Inclusive Design and Access

supplementary planning guidance
This document was correct at the time of publication, March 2007. It was initially agreed for public consultation on 12 June 2006. Following an extensive consultation exercise, it was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by the Cabinet Member for Planning on 13 February 2007.
## Contents

### Part 1 Introduction  4

Aims  
The Social Model of Disability  4  
What is Inclusive Design ?  4

### Part 2 Inclusive Design in Context: Summary of Legislation, Policy and Guidance  6

**National Legislation and Policy**  6

- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)  6  
- The Planning Acts  6  
- The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) (draft) (England) Order 2005  7  
- Planning Policy Statements  7

- Unitary Development Plan  8  
- Technical Guidance  8

### Part 3 Inclusive Access within the Development Control Process  10

Introduction  10  
Existing Buildings  10  
New Buildings  10  
Listed Buildings  10

Application Documents  11

Access Strategy  11  
Access Audit  11  
Access / Design Statement  13  
Historic Building Impact Assessment / Conservation Assessment  14  
Professional Advice  15

### Part 4 Case Studies – Existing Buildings  16

Entry into a Building  16  
Internal Changes  22  
Historic / Listed Buildings  23

### Part 5 Case Studies – New Buildings  26

### Part 6 Application Checklist  29

Appendix 1  30

Sources / Contacts  End Pages
PART 1 Introduction

Aims

Westminster City Council prides itself on its commitment to architectural excellence both in the conservation of its historic built environment and through consistently high standards of new design. This commitment extends to ensuring that the built environment of central London can be enjoyed by all.

High quality design recognises the importance and diversity of its users and should seek to create an attractive, open, and user-friendly environment. Everyone should be able to get to and use buildings and the open spaces between them.

The Department of Planning and City Development has a key role to play in removing or reducing barriers to access in Westminster. This guidance document seeks to encourage best practice and promote a high quality and inclusive environment for all, irrespective of age, gender, mobility or impairment.

This document aims to provide guidance to those making planning applications, it is not intended to provide comprehensive guidance on the provision of inclusive access. A list of relevant publications which expand on the issues raised here is included as an appendix.

The Social Model of Disability

There is no one definition of ‘disability’ and the term can be applied to a large and diverse group of people. However, disabled people do share in common the experience of discrimination and often exclusion from mainstream society. In recognition of this, Westminster City Council has chosen to adopt the ‘social model of disability.’

This model recognises that disability is not a question of impairment. Society itself creates disability by putting up barriers which prevent everyone from participating fully in all activities and sectors of society. These include barriers that are physical barriers within buildings, barriers to information and services as well as barriers of assumption, stereotype and prejudice.

What is inclusive design?

The concept of inclusive design makes use of the social model of disability by focusing on removal of the barriers within the environment rather than the impairment. It is not about making special provision for disabled people but is about designing the environment in a way that encompasses everyone’s needs.

Some of the most obvious barriers to an inclusive environment are physical barriers created through inaccessible buildings and spaces, both internal and external. Often access needs are considered separately as an add-on to the design process. Inclusive design is based upon embracing diversity and taking into account the needs of differing users throughout the design process.

Thus inclusive design is not an end result but a process through which the needs of diverse groups of
users are considered and incorporated from inception through the design process and into the subsequent management of buildings.

Providing inclusive access to existing buildings offers particular challenges. Inclusive design in this context may not just be about physical alterations but should also consider the differing ways in which services and information can be provided to meet the needs of different users.

In defining ‘inclusive environments’ the Disability Rights Commission has set out five principles for inclusivity as follows:

- ease of use
- freedom of choice and access to mainstream activities
- embrace diversity and difference
- legible and predictable
- of high quality.

It should be recognised that inclusive environments benefit everyone and most of us will experience some form of disability at some stage in our lives. Those who are travelling with small children or are carrying luggage or heavy shopping will all benefit from an accessible environment, as will people with temporary mobility problems and many older people.
PART 2 Inclusive Design in Context: Summary of Legislation, Policy and Guidance

National Legislation and Policy

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) - The most important recent piece of legislation is the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, which aims to prevent discrimination against disabled people and provide equality of access to goods, facilities and services.

The Act which places new duties on employers and service providers, and since 1 October 2004 requires that, where reasonable to do so, all areas of buildings to which the public can reasonably expect physical access for the purposes of accessing goods, facilities or services, shall be made accessible.

The Act was amended most recently by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 to introduce further measures to prevent discrimination. A statutory Code of Practice (prepared by the Disability Rights Commission) has been produced which imposes a general duty on public authorities to promote disability equality when exercising their functions. The purpose of the Code is to give practical guidance on how to prevent discrimination against disabled people in accessing services to the public, private clubs and premises.

The Planning Acts

The relevant section of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is section 76, which left consideration of access too late in the process, in effect drawing an applicant’s attention to the issue upon being granted permission. To address this section 42 of the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has, amongst many other things, re-drafted section 62 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Section 62 of the 1990 Act relates to the form and content of planning applications.

The re-worded section now includes at sub-section (1) (5) that:

“A development order must require that an application for planning permission of such description as is specified in the order must be accompanied by such of the following as is so specified –

a) a statement about the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development;

b) a statement about how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with.”

Sub-section (1) (6) continues:

“The form and content of a statement mentioned in subsection (5) is such as is required by the development order.”

It is important to note that the wording of 62 (1) (5) relates only to ‘access to the development’ and does not therefore extend to the internal aspects of individual buildings.
Section 42 (5) of the P&CP Act 2004 gives effect to a new section 327A of the T&CP Act 1990 which requires a local planning authority not to accept an application unless it is accompanied by a design statement and an access statement, where required.

Central government has also introduced secondary legislation on some of the development control provisions of the P&CP Act 2004 which includes that design and access statements should be a single document. This secondary legislation has amended the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990. The amendments that have been made are most readily explained in Circular 01/2006 produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The secondary legislation is as follows:

**The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) (England) Order 2006**

This order which amends the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (the GDPO) came into force in 2006. It sets out the types of applications for planning permission for which design and access statements will be required. It states that they will be required for all applications except for:

- a change in the use of land or buildings;
- engineering or mining applications;
- development of an existing single dwelling-house, where no part of the dwelling-house or its curtilage is within a designated area, e.g. a conservation area.

Also, design and access statements are not required for applications for advertisement consent, relating to tree preservation orders or hazardous substances.

The GDPO also sets out the criteria which should be applied to explain and justify the proposed design of and access to a development.

**The Planning (Applications for Planning permission, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006**

These regulations amend the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 and also came into force in 2006. These include the requirement for design and access statements to accompany applications for listed building consent. The need to consider access issues within the statement would not apply to applications for works affecting only the interior of a building. The regulations set out what an access and design statement should include.

**Planning Policy Statements**

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development sets out the Government’s overarching policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. Amongst the key principles contained in this is that “Planning policies should promote high
quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. Design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted.

Unitary Development Plan

The Unitary Development Plan is the statutory document setting out planning policies for developing land, improving transport and protecting the environment in Westminster. This SPG has been produced to supplement the policies in the UDP. Relevant access policies contained within the UDP are set out below:

STRA 26: IMPROVING ACCESS TO FACILITIES AND BUILDINGS

“It is the City Council’s aim:

To ensure that all users and visitors have access to individual buildings and developments. Particular regard will be paid to the needs of people with disabilities.”

Housing Policy H 8: PROVISION OF HOMES FOR LONG TERM NEEDS

“The City Council will expect all new housing units to meet the Lifetime Homes Standard. In all housing developments of 25 or more dwellings, the Council will require that 10% of the units should be designed to be wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable for residents who are wheelchair users.”

Transport Policy TRANS 3: PEDESTRIANS (this policy also applies to wheelchair users)

“(A) The City Council, in considering development proposals, will aim to secure and improved environment for pedestrians, with particular regard to their safety, ease, convenience and directness of movement, in the course of negotiations or securing planning agreements, including the provision of appropriate facilities, such as footway widening, connecting walkways, footbridge location and covered arcading.

(B) In its consideration of proposals for the future creation of pedestrian-only areas or areas of pedestrian priority, the City Council will aim to achieve a high standard of urban design and also to have regard to the following physical features:.....the access and mobility needs of disabled, elderly … people…”

Design Policy DES 1: PRINCIPLES OF URBAN DESIGN AND CONSERVATION

“(B) Amenity, Accessibility and Community Safety

To protect amenity, development should:

... provide for safe and convenient access for all…”
Technical Guidance

British Standard BS8300:2001 - Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice
Provides detailed guidance on good practice to making the built environment accessible. It includes car parking, access routes to and around buildings, entering a building, horizontal & vertical circulation, guidance for individual building types and technical specifications.

The Building Regulations 2000: Access to and use of buildings, Approved Document M
This came into effect on 1 May 2004 and states that reasonable provision shall be made for people to gain access to,; and use of, a building and its facilities. This applies to both newly erected non-domestic buildings and to dwellings. In addition it will apply to extensions to non-domestic buildings and non-domestic buildings which undergo a material alteration; or to an existing building or part of an existing building which undergoes a material change of use to a hotel or boarding house, institution, public building or shop. The document contains detailed technical information largely drawn from the British Standard.

For specific advice on Approved Document M you can contact the Council’s Building Control Service:
Westminster District Surveyors
City Hall
64 Victoria Street
London
SW1E 6QP
Tel. 020 7641 7230/7240
Fax. 020 7641 7115

Other Guidance
See Appendix 1 for a summary of other relevant guidance documents.
PART 3 Inclusive Access within the Development Control Process

Introduction

All proposals, whether they relate to new developments or alterations to existing buildings, should from their inception consider the implications of providing inclusive access and the details which are submitted as part of any application should reflect this process.

Existing Buildings

Where alterations are proposed to existing buildings the need to be in compliance with the statutory framework will depend on the alterations that are proposed and on the particular circumstances of the case. Alterations should at all times consider the implications of inclusive access and should aim to ensure that they are designed so that all users are planned for.

Where the building in question is host to a service provider, they are required, under the Disability Discrimination Act to make reasonable adjustments to all areas of their building to which the public can reasonably expect physical access for the purpose of receiving goods, facilities or services.

The types and uses of buildings which may therefore be included within the requirements of the Act are numerous, and would include shops, restaurants, hotels, places of worship etc.

Any planning application which is seeking permission to carry out alterations to a building that have an impact on physical access will need to demonstrate the design process via which the proposal evolved. The first element in this is an access strategy, detailing the applicant’s philosophy and approach to inclusive design. This will underpin both the reasoning behind the alterations and, where departures from adopted design guidance (e.g. Part M of the Building Regulations; or BS 8300), the reasons for the departure and justification for the solutions proposed. Also identifying the mechanisms by which implementation is intended. In addition to an access strategy, any submission should include an access audit which will clearly demonstrate the specific, as opposed to strategic, reasons for any proposed alteration(s).

New Buildings

Where new developments are proposed, the statutory framework that is now in place requires a level of compliance designed to ensure that inclusive design is integral to the overall scheme. Nevertheless, the details submitted as part of any planning application will be expected to include a design and access statement, which clearly demonstrates how the design process has evolved and will further evolve during detailed design consideration, and clarifies all of the design features which have an impact on inclusive access.
Listed Buildings

The listed status of a building gives its owners/occupants no direct exemption from considering inclusive access as part of any proposed alterations and with respect to service providers from seeking to address the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. However, the requirements of this act have to be set against the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, where the City Council, when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, has a statutory duty as defined by s 66 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

It is therefore important when considering alterations to a listed building that an evaluation of the building in the form of a historic building impact assessment and/or a conservation plan is undertaken. Any application proposing alterations to a listed building that will result in improved inclusive access should include a historic building impact assessment and this should be read in conjunction with the access audit.

Application Documents

In addition to the standard drawings (accurate, metrically-scaled plans, elevations & sections) that would be expected from any application, a design and access statement will now be required to be submitted with most planning applications and listed building consent applications.

In developing the access part of a design and access statement, the following elements should be included:

Access Strategy

The access strategy is the starting point and should underpin proposals for development from their inception. Any service provider should have formulated a strategic commitment to make their service more inclusive. The strategy should demonstrate the applicant’s understanding of disability and inclusion. It is recommended that the Social Model of Disability is adopted. This will give direction as to how they strategically intend to make adjustments either by physical alterations to their building or by the implementation of operating procedures and what budget, personnel and timescale they intend to attach to the implementation of this strategy.

Access Audit

The access audit, carried out prior to preparing the application, represents an important document in any submission for planning permission and/or listed building consent, where alterations are being proposed to an existing building. The audit represents an assessment of a service and the building from which it operates. Driven by the access strategy an audit should identify those parts of a service and its building where barriers to inclusive access exist. The audit will be an important tool in understanding the reasoning
behind proposals for physical alterations and particularly in the case of listed buildings one part of the justification for alterations.

The audit should consider the context of an application proposal and should be specifically targeted to the area of the building affected by the proposal.

Where proposals relate to the whole or substantial parts of a building the audit should be more comprehensive, presenting a wider access context. This should include how a service is provided from the building, what other barriers may exist beyond the entrance, what other entrances exist to the building and whether these represent barriers to access. This additional information should be included in any comprehensive access audit.

In terms of the presentation of an audit, this will most usefully be in the form of a journey through the building, starting at the nearest parking or entrance point to a site/building, continuing to the entrance(s), circulation routes, facilities and services in the building, how the building is ‘used’ by those visiting it and means of escape. This information might be presented in tabular form preferably related to floor plans of the building. The following examples are not intended to be prescriptive but as indicative of how an audit might be presented:

Table 1 – Example of an extract from an Access Audit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Floor Level</td>
<td>Ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Car Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Space</td>
<td>Public / Employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Car Parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>There are x number of spaces for cars to park, each bay is a standard 2.1m wide. There is no designated space(s) for disabled drivers. There are no dropped kerbs to allow wheelchair users smooth access to and from their vehicles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Where parking is provided all bays (or x% of bays) should be wheelchair accessible as far as possible &amp; practical. Bays should be clearly marked and surface should be even and stable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>Identify and provide x spaces for disabled drivers. Install a dropped kerb for easy access from car to entrance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 – Example of an extract from an Access Audit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>External Step(s). Are all step nosings identifiable and colour contrasted?</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Apply external marker strips with non slip additive, colour white, to edge of external step. 50mm wide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Design and Access Statement**

The Council’s own UDP policies in addition to other guidance and legislation makes clear that proposals for planning permission, where relevant, should include a design and access statement as part of the application. The Council will not register an application where, in its view, such a statement should form part of the original submission.

The access section of the design and access statement will represent the product of the access strategy and audit process. The statement will demonstrate the evolutionary process which has led to the proposals for which permission and/or consent are being sought. The statement should give details of the national standards used (for example, British Standard BS 8300 2001: Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice) and should give any details of any consultation process conducted (for example with the Council’s access officer).

The Statement should detail the process through which the design has gone and the process to be followed as it evolves. The scale of the scheme will dictate the detail of the process to be followed. Applications for larger schemes, including all major applications should cover:

1. The adoption, at inception, of a philosophy and approach (e.g. the social model of disability).
2. The identification of the performance indicators to be applied (e.g. BS8300 Part M of the Building Regulations).
3. A statement that establishes generic issues that will influence inclusive design.
4. What the legitimate and reasonable constraints are likely to be on maximising access (e.g. spatial; financial; time; the nature of the service; impact on other users; any listed building or conservation issues; health and safety and security considerations.)
5. That design team members will be sufficiently trained to understand the issues surrounding inclusion.

---

1 See also Appendix 2 for further information on contents of Design and Access Statements.
6. That professional advice from an Access Consultant is obtained in their role as a design team member.

7. That access issues will be regularly reviewed (e.g. by being a standing agenda item at all design team meetings).

8. That the various levels of access achieved will be signed off at the same time as the RIBA Plan Of Work stages.

9. That a record will be kept of all departures from the adopted design guides together with the reasoning behind the departure and the justification of the adopted solutions.

10. That this record will be part of the permanent access statement and one of the building management documents on hand-over. It will provide important direction as to the reasons for the detail of the design and may form part of a protection against accusations of unreasonable discrimination.

Depending on the degree of design evolution at the time of submission, the statement may be accompanied by drawings which clarify the specifically access related proposals being made. In addition the drawings should illustrate the principal access related features such as car parking and circulation routes externally and internally. The statement may also include photographs of the site and its surroundings; and any other relevant illustrations.

The expectation will be that the building regulations will be satisfied. However, any significant departures predictable at the time of application should be identified in the statement with the reasoning behind them explained.

In more modest schemes which may specifically relate to an alteration which will have an impact on access, then a greater degree of supporting information will be expected at the submission stage.

The design component of the statement should illustrate the process that has led to the development proposal and explains and justifies the proposal in a structured way. The advice contained within the City Council’s supplementary planning guidance ‘Design Matters in Westminster’, provides helpful guidance on the design issues which should be considered.

*Historic Building Impact Assessment / Conservation Plan*

Where the building in question is a historic property, the implications of any proposals relating to inclusive access will need to address not just the access issues but also the impact on the historic building / site and its constituent parts. The access statement in this case would demonstrate how these issues (which may sometimes be conflicting) have been reconciled or alternatively why they cannot be reconciled.

The assessment of a historic building or site ought to be a management document for a property and should identify the special features of the building
which contribute to its historic and architectural significance. In addition the assessment might attach degrees of significance to various features within a building (for example an original principal staircase may have a greater historic or architectural significance than an altered secondary staircase; or an original floor surface regarded as more significant than a replacement surface). Whilst some elements of an assessment may seem self evident, nonetheless the process of identification, assessment and recording will assist future management of the building.

The impact assessment will consider the merits of a proposal and specifically address the impact these have on the special historic and architectural features of a building.

**Professional Advice**

Applicants are strongly urged to use appropriate professional advice with respect to proposals for inclusive access. While there is a growing awareness of the needs of disabled people and the requirements within the legislation, the detailed design and implementation of proposals remains an area requiring a significant level of expertise.

In addition to the dimensions and standards which are provided in such documents as the British Standard (BS 8300:2001) there are a myriad of detailed design issues which should be considered. These might include:

- appropriate floor surfaces;
- position of handles and handrails;
- differing acoustic properties of certain materials;
- tonal contrast to surfaces and obstacles such as stairs;
- installation of hearing enhancement systems such as infra-red and induction loops;
- and signage, including talking signs.

In order to ensure that these items are all considered in the design process, the involvement of an access consultant, is strongly encouraged. Where the property in question is a historic building the additional use of a ‘historic buildings’ consultant is also advisable.

For further details about access consultants contact:

The National Register of Access Consultants
70 South Lambeth Road,
London, SW8 1RL

Tel: 020 7735 7845
Fax: 020 7840 5811
e-mail: info@nrac.org.uk
website: www.nrac.org.uk
Part 4 Case Studies - Existing Buildings

Entry into a building

For buildings which are host to a service provider an obvious and instant barrier to inclusive access is the entrance to that building. The width of the opening, the appearance of the entrance, the surface material at the entrance and any steps or changes in level can all represent obstacles.

If such an obstacle to the entrance exists, the requirements of the DDA will mean the service provider must make all reasonable adjustments to the property to remove the identified barrier. The entrance will often also be the main point of egress, although it should be borne in mind that other access/egress points should also be considered, particularly if alternative egress points (i.e. for fire escape purposes) also represent barriers.

Plate 1 A shop unit in Seymour Place, W1. Access to this unit is clearly compromised by the raised area in front of the building and by the threshold to the entrance door itself. To directly overcome the physical barrier, physical alterations to the property could be proposed. However, the requirements of the DDA are all concerned with reasonableness – so alternative means of providing the service (e.g. home delivery and collection service) or changing operating procedures, may also be considered reasonable.

Plate 2 Another shop unit in Seymour Place, within the same terrace as the unit shown in Plate 1. In this case a new shopfront has been installed which in addition to incorporating traditional shopfront detailing also provides level access from the highway. This is the ideal situation because whereas some service providers can find alternative means of providing their service, others, such as a café or a public house are as much about the experience as the product and therefore physical access is vital.

Wherever practicable and reasonable all access points into and out of a building should be at the same level as the external ground surface. The Council will therefore expect the provision of level access on all buildings from which a service is provided. Where level access is not being provided, or where the alterations proposed fall short of the British Standard, a full
justification for this should be submitted with the application in the Access Statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General details for ramps and entrance doors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limits for a ramp</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ramp Length</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not exceeding 2m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No single flight ramp should exceed 10m in length or a rise of more than 500mm)

**Door widths**
Minimum width of 750mm, although preferably 800mm for straight on doors. Where the doors are approached at an angle this can increase to 850mm.

Plate 3 Emergency exits from building should not be overlooked. In this example the exit doors have level access with the highway.

As indicated a threshold step or series of steps to the entrance can be a barrier to a number of people, including those with mobility and visual impairments. While there is no panacea which can be applied to this situation, there are a number of options that could be considered.

The most obvious and straightforward solution may be to simply remove the barrier, although the more likely means of accommodating a change in level is to provide a ramp. However, it should be borne in mind that some ambulant disabled people have difficulty using ramps and it is undesirable for a ramp to be the only approach to a building.
Plate 4 The ramped access that has been provided behind the railings to this hospital building has not supplanted the original entrance steps but is complementary to them. The Building Regulations acknowledge the importance of having both steps and ramps as some people who can walk but have restricted mobility find a ramp more difficult to negotiate than a stair. This building has now been closed and the site is to be redeveloped.

To comply with building regulations and the British Standard ramps should incorporate a number of design features including:

- ramps under 2m in length should have a maximum gradient of 1:12; 5m 1:15; 10m 1:20, although 1:20 is preferable for all lengths;
- minimum surface width should be 1200mm;
- should have landings at the foot and head which should be a minimum of 1200mm long and clear of any door swing;
- a handrail on each side;
- have an easy to maintain and slip resistant surface².

In practice the accommodation of a ramp may present a number of problems. The land outside the entrance may not fall within the demise of the service provider, or the floor area required for the ramp may be considered an obstruction to pavement users, or if the ramp is contained within the building may significantly reduce the commercial floor space of a small business. Ultimately, the service provider should make an assessment of what can reasonably be provided and apply to make those changes to avoid the initiation of civil proceedings. A Code of Practice produced by the Disability Rights Commission sets out procedures relating to legal action.

² For comprehensive details on the requirements of ramps and other features, applicants should refer to British Standard BS 8300:2001.
Where there is reasonable scope to provide level access it should be 
provided, but where this proves unreasonably difficult or impossible, other 
options should be considered. It may be appropriate to consider making 
available a portable ramp (that meets British Standard BS 8300:2001). In 
such circumstances the ramp should be stored close to the entrance and 
users of the building should be made aware that this facility is available. Other 
alterations to an entrance which might be considered include:

- the installation of a platform lift
- the provision of handrails, which would assist those with mobility 
difficulties;
- nosings to steps may need to be modified to provide colour and tonal 
contrast for visually impaired people.

Plate 5 Temporary / portable ramps can be an acceptable solution, where difficulties of 
level access or a permanent ramp solution occur. In such circumstances the 
associated management of the building should be in place, to ensure that when the 
ramp is needed there is a way of ensuring it is in place or alternatively an accessible call 
button should be in place. The importance of staff training and awareness cannot be 
over emphasised. The management procedures should also ensure that the 
individual using the ramp is safe. This example is on Portland Place, W1.

Plate 6 A far from elegant solution on Berners Street, 
W1. Although well-intentioned - the entrance 
steps to a shop do have 
handrails to assist ambulant 
users and the nosings to the 
steps have tonal variation to 
assist visually impaired 
people. However, the design 
does not meet with British 
Standard in that the handrail 
should project beyond the 
bottom nosing and should 
not be cold to the touch,
Where the provision of a ramp can be accommodated and is proposed, this does not obviate the need to comply with the Council’s design policies and should therefore be designed to respect the character and appearance of the building.

**Plate 7** While the installation of a ramp will provide improved access to a building, it can also, if poorly designed, appear incongruous and damaging to the external appearance of a building. In this example the ramp and railings relate poorly to the host building.

**Plate 8** An elegant solution. In this case on Berners Street, W1, the ramp and new steps have been sensitively sited and utilise materials which compliment the building. But the solution does fall short of the highest standards. Again, the handrail is in metal and does not project beyond the end of the sides of the ramp, a handrail could have been provided for the steps, is the surface slip resistant?

Additional modifications to the entrance may include ensuring that the door width is sufficient for wheelchair users. The minimum effective clear width should be 750mm although 800mm, the standard for new buildings, is preferable. It should be considered that fitting closing devices to single swing doors can greatly disadvantage people with a wide range of disabilities. Other modifications to the entrance door may include automatic doors, colour / tone contrast of doors with rest of building, allowing a clear view of the interior of the building and providing handles of contrasting colour, positioned 1m from the floor level.
Plate 9 Another elegant solution at the Royal Academy, Piccadilly. In addition to the quality of design this also comes much closer to following best practice. Rigorous compliance may have sought a handrail on both sides of the ramp. However, in the context of a grade II* listed building, it probably results in a more sympathetic design and therefore reasonable in the circumstances.
Internal changes

Many internal modifications to a building may be required in order to provide inclusive access and to dispense with physical barriers. This will include a myriad of items such as:

- level circulation throughout the building (possibly including additional ramps and lifts);
- means of escape;
- adjustment to surface finishes to facilitate people with sensory impairments;
- provision of signs and information, and other communication systems;
- modification of internal doors, reception desks, lighting, seating layouts and lavatories.

While for unlisted buildings many of these items would fall outside the control of the planning system\(^3\), they will nonetheless be matters which should be addressed by all service providers as required by the DDA\(^4\). Where the building is listed, any modifications to the interior are likely to require listed building consent. In these circumstances the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; Planning Policy Guidance Note 15; the Council’s design polices and its supplementary planning guidance all need to be considered as part of any proposal.

Plate 10
Clear signage and alternative modes of providing a service form an important element of access provision. For further details on appropriate signage see – The Sign Design Guide.

---

\(^3\) Applications seeking change of use may bring the internal layout and arrangements of a building within planning control in terms of providing inclusive access.

\(^4\) For technical specifications of internal alterations see British Standard BS8300:2001.
Historic / Listed Buildings

It is likely that there will be a number of instances where there is a tension between the provision of inclusive access on the one hand and the desire to preserve the character of a listed building on the other. However, PPG15 indicates that there should in many cases be opportunities to resolve these tensions satisfactorily:

It is important in principle that disabled people should have dignified easy access to and within historic buildings. If it is treated as part of an integrated review of access requirements for all visitors or users, and a flexible and pragmatic approach is taken, it should normally be possible to plan suitable access for disabled people without compromising a building’s special interest. Alternative routes or re-organizing the use of spaces may achieve the desired result without the need for damaging alterations. Paragraph 3.28, PPG15, 1994.

External alterations, particularly those associated with the entrance to the building are likely to present design challenges, but also internal works may prove difficult to achieve. Obvious examples within Westminster include formal stepped entrances and internal circulation within historic interiors.

Plates 11 & 12 These historic and listed buildings, all in conservation areas, present a very typical challenge in terms of providing inclusive access. In these cases the level of the principal entrance lies above that of the street and is reached by a short flight of steps, usually over a front lightwell. In many of these instances a permanent ramp solution is unlikely to be acceptable / achievable. Platform lifts can sometimes be a solution, but in many cases the use of a portable ramp to overcome changes of under 350mm and the provision of an accessible call button may be the only workable solution.
Plate 13 In this case at a grade I listed property in Carlton House Terrace, SW1, a platform lift has been installed behind the railings and allows access to the raised entrance.

Plate 14 At Hertford House, Manchester Square, one of the three stepped entrances to the main entrance point has been re-designed to incorporate a ramp, while still maintaining the character and special interest of this grade II listed building. To be more compliant with Part M guidance, the ramp ought to have handrails, however, this would have a harmful impact on the character of the building and they have therefore not been installed.

In some situations there will be sufficient space at the front of a building to consider the provision of a level entrance or a ramp and if this can be achieved without a detrimental impact on the listed building then this will clearly represent the ideal solution. However, there will be properties where this is not easily achieved. The provision of a platform lift can sometimes offer a solution as it will improve access for most wheelchair users, where the space for a ramp is not available. However, in some situations it may be the case that the physical alteration of the front entrance will not be possible, but this does not mean that the requirements of the DDA can be disregarded. There may be operational changes that a service provider can make which would ensure that the service remains accessible. For example, a portable ramp could be made available, and where this is the case users of the service
should be made aware of this and should also know how they can contact the service provider to ensure that the portable ramp can be put in place. This may take the form of a call button at the entrance to the building, positioned so that it can be used by all users. Also staff should be made aware of their responsibilities when requests for access assistance are made.

Internal alterations to historic buildings need to be sensitively carried out in order to maintain the special interest and character of these buildings. In terms of considering internal access an obvious alteration and one, which in unlisted buildings ought to be considered, is the installation of a lift. This would provide access for everyone to all floors. However, within listed buildings the installation of a lift is usually very damaging in terms of a loss of fabric and a damaging impact on the historic plan form and will often be unacceptable. Again, should a listed building consent application for an internal lift be refused, this does not necessarily obviate the service provider from making adjustments. For example, if access is available to the ground floor of a building only, then operating procedures may be able to be revised to ensure that all or most of the service is available at this floor level.

Other internal alterations to improve access, which will need to be carefully assessed when an application for consent is made might include such things as:

- changes to floor surfaces – which may be sought to improve level access, to overcome slippery surfaces or to introduce colour and tonal variation. There may be situations where the floor surfaces are considered to contribute towards the special interest and character of the listed building and therefore any proposals for their alteration will need to be carefully handled;

- changes to doors and openings – which may be sought to accommodate minimum clear widths. Again doors and architraves can represent important historic fabric, the loss or alteration of which can be contentious. Also the impact that widening doors can have on historic plan form can be damaging.

- Stairs / steps – internal stairs and steps can represent significant features of a historic interior and proposals for ramps and/or mechanical features to assist movement or mobility can, as with external steps, be damaging.
Part 5 Case Studies - New Buildings

As stated in policy STRA 26 of the Council’s UDP it is the Council’s aim to ensure that all users and visitors have access to individual buildings and developments and that particular regard will be paid to the needs of people with disabilities. Where a new building or development is proposed this stated aim will be applied.

Where new residential developments are proposed housing policy H8 will be applied which states that the City Council will expect all new housing units to meet the Lifetime Homes Standard. In all housing developments of 25 or more dwellings, the Council will require that 10% of the units should be designed to be wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable for residents who are wheelchair users.

In addition, quite apart from the Council’s policies and the requirements under the DDA, the Approved Document M of the Building Regulations which came into effect on 1 May 2004 states that reasonable provision shall be made for people to gain access to; and use the building and its facilities. This will apply to both newly erected non-domestic buildings and to dwellings; in addition it will apply to extensions to non-domestic buildings and non-domestic buildings which undergo a material alteration; or to an existing building or part of an existing building which undergoes a material change of use to a hotel or boarding house, institution, public building or shop.

The key document to adhere to in providing inclusive access to new buildings is the British Standard BS 8300:2001.

As with existing buildings the need to provide inclusive access should not obviate the need for good design. Indeed where new buildings are proposed the need to provide inclusive access should be integral to the design from inception stage.

---

5 The Building Regulations 2000 and Approved Document Part M define a ‘material alteration’ as one where the work would result in the property not complying with Part M where previously it did, or, where it did not previously comply with Part M, it should not be more unsatisfactory as a result of the alteration.
Plate 15 In this new development at 13-27 Davies Street, W1 which includes retail, restaurant, office and residential use, level access to the building has been provided.

Plate 16 Seacole Building, SW1, part of the new Home Office Headquarters redevelopment. This entrance on Great Peter Street has level access and automatic doors. In addition visibility through the doors is good and the self-opening mechanism, minimise any visual confusion with regard to the position of the doors.
Plate 17 The entrances to the Hampden Gurney Primary School, Nutford Place, W1 incorporate both steps and ramps. In the case of the ramps these are integral to the design following the curved profile of the upper storeys.
Part 6 Application Checklist

1. Has a design and access statement been produced?

2. Is it clear that the assessment – evaluation – design process has been followed covering the development’s relevant physical, social, economic and policy context?

3. Does the statement adequately explain and justify the proposed design and level of access?

4. Does the statement include illustrations and accurate metrically scaled drawings, including plans, elevations and sections? Are they easy to interpret?

5. Ensure the statement is not simply a justification of a pre-determined design and access solution.

6. Is the design solution achievable?

7. Is the proposed level of access to, within and around the site achievable and reasonable?

8. Ensure the statement relates directly to the site and proposal, and is not a generic document or one that has been copied from elsewhere.

9. Have the parts of the statement that could and should be linked through planning conditions to future design and access for the development been identified?

10. If the building in question is a listed building does the application contain a historic building impact assessment?

11. Is the access statement a description of the process that will be followed and is it based upon the adopted philosophy of inclusion?

12. Is the proposal wholly in the applicant’s ownership or is other private or public land involved?

---

See also Appendix 2 for further information on the requirements of Design and Access Statements.
Appendix 1 – Other Guidance

The London Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance. Accessible London: Achieving an Inclusive environment (April 2004) – Provides detailed advice and guidance on the Mayor of London’s policies which promote an inclusive environment in London. Although it is not part of the statutory plan it is a material consideration. The SPG is intended to assist local authorities, developers and others with responsibility for making improvements to London’s built environment.


Planning and Access for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, March 2003) – This good practice guide describes how all those involved in the development process can play their part in delivering physical environments which can be used by everyone. It considers the role of the planning system and how this can be used to achieve an inclusive environment. It encourages the submission of access statements with planning applications and suggests planning authorities might reject the registration of an application until such time as an adequate statement has been submitted.

Access Statements: Achieving an inclusive environment by ensuring continuity throughout the planning, design and management of buildings and spaces. Disability Rights Commission – Intended for anyone involved in the “procurement, design, product selection and management of the built environment.” It contains advice on the content and management of access statements.

Department for Transport: Inclusive Mobility (updated July 2005) - Provides guidance on access issues within the pedestrian and street environment as well as public transport buildings and transport infrastructure. It is primarily a technical document providing dimensional information.

Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee: Inclusive Projects (June 2003) This guide offers best practice advice on how all participants in the development process can contribute to the delivery of a high quality inclusive environment that provides access to all members of society, including disabled people.

Residential Development

Lifetime Homes Standards

Originating from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Lifetime Homes Group, lifetime homes have sixteen design features that ensure new residential units will meet the needs of most households. The
sixteen standards relate to the following items:

- car parking;
- access from car parking;
- approach;
- external entrances;
- communal stairs;
- doorways and hallways;
- wheelchair accessibility;
- living room;
- two or more storey requirements;
- wc
- bathroom and wc walls;
- lift capability;
- main bedroom;
- bathroom layout;
- window specifications;
- fixtures and fittings.

As indicated the Council’s housing policy H8 will expect all new housing units to meet the Lifetime Homes Standards.

**Historic Buildings and Conservation**

**PPG15**

This PPG provides a full statement of Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment. A specific reference to the consideration of disabled access and historic buildings is contained in paragraph 3.28.

**Easy Access to Historic Buildings, English Heritage, July 2004**

This document considers the relevant issues concerning access to historic buildings. In addition to providing sections on the statutory framework and determining reasonableness within the context of the historic built environment, this document also offers practical advice and examples.
Appendix 2 – Design and Access Statements

The two most useful documents to provide guidance on the requirements of a design and access statement are Circular 01/2006 produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government, entitled ‘Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System’; and CABE’s publication Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them.

In these documents the importance of site assessment, consultation and evaluation are stressed as primary considerations when developing a design and this process, including the outcomes of consultation should be included within the statement.

These documents also make clear that the statement should explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to particular aspects of the proposal and that these should include – amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of development. The statement should also explain how access arrangements will ensure that all users will have equal and convenient access to buildings and spaces and the public transport network. The statement should address the need for flexibility of the development and how it may adapt to changing needs.

The DCLG Circular also provides clarity on the contents of design and access statements for listed building consent applications. It specifically confirms that the statement will need to explain and justify the approach to ensuring that the listed building preserves or enhances its special historic and architectural importance. Where there is potentially an aspect of design that will impact on this, the statement should explain why this is necessary, and what measures within the approach to design have been taken to minimise its impact.

Information sheets providing further assistance when considering the contents of design and access statements have been prepared by the City Council.
Sources


Bringing the DDA to life for small shops: Improving access to goods and services for disabled customers. Disability Rights Commission, 2003.


City of Westminster Unitary Development Plan (approved by Full Council 13 December 2004).


Lifetime Homes – see www.jrf.org.uk


Westminster Way, City of Westminster.
Contacts

Application Forms and General Planning Enquiries

For planning, listed building consent and all other application forms, and for general planning enquiries, contact:

Tel: 020 7641 2513  
Fax: 020 7641 5510  
Email: planninginformation@westminster.gov.uk

All completed application forms should be sent to:

Development Planning Services  
Department of Planning and City Development  
Westminster City Council  
City Hall  
64 Victoria Street  
London SW1E 6QP

They can also be delivered by hand to the Planning Desk, One Stop Services at the same address, or can be submitted online via the Planning Portal. For more information on online submissions visit www.westminster.gov.uk
The City Council also makes available many documents in Braille, on tape and in large print. If you require any of the information contained in these documents in one of these alternative formats please contact: (020) 7641 8088.