

Building Control

Guidance Note No. 25

Access Statements

This leaflet is one of a series produced by the Hertfordshire Building Control Technical Forum

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONALS ON THE USE OF ACCESS STATEMENTS IN DEMONSTRATING COMPLIANCE WITH PART M OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS – ACCESS TO AND USE OF BUILDINGS

Introduction

The current Part M of the Building regulations came into effect on 1 May 2004. Approved Document M suggests various ways of achieving compliance with the core requirements and in the majority of cases the designer will choose to accord with these recommendations or the similar guidance contained in the British Standard Code of Practice B.S.8300:2009. This is not mandatory however as these documents only show one way in which to comply and there may be other equally satisfactory ways in which the requirements can be met. Approved Document M also introduces the concept of an Access Statement.

By considering access issues for all members of society at the earliest opportunity steps can be taken to ensure facilities are suitable for use, and accessible by everyone. The process will also help inclusive design proposals to be fully integrated into the design from the beginning rather than considered towards the end of the process when only less effective, compromise solutions can be achieved.

The access statement should clearly identify:

- The philosophy and approach to inclusive design
- The key issues of the particular scheme
- The source of advice and guidance used
- How the principles of inclusive design have been implemented into the scheme
- How inclusion will be maintained and managed

Purpose of an Access Statement

Alternative solutions to access problems will vary depending on the intended use of a building, its size and location. The gradient of the plot will also have an influence. Changes of use and extensions to existing buildings can present problems particularly if they are of architectural or historic importance. The purpose of an Access Statement is to allow a designer to outline their philosophy and approach to achieving a reasonable level of accessibility. In its simplest form this may be a confirmation that they intend to accord fully with the guidance contained in either Approved Document M or B.S.8300:2009. In this case the specifications and drawings submitted with the Building Regulations application should demonstrate this.

Access Statements and Planning Applications

The Access statement should be submitted at the planning stage as it is intended to be a 'living document' that will grow in detail as the project proceeds. In this way it will help to provide an audit trail to demonstrate whether particular matters have been considered adequately and with the benefit of current and authoritative guidance. This will be to benefit of the client and any future occupiers where such matters are material to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The early consideration of such matters is advantageous in that any potential problems can be considered and resolved before the detailed design work takes place. It also avoids the need to seek amendments to planning consents where such problems only come to light at the Building Regulations stage.

Non-conformity with Usual Design Guidance

For designs that deviate from the usual design guidance, the Access Statement provides an opportunity to bring the Building Control Surveyor's attention to this fact and to explain and justify that reasonable provision for accessibility has been made in other ways. The designer may wish to adopt more innovative methods or it may be that the normal provisions are not feasible for reasons of security, structural integrity, safety, cost constraints or conservation issues. In all the above cases the designer needs to demonstrate the achievement of a reasonable provision, or an equivalent or better level.

Further guidance on Access Statements and related matters can be found in Approved Document M (Paras 0.20-0.28) and on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website at www.equalityhumanrights.com . The [Centre for Accessible Environments](#) (CAE) also offers advice.