

9. DISABLED PERSONS' ACCESS

- 9.1 Local Planning Authorities have a duty under Section 76 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to draw attention to the relevant provisions of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, and the British Standards Institute Code of Practice BS 5810 (1979) relating to Access of the Disabled to Buildings.
- 9.2 The importance of being able to enter and use a building, whether as an employee, shopper or visitor, should not be underestimated. Without sensitive design, access to and within buildings can be difficult for a wide range of people, including the elderly, the wheelchair-bound, and parents with children in prams.
- 9.3 This section of the Environmental Guidelines provides supplementary planning guidance to Policies 11 and 18 relating to quality of development and the size of dwellings. It should be applied to the design of all buildings to which the public will require access, such as shops, offices, schools, industrial premises, leisure facilities, doctors' surgeries, etc. As well as new buildings, they would also apply in cases where a building is being refurbished or a new shop front is being installed.
- 9.4 Access to and into buildings are important planning considerations.

Getting to the Building

- 9.5 Parking requirements for disabled people have been covered in Appendix 5 of the Local Plan. Such spaces should be clearly signposted and located close to the building entrance.
- 9.6 The route from the parking place should be clearly signed; at least 2 m wide to allow wheelchairs and pushchairs to pass; level (gradients should not exceed 1:12 for aided people or 1:20 for independent wheelchair users); and well lit.
- 9.7 Both ramps and steps should be provided and indicated with both tactile and visual signs to give warning of their presence. All surfaces should be slip-resistant.
- 9.8 Ramps should be at least 1.2 m wide, or 1.8 m to allow wheelchairs or prams to pass in buildings heavily used by people with mobility difficulties. Where ramps are longer than 10 m a resting platform should be provided where the ramp turns. A minimum area, 1.5 m x 1.5 m, should be provided at the top and bottom for clear visibility and room to manoeuvre.
- 9.9 The minimum width of a stairway is 1 m, with a maximum rise of 1.2 m between landings. The minimum width of tread is 28 cms and the maximum height of riser is 15 cms for external steps. Single steps should be avoided. The tread should be painted a different colour from

the riser to enable people with impaired vision to distinguish steps, and light should be directed towards the steps, not down them.

- 9.10 Both ramps and steps should be provided with handrails on both sides at a height of 0.9 m on slopes or steps and 1 m on the level. The handrail should extend at least 0.3 m at the top and bottom of a staircase.
- 9.11 Street furniture requires careful location and design to avoid accidents: gully grating bars should run diagonally to the direction of travel; manhole and access covers should be flush with the surface; the minimum width to allow passage between bollards should be 0.9 m and signposts, trees or other street furniture should be placed towards the edge of footways.

Getting into the Building

- 9.12 The entrance should be easy to distinguish, on the level, covered and well lit. Where raised threshold sills are absolutely necessary they should not exceed 13 mm.
- 9.13 Doors should not be positioned over the riser of the top step of a flight of stairs. Doors should be wide enough for double buggies and wheelchairs (minimum of 0.8 m for single doors). Doors should be easy to open and close, with lever rather than knob handles, about 1.04 m above floor level. Revolving doors, those with spring closers and turnstiles should be avoided. Frameless plate glass doors are dangerous and should be marked at all eye levels to avoid collisions. Where two sets of doors are located before reaching the lobby, enough space (2.1 m) must be allowed to enable them to be tackled separately. Consideration should be given to the dangers of doors opening in to circulation areas. External and internal doormats should be recessed to be flush with the adjacent floor surfaces.
- 9.14 The Building Regulations 1991 Part M Access and Facilities for Disabled People covers access to and within buildings and the provision of facilities for disabled people, e.g. lifts and toilets. The following sections relate to the inside of buildings, but applicants are nevertheless asked to adopt the guidelines in drawing up their planning applications.

Inside the Building

- 9.15 Entrance lobbies should be large enough to allow free circulation of wheelchairs and double buggies. Inquiry counters should be at a height suitable for wheelchair users.
- 9.16 Changes in level should be ramped (no steeper than 1:12), or if unavoidable steps should be clearly marked and have handrails, while floor surfaces should be slip-resistant.

- 9.17 Areas to be accessible to both people with disabilities and adults with young children must be at the same level as the entrance door or as a lift. Passageways should be wide enough to allow double buggies and/or wheelchairs to pass (i.e. at least 1.8 m wide in circulation routes).
- 9.18 Lifts should be at entrance level, with a manoeuvring space of 1.5 m x 1.5 m in front of them. The internal dimensions should be of a similar size to enable wheelchairs or double buggies to turn through 180°. The minimum clear opening of the lift door should be 0.8 m. Lifts must be automatically self-levelling. Timing devices should allow sufficient time for manoeuvring, and the controls should be placed so that they can be operated from a seated position (no higher than 0.9 m above floor level).
- 9.19 Amenities such as access facilities, toilets and telephones should be clearly signposted and usable, e.g. telephones should be situated no higher than 1.3 m above floor level. Unisex disabled toilet facilities should be provided at entrance level. Design must allow for access by wheelchairs and double buggies: i.e:
- (a) the door to any wheelchair WC compartment must give a clear opening width of 1 m;
 - (b) wheelchair WC compartments should conform to British Standard 5810 (paragraph 8) with a minimum internal size of 2 m x 1.5 m.
- 9.20 Larger WC compartments are also more convenient for pregnant women and adults with young children.
- 9.21 Child-height lavatories and a nappy changing area should be accessible to men and women and provided in all shopping developments, sports facilities and public buildings, along with baby feeding areas.
- 9.22 The provision of supervised child care facilities is also encouraged.

Special Provision

- 9.23 At least 1 in every 5 of the check-outs in supermarkets and stores should be wide enough for a double buggy or wheelchair. The conveyor belt should make the items accessible to elderly people and people with mobility difficulties. Seats should be provided near the exit and the check-outs at a choice of heights but no lower than 420 mm. Automatic entrance doors and lifts to upper floors are essential. A lock up or safe area for leaving prams and pushchairs should be provided.

- 9.24 Auditoria with tiered seats must include areas accessible to wheelchair users where they can sit with their companions. The minimum requirement is 6 spaces, or 1% of the total number of seats whichever is the greater. In sports stadia, the number is 20, or 0.5% of the total number of seats, whichever is the greater.
- 9.25 Induction loops should be provided in all theatres, cinemas, halls, meeting places and sports stadia. A clear, pictorial and visible sign should indicate the presence of the loop, and the loop should be switched on.