

**ACCESS AUDIT REPORT  
on the  
VILLAGE HALL  
DOLTON**

**FOR  
THE DOLTON VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE  
DOLTON VILLAGE HALL  
DOLTON  
DEVON**

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PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH:  
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Designing for Accessibility  
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CONTENTS

		PAGE NO:
1.0	DEFINITION OF DISABILITY AND MAIN SUMMARY	3
2.0	PRINCIPLES OF AUDIT	3
3.0	INTRODUCTION	6
4.0	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLISTS	6
5.0	INCLUDING REMEDIAL ACTIONS, PRIORITIES AND COSTS	11
APPENDIX I:	PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS	
APPENDIX II:	MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES AND ASSOCIATED INFORMATION	
APPENDIX III:	USEFUL INFORMATION INCLUDING GROUND FLOOR PLAN	

## **1. MAIN SUMMARY**

### DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 states that a disabled person is a person who has "...a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the persons ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". The broader definition of disability includes those people with physical, sensory, mental health and learning difficulties and also includes cancer, facial disfigurements, incontinence, co-ordination, the ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects, speech, memory, ability to concentrate, learn or understand, perception of the risk of physical danger, epilepsy and those with multiple disabilities. Simply providing improved physical access does not address the broader needs of all disabled people.

### SUMMARY

Dolton Village Hall occupies a site off South Street on the south west of the village. The original building was built in 1967, with an extension and alterations, incorporating a store room in 1969

The items costed below relate directly to the Accessibility checklist made of the building detailed in Section 5. These costs relate to individual items in isolation and do not allow for professional fees, VAT, contingencies, commissioning costs and preliminaries or ancillary costs as part of a larger refurbishment project.

Priority 1 items are defined as: implement immediately to eliminate a serious barrier or hazard to access and use of the building.

The estimated cost liability for Priority 1 items is in the region of £900. 00

Priority 2 items are defined as: implement as soon as possible to improve access.

The estimated cost liability for Priority 2 items is in the region of £8,800. 00

Priority 3 items are defined as: plan adaptation work to be implemented to suit identified building users requiring adaptations to be made.

The estimated cost liability for Priority 3 items is in the region of £8,550. 00

Priority 4 items are defined as: implementation as part of specific regular maintenance/renewal.

The estimated cost liability for Priority 4 items is in the region of £500. 00

## **2. PRINCIPLES OF THE AUDIT**

- 2.1. The Access Audit has been undertaken to appraise defined areas of the existing accommodation to assess the extent of accessibility to services and facilities and propose the extent of works required to improve the current facilities in accordance with the definitions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The audit takes into account the needs of people with mobility impairments (including wheelchair users) and sensory impairments. The audit will identify physical barriers to access against pre-determined criteria identified below. The audit should be treated as the starting point of an ongoing access plan, constantly updated by the committee. This audit should only be seen as a snapshot of the position at the time of the report. Changes made after the site inspection may improve or reduce levels of accessibility. As the DDA evolves, so will buildings, and review of audits already completed should be considered on a periodic basis. The DDA is not compliance-based legislation and relates to discrimination, not directly to buildings and physical standards.

In physical terms a building could be made as accessible as the requirements of BS8300:2001 and Approved Document Part M 2004 Edition, although this will not protect an Employer or service provider from possible claims under the DDA 1995. Management and staff attitudes are equally important to ensure equality for all. It should be noted that the issues considered in the report will affect the convenience of the use of the building for all occupants and not just those users with identifiable disabilities. The audit focuses on key elements of the building including approach, entry, horizontal and vertical circulation together with essential facilities within the building.

The agreed appraisal criteria are:

- a) The need to maximise accessibility to the building for both the public and employees.
- b) Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This Act is sub-divided into several sections, but for the purposes of this report will focus on Part II Employment, and Part III, Goods, Facilities and Services.

Under the terms of Part III of the Act it has been made unlawful for service providers to refuse to serve disabled people because of their disability unless their action can be justified. This may be possible on grounds of health and safety although the reasoning must be well considered and clarified.

From 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004, the Act will cover all employers regardless of size, although a key factor with Part II is that Employers are only required to be reactive to the needs of an individual employee. With regards to Part III and Access to Goods, Facilities and Services, anyone providing a service is affected and a service provider must anticipate future need and therefore be proactive.

In general terms the service provider must not prevent disabled people having access to services that are available to non-disabled people.

In adapting a building to improve accessibility a service provider must consider making "reasonable adjustments" in order to improve access for all to the service being provided. At this time there is no clear definition of what is reasonable, although cost, practicability, effectiveness, health and safety and disruption are all factors. Reasonableness is likely to be more clearly defined in case law that occurs after 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004. Good practice should ensure that a service provider will 'anticipate need' as well as responding to individual circumstances as they arise. Frequency of need is no argument against not making a provision, although reasonableness can have a bearing on the solution.

Under the terms of the DDA, after October 2004 service providers must have considered alternative means of providing access to services where a physical barrier exists. These barriers may be altered, avoided or removed. Works should be executed in accordance with the current Approved Document M of the Building Regulations and the standards published in BS 8300 (October 2001). There is a further option to provide the service by a reasonable alternative means, although again this is subject to the definition of the term reasonable. This document is aimed at providing technical solutions to most building situations. Good Practice Guides such as the Designing for Accessibility (2004 Edition) document produced by the Centre for Accessible Environments have also been referred to.

- c) Provision of the Building Regulations Approved Document Part M. The main difference between Part M in its earlier form and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) was that Part M only applied to certain new and refurbishment works whereas the effect of the DDA is retrospective. Now The Building Regulations 2000, Access to and Use of Buildings, Approved Document Part M Access to and Use of Buildings - 2004 Edition applies to material alterations of and extensions to existing non-domestic buildings. There is no exception for historic buildings, but the new edition of Part M contains guidance on such buildings.
- d) Currently published Good Practice and Design to make buildings more accessible.

- e) The need to observe reasonableness in practically providing and implementing improved access options.
- f) British Standard BS8300:2001 - Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of Disabled People - Code of Practice.

2.2. The dimensional criteria used within the report is based on the guidance given in Approved Document M of the Building Regulations (2004 Edition) with additional recommendations as given in Designing for Accessibility (2004) published by the Centre for Accessible Environments and BS 8300 'Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people- Code of Practice' October 2001.

2.3. An indication of the cost implications of the recommendations is provided. These costings are budget costs only and detailed estimates should be obtained prior to implementing the works. Each cost item refers to that element in isolation and does not include the ancillary costs that may be part of a larger refurbishment project. Where costs may be incorporated within general ongoing maintenance/ refurbishment works these have not been detailed as the works are related to a change of design/ approach rather than additional cost.

Although priorities have been allocated for individual elements we would strongly recommend buildings are not considered in isolation but instead a holistic attitude is taken. For example improving the access into a building will have little value if the user cannot get access to internal rooms, reach controls or access sanitation facilities.

2.4. Due to the restricted nature of the brief and following client instructions, we did not discuss any access issues with either current employees or visitors.

## 2.5. PRIORITIES

Various priorities have been given to the points raised in the accessibility checklist detailed in section 5 and are defined:

### 2.5.1. Priority 1

Implement immediately to eliminate a serious barrier or hazard to access and use of the building.

### 2.5.2. Priority 2

Implement as soon as possible to improve access.

### 2.5.3. Priority 3

Plan adaptation work to be implemented to suit identified building users requiring adaptations to be made.

### 2.5.4. Priority 4

Implementation as part of specific regular maintenance/renewal.

### 2.5.5. Priority 5

Arrange for assistance to be readily available where appropriate. This requirement is now included under Part 3 of the DDA Act 1995.

2.6. This audit is undertaken in accordance with the terms and conditions for the engagement of an access consultant or access auditor defined by the NRAC. These terms may be downloaded from their website at [www.nrac.org.uk/termsandconditions](http://www.nrac.org.uk/termsandconditions).

- 2.7. As regards Part IV of the DDA related to employment this audit will focus on accessibility issues. Comments on employment rights and duties and legal definitions are beyond the scope of this audit and separate legal advice should be sought.
- 2.8. Even if all the recommendations in this audit are adopted this will not guarantee compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. As previously stated, the DDA is not compliance based and relates to elimination of discrimination that cannot be solved by changes to physical features alone.
- 2.9. This audit should not be seen as a health and safety document in relation to egress in the event of an evacuation, and although comments will be made in relation to means of escape, any barriers should be discussed in detail with the local Fire Officer and a strategy agreed for implementation.

### **3. AUDIT INTRODUCTION**

- 3.1. The Access Audit of Dolton Village Hall was carried out on behalf of Mr John Cotter, chairman of the Dolton Village Hall Committee on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2004. The weather at the time of the survey was dry although overcast.

Dolton Village Hall occupies a site off South Street on the south west of the village. The original building was built in 1967, with an extension and alterations, incorporating a store room in 1969. The building is single storey with a main hall, a meeting room and a kitchen. There are male, female and an accessible toilet adjacent to the main entrance, with an additional toilet off the meeting room.

There are many possible activities and sports in which disabled people may wish to participate including keep fit, yoga, skittles, short mat bowls etc. Further details are shown in the appendices.

Access to the site is as indicated on the attached location maps and bus timetables.

### **4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Various photograph references are given throughout the summary of findings and these have been included as part of a photographic record in Appendix I. A general summary of issues follows for each building element. Due to the size of the inspection not all issues have been identified in the following text. Reference should also be made to the tables.

#### **4.1. Approach, Routes and Street Furniture**

Access to the building is poorly served by both pedestrian and vehicle access, although signage on the main vehicle and pedestrian route is limited (photographs i, 5 and 6). The nearest bus links are to be found in The Square, some 2-300m away. Improved signage would be of the greatest benefit to users and visitors to guide them in the right direction. Pedestrian access from South Street is provided with a combined pedestrian and vehicular access due to the narrow access width (photographs 2 and 3). Drop kerbs have been provided at various points, although not on all routes. Many of the routes to the Hall do not have footpaths causing visitors to use the carriageway. There are several points of traffic control to be dealt with in the village, but these are outside the scope of this report.

There is an alternative pedestrian access to the Hall from the Stafford Way estate by public footpath across 'Atkin's Field', although this is not practicable for people with disabilities as it involves the use of a stile and the crossing of an open field which often has horses grazing.

#### **4.2. Car Parking**

No accessible bays have been provided adjacent to the front entrance (photograph 20). Recommended standards suggest that a minimum of two bays should be provided, with transfer

space identified at the sides and rear of each bay to allow full circulation and loading around the vehicle.

#### 4.3. External Ramps, Steps and Main Entrance

The main entrance has been provided with a level access into the lobby area. There are no other level accesses to the building. A ramp should be formed / provided at the fire exit from the main hall, as at present the step down from the outward opening door is difficult to traverse in a wheelchair and a serious tripping hazard for those with sight impairments.

The main entrance sits forward of the rest of the building and comprises an artificial stone porch in a greenish colour (photographs 19 & 22). The front doors are dark brown veneered and set back into the porch causing them to be difficult to see in some lighting conditions. The main entrance could be finished in a tonally contrasting colour to identify the entry point more easily for those with a visual impairment. For the first time visitor the main entrance location is unwelcoming and additional signage could be of benefit.

#### 4.4. Entrances, Reception Area and Lobby

There is no reception area as such, merely the entry lobby. At some functions / events this is used as the meeting and greeting area, at others it is empty, and again for the first time visitor better signage would be an advantage.

There is no seating in this area and way finding signs should be provided to indicate the various areas of the building, especially as the smaller hall is often let separately to the main hall and users must retrace their steps and re-enter the building at the side entrance through the kitchen. This, the only other entrance is currently inaccessible, being a narrow door, with an awkward double step upwards.

There are user group notice boards on both sides of the lobby, these can again confuse the first time user as although there is some Hall information, it tends to be buried in the user group's notices.

The lighting in this area could be improved to give better transition between inside and out.

#### 4.5. Corridors:

The corridor areas at the sides of the stage are restrictive due to the original building design, and the doors at the ends are too narrow to allow the passage of a wheelchair, but widening them would incur considerable expense and disruption to the building. Leading edges on corridor doors for wheelchair users are also insufficient. Access through an upgraded kitchen door would seem the only reasonable option.

Ideally all signage should be reachable by visitors and be embossed or have Braille added to them. Some signage within the building is located so that other visitors may obscure them. Consideration of relocation and upgrading the signs should be considered.

#### 4.6. Internal Doors:

Generally the doors are all finished in a dark veneer, with the architraves being painted dark brown.

The entrance and inner lobby doors have a reasonable area of glazing, but are glazed in obscured glass which makes access difficult due to poor visibility (photograph 46). The inner doors to the kitchen and small hall from the main hall have no glazing, and it could be argued that a loss of privacy would occur if glazing were fitted, likewise the door between the kitchen and the small hall is unglazed. The external door to the kitchen is an unglazed ledged, braced and framed door, and as such would be difficult to install glazing. It might be preferable to fit a new part glazed unit when level access is installed at this entrance (photographs 52 & 55).

Door furniture varies in quality around the building and ideally should all be circular profile in a tonally contrasting finish to the door surface. Door closers should also be maintained to minimum opening pressures not to exceed 20N

4.7. Internal Stairs:

There are no staircases in this building.

4.8. Platform Stair lifts/ Lifts:

None currently provided in the building.

4.9. WC's, Changing Areas and Shower Facilities: General Provisions:

There are two separate facilities available for both male and female use. Off the main lobby on the left are male toilets, whilst on the right are the female. Behind the male toilet is an accessible WC. Whilst not to current standards in terms of fittings it is adequate in size for manoeuvrability. There is another single toilet off the small hall for the use of all, currently this is not accessible, it could be made so, but only by considerable modification (photographs 5863 & 66-69). No showers or specific changing areas are provided.

The standards of the sanitary facilities generally are not to current standards and no doubt will be upgraded at a time of general refurbishment.

The units are all white against light coloured walls.

Tonal contrast could be improved between the wall and floor surfaces and also the glare from the tiling may be confusing for someone with a visual impairment. The lowering of hand driers and dispensers should also be considered to a maximum of 1200mm above finished floor level. Obstructions such as waste bins under hand driers should be avoided.

Compartment doors to WC cubicles should be provided with lever handle locks that are easier to operate than the current mechanisms.

The provision of lever taps for hot and cold water supplies could also be considered to assist users with poor grip or manual dexterity disabilities. At present these are mostly pillar taps and with a twist action operation. No thermostatic mixing valves are fitted to the system, thereby creating a scalding risk if the hot water system becomes defective and overheats.

4.10. WC's: Wheelchair users:

One accessible WC has been provided in the building, the installation is fairly dated with fixed rails, an upgrade to meet current standards should be considered. It does however meet the size requirements set out in BS8300: 2001 and is located adjacent to the lobby (photographs 43 & 44).

Tonal contrast within the accessible WC is poor and should be improved between the wall and floor surfaces. Directional signage would also be of benefit. Tonal contrast between the fittings and the wall surface is poor, although the glare from the tiled wall surface may confuse a person with a visual impairment.

The accessible WC would also benefit from provision of a suitably sized mirror and also a shelf so that belongings do not have to be placed on the floor. Additional grab rails would be of benefit in both units.

4.11. Internal Surfaces:

All floor surfaces are suitable for the passage of wheelchairs and solid colours have generally been used avoiding bold patterns. If replacement of floor coverings is undertaken the replacement should be provided in a contrasting colour to the skirting and wall finishes.

Many switches and controls etc are hard to locate against wall surfaces of a similar colour. When replacements are required the controls should be replaced in a contrasting colour unit or provided with a clearly identified border for ease of identification.

Both the small and main halls have shiny floor surfaces suited to the various activities undertaken. The glare from these floors may be mistaken by someone with a visual impairment as a wet surface. Consideration should be given to reducing the glare on these surfaces (photographs 45 & 47).

4.12. Seating:

The movable seating provision could be improved by providing seats at a range of levels and with armrests to aid access.

4.13. Counters and Service Desks:

There is no counter or service desk provision.

4.14. Facilities:

Telephones: there is currently no public telephone in the building; provision should be considered due to the poor cell phone reception in the area. It should be fixed at a suitable height, and would benefit from being provided with a perch seat and shelf being fixed adjacent.

Alarms: if a fire alarm is fitted to the building it should be supplemented by visual alarms and as the building is open to the public then particular care should be taken in the formulation and implementation of a controlled evacuation of the building.

4.15. Way-finding:

The improvement of signage internally generally would significantly improve way-finding around the building. Limited access to the kitchen and small hall should be highlighted.

4.16. Lighting:

Many of the lighting controls would benefit from a colour contrast to the surrounding walls surfaces to make them more identifiable.

The lighting provision is standardised throughout the building, consideration should be given to the provision of variable levels and patterns of lighting to suit differing functions and impairments

4.17. Acoustics:

Generally the acoustic standards internally are acceptable, although consideration could be given to the provision of an induction loop in the Main Hall. This may help users with a hearing impairment participate in organised classes, and aid their involvement in other functions. The space could then also be used to hold meetings if required.

4.18. Means of Escape:

As stated earlier no alarm system is fitted, and an audible system with visual back up to the alarm could be fitted.

All emergency exit routes should be made as accessible as the main entrance, i.e negotiable by a wheelchair users or someone with a disability (photographs 70, 72-74).

4.19. Building Management:

General maintenance and cleaning is carried out by a caretaker employed by the committee. As previously stated access to the building is freely available. The implementation of a coherent management and emergency evacuation policy and general improvements will benefit access for all visitors and staff within the building. The implementation of an access action plan should be agreed and continuously developed as works and improvements progress.

4.20. General:

Currently there is no access to the stage for people with a mobility disability, or suitable facilities for anyone with a visual impairment. Again the provision of such facilities would be expensive and difficult to install, feedback from the relevant users would be valuable to indicate the likelihood of such a need.