore House  
Salisbury Place  
Edinburgh EH9 1SH  
[www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)  
0131 668 8600

Institute of Historic Building Conservation  
(IHBC)  
Jubilee House  
High Street, Tisbury  
Wiltshire SP3 6HA  
[www.ihbc.org.uk](http://www.ihbc.org.uk)  
01747 873133

Museums, Archives and Libraries Council  
(formerly Re:source)  
16 Queen Anne's Gate  
London SW1H 9AA  
[www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)  
020 7273 1444

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
(ODPM)  
26 Whitehall  
London SW1A 2WH  
[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)  
020 7944 4400

Published June 2004

© English Heritage 2004  
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Designed by Mark Freeth,  
Creative Services Department,  
English Heritage

Brought to press by Publishing and  
Creative Services Department,  
English Heritage

Printed by Vitesse

Product code 50702

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