

**South
Northamptonshire
Council**



**BRIEFING NOTE
ON SIMPLE
ACCESS STATEMENTS**

GUIDANCE NOTE 10

BRIEFING NOTE ON ACCESS STATEMENTS

In order to align with the Disability Discrimination Act, the Building Regulations Approved Document M has been revised and the new requirements came into force on 1st May 2004. This has major implications in respect of commercial developments.

One of the requirements of the new regulations concerns the provision of an Access Statement to accompany some types of applications.

The following notes are intended to give an overview of the requirements and to assist with their development.

What is the purpose Access Statement

An Access Statement identifies the design philosophy and approach adopted in respect of inclusive design for a relevant proposal. This is particularly important when the approach taken, differs from the guidance in the Approved Document. The intention is for it to develop with the plans as they proceed through the Planning and Building Regulation process.

It should demonstrate how all potential users can utilise the premises, and should establish that access needs have been considered in both planning and site management terms.

The exact form of the Access Statement will depend on the size, nature and complexity of the building or space. However each statement should define the following points;

1. The policy and approach to access being adopted, including reference to the inclusion of disabled people.
2. Any specific issues affecting access to the particular building or space, and solutions to overcome them.
3. The sources of advice and technical guidance followed, including any user consultation planned and undertaken.
4. The access strategy being implemented, and ...
5. Any action plan detailing the implementation of the access strategy.

Please note that In the event of Building Control accepting a proposal for a particular departure from the Approved Document, this may not necessarily remove the owner's liability under the Disability Discrimination Act.

What developments require an Access Statement?

Access statements should be produced for the following types of building work:

- When a non-domestic building is newly erected.
- Where an existing non domestic building is extended, or undergoes a material alteration
- Where an existing building or part of it undergoes a material change of use to a hotel or boarding house, institution, public building or shop.

It should be noted that, regardless of compliance with Building Regulations, there will be obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 for service-providers and employers to consider barriers created by physical features in buildings.

Other sources of information

Further guidance on Access Statements, from inception of a project to the building in use, is expected to be published by the Disability Rights Commission and will be available on the DREC web site at www.drc-gb.org.

The page at the back of the 2004 edition of Approved Document M provides a comprehensive list of standards and publications that may also be of assistance to you.

The following is an example of a simple project for Access Statements, which may be of assistance.

1. Proposed Use of the Development

A change of use of a corner shop to a hot food take-away service, and the installation of a new shop front.

1.1. Context:

- 1.1.1. The shop is in an elevated position with a hard-standing at the front, which it shares with other adjoining retail units. The hard surface is used as an informal car parking area by customers and is accessed by driving

over a damaged kerb at the end of the hard-standing farthest away from this property. Beyond this is a public footpath. The frontage to this property currently has two steps at the main entrance and a PVCU door. The existing clear opening width of the door is 690mm, and the door threshold is 50mm. This clearly presents a tripping hazard. The applicant wishes to change the use of the shop, redesign the inside and change the shop front.

Access Statement for Planning and Building Control (Stages One, Two and Three)

Access Statement for [Company]

[name of site]

1.2 Background:

- 1.1.2. [Company] is a small business that wishes to acquire an existing corner shop and change the use of the premises to a hot food take-away service. Currently the main entrance is approached and accessed via a shared hard-standing area used as an informal car park by patrons of the small row of businesses adjoining the above property.
- 1.1.3. Vehicular access to this area is gained by driving over a raised kerb at the end of the hard standing farthest from this property. A 2m footpath, which is owned by the Council, surrounds this informal parking area.
- 1.1.4. The existing corner shop is accessed via two steps and a narrow door which has a 50mm threshold.

1.3 Statement of Intent:

- 1.3.1 [Company] is a small business wishing to establish itself in the high street. To maximise the business opportunities and because of the nature of the business, being successful will require [Company] to offer a friendly service that is responsive to the needs of customers.
- 1.3.2 Whilst the physical limitations of the existing building may impose some constraints on what [Company] are able to do, [Company] fully intend to comply with current regulations and good practice. [Company] wish to make the new premises as accessible as possible, in line with local planning policy and the obligations imposed on [Company] as service providers under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- 1.3.3 In terms of [Company]'s ongoing management obligations under the DDA, the company intend to undertake regular staff training in order to ensure a continued accessible service.

1.4 Sources of Guidance:

- 1.4.1 [Company] has taken advice from the local Building Control Surveyor and have used as our main sources of reference the Approved Document to Part M of the Building Regulations (2004), although not all of it is relevant to the proposed work. In addition [Company] has contacted the Disability Rights Commission's help line and referred to local access design standards.

1.5 Consultation:

- 1.5.1 No detailed customer consultation has been possible since [Company] are a new business with no established client base. However, [Company] have liaised with the Council's Access Officer, the Local Building Control Department and have spoken with the local Access Group. The scheme proposed has taken into account the advice given. Once established, [Company] intend to obtain feedback from regular clients in the form of informal discussions and a brief questionnaire.

1.6 Specific 'Access Issues' with the proposal.

1.7 The Approach:

- 1.7.1 Currently the shared space outside the front of our shop is used as an unofficial car park. It is access over an existing kerb, which is causing the paving to break up. We wish to formalise the parking provision and, as only one bay can be provided, this will be for use by disabled customers only.

1.8 Car Parking:

- 1.8.1 We wish to create one disabled parking space in front of our shop, in line with the local design note. We would therefore, wish to install a dropped kerb at this point.

- 1.8.2 The hatched manoeuvring area of the parking space will also extend to the base of the entrance ramp, defining the access route to be kept clear of obstructions at all times. No additional lighting will be installed as the street lighting at the edge of the site is considered to be adequate.

1.9 Entrance:

- 1.9.2 The entrance ramp will extend across the front of our shop and into the shared area. It will be designed in line with the Approved Document to Part M (2004) of the Building Regulations, and local planning requirements.
- 1.9.3 The new shop front will be designed to create a level threshold and comply with planning requirements and the Approved Document to Part M (2004), but with a 1m door width. We would also wish to construct a canopy in keeping with the theme of the take away and to enable us to make our premises more distinctive and, thus, easier to locate. All new shop front signs will be designed to achieve good colour contrast and be visible from the footpath.

1.10 Building Control Submission:

- 1.10.1 The entrance ramp has been designed in line with the Approved Document to Part M (2004). The entrance is 1m wide with a level threshold. The door furniture also meets the requirements of the Approved Document to Part M (2004).

1.11 Counter/Service Area:

- 1.11.1 The low counter is located away from the till for security reasons. The design of the counter/service desk is in accordance with the Approved Document to Part M (2004). Staff will carry out financial transactions at the low counter if required by a customer's access needs. An induction loop will be installed near the till. The lighting over the counter will be increased to assist staff and people who require a higher level of lighting to lip read.

1.12 Toilet Facilities:

- 1.12.1 There are no public toilet facilities at the premises.

1.13 Décor:

- 1.13.1 The colour scheme will be chosen to highlight walls, floors, counter doors and ironmongery. The guidance used will be from design guidance produced by ICI Paints and the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

1.14.1 Evacuation:

- 1.14.1 In an emergency, customers will evacuate through the entrance door. Our risk assessment suggests that alternatives are unnecessary as customers face minimal risk from fire within the area they use. Staff will undergo basic training in evacuation procedures and will be responsible for getting customers out of the building. Therefore, no additional alarm systems are to be installed.

For further information contact the Building Control Dept 01327 322240 or to comment on this leaflet please contact

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Monday to Thursday

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