



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Approved Document M “Access to and use of buildings”

Volume 1: Dwellings

The Building Regulations 2010
2015 edition incorporating 2016 amendments – for use in England*

Volume 2: Buildings other than Dwellings

The Building Regulations 2010
2015 edition – for use in England*

Frequently Asked Questions



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Approved Document M

“Access to and use of buildings”

Volume 1: Dwellings

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Frequently Asked Questions

Handrails and guarding to ramps

Category 1, 2 and 3

Question: Do ramps need handrails?

Answer: Approved Document M does not include guidance for handrails and guarding to external ramps, because this is covered in detail by Approved Document K clause 2.12 (page 20), where it states that in dwellings and for common access areas in buildings that contain flats: Provide all of the following:

- a. For ramps that are less than 1000mm wide: provide a handrail on one or both sides.
- b. For ramps that are 1000mm or more wide: provide a handrail on both sides.
- c. For ramps that are 600mm or less in height: you do not need to provide handrails.
- d. Position the top of the handrails at a height of 900mm to 1000mm above the surface of the ramp.
- e. Choose handrails that give firm support and allow a firm grip.
- f. The handrails may form the top of the guarding if you can match the heights.

Localised obstructions

Diagram 1.2, Diagram 2.3, Diagram 3.3

Question: What would constitute a localised obstruction in the shaded area shown in Diagrams 1.2, 2.3 and 3.3?

Answer: Localised obstructions means any element that might impede the ability of a wheelchair user or person using mobility aids to turn easily through a door opening or around a corner. Localised obstructions are fixed items such as a protruding radiator or a wall mounted fire hydrant. Skirtings and architraves can be ignored when measuring clear widths.

The grey shaded areas in diagrams should be free of wall nibs, services or any protruding elements, however, a localised obstruction is only problematic if it is in the likely path of travel of someone entering or leaving a room or turning a corner. Where grey areas are

indicated to both sides of a door this assumes that the door can be approached from two directions – if a door can only be approached from one direction then a clear zone on the other side of the door is not required (e.g. at the end of a corridor).

Turning circles and zones

Category 3 Dwellings

Question: Category 3 dwellings include requirements for a range of turning / manoeuvring zones – where do these apply?

Answer: Category 3 Bathrooms should provide a 1500mm turning circle free of low level obstruction that provides 360° access and movement for a wheelchair user. Ellipses are not used to demonstrate compliance in bathroom, cloak room or wet rooms.

Category 3 bedrooms require that a 1200mm manoeuvring square is used to make reasonable provision for space around beds and between doors and other bedroom furniture.

In living areas / the lounge of a Category 3 dwelling, either a 1400x1700 ellipse or the 1500mm turning circle can be used to demonstrate a reasonable manoeuvring zone.

Landings to ramps

Category 1 and 2 – paragraphs 1.7e and 2.10g

Question: Do landings on internal or external ramps need to be level?

Answer: A landing is defined in common usage as “a level area at the top of a staircase or ramp or between one flight of a stair or ramp and another” and it would be reasonable to expect these landings to have a gradient between 1:40 and 1:60.

300mm nib to the right hand side

Category 2 – diagram 2.3

Question: Why is there a 300mm nib shown to the door on the right hand side?

Answer: This meets provision 2.22d where a door opens inward (shown dotted) to provide a leading edge.

300mm nibs to doors

Category 2 – paragraph 2.14f, Category 3 - paragraph 3.22

Question: Should the 300mm nib to the leading edge of a door or gate be required when the approach is not head on?

Answer: A 300mm nib is required for a head on approach to a gate or door to ensure that the door can be approached and opened by a wheelchair user – the nib allows a wheelchair foot rest (or other mobility aid) to project beyond the line of the door frame, enabling a wheelchair user to reach the door handle.

When the internal approach is not head on, a nib may not be required for all of the 1200mm (Cat 2)(2.20f) or 1800mm (Cat 3) (diagram 3.3 and 3.24f) distance as indicated, provided that the proposed layout creates the movement space for a wheelchair user to approach the door controls and use the door handles to open the door.

Ramps at gradient of 1:12

Category 2 – diagram 2.1, note 2

Question: Must ramps be at a gradient of 1:12?

Answer: It is possible that some ramped approaches may incorporate gradients of 1:12, but in general a ramped approach should have gradients in accordance with lengths and rises shown in diagram 2.1.

Projecting corner

Category 2 – paragraph 2.14k.

Question: What does “away from any projecting corner” mean?

Answer: A projecting corner is typically created by a wall projecting outwards beyond the plane of the door. It would be reasonable for door controls to be positioned at least 300mm from any corner or obstruction that would prevent a wheelchair user accessing the controls in the same way as is done with the 300mm nib required for doors.

Double doors into a rear garden

Category 2 – paragraph 2.20e.

Question: Do double doors to a rear garden in an individual dwelling (and which are not the principal or alternative entrance) need to have at least one leaf 850mm wide?

Answer: Where the approach is head on, and where the double doors are not the principal or alternative entrance, it would be reasonable for at least one or both leaves to

have individual clear opening widths of 750mm. Where both leaves of a double door can be operated with a single action, door leaves smaller than 750mm may be reasonable providing that the Building Control Body is satisfied that the doors in combination are reasonably accessible to a wheelchair user.

Porch / Lobby

Category 2 – paragraph 2.20i.

Question: Where do requirements for a “porch” or “lobby” apply?

Answer: The term porch or lobby is intended here as a private and domestic front porch or lobby to a dwelling. Lobbies created in corridors or other circulation spaces elsewhere in the dwelling do not need to comply with requirements of 2.20i but should comply with requirements for hall and door widths in paragraph 2.22. Door swings into a private lobby or private porch should be designed so that a wheelchair user can practicably enter the private lobby and then turn to close the door.

The requirement for 1500mm between door swings should be measured with doors closed where one leaf opens into the lobby, and the other opens outwards, but should be measured between open door swings where both doors open into the lobby. Door swings to a non-habitable room such as a WC or a store door opposite the front door would not require this 1500mm dimension.

Steps on to a balcony

Category 2 – paragraph 2.21.

Question: Is a step up into an inset balcony or roof terrace permissible when this is located above accommodation that needs to include insulation?

Answer: Yes, for Category 2 where there is a need to insulate inhabited areas below a balcony or terrace a step up of up to 225mm would be reasonable. This does not apply to Category 3.

Kitchen furniture

Category 2 – paragraph 2.24

Question: Does kitchen planning need to anticipate the position of loose furniture such as a table or chairs? Can loose furniture encroach into the 1200mm access zone in front of kitchen units?

Answer: A minimum of 1200mm should be maintained between fixed built in elements such as walls or kitchen cupboards. Loose furniture can encroach into the minimum clear access space of 1200mm set, whilst not a requirement it would be reasonable to expect a route at least 750mm clear to be maintained between any loose furniture and fixed units.

Location of principal bedroom

Category 2 – paragraph 2.25

Question: In dwellings of three storeys or more, would it be reasonable for the principal bedroom to be located on a different floor to the accessible bathroom set out in paragraph 2.29?

Answer: Paragraph 2.29 requires that an accessible bathroom is located on the same storey as the principal bedroom defined in paragraph 2.25b. In a dwelling where accommodation is set out over three storeys or more, it would be reasonable for a twin room, or a double bedroom (as an alternative to the principal bedroom) to be located on the same floor as the accessible bathroom required by paragraph 2.29 providing that the relevant requirements for circulation are demonstrated for that type of bedroom.

Bedrooms

Category 2 – paragraph 2.25

Question: What is the minimum shape and layout for a Category 2 bedroom?

Answer: Diagram 2.4 shows 750mm width to the side of beds and 750mm at the foot of beds, with wardrobes or other furniture outside the access zone. Bedside furniture is permitted to sit to the side and at the head of the bed and up to a zone of 600mm away from the wall at the head of the bed. Furniture used to demonstrate compliance would reasonably be in accordance with the dimensions given in the furniture schedule in Appendix D.

Fixing WC supports

Category 2 – paragraph 2.26; Category 3 – paragraph 3.36d

Question: Do all surrounding walls in a bathroom or WC need to be capable of sustaining a 1.5KN load in order to support handrails and grab rails on all sides?

Answer: Drop down rails to facilitate transfer to a WC are likely to be required to either side of the WC, whilst handrails and supports subject to a lower loading are likely to be required elsewhere. On that basis, it would be reasonable to expect the wall behind the WC to support a load of 1.5kn, but it may be reasonable for other walls to support a reduced load of 0.85kn. It would also be reasonable to design to meet these loads only in the zone where hand rails are likely to be fixed e.g. between 300-1500mm above finished floor level. Where boxing is not a reasonable fixing point, it may not need to be strengthened. Detail on location of wall strengthening can be discussed on a case by case basis with the Building Control Body.

Baths installed on completion

Category 2 – paragraph 2.29a

Question: Does every Category 2 dwelling require a bath to be installed at completion?

Answer: Guidance in paragraph 2.29 of Category 2 asks for a bath, a washbasin and a WC to be provided. In some types of home or in certain circumstances it may be reasonable for the bathroom to be equipped with a shower instead of a bath, providing that;

- there is sufficient room for a bath to be installed in place of the shower at a later date.
- it can be demonstrated that the bathroom can still comply with the requirements for clear access zones in diagram 2.5 once a bath is installed.

Bath or Shower?

Category 2 – M4(2)

Question: Does a dwelling with one bed for one person (1b1p) need to have a bath in the bathroom?

Answer: For Category 2 M4(2) in every dwelling which has a principal double bedroom, it is deemed reasonable to require that the dwelling has a bathroom containing a WC, a basin and a bath as described in paragraph 2.29b. These requirements are assumed for properties with two or more occupants. For smaller one person dwellings (for instance a 1b1p as defined by the Nationally Described Space Standard) it may be reasonable for a shower to be provided instead of a bath as a permanent layout providing that the requirements of Diagram 2.5 for clear access zones continue to be met.

Projection of sanitary ware

Category 2 and 3, diagram 2.7 and diagram 3.10

Question: By how much can a hand rinse basin or wash hand basin position overlap with the clear access zones or turning circles?

Answer: Diagrams 2.5 and Diagram 3.10 each set out acceptable requirements for projection by a hand-rinse basin or wash hand basin into the WC access zone for each category. Typically this is up to 200mm and clear of the pedestal or trap beneath the wash hand basin, or 300mm for a wash hand basin adjacent to a WC. It would be reasonable for a hand rinse or hand wash basin to project up to 200mm into a turning circle (where necessary) providing this remains clear of pedestal or trap underneath the basin. For Category 2 a 450mm deep wash hand basin may extend its full depth adjacent to the tap end of the bath with the 1100mm clear access zone required beyond the basin.

Ramp gradient

Category 3 – Diagram 3.1

Question: Must ramps for category 3 be at a gradient of 1:12?

Answer: No – this is an error. A ramped approach should have gradients in accordance with lengths and rise shown in diagram 3.1 and gradients of 1:12 are not permissible in approach routes to Category 3 dwellings.

Adaptable to accessible layouts

Category 3 – M4(3) 2a and 2b

Question: How should an adaptable layout complying with M4(3)2a anticipate the wheelchair accessible layout required by M4(3)2b?

Answer: The underlying principle in Category 3 dwellings is that wheelchair adaptable dwellings should be capable of being simply adapted to meet the needs of a wheelchair user, or designed at the outset to do so.

In demonstrating compliance for all M4(3) dwellings, a sensible approach would be to firstly design for a wheelchair accessible layout which complies in all aspects with requirements of M4(3) 2b including bathrooms, corridors, doors, bedrooms and kitchens. Designers can then modify that design utilising the greater flexibility provided by requirements for adaptable dwellings.

Through floor lift location

Category 3 – diagram 3.7

Question: Note 2 suggests that the turning circle should be 'clear of the top step' – what does this mean?

Answer: There is a risk that when a wheelchair user exits the lift they could manoeuvre dangerously close to the the top step of a flight of stairs depending on the layout of the landing area. Consideration needs to be given to ensuring reasonable distance between the top step and the edge of the manoeuvring circle.

Wheelchair storage and transfer space

Category 3 – paragraph 3.25a

Question: Can a wheelchair storage and transfer space be provided in the hallway of a dwelling and does this conflict or impede the means of escape?

Answer: Ideally the storage and transfer space should be sited adjacent to the hallway or corridor of a dwelling and nearby the principal entrance. This arrangement should also comply with escape requirements set out in Approved Document B (Fire Safety) for that type of dwelling. To do so, in some circumstances it may be necessary for the wheelchair transfer and storage space to be located away from the entrance area but still on the same storey.

Internal storage

Category 3 Storage – paragraph 3.26

Question: Can 0.5m² of plant or equipment be included as part of the minimum area of general built-in storage listed in Table 3.1?

Answer: No. The storage space in the wheelchair standard should not include plant or equipment – the space is intended for storage of additional wheelchair or mobility / health equipment which typically exceeds requirements in other forms of housing.

Adaptable kitchen design

Category 3 – paragraph 3.32

Question: Does kitchen planning in Category 3 need to anticipate the position of loose furniture such as a table or chairs? Can loose furniture encroach into the access space of 1500mm access zone in front of kitchen units?

Answer: Furnished layouts for Category 3 housing are required and in those layouts, loose furniture can encroach into the 1500mm access zone required by paragraph 3.32b, though a clear route at least 750mm wide must be provided. 1500mm clear should be maintained between any fixed building elements or kitchen cabinets.

Wall hung basins

Category 3 – paragraph 3.36 h)

Question: Are semi-pedestal basins permissible in bathrooms?

Answer: The intent is that wheelchair users are able to approach and use the basin. Typically this requires some space at low level below the basin for an approach to be made and for full pedestal basins to be avoided. Semi pedestal basin types are permissible, and providing that it can be demonstrated that a wheelchair user can approach the basin, the lower extent of the basin may be lower than the typical range of 400-600mm above finished floor level.

Grab rails and drop down rails

Category 3

Question: Do grab rails and drop-down rails need to be fitted in new developments?

Answer: Reasonable provision should be made in the layout and structure of dwelling to make it easy to fit these features later, to suit any specific needs of the householder, but these are not required at completion. Note that in buildings other than dwellings, Approved Document M (Access to and use of buildings) Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings specifies where grab rails and drop down rails should be fitted that meet the most common needs of disabled people.

Walls, stacks, concealed drainage

Category 3 – paragraph 3.33b

Question: What is meant by “without the need to move structural walls, stacks or concealed drainage”?

Answer: An adaptable kitchen must be capable of being easily adapted to provide an accessible layout. Concealed drainage such as inaccessible stacks or drainage behind boxing, walls or partitions should not need to be extensively modified to support an accessible layout. It would, however, be reasonable for easily accessible connections to stacks and surface mounted drainage inside cupboards, or services mounted against walls to be altered to meet an accessible layout.

WC pans

Category 3 – paragraph 3.36g

Question: Do WC pans need to project no less than 700mm in order to fit with the furniture schedule and also be clear of all boxing-in and pipework?

Answer: Diagrams 3.10 and 3.11 both state that the size of the sanitary units are given as minima in the furniture schedule in Appendix D. Using other sizes may affect the overall size of a bathroom or cloakroom. Using a larger unit than the 500x700mm WC + cistern given in the guidance may therefore impact on the overall clearances and room sizing needed to make a compliant bathroom, cloakroom or wet room. Larger units are permissible if the knock on effect to overall room dimensions is factored into the sizing of a room's layout.

Size of sanitary facilities

Category 3 – paragraph 3.38

Question: Do sanitary facilities need to be large enough to provide a wheelchair accessible bathroom at a future date?

Answer: The requirement for M4(3)2a is for a bathroom that is capable of simple adaptation at a future date to become wheelchair accessible in compliance with M4(3)2b. It need not be completed and delivered as a wheelchair accessible bathroom, but does need to be equipped with suitable services and adequate overall dimensions. The simplest way to demonstrate compliance is to design an accessible bathroom, and then modify the layout to meet the more relaxed requirements for an adaptable bathroom.

Pipework and services

Category 3 – Diagram 3.10 and 3.11

Question: Do all pipework and services need to be clear of access zones?

Answer: Stacks and services should be located outside of the grey shaded clear access zones shown for both Category 2 and Category 3 bathrooms to ensure that a wheelchair is able to use the bathroom effectively. In Category 3 wheelchair accessible bathrooms and WC/ Cloakrooms, the access zone extends to the rear of the cistern to enable assistive devices to move up to the surface of the wall. Wheelchair adaptable layouts will need to be capable of simple alteration to also meet this requirement.

Bath above level access shower

Category 3 – paragraph 3.41

Question: Do only adaptable layouts have a bath fitted above the installed level access shower?

Answer: It would be reasonable for wheelchair adaptable bathrooms to have either a level access shower or a level access shower with a bath fitted over at the point of completion. Wheelchair accessible bathrooms should have the level access shower available at point of completion. Where a bath is not provided in addition to the shower at completion there should be sufficient space above the level access shower for a bath to be fitted, whilst still being able to comply with the access zone requirements set out in diagram 3.11 once the bath is in place. These bathroom layouts should provide a turning circle of 1500mm when the door is closed as explained in paragraph 3.43e.

Baths over level access showers

Category 3 – paragraph 3.41

Question: Paragraph 3.41 Note 3 sets out that a bath may reasonably be positioned over the level access shower in properties up to 4 bedrooms. Is this acceptable in wheelchair accessible properties or only in wheelchair adaptable properties?

Answer: Wheelchair accessible properties must always provide an accessible shower as a minimum at the point that the properties are complete.

Shower position

Category 3 – paragraph 3.43d

Question: Paragraph 3.43d sets out that a shower should be positioned in the corner of a room to enable easy access to controls – but diagram 3.17 shows the shower adjacent to the bath. Which is correct?

Answer: It is always preferable for a shower to be positioned in the corner of a bathroom, and this should be the case wherever possible. It would be reasonable for a shower to be away from the corner as shown in diagram 3.17, but only where both a bath and a shower are in the same room and the shower can be increased in area at a later date if necessary.

Planted door stop

Category 3 – diagram 3.12A and 3.15A

Question: What is the purpose of a planted door stop?

Answer: A planted door stop can be easily repositioned to allow a door which opens inwards to be re-hung outwards without the need to change the door frame as a whole. Category 3 Wheelchair adaptable dwellings can therefore have inward opening doors, but must be capable of easy adaptation to provide the outward opening door required for Category 3 Wheelchair accessible dwellings. Flats typically need outward opening doors on the entry level accessible WC.

Pumped drainage in showers

Categories 2 and 3 – in examples 2.7A and 2.7B 3.12A, 3.12B, 3.15A, 3.15B, 3.16A, 3.16B, 3.16C, 3.17A and 3.17B

Question: Can pumped solutions for floor level drainage be considered as an alternative to gravity drainage when designing provision for a future level access shower?

Answer: Yes. In new build dwellings, particularly flats, planning for floor level gravity drainage requires recesses and connections in the floor which may prove unreasonably difficult to achieve. Shower waste pump kits can be fitted as an alternative when gravity drainage is not an option and it would be reasonable in these circumstances for the future level access shower provision to be designed to accept this arrangement. Drainage solutions that work using gravity drainage will perform and maintain better.

For purpose built and purposed designed Category 3 dwellings it may be reasonable to expect a gravity drainage system from the outset.

Space between WC and wash hand basin

Category 3 – 3.15A

Question: What did the corrigenda change in dimensions of 800mm to 950mm in Diagram 3.15A serve to show?

Answer: The change from 800mm to 950mm in the corrigenda was to provide the necessary distance between centre line of a WC pan and the centre line of a wash hand basin. This should not be understood as the requirement of space between a WC and the edge of a wet room shower.

Wash hand basins and clear access

Category 3 – 3.16A

Question: Can wash hand basins in Category 3 dwellings encroach on clear access zones?

Answer: Diagrams 3.10 and 3.11 show the maximum encroachment of basins in to the WC access zone – the maximum penetration is typically 200mm, but 300mm adjacent to a WC. In wheelchair accessible layouts (diagram 3.11 and paragraph 3.36h) the intention is that there is a clear zone from the floor to the underside of /drainage / pipes / services of between 400-600mm. This is to maximise ease of approach, whilst recognising that services have to be accommodated in some form. It is anticipated that pipes and drainage may need to be through wall penetrations to achieve this result rather than running to the floor. Diagram 3.16A shows wash hand basin access zone encroaching by 200mm, in line with requirements set out in 3.11.

Adaptable to accessible layouts

Category 3 – M4(3) 2a and 2b.

Question: Is moving a wall, a soil vent pipe or a stack a simple alteration?

Answer: When considering alterations required to change an adaptable dwelling into an accessible wheelchair user dwelling it would be reasonable to allow for moving lightweight

internal partitions and the associated making good works or moving local wall mounted services, sockets and plugs. Moving or modifying structural walls, block work walls, party walls or fire compartment walls, soil stacks, soil vent pipes and major building services may not be considered a reasonably simple alteration. Any change however simple should still comply with all of the relevant requirements of the building regulations.

Furniture schedule

Category 3 – Appendix D

Question: How does the furniture schedule in Appendix D apply?

Answer: Category 3: Wheelchair user dwellings require that fully furnished layouts should be provided for both adaptable and accessible options in order to demonstrate compliance. These layouts should include all of the furniture set out in Annex D (other than coffee tables and occasional tables which are optional, and where included may sit within manoeuvring zones) which shows typical module sizes, the number of elements per room and per size of dwelling.

Other than for Category 2 Bedroom layouts, and for sanitary accommodation, furnished layouts are not required to demonstrate compliance of Category 1 or 2 dwellings.

Number of seats in a dwelling

Category 3 – Appendix D

Question: How many seats does an 8 person dwelling need?

Answer: It would be reasonable for living rooms in an 8 person home to have 8 seats not 1 as is currently shown in Appendix D: Furniture Schedule. The 8 seats in the living room can be distributed between combinations of 2 and 3 seat sofas and 1 seat armchairs, Furniture layouts are required to demonstrate compliance in a Category 3 layout.

1200x600mm wardrobe

Category 3 – Appendix D

Question: Must a single bedroom include a 1200x600mm wardrobe?

Answer: As set out in the furniture schedule a 1200x600mm wardrobe is preferable to accommodate additional storage required for assistive aids, but where the circulation requirements cannot be met with the minimum bedroom area, a 600x600mm wardrobe may be reasonable as an alternative in demonstrating a compliant layout.

Approved Document M

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Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings

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Frequently Asked Questions

BS 8300:2001

Notes on the requirements

Question: Is the guidance in BS 8300, where it differs from the guidance in AD M, an acceptable alternative?

Answer: Approved Document M “Access to and use of buildings” Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings (ADM Vol.2) currently states: "Approved Documents are intended to provide guidance for some of the more common building situations. However, there may well be alternative ways of achieving compliance with the requirements. Thus there is no obligation to adopt any particular solution contained in an Approved Document if you prefer to meet the relevant requirement in some other way."

BS 8300:2001 'Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - Code of Practice' supersedes BS 5619:1978 and BS 5810:1979. BS 8300 provides guidance on good practice in the design of domestic and non-domestic buildings and their approaches so that they are convenient to use by disabled people. The design recommendations are based on user trials and validated desk studies which formed part of a research project commissioned in 1997 and 2001 by DETR.

The guidance in Approved Document M is based on and is complementary to the BS, although the BS contains much additional material that is not apt for, or not considered appropriate for, inclusion in guidance accompanying regulation. Also, in a few cases, the guidance in AD M differs from the recommendation in BS 8300. Compliance with the recommendations in the BS, therefore, while ensuring good practice, is not necessarily equivalent to compliance with the guidance in ADM Vol.2."

Where the recommendation in BS 8300 implies a higher standard than that recommended in ADM Vol.2, clearly that would be acceptable. Also, where the BS recommendations post-date the publication of AD M and are based on new or re-evaluated research, such as described below, those recommendations too may be considered acceptable alternatives to the guidance in ADM Vol.2.

The BSI committee responsible for BS 8300:2001 published a consolidated amendment

(Amendment 1:2005) to the BS in June 2005, prior to commencing work on the major quinquennial review of BS 8300. This amendment addressed a number of issues, some of which relate only to BS 8300, and some common to BS 8300 and ADM Vol.2.

Two or three issues, in particular, are known to have caused some difficulty to industry and the design and building control professions. In order to assist in resolving these concerns, the BS committee has undertaken a review of the research on which the recommendations in both BS 8300 and ADM Vol.2 were based. Where appropriate, guidance based on consideration of the BS amendment is included in the FAQs below.

Exemption from building control charges

Regulation 9

Question: What type of building work is exempt from building control charges because it falls within Regulation 9 of The Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 1998 (SI 1998 No 3129)?

Answer: The building work which is exempt from charges is:

1. any alteration to an existing public building or home occupied by a disabled person which is solely for the purpose of enabling a disabled person to get in or out, or to provide better facilities for a disabled person.
2. the provision or extension of a room in a home where the sole use of the room will be
 - to carry out medical treatment of a disabled person which cannot be carried out in another room, or
 - to store medical equipment used by a disabled person, or
 - to replace or adapt accommodation or a facility in a building which already existed but which a disabled person could not use without assistance.

Change of use

Regulation 5

Question: Does the new Approved Document M: Volume 2 – Buildings other than dwellings, edition 2015 apply in full to a change of use of a building to flats?

Answer: Sections 0.10 to 0.12 of Approved Document M: Volume 2 – Buildings other than dwellings, edition 2015 of the Building Regulations aims to define when a building undergoes a change of use. Not all the requirements in Approved Document M apply where there is a change of use of a building to flats.

Upper storey extensions

General guidance

Question: Where a building is extended to create an additional upper storey would the access from the street to these floors be required to meet Part M?

Answer: Yes, to the extent possible within the constraints of the existing building, as set out in the Access Statement.

Access statements

Access strategy – 0.20-0.25

Question: Is there any additional guidance on Access Statements?

Answer: The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) closed on 28 September 2007. Its responsibility for helping secure civil rights for disabled people has now transferred to the new Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The Disability Rights Commission had prepared a guide: 'Access Statements: Achieving an inclusive environment by ensuring continuity throughout the planning, design and management of buildings and spaces', which is still available on the DRC archived website.

Habitable rooms

Definitions – 0.26

Question: Is a kitchen a "habitable room"?

Answer: "Habitable rooms" are defined in Approved Document M: Volume 2 Buildings other than dwellings under paragraph 0.26 as "... for the purpose of defining the principal storey [habitable room] ... a room used, or intended to be used, for dwelling purposes, including a kitchen but not a bathroom or a utility room.

Lifts

Paragraph 3.17

Question: Is it reasonable to have to provide lifts in small two-storey buildings in Planning Use Class B1 (office/light industrial use) where there is no provision for access for the general public?

Answer: The Design Considerations in Approved Document M: Volume 2 Buildings other than dwellings 3.17 make it clear that "...a passenger lift is the most suitable means of

vertical access and should be provided wherever possible. However, given the space constraints in some buildings, it may not always be possible to install the type and size of passenger lift that would be suitable for use by all, and other options may need to be considered to provide for users with mobility impairments."

Approved Document M: Volume 2 Buildings other than dwellings 3.21 and 3.22 add that "...For all buildings, a passenger lift is the most suitable form of access for people moving from one storey to another..." but emphasise that "...in exceptional circumstances for new developments with particular constraints (e.g. a listed building, or an infill site in a historic town centre), where a passenger lift cannot be accommodated, a vertical lifting platform (platform lift), although not equivalent to a passenger lift, may be considered as an alternative option to provide access for persons with impaired mobility."

The Provisions at Approved Document M: Volume 2 Buildings other than dwellings 3.24 state that "...The provision of lifting devices will satisfy Requirement M1 or M2 if ... new developments have a passenger lift serving all storeys [or] new developments, where due to site constraints a passenger lift cannot be accommodated to provide access to persons with impaired mobility, have a lifting platform, of a type designed for the vertical height to be traveled"

The guidance is clear therefore that the normal expectation would be for a lift to be provided in new developments, with justifiable exceptions where a lifting platform may be acceptable. It should be noted that the situations mentioned (e.g. a listed building or an infill site in a historic town centre) are examples only. Each situation should be judged on its merits.

The aforesaid does not however mean that there will be no exceptions to these principles. The legal requirement of the Regulations is that there shall be reasonable provision for access. What is reasonable must be judged on the circumstances of the individual case, and there will almost certainly be cases where the provision of any kind of lifting device may be unreasonable.

The onus must, however, be on the applicant to justify such exceptions in an Access Statement. As an indication of the sort of factors that might be relevant to such a justification, applicants may wish to demonstrate for example that no members of the general public are accommodated, that all facilities are replicated on each floor, that the space demand of the lift and associated landings is disproportionate to the accommodation provided, that adequate provision is made for installation of a lift at a later date should it be required, and so forth.

It would not be reasonable to set out in guidance such as this exactly what combination of circumstances would justify omission of a lift, but nor would it be reasonable for a building control body to state in advance of consideration of an application that provision of a lift would not be required.

Handrails

Pararaphs 1.34-1.37

Question: Is "contrasting material" visually contrasting material or a different type of material?

Answer: Contrasting material means material with a visual contrast.

Question: If you have continuous flights does the continuous handrail have to extend at least 300mm beyond the first and last nosing at the central well of the staircase, as it would for a single flight staircase?

Answer: An ambulant disabled person should be able to hold a handrail for support either before taking a first step up or down, or after reaching the landing from the last step in a flight. That should normally be possible where the handrail continues around the central well of a stair without further extension onto the landing, particularly if the handrail continues in an unbroken radius.

Question: The guidance on handrail dimensions in BS 8300 differs from that in AD M. Is the BS guidance an acceptable alternative?

Answer: The guidance that follows is based on consideration of Amendment 1:2005 to BS 8300:2001 (see BS 8300:2001)

A handrail should be:

1. of an oval or circular profile;
2. finished so as to provide visual contrast with the surroundings against which it is seen;
3. easy and comfortable to grip with no sharp edges, smooth and not cold to the touch.

A circular handrail should have a diameter of at least 40 mm but not greater than 50 mm.

A handrail with an oval profile should have dimensions of 50 mm wide and 38 mm deep. The profile should have rounded edges with a radius of at least 15 mm.

There should be a clearance of between 50 mm and 60 mm between a handrail and any adjacent wall surface and any handrail support should meet the handrail, centrally, on its underside. The clearance between the bottom of the rail and any cranked support, or continuous balustrade, should be at least 50 mm to minimize the risk of the handrail supports interrupting the smooth running of a person's hand along the rail.

Mezzanine floors in an existing building

Paragraph 3.22-3.24

Question: What are the requirements under Part M for a mezzanine floor within an existing building which is not being extended or undergoing a change of use?

Answer: The mezzanine floor should not make the building less accessible than it is at the moment. In general, a new mezzanine floor would need to be accessible either by passenger lift or a lifting platform, as recommended in sections 3.22 to 3.24 of the 2015 edition of Approved Document M: Volume 2 Buildings other than dwellings, unless a fully justified case could be made in an Access Statement that, in the particular circumstances of the case, this would be unreasonable.

For new mezzanine floors in existing buildings providing office accommodation for ten or fewer people it may be reasonable to make provision for the installation of a lifting platform at a later date.

Shared refreshment facilities

Paragraph 4.16

Question: Approved Document M: Volume 2 Buildings other than dwellings, at 4.16.(c) and Diagram 16, refers to a 'shared' refreshment facility : what is meant by 'shared' in this context?

Answer: As with much of the guidance in Approved Document M: Volume 2 Buildings other than dwellings, this is based on the recommendations of BS 8300. For brevity, much of the descriptive text in the BS has had to be omitted from the AD. However, much of the context for the guidance in AD M can best be understood by reference to the BS.

BS 8300 clause 12.1 provides recommendations for "...self-catering kitchen facilities in non-residential buildings (such as shared refreshment facilities in commercial buildings or offices, self-catering accommodation or hospital accommodation for relatives of in-patients, premises for hire and day centres)..."

Sub-clause 12.1.3.3 states "Single height work surface for a kitchenette or refreshment area shared by wheelchair users and people standing."

Where a facility is provided for making refreshments and heating pre-cooked meals only, for example in employment buildings and catering facilities for hire by the general public or catering firms, a single work surface height of 850 mm, which allows use by both wheelchair users and ambulant people, should be provided"

By implication, therefore, a 'shared' facility is any facility that might be expected to be shared by people with varying abilities.

Sockets and switches

Paragraph 4.25-4.29

Question: Should the height of trip switches and consumer units (fuse boxes), which are normally positioned at least 1200mm above floor level to avoid tampering by children, be within the 450mm to 1200mm height range specified in Section 8?

Answer: Approved Document M: Volume 2 Buildings other than dwellings does not offer guidance on the positioning of trip switches and fuse boxes. A new Part of the Building Regulations, Part P 'Electrical safety', with accompanying guidance in an Approved Document, came into force on 1 January 2005. Part P 'Electrical safety' and the current 2013 edition can be found on the www.gov.uk.

Section 10.5.2 of BS 8300:2001, 'Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - code of practice' states that:

- electrical socket outlets, telephone points and TV sockets should be located between 400mm and 1000mm above the floor.
- Switches for permanently wired appliances should be mounted between 750mm and 1200mm above the floor.
- Meters should be mounted between 1200mm and 1400mm from the floor so that the readings can be viewed by a person standing or sitting. Pre-pay meters should be accessible but protected from tampering by children.
- All switches and controls that require manual dexterity should be between 750mm and 1000mm from the floor, and
- the maximum height of simple push button controls which require limited dexterity should be 1200mm.

If a light switch is remote controllable (by handset) - designed specifically to help disabled people - does this remote controllable light switch still have to be mounted below a certain height, or can it be exempt in this instance?

A remote control may be an acceptable alternative to permit a light switch to be positioned higher than the guidance in Approved Document M: Volume 2 Buildings other than dwellings, as the remote control can be operated by a person in a wheelchair with limited reach.

Which Edition and Volume of Approved Document applies?

Question: Which version of the Approved Document applies to my project?

Answer: The table below shows which edition and volume applies, however, the developer can choose to use a later version.

Work started or building notice, full plans application or initial notice submitted	Edition	
	Dwellings	Buildings other than dwellings
Before 1 October 2015	2004 edition with 2010 and 2013 amendments	
Between 1 October 2015 and 1 March 2016	Volume 1: 2015 edition	Volume 2: 2015 edition
After 1 March 2016	Volume 1: 2015 edition with 2016 amendments	