

## Supplementary Planning Document

### Document Title: **Access for People with Disabilities**

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## **SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

### **ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This guidance aims to help achieve developments that adopt the following principles of inclusive design:

- Developments that can be used safely and easily by as many people as possible without separate provision. This includes people with differing disabilities, elderly people and parents and guardians of young children.
- The freedom to choose and ability to participate in a development's activities and services.
- Values that embrace diversity and difference.
- Adopts high quality design and use of appropriate materials.
- Achieves safe, comfortable and healthy environments.
- Provides for ease of use and way finding and provides information in an accessible format.
- Incorporates signage on the approach, outside and inside the development that is legible and meets the diverse needs of all the community.

1.2 This document includes sections on the following:-

- Background information on the types of disability and design considerations for varying types of disability.
- Policy and legislative content, including advice on the need for, and content of, a design/access statement
- Detailed policy guidance by which proposals for development will be assessed when a planning application is submitted and further advice on how to comply with obligations under the Building Regulations and Disability Discrimination Act.
- A list of documents referred to which provide detailed specific guidance is contained in Section 10.

Detailed guidance on the design of access ramps, access to shop fronts and the requirements for disabled parking spaces is available in Designing for Accessibility (Document 8) and Part M of the Building Regulations 2004 (Document 9). Good practice examples are appended to this SPD.

## 2.0 Disability Profiles

2.1 The 2001 Census of Population has revealed that almost 20% of the population of Birmingham have a long-term illness or disability. In certain wards of the City over 44% of households have a member with a long-term illness or disability. The following is a national profile of disability (1995 UK DATA).

- \* 1% of the population are wheelchair users.
- \* 3% of the population have a learning disability.
- \* 4% of the population are blind or partially sighted.
- \* 5% of the population use a stick or other support.
- \* 6% of the population are families with children under 5.
- \* 10% have poor physical co-ordination.
- \* 12% of the population has a hearing problem.
- \* 13% of the population have a literacy problem.

## 2.2 Some design considerations for people with disabilities

The following are examples of problems often experienced by disabled people.

### Wheelchair users

- \* Changes in level, problems created by high kerbs, stairs or steps, gradients which are too steep, loose gravel and cobbles on approaches to premises, doorways and corridors that are too narrow, doors that are hard to open, the absence of toilets designed for people with disabilities. These are among some of the barriers created to wheelchair users. This group particularly benefits from automatic entrance doors.

### People who are blind or partially sighted

- \* People with a visual impairment are restricted by poor illumination or lighting which is uneven. Poor or no signage and poor design and layout considerations cause locational problems. The use of colour contrasts on steps, the clearance of hazards on routes to and around buildings and the use of etching or other markings in glass, can all be of benefit.

### People with hearing impairment

- \* Problems with obtaining information are worsened by too many hard surfaces leading to a noisy and confusing environment. Poor acoustics, the absence of induction loops, minicom phones or type talk facilities cause additional problems.

### People with an ambulant disability or reduced manual dexterity

- \* Inadequate clearance for sticks and walking aids, too steep gradients, slippery and uneven ground, and long distances without resting places create additional problems for these users of premises. Many people

may also benefit from handrails that are not cold to grip, such as wood or plastic, and from easy to operate door handles able to be operated by a person with a closed fist, or automatic doors.

People with learning disabilities, literacy problems and who do not speak English as a first language

- \* These groups benefit from clear, simple and logical signage that may include pictograms and information in ethnic minority languages and voice information to assist in way finding and information difficulties.

Parents/carers with young children including those with disabilities

- \* For safety reasons this group benefit from lower handrails on steps and ramps. Problems with wide buggies (0.9m wide) entering buildings, the absence of changing and feeding facilities, parent and child parking spaces are experienced. Automatic doors and automatic hold open facilities on doors particularly benefit this group.

**3.0 The Social Model approach to Disability**

- 3.1 Birmingham City Council has adopted a social model approach to disability in relation to how it provides its services. This recognises that there are institutional and environmental barriers constraining opportunities for disabled people. This is the opposite of a medical approach to disability which regards disabled people as having a medical problem which may be overcome by medical or therapeutic treatment. This supplementary planning document and the policies in the UDP aim to assist in removing barriers preventing all people, including those with disabilities, having independent access and opportunities to access the built environment and services to the public.

**4.0 The Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 (DDA) and the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001**

- 4.1 Part 3 of the DDA gives disabled people a right of access to goods, facilities and services. This requires service providers to:-

- (a) alter a barrier feature so that it no longer has effect;
- (b) provide a reasonable means of avoiding that feature; or
- (c) provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service available.

- 4.2 These requirements apply to all buildings where services are provided to the public and to transportation infrastructure. It is also important for developers and potential employers to take account of the latest regulations relating to Part 2 of the DDA (Employment Provision). The DDA 2005 introduces, from December 2006, a requirement for public bodies such as the Council to promote equality in respect of people with disabilities. Regulations were also introduced to extend these requirements to all firms with more than one employee. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 requires schools and colleges to develop inclusive policies for disabled pupils and students, and those referred to as having special education needs.

## 5.0 **Design / Access Statements**

- 5.1 The requirement to produce a design or access statement for submission with some types of planning applications is likely to be introduced in 2006 by central government. Smaller developments are unlikely to require access statements in the future, but will be required to meet the minimum requirements set out in Appendix 1 of this document. Although access statements are yet to be required by legislation, they are a useful submission with a planning application. These statements enable the developer to demonstrate how they are meeting their legislative obligations and can assist in public consultation. The precise form of a design / access statement and the level of detail it will contain, will vary according to the size, nature and complexity of the proposal. The design / access statement attached to the planning application should always include the approach to the site; proposals for the designation and management of blue badge parking; details of the entrance to the building; and, if a listed building, internal alterations.
- 5.2 Guidance on what should be included in a design / access statement is given below, and is based on recent consultation papers from central government.
- a) The policy or approach adopted for access, and how policies relating to access in relevant local development documents, such as this one, have been taken into account.
  - b) What, if any, consultation has been undertaken in relation to access issues, and what account has been taken of any such consultation responses. This should normally include consultation with the Access Committee for Birmingham.
  - c) How any specific issue affecting access to the development has been addressed.
  - d) How prospective users will be able to access the development from the existing transport network and why the main points of access to the site, and the layout of access routes within the site, have been chosen.
  - e) How features ensuring access to the development will be maintained.
  - f) All access and design details in such statements should be integrated and should be dealt with within all aspects of the proposed development e.g. the content, use, layout materials and landscaping.
- 5.3 Access Statements are already required for Building Regulation applications where a justification is necessary if Part M of the Building Regulations cannot be complied with.

## 6.0 **Building Regulations 2004**

- 6.1 The revised Part M of the Building Regulations, introduced in May 2004, extended the existing provisions to include the following: -
- Material changes of use of premises to hotels, boarding houses, institutions, public buildings and shops.
  - Material alterations to existing non-domestic buildings.

- A focus on access for all users not just disabled e.g. for parents with young children, elderly people.
- Changes to buildings including the provision of parking bays, and visual contrasts and door pressures at entrances.
- Changes in standards for ramps, steps and toilets.
- A recommendation that access statements are submitted at the same time as a Building Regulations application.

Birmingham City Council's Building Consultancy Division have a wealth of technical expertise across a wide range of building sectors, regarding the implementation of Part M of the Building Regulations and the use of access statements. They welcome the opportunity with developers and architects to engage in early pre-application discussions in order to facilitate solutions in this technically complex area (see contact details in Section 11).

## **7.0 Unitary Development Plan Policy (UDP)**

- 7.1 The UDP 2005 (Document 5) includes a number of access policies and, as the statutory plan, has more weight in the consideration of planning applications than supplementary planning documents and guidance. Policy 3.16 states that: -

“The design of new development where the public are admitted (including extensions to existing buildings, changes of use, open space and places of employment) should make provision for the access and other needs of all sectors of the community, including, for example, the elderly and infirm, people with disabilities and parents with pushchairs. Everyone, including people with disabilities and parents with pushchairs, should be able to gain access to buildings and other facilities through a main entrance wherever possible. Shopmobility schemes will be encouraged in centres and may be secured to by Section 106 Agreements where appropriate.....”

- 7.2 Policy 6.21 reiterates the continuing need to improve public transport interchanges, so that access to places of employment, education, shopping, medical, cultural, leisure and social facilities is attractive for those with and without public transport. Of particular concern are the needs of the elderly, those less mobile and people with disabilities.

## **8.0 Town and Country Planning Act 1990**

- 8.1 Alterations designed to improve access and facilities for disabled people may need planning permission. This will depend on whether it constitutes development (under Section 55 of the above Act). In the case of external entrance ramps and altered entrances, it will depend on whether the works represent a material alteration to the building. It is likely most ramps and alterations to shop entrances will require planning permission but provided the works are not part of a larger proposal the planning application may be exempt from planning fees. Listed Building Consent will normally be required for alterations to listed buildings, in addition to planning permission.

## 9.0 **Detailed Policy Guidance**

9.1 The following guidance is divided into two sections. The first outlines the accessibility matters the Council will consider when determining a planning application. The second section provides additional guidance to assist building owners and service providers comply with their obligations under the Building Regulations and the Disability Discrimination Act. The documents referred to are contained in Section 10.0. Early consultation is also recommended with other responsible bodies, such as Sports England, English Heritage etc, for specific development types.

9.2 Examples of good practice on the use of ramps and shop front considerations are appended to this document. More detailed access requirements, e.g. ramp gradients and door opening widths etc. are available in Designing for Accessibility (see Document 8). Lifetime homes are a concept introduced in the Council's supplementary planning document 'Places for Living' (Document 29). Lifetime homes are dwellings designed to a higher standard of accessibility and facility provision, to enable people to remain in them throughout their life. In practise, these are standards the Council aims to achieve for all social housing built in the City. Further guidance is provided in Documents 21 and 29.

## 9.3 **Section 1 – Planning Requirements**

### 9.4 **Development proposals involving changes to the built environment**

Planning applications for changes of use, alterations to shop fronts, and approaches and entrances to new and altered buildings used by the public, should provide inclusive access for all. Planning permission may be refused on grounds that the development does not comply with the access policies contained in the UDP and this Supplementary Planning Document. Where appropriate, and where an access statement provides an acceptable alternative, planning conditions relating to access provision and facilities for people with disabilities will be attached to secure compliance (see Document 8).

The UDP provides the policy context to achieve barrier free access for all which will help property owners towards compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (see Document 6).

### 9.5 **Works Around Buildings (Public Realm)**

For this purpose, the public realm is defined as the areas around buildings used by the public, which may be publicly or privately owned, including highways, public squares and open areas. Where such works require planning permission, proposals to enhance the public realm and pedestrian environment should meet the required standards of safety, access and inclusion. Detailed standards on the layout of footways, crossing points and street furniture are included in Designing for Accessibility (Document 8), and the Department of Transport's Inclusive Mobility Guidelines (Document 17). A key considerations include: -

- The choice of surface materials - only those with good non-slip surfaces will be acceptable.
- Surfaces must be firm, stable, even, non-reflective, and enable rainwater to move quickly off the surface minimising ponding.
- Steps must have appropriate colour contrasts.

Conditions may be imposed on a planning permission to ensure acceptable materials are used. The position, design and colour of street furniture is

important and should also take account of the needs of people with disabilities. The City Council's guidance on street furniture (Document 16) provides more information. The Council will also look carefully at such proposals as it has an obligation under the DDA to ensure adequate provision is made.

#### 9.6 Approaches to buildings and open areas within an application site

The pedestrian approach to developments should provide a safe, level route linking the site boundary to a principal entrance of the building and, where possible, to local public transport stops and adjacent public car parks. This is particularly important for buildings set well back from frontages with car park and access roads between the boundary of the site and the building entrance.

The footway should provide a safe route, which is either segregated by grade or clearly distinguished from the vehicle carriageway by road markings, such as chevrons. Such areas should be level, adequately lit and use appropriate surface materials. Paths should avoid the use of loose gravel and cobbles, and avoid low overhanging structures. They should use material with good non-slip qualities and install bollards at least 0.9m in height with colour contrast. Any street furniture should not create a hazard for people with disabilities. Where pedestrian routes are next to parking spaces measures may need to be taken to avoid cars overhanging footways and obstructing the footway causing a hazard to blind people. Particular consideration should be given to the access and safety needs of blind and partially sighted people, including the use of appropriate colour contrasts on steps. Conditions may be imposed on a planning permission to ensure acceptable materials and lighting. (See Document 8, Document 9 and Document 26).

#### 9.7 Car parking provision

Parking spaces for people with disabilities should be provided within the boundaries of the development site in addition to those for general needs, in accordance with advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (see Document 24). Spaces for Blue Badge holders should be located adjacent to or within easy reach of the main entrance (within 50m if uncovered and 100m if covered) and of a size in accordance with BS8300. The minimum provision should be at least one designated space for each development. Where on site provision is not possible consent will be required from the City's Chief Highway Engineer for any proposed changes to on street parking arrangements. It should be noted that any on street provision cannot be dedicated to the users of specific developments. For leisure, retail, health centres and other public buildings, particularly those on the edge or outside local centres, larger bays should be provided for parking and unloading for special needs transport, such as minibuses. Conditions may be imposed on a planning permission to ensure these disabled spaces are actively and continuously managed, to encourage applicants/developers to reduce abuses of the parking arrangements. Parking bays should be clearly signposted in accordance with BS8300. Consideration should be given, by the above developments, to the need to provide parent/child parking spaces and relate them to disabled spaces (see Document 18 and Document 24).

#### 9.8 Entrances into buildings used by the public

Policy 3.16 of the UDP states that access into buildings should normally be through a main entrance for all users. The following is a list of options available to achieve this. The options are listed in preference order.

- (i) Provide a level approach and entrance door, easy and safe to use by everyone. If there are levels differences at the entrance, this could be provided by an internal platform lift or ramp or a short ramp at minimum gradient of 1:12 used in conjunction with an inset shopfront door. It could also be part of a comprehensive access improvement providing level entrances to a number of retail and commercial premises in, for example, a shopping or commercial frontage, and achieved by raising a section of footway or forecourt. This solution reduces the clutter and obtrusiveness of a formal ramp located parallel to the frontage. A number of individual formal ramps in a short commercial frontage can add clutter, obstruct blind pedestrians and adversely effect the visual appearance of the street frontage.
- (ii) Provide an external ramped approach to entrances on private forecourts. This can be achieved in two ways: (a) a formal ramp with handrails, upstands and retaining walls, which in the case of shopfronts, is usually positioned parallel to the shopfront or front elevation; and (b) where there is a relatively small threshold or single step, a gentle gradient normally of no more than 1:20 may be appropriate in the form of a splayed ramp, with a level platform directly in front of the entrance.
- (iii) A separate entrance door providing access to an internal lift. This should be provided adjacent to the main entrance to the building. This solution may be particularly appropriate for providing access to listed buildings or where frontage ramps are not practical due to the absence of a private forecourt.
- (iv) Provide an external ramp on a public footway. This will not normally be acceptable and will only be acceptable where the ramp does not provide an undue hazard or obstruction to passing pedestrians. This usually requires a distance of 1.5m to be retained between the ramp edge and the kerb. In busier locations, however, such as city and district centres, this distance may be extended to 2.5m for a distance of at least 4m around the ramp. A license or Order (under Section 247 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) is required for developments on the public footway. A ramp involving the raising of a substantial width of public footway with a gradient normally no greater than 1:20 may be acceptable, subject to the agreement of the Chief Highway Engineer. It will need to be demonstrated that other access solutions are not feasible and it should not create an unsightly undulating footway.
- (v) External platform lift provided it has either independent user control or there is surveillance via a CCTV link with the reception of the building. There should be a management process in place for its use.
- (vi) Innovative solutions, including steps that change to a platform stair lift, steps with ramp across (used where there is a shortage of space to provide separate ramps), or powered tracked steprisers, may be appropriate in certain circumstances.

The following are not normally considered other than in exceptional circumstances.

- (i) Portable ramps do not provide a satisfactory long term solution as they do not allow independent access and their use can impede the public footway. Where such provision can be justified, such as to overcome access problems to a listed building, the ramp must be of appropriate

length to achieve a minimum 1:12 gradient, stored close to the entrance door, which must be directly linked to the building's reception at a height suitable for use by wheelchair users.

- (ii) Use of a rear entrance door or trade entrance as the main alternative access for disabled people. This will not normally be acceptable as it conflicts with the UDP policy except where it can be demonstrated that it is the only reasonable solution. This entrance must be signposted from the other principal entrance(s), should have a suitable canopy and have an inclusive means of contacting reception in situations where access is through a locked entrance. The door must have a direct link to the building's reception, at a height suitable for use by wheelchair users. Any car parking provision should be located adjacent to this entrance.

#### 9.9 Access onto upper floors

Where a planning application is submitted for the change of use of an upper floor to a separate use that will be available to the public, access to the building will need to be provided in accordance with the criterion in 9.8. Internal lift arrangements are not a requirement of the planning consent, but will need to be addressed to comply with DDA requirements (see section 10).

#### 9.10 Access to communal amenity areas

Where residential and commercial schemes include communal amenity areas, such as garden courtyards within a residential scheme, these should be accessible to all users. The entrance criteria in 9.8 can apply. Conditions may be imposed to encourage features such as garden areas, seating, surfaces and play equipment which can be used by disabled people.

#### 9.11 Development affecting Listed Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas

Unlike non-listed buildings, the requirements of Listed Building Consent can look at internal arrangements within a listed building. Development affecting scheduled monuments, external provision in conservation areas and in front of listed buildings, should seek to preserve and enhance the character, appearance and setting of buildings. The design and materials of any development must contribute to these objectives. Where possible, the above standards should be met, but more innovative solutions may be acceptable to balance the sometimes conflicting demands of accessibility and conservation. Where listed buildings house public services, the listed building consent must also address access to lifts, changing rooms and public toilets.

The UDP and PPG15 have policies requiring the preservation and enhancement of historic buildings. The appendix to this document provides more detailed best practice and aesthetic design advice in relation to ramps (see Documents 9, 10 and 11).

#### 9.12 Section 2 – Guidance on meeting other legislative requirements

- 9.13 In order to assist developers to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations and their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act the following advice is also offered, although it does not provide an exhaustive list. The references in Section 11 provide more details.

#### 9.14 Works in the Public Realm

Lighting levels should be even and consistent, and have way-finding signage. Signage of wheelchair routes to shopmobility sites should be a primary consideration and placed at appropriate locations. Features, such as fountains can provide important reference points for blind people. Audio signage should also be considered in appropriate locations.

#### 9.15 Approaches to buildings and open areas within an application site

Pedestrianisation and environmental improvement schemes in the public realm are important elements in creating an improved built environment for the City and proposals should achieve barrier free access and maximise public safety. Where the route is longer than 50m, consideration should be given to provision of seating for people with disabilities (see Document 8, Document 9 and Document 25).

#### 9.16 Entrances into buildings used by the public

Provision should include colour or etching in mainly-glass doors. Major buildings used by the public should preferably have automatic side sliding doors, or doors with an automatic hold-open facility. They should have at least 1000mm clear opening width, a canopy over the entrance, and require little opening force. New and altered buildings used by the public such as transport termini, leisure facilities, libraries, retail and significant public buildings should incorporate electronic way-finding features, such as the RNIB REACT system being developed in the City Centre and the Bull Ring. It provides blind people with information and reference points. In the City Centre, and where a shopmobility schemes exists outside the City Centre, consideration should be given to how a shopmobility scheme can be used to support independent access by disabled people to the development.

The list in paragraph 9.8 has been drawn up in conjunction with the Access Committee for Birmingham and represents the most user-friendly solutions in descending order of acceptability. The choice of providing means of access for people with disabilities may be justified by technical or operational constraints. This may need to be justified in an access statement, referred to in Section 5 (see also Document 8, Document 9 and Document 30).

#### 9.17 Signage

Development proposals, particularly those which are set back from road frontages, should include satisfactory signage proposals providing information in an accessible location and format. This should include information on the means of access to the principal reception area of the building, particularly where it is not clear. Consideration should also be given to providing basic information as to the purpose of the building in the main ethnic minority languages adjacent to the main entrance. Signs should be well placed, sign clutter should be avoided and signs should be well lit and use clearly visible print. Where signage is proposed on the public highway, it should conform with the Council's adopted City Centre Pedestrian Signposting Policy (Document 30) and be carried out to the satisfaction of the City's Chief Highway Engineer. Good maintenance and cleaning is essential to avoid glare. Signboards should be non-reflective and contrast with their background. The use of finger signs should be encouraged. Symbols can be useful where quick decisions are required, such as in transport environments and for people with learning disabilities (see Document 8, Document 9 and Document 12).

9.18 Access onto upper floors

These types of development include mixed uses, with commercial uses on the ground floor and residential flat schemes above. Residential multi-storey developments, those that provide unique facilities on upper floors or separate business units, or uses with no ground floorspace are also included. The development should normally incorporate a lift able to be used by wheelchair users. Where this is not reasonable, the applicant should demonstrate why this could not be provided in the planning application submission or the design and access statement. If a person with a disability cannot physically access a service, that service should be provided in an alternative way, e.g. by a home visit.

**10.0 References**

| Document Number | Document Title  |
|-----------------|---|
| 1               | Planning & Access for Disabled People A Good Practice Guide 2003, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)                              |
| 2               | Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 – Development Plans, ODPM  |
| 3               | Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 – Planning and the Historic Environment, ODPM  |
| 4               | Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 – General Policy and Principles, ODPM   |
| 5               | Birmingham Unitary Development Plan 2005, Birmingham City Council (BCC) (see Policies 2.38, 3.16, 5.35, 7.15 and 6.21)                    |
| 6               | Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005  |
| 7               | Code of Practice - Rights of Access to Goods, Facilities and Services in Premises 2002 (and Draft 2005)                                   |
| 8               | Designing for Accessibility - Essential Guide for Public Buildings, Centre for Accessible Environments 2004                               |
| 9               | Building Regulations 2000 – Part M (Amended 2004)   |
| 10              | Easy Access to Historic Properties, English Heritage 2004   |
| 11              | Easy Access to Historic Landscapes, English Heritage 2005   |
| 12              | Sign Design Guide, Royal National Institute for the Blind   |
| 13              | Building Sight, Royal National Institute for the Blind  |
| 14              | Shopfront Design Guide, BCC   |
| 15              | Places for All, BCC   |
| 16              | Guide to Siting and Specification of Street Furniture, BCC (2001)   |
| 17              | Inclusive Mobility – A guide to best practice on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure, Department of Transport (2005)        |
| 18              | British Standard 8300.2001 - Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people code of practice               |
| 19              | British Standard EN 81-70.2003 - Safety Rules for Construction and Installation of Lifts  |
| 20              | The Access Manual Auditing and Managing Inclusive Built Environments – Ann Sawyer and Keith Bright, Blackwells                            |
| 21              | Lifetime Homes – Checklist and demonstration plans – BCC  |
| 22              | BC1S 2002 – Information on Access Costs   |
| 23              | Access for Disabled People - Sport England (2002)   |
| 24              | Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 – Transport, ODPM  |
| 25              | Lighting – Chartered Institute of Building Service Engineers  |
| 26              | Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving Surfaces, Department of Transport   |
| 27              | Train and Station Services for Disabled People, Strategic Rail Authority  |
| 28              | A Design Guide for Use of Colour and Contrast to Improve The built environment ICI / Univ. of Reading and Access Committee for Birmingham |
| 29              | Places for Living, 2001, BCC  |
| 30              | City Centre Pedestrian Signposting Policy, BCC 2001   |

## **11. Contacts For Further Information:**

### **Planning Control**

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Access Committee Contact Officer: Paul Hampton  
Access Issues Manager: Tim Spittle

### **Highway Traffic Manager**

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### **Access Committee for Birmingham**

Tel. 0121 236 1686

### **National Association of Access Consultants**

Tel. 0207 357 8182

## **Associated Documents**

The following associated documents have been prepared to accompany this SPD. They can be found on the Council's website at [www.birmingham.gov.uk/spdaccess](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/spdaccess).

1. Consultation Statement
2. Adoption Statement
3. Sustainability Appraisal
4. Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report
5. Equality Impact Needs Assessment

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR EXTERNAL RAMPS

### General Principles

Before considering the installation of an external ramp the following should be taken into account.

- \* Undertake an access audit of the building and its functions to establish access needs. Consult a range of users including people with disabilities in order to establish their needs.
- \* External access ramps can be very dominant features on the fronts of buildings and can sometimes, for single steps, be avoided e.g. by relocating the main entrance door to a more easily accessible entrance that everyone can use. It can often easily be achieved on a site that slopes from one side of the frontage to another. Other alternatives are to provide an internal ramp and lower the level of a front entrance threshold to make it level with the adjacent forecourt or public footpath. An inset front entrance door with ramped approach can also provide an acceptable access.
- \* Avoid proposals that have an adverse impact on the character of the building, its façade or setting. This is important in the case of statutorily or locally listed buildings and conservation areas.
- \* Proposals must comply with current Part M of the Building Regulations and British Standard 8300.2001 for disabled access.
- \* Small concrete and tarmac splay ramps are rarely attractive and a better alternative is to raise the immediate surrounding area of the forecourt to provide a gently sloping entrance or undertake a comprehensive frontage improvement involving raising the footway or forecourt to provide a level or slightly inclined approach to the entrance.
- \* Formal access ramps on the public footway should be the last alternative considered. They require planning permission and either a licence from the local authority or a stopping up or diversion order under Section 247 of the Town and Country Planning Act.
- \* There are a number of different standards with which to comply, but in general terms
  - Ramps should have a maximum gradient of 1 in 12 for a maximum of 2m in length before a rest platform will be required.
  - Ramps should have a minimum surface width of 1.5m.
  - Entrance doors on new developments should have a minimum width of 1m.
  - Replacement existing entrance doors should have a minimum width of 775mm.

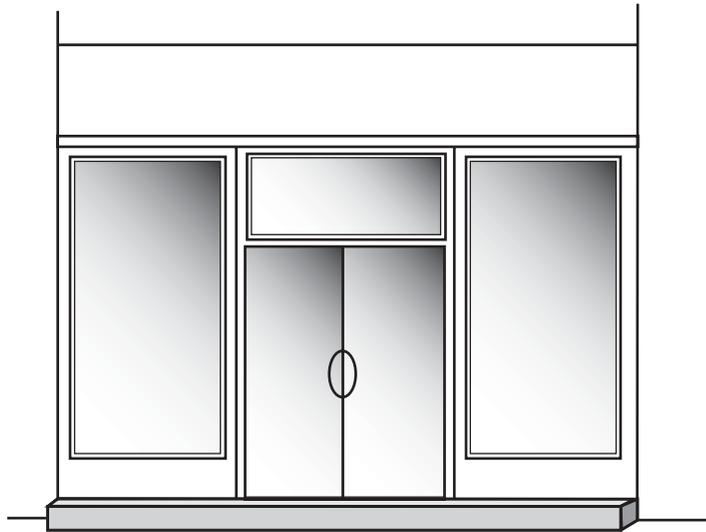
Full details of requirements are contained in Part M of the Building Regulations.

## **Design Principles**

- \* The design of the ramp should use materials which complement the façade or elevation of the building e.g. a stone building would require stone retaining walls and coping to the access ramp together with appropriate handrails and balustrade.
- \* Combined ramp and steps often provide the best solution together with cast iron or steel balustrades with wooden or plastic nylon handrails to provide a warmer grip. Scaffold type galvanised handrails/balustrades should be avoided in prominent locations and if used in less prominent locations should have a powder coated painted finish. The provision of a low level child's handrail is often appropriate for buildings used by children (0.6m in height from the base). Where the ramp is likely to be used by young children vertical bars with a maximum separation of 100 mm or grid sections should be used.
- \* For situations where there is a substantial height difference the provision of a dogleg rather than a very long straight section can reduce the impact on the frontage. Twin ramps either side of entrance steps are rarely necessary unless required to provide symmetry to a building of exceptional character.
- \* The surface of a ramp needs careful consideration with ribbed paving slabs often the most appropriate. Where concrete or brick pavements are used they should have good slip resistance and no substantial chamfers.
- \* Consideration should be given to the use of recyclable and bio degradable materials. For example iron can be recycled many times. Provided timbers are used from sustainable sources then they are an appropriate material. Plastics and polymers can only be recycled a limited number of times or not at all.
- \* An example of a well designed ramp is attached.

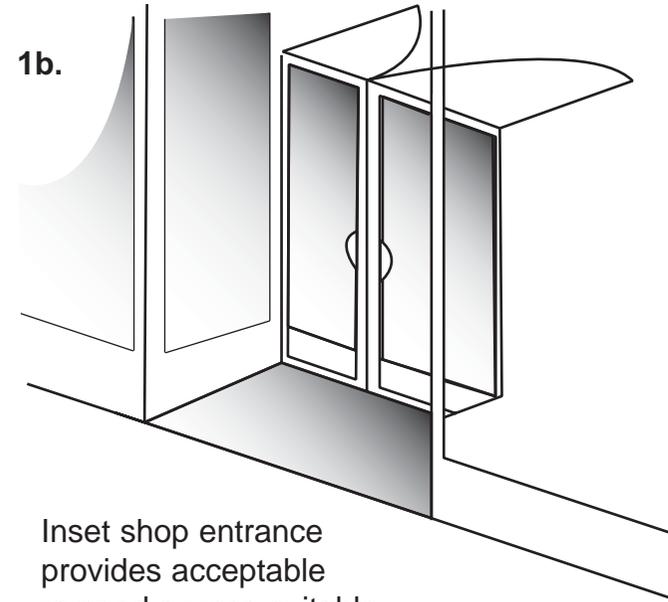
# Shopfronts - Examples of good and bad practice

1a.



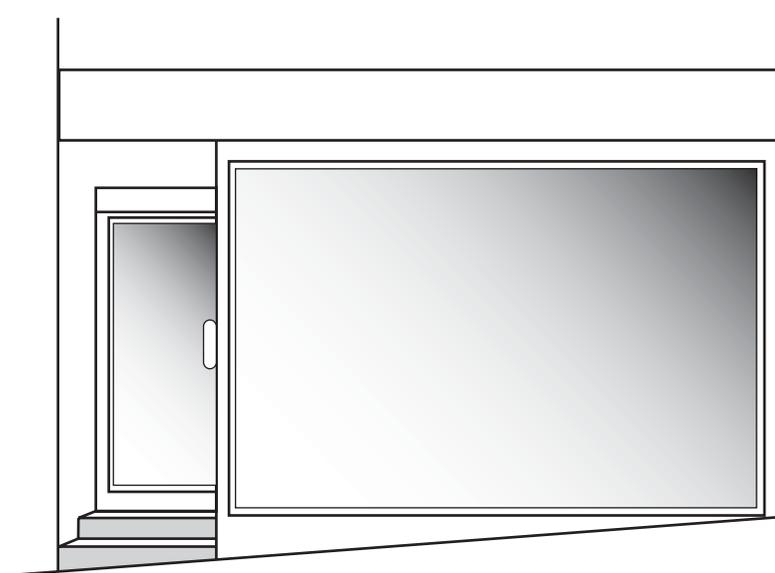
Typical standard shopfront with stepped threshold difficult for disabled people and mothers with prams to negotiate

1b.



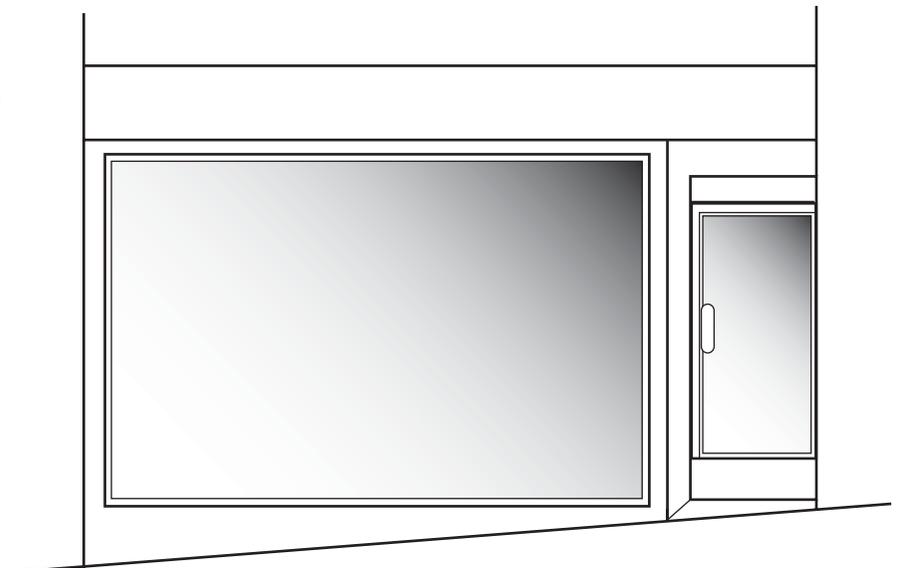
Inset shop entrance provides acceptable ramped access suitable for disabled people

2a.



A wrongly handed entrance on a sloping site requires a stepped entrance

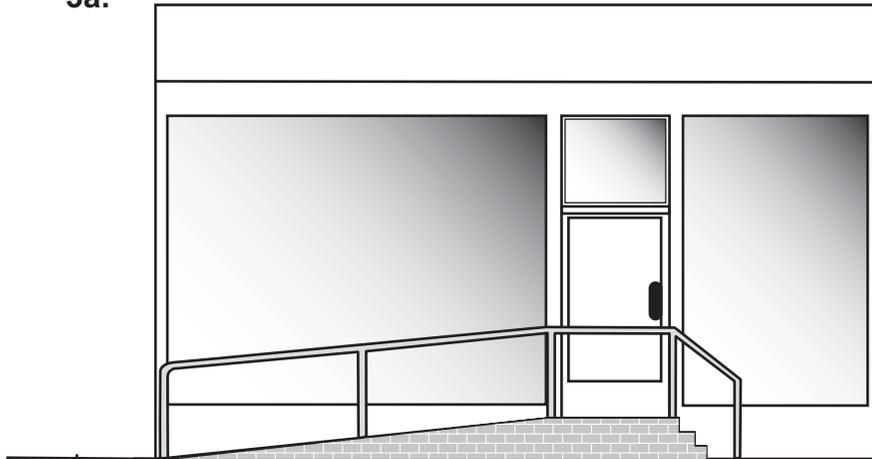
2b.



A solution is to position the entrance on the upward side of the shopfront

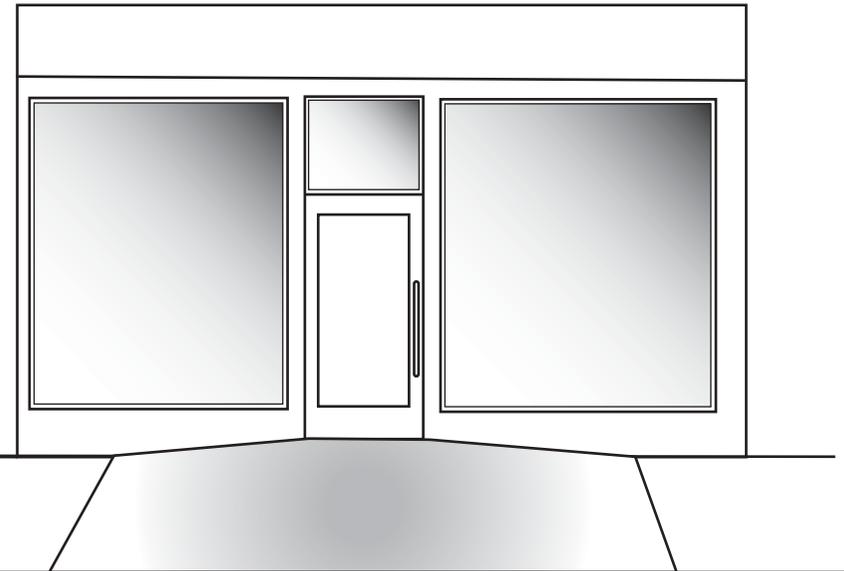
# Further Examples of Acceptable Shopfronts

3a.



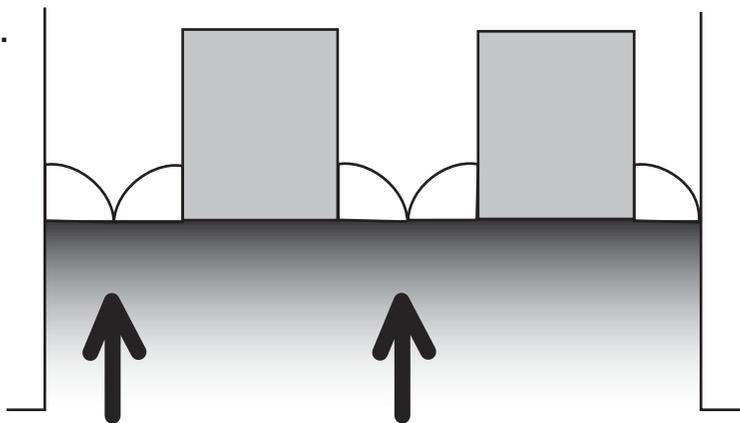
Dual ramped and stepped entrance overcomes problems of a high threshold suitable for use where there is a forecourt behind the public footpath. This should only be used when other alternatives are not feasible

3b.



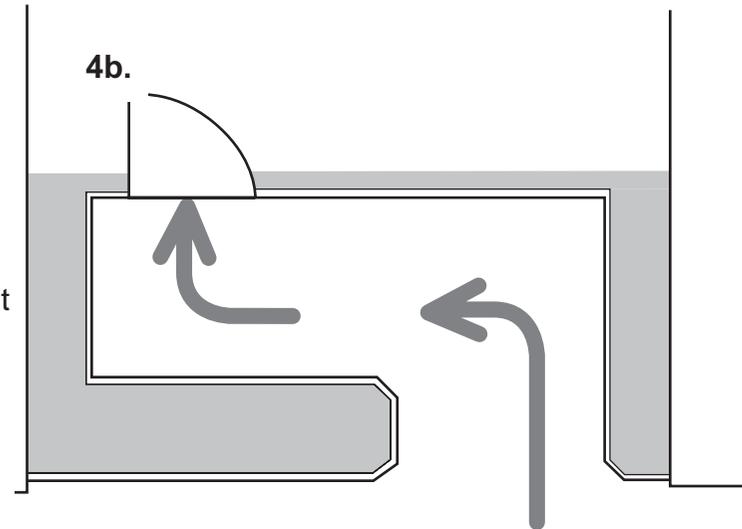
A splayed ramp may be acceptable for small thresholds where a forecourt exists

4a.

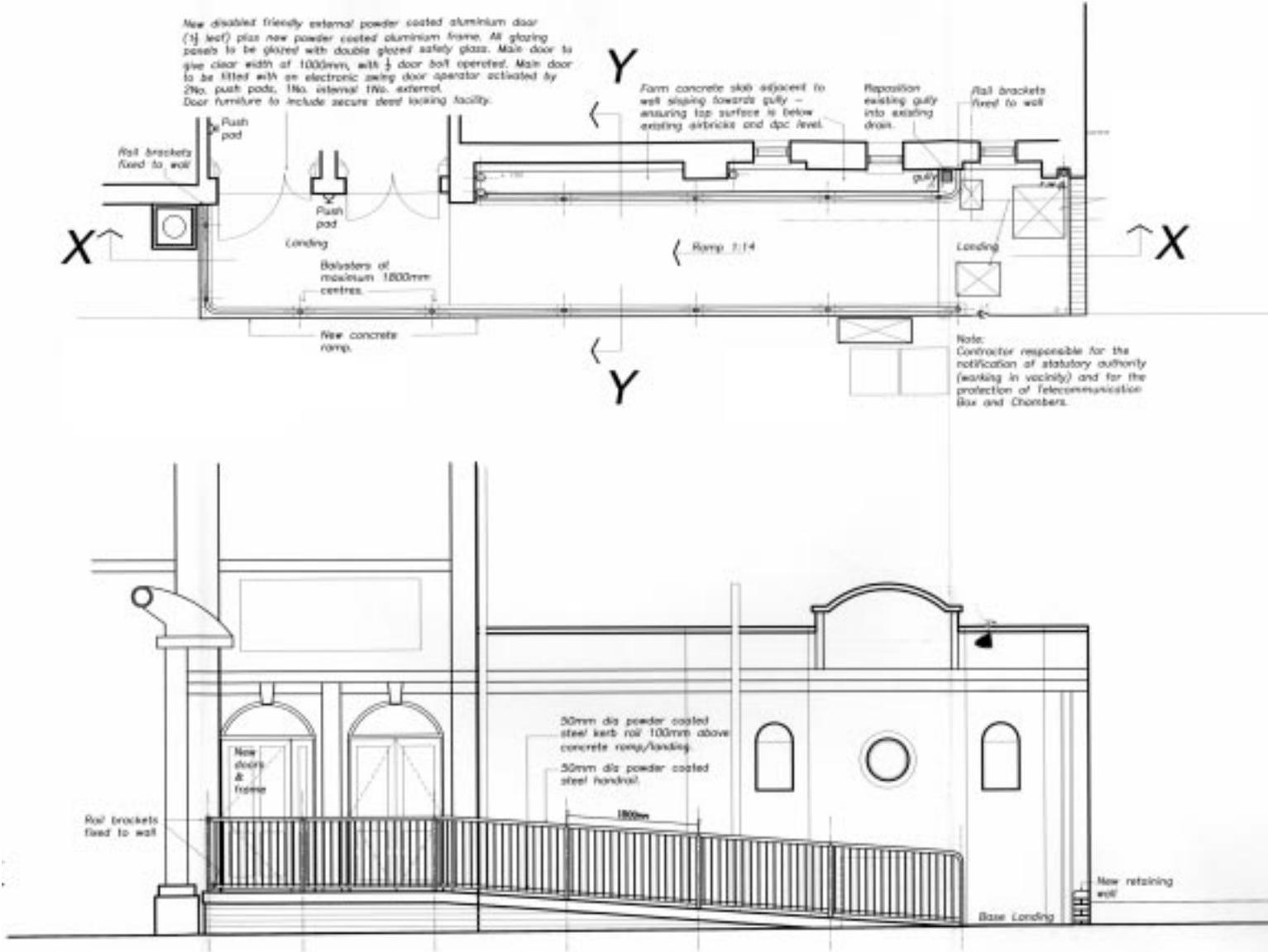


Acceptable variations on inset shopfronts: 4a. allows front to be ramped and display racks to be located in the front without obstructing the forecourt or public footpath. 4b. a further variation on the inset shopfront.

4b.



# Building Access - Example of good practice - external ramp



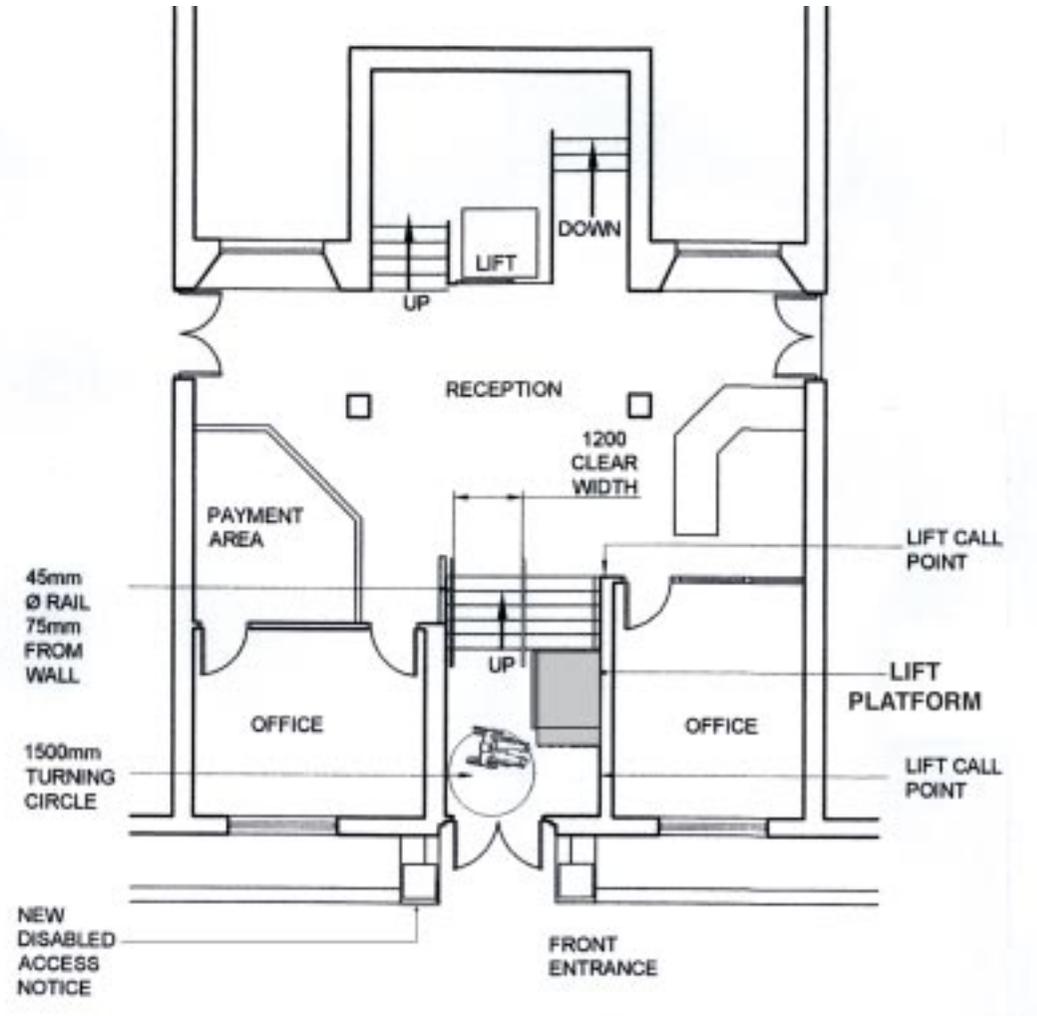
# Building Access - Examples of good practice - no external ramp



Elevation showing poor access to main building via steps



Reworked elevation showing access at street level



Floor plan showing access from street level to reception level via a Platform Lift.