

Accessible Historic Environment



*A guide for
owners &
occupiers*

Why do I need to know about the Disability Discrimination Act?

Historic buildings and places should be accessible to everyone, including people with mobility or sensory impairments, older people, parents with small children and anyone who is temporarily disabled as a result of illness or injury. Owners and managers of historic properties with public access must commit themselves to creating an environment in which this can be achieved.

The word “access” is widely interpreted to include access to and within any building or site, and access to all facilities and services. The objective is to provide, as much as is reasonably achievable, a barrier-free environment for all.

Providing access to services and buildings for people with mobility and sensory difficulties is required under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). Nevertheless, there is also a distinct need to conserve historic places and not to alter them in ways that adversely affect their architectural or historic interest.



Even small changes in level can be a problem for wheelchair users, this ramp allows easy access - Market Square, Evesham.

What are the requirements?

Where a **physical feature** makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services, a service provider must make reasonable adjustments to:

- **remove** the feature; or
- **alter** it so that it no longer has that effect; or
- **provide a reasonable means of avoiding it**; or
- provide a reasonable **alternative** method of making the services available.

Why is it different in a listed building or conservation area?

The Disability Discrimination Act does not override other legislation such as listed building or planning legislation, and the need to obtain appropriate approvals still applies in the case of changes made to improve access. It is important that an assessment is made to see if any changes are necessary and if so that they are sensitive to the significance of the building and its setting and the access needs of users.



Droitwich Contact Centre has a ramp to allow access over the step.

What do I need to do?

Follow the three part process described below.

1. An **access audit** will be required to assess and document barriers to access for all users which exist within a building and its surroundings. This should be undertaken in advance of proposals to improve access.

To comply with the requirements of the DDA a provider must consider:-

- What services are being or might in the future be provided
- What barriers there might be to everyone being able to take advantage of those services

2. The **Conservation Assessment** is a complementary part of the process, which establishes the relative significance of a building in terms of its special architectural, historical or archaeological features.

The historic value of a place can lie in its construction materials, its style, principal elevations, major architectural or landscape features or principal public spaces. Every effort

should be made to minimise damage to original materials, fabric and elements that contribute to the significance of the place. It is critical that this significance is clearly defined and understood.

Alterations should, as far as possible be reversible, especially if these involve change to the original fabric.

3. An **Access Plan** can be prepared when the access audit and conservation assessment have been completed. This should reconcile the needs of access and conservation. The access plan can be used to inform any Access Statement which should accompany planning applications affecting listed buildings and conservation areas. Information about **Design and Access Statements** can be found on the Wychavon web site.

After completing the above consider some practical solutions....

The historic buildings' design and character will inevitably have an impact on accessibility. The façade in particular should be respected when considering the preferred access entrance, generally this will be the main entrance to satisfy the 'inclusion' element for the DDA. Classical styled buildings follow strict rules of symmetry and proportion and frequently the entrance is set on a raised base approached by a flight of steps. Classical rules of symmetry should be respected when any alterations are proposed, though this does not mean that there can be no relatively small scale changes as long as they do not affect the appearance significantly. Buildings in Gothic and other styles are generally not as affected by symmetry of design but proportion and balance must be a consideration.

It is important for service providers not to assume that the only way to make services accessible to disabled people is to make a physical alteration to premises. Minor measures such as paying special attention to take more time to serve a disabled customer will help the disabled person to use the service. Early pre-application consultation with Wychavon District Council Planning Services is advisable.

Horizontal and vertical movement throughout an historic building may be constrained by, floor surfaces, doors and openings, thresholds and small and large changes in level. Alterations to these can impact upon the appearance and significance of the

building. It may not always be possible to conform strictly to Approved Document Part M of the Building Regulations but the aim should be to achieve a balance between reasonable adjustment and the historic building. It is essential that detailed design studies, supported by accurate drawings and visualisations ensure that any intervention is properly planned and the impact fully understood.



Minor measures can be taken to make services accessible - High Street, Evesham.

Door and Openings

Door and window openings should not generally be altered in their proportions or detail as these are likely to be significant.

Thresholds

Raised thresholds can be a barrier to wheelchair users or a trip hazard, these can be removed or overcome by adding threshold ramps or adjusting levels to remove the step.



This ramp is a practical & attractive solution to making easy access over the step - High Street Pershore

Ramps

Ramps can be used by wheelchair users, ambulant disabled, older people and people with pushchairs. Platform lifts, may be necessary where there are larger changes in level.

- Any temporary measures should be of high standard and quality, seeking to minimise visual impact and provide an integrated and independent access.
- Portable ramps may provide a solution where use would be very infrequent.



Platform lifts are less obtrusive than a long ramp with hand rails - High Street Pershore

A passenger lift is the most suitable means of vertical access and should be provided wherever possible. Lifts should be located in less sensitive parts of the historic buildings, for example, secondary staircases, light wells or previously disturbed or altered areas. **Platform lifts are less obtrusive than a long ramp with rails.**

Stairs and Landings Historic principal staircases often do not comply with current standards but changing them is likely to be contentious. This may not be a problem if there is a secondary staircase where alteration may be acceptable.

Handrails represent a critical design issue and even where sensitively designed will inevitably have an impact on character.

Hazard warning surface texture and contrasts used on external and internal steps and landings may be undesirable in historic buildings. Creating contrasts using carpeting, lighting or removable paint can be helpful.

Toilet Facilities In most places one unisex

toilet is all that is required. Toilets can be incorporated into less significant rooms.

Sensory

- Visual: Colour contrast will assist visually impaired people.
- Sound: Consider provision for people with hearing loss.

Historic Settings and Landscapes

Where the service that is being provided is within the setting of a listed building or in the historic designed landscape the same considerations will apply to landscape and setting as to historic buildings. Additionally an Historic Landscape Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment may be required. Design and character will inevitably have an impact on accessibility in historic landscapes and settings.

Landscape Solutions

Where the historic environment would be otherwise compromised implementing management measures may provide a reasonable adjustment.

A route around a site can vary depending on the capability of people, so a range of options can be presented to all users. Path widths and gradients should be taken into account for wheelchair users. There should be a clear walking 'tunnel' directly above a path, mounted objects should not protrude. Bridges and boardwalks need clear widths for one and two-way traffic. Historical steps may not comply with current standards but changing them is likely to be contentious. This may not be a problem where an alternative can be provided. Gates can be left open wherever practicable.

Ground surfaces

Existing gravel surfaces and stone setts can be modified without altering appearance. Forming dropped kerbs generally requires tactile paving, in sensitive locations continuation of natural stone is the preferred option.

Parking

Parking should be provided as close as possible to the principal public entry. Access is needed from a parking space to the pathway system. A properly constructed dropped kerb, or level access to the path can usually achieve this.

A sealed surface is best, but a well compacted or cement stabilised gravel can be suitable and, in many rural settings, more appropriate.



Stabilized gravel surface - Lido Park, Droitwich

The following documents can be accessed on the website at www.wychavon.gov/planningservices/publications or from the Civic Centre.

- Accessible Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document.
- Listed Buildings a guide for Owners and Occupiers
- Conservation Areas a guide for Owners and Occupiers
- Historic Parks and Gardens Supplementary Planning Document

Please be aware

It is a criminal offence to alter a listed building without the necessary consent or not in accordance with the conditions of the consent. Listed Building Consent is necessary for all works, inside and out, that affect the character of the building, including small changes such as windows, doors, walls, staircases and fireplaces, even if those items are not considered to be 'original'.

Some unlisted buildings may have permitted development rights removed and this often includes doors and windows so that planning permission is required for replacement or change. Please contact planning services to find out if your property is affected.

Unauthorised works can lead to prosecution of the owner and the person carrying out the works. In addition an enforcement notice can be served requiring the correction of unauthorised works.

Help and Advice

For further information and advice on Disabled Access in the Historic Environment, contact:

The Heritage Section
Planning Services
Wychavon District Council, Civic Centre,
Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore
Worcs, WR10 1PT
Tel: 01386 565565

Email: planning@wychavon.gov.uk
Web: www.wychavon.gov.uk

এই দলিলাটি বুঝতে আপনার সাহায্যের দরকার হলে দয়া করে এই নম্বরে ফোন করুন: 01905 25121

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز سے متعلق مدد درکار ہو تو براہ مہربانی 01905 25121 پر فون کریں۔

如果你在明白這份文件方面需要幫助的話，請致電 01905 25121。

नेवत बुवातुं हिम समस्तस्यैष भवते विमे मवाधिका सी छेन वै ता विवण्ण बववे टैलीफोन नंभर 01905 25121 'डे संपत्त बवे।

Se con questo documento avete bisogno di aiuto pregasi telefonare a 01905 25121

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tego dokumentu, zadzwoń pod nr tel.: 01905 25121

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