

## **Access Audits**

An access audit is a means of identifying barriers or potential barriers in the everyday environment for people with disabilities. An access audit will assess not only the physical features of a building but will also assess sensory and intellectual features to review how easy it is for people to use that environment. Building management and staff awareness are also critical factors in assessing how accessible an environment is and will often be included in the access audit.

babel offers 3 types of audit for existing buildings:

### **Level 1 Audit**

A walk-and-talk assessment where the client or their representative is present with the auditor to walk around the building – the discussion can then be recorded into the form of meeting notes with general recommendations should the client wish. Generally only key barriers are identified in a Level 1 Audit. This type of audit is recommended for clients with a limited budget who want to get a general sense of what barriers they may have.

### **Level 2 Audit**

A general assessment with associated recommendations formulated into a tabular or narrative report to suit the client. This type of audit is most suitable for clients who have building professionals with some knowledge of access requirements and can implement change for them. This type of report is also extremely useful at identifying key barriers, many of which are either free or relatively cheap to implement by the client themselves.

### **Level 3 Audit**

A detailed assessment with prioritised and costed recommendations formulated into a tabular report, often with a narrative style conclusion for those who just want a summary of what the audit report includes. The tabular format can be expanded and columns added to record a Client's decisions and actions. This then becomes a useful planning tool for a client to meet their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act. This type of audit is most suitable for clients who want to be able to implement works directly from the report or who have building professionals that can do this for them.

## Meeting Notes

**Venue:** Office Building  
London

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> March 2004  
9 am – 11 am

**Attendees:** The Client, The Organisation (TC)  
Emma Luddington, babel (EL)

**Subject:** Access for Disabled People to The Office Building

### Scope:

The purpose of the meeting was to assess the accessibility the Office Building and to identify any fundamental access issues that exist. The nature of the meeting was a walk-and-talk with EL and TC taking working notes as necessary.

The following is a summary of the findings as identified on site:

### External Areas

#### Building Identification

The entrance is not clearly identified from the street. There are no signs and the entrance building is in a similar blue cladding to the surrounding facades  
**It is recommended that new signs are added to improve building identification.**

#### External Lighting

The site was assessed during the day (Wet and cloudy conditions) and so artificial lighting levels could not be fully assessed.

**It is recommended that lighting is added to this area to give a minimum of 50 lux and preferably 100lux on the main route to entrance doors.**

### Entrance

#### Entrance Doors

Double doors have an inadequate clear opening width through each leaf. The vision panel is set high meaning that a wheelchair user or person of short stature cannot see into the building or be seen if anyone is approaching from the other side.

**It is recommended that these doors are replaced with leaf + ½ leaf to give an adequate clear opening width through the main leaf and suitable vision panels.**

### Entrance Lobby

The lobby is too small to enable a wheelchair user to allow the 1<sup>st</sup> door to close behind them before opening the 2<sup>nd</sup> door.

**It is recommended that the lobby is extended to enable users to close one door before opening the next.**

The entrance mat is worn and needs replacing.

**A firm flush entrance mat should be provided, where possible being extended to cover the entire floor surface of the lobby**

### Foyer Area

The vinyl flooring is not clean and so the dirt offers some slip resistance but the surface was slippery when wet at time of inspection.

**It is recommended that the floor surface is replaced for one which offers greater water absorption and slip resistance.**

There are no directional or locational signs anywhere in this space.

**It is recommended that some simple signs area added to identify keys elements and routes**

Generally poor colour contrast between the grey vinyl floor, pale blue laminate boxing up to dado level and dull white walls above.

**It is recommended that the space is redecorated to give a less gloomy and more contrasting appearance. Also any new floor surface should be chosen to contrast tonally with the pale blue boxing and white walls.**

The area for signing in and security control is not clearly defined and is likely to cause confusion. The sign in counter is set low at 750mm.

**It is recommended that a new reception / security control counter be added to meet the current design standards with a lower counter for seated users and a higher counter for standing visitors signing in.**

### Staff

The staff in here are extremely busy – it is not clear who is a reception staff and who is security. Also with the number of people within this space wearing suits and the lack of clear differentiation between staff and visitors space it is likely to be difficult to identify who the staff are.

**A clear definition of staff and visitor areas should be established – also possibly consider incorporating some more easily identifiable features to the staff uniform to ensure staff stand out against visiting men in suits.**

It is not known if staff members receive customer service training which includes Disability Awareness training.

**It is strongly recommended that staff are given such training to enable them to deal with the broad variety of visitors, tradesmen and staff that will arrive here.**

<b>Building Feature</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>Entrance Identification</b>	The entrance is not clearly identified from the street. There are no signs and the entrance building is set back from the street in a similar blue cladding to the surrounding facades	<b>It is recommended that 3 new signs are added – 2 to the corners of the building adjacent to street level (visible on approach on the pavement) and on above the building entrance doors. Also, replacing the flooring surface at the threshold area between the pavement and entrance courtyard could be better defined – possibly by adding a new, contrasting surface.</b>
<b>Approach</b>	There are a number of bollards forming a barrier between the entrance 'courtyard' and the street. It is understood that these are a necessary protection against ram-raiding. However the available space at pavement level between them is just 800mm as opposed to the recommended minimum of 900mm and preferred width of 1200mm. These bollards, in beige concrete, also contrast badly against the background.	<b>It is recommended that at least one bollard be removed to create a wider access route and that the remaining bollards are either painted or treated to ensure that they stand-out against the background.</b>
<b>Level Change from Pavement to Entrance Doors</b>	There is a 300mm level change (approximately) over a distance of 6000mm (approximately). The actual gradient of the slope formed by the brick paviours varies greatly in different areas between 1:50 and 1:8. A slope of 1:12 or greater can create a risk of a wheelchair user flipping backwards due to an imbalance of their centre of gravity. The slope levels out to the 1:50 near to the door but there is currently no level landing of 1200mm clear of the fully opened outward opening doors to the entrance lobby. (Under current design guidance a gradient of 1:60 or more is considered level)	<b>It is recommended that this whole area is re-graded to create a suitable landing space and a gradient that is suitable to the level change – it is likely that this will be 1:40 over 4 metres down to the bollards. (This may require amendment to the bollards and relaying of these areas.) It should be noted that under the new Part M of the Building Regulations (applicable from May 2004) there should be a landing of 1500mm x 1500mm clear of any door swing at an entrance point.</b>
<b>External Lighting</b>	The site was assessed during the day (Wet and cloudy conditions) and so artificial lighting levels could not be fully assessed. However, on inspection there appeared to be only 1 bulk head light set away from the most likely route between pavement and entrance doors.	<b>It is recommended that lighting is added to this area to give a minimum of 50 lux and preferably 100lux on the main route to entrance doors. In fact the design of a linear lighting scheme could further improve the entrance identification of this area.</b>
<b>Weather Protection at Entrance</b>	There is no place for shelter and there is no canopy over the entrance doors to protect visitors from the weather as they wait to be permitted entry to the building.	<b>It is recommended that a canopy is added over the landing and doorway area to the entrance. This should have integrated lighting to assist visitors and staff to see the door controls, intercom etc.</b>
<b>Door Controls</b>	The Control Panels are all set high at an average of 1500mm – It is understood that the bell & intercom were not working at time of inspection. The swipe panels for staff to log in and out of work are located within the entrance lobby and on the front façade adjacent to doors.	<b>Control panels should be lowered to a maximum of 1200mm and a minimum of 900mm above finished floor level.</b>

Location	Feature	Description	Recommendation	Level A	Level B	Level C
<b>Building Approach</b>						
External Areas	Building Identification	The entrance is not clearly identified from the street. There are no signs and the entrance building is set back from the street in a similar blue cladding to the surrounding facades	B = It is recommended that 3 new signs are added – 2 to the corners of the building adjacent to street level (visible on approach on the pavement) and one above the building entrance doors. C = Replacing the flooring surface at the threshold area between the pavement and entrance courtyard could be better defined – possibly by adding a new, contrasting surface.		£1,200	£1,000
External Areas	Approach	There are a number of bollards forming a barrier between the entrance 'courtyard' and the street. However the available space at pavement level between them is just 800mm as opposed to the recommended minimum of 900mm and preferred width of 1200mm.	It is recommended that at least one bollard be removed to create a wider access route. It is recommended that the remaining bollards are either painted or treated to ensure that they stand-out against the background.		£700	
External Areas	Level Change from Pavement to Entrance Doors	There is a 300mm level change (approximately) over a distance of 6000mm (approximately). The actual gradient of the slope formed by the brick paviours varies greatly in different areas between	It is recommended that this whole area is re-graded to create a suitable landing space and a gradient that is suitable to the level change – it is likely that this will be 1:40 over 4 metres down to the bollards. (This may require amendment to the bollards and relaying of these areas.)	£16,200		
External Areas	Level Change from Pavement to Entrance Doors	The slope levels out to the 1:50 near to the door but there is currently no level landing of 1200mm clear of the fully opened outward opening doors to the entrance lobby. (Under current design guidance a gradient of 1:60 or more is considered level)	It should be noted that under the new Part M of the Building Regulations (applicable from May 2004) there should be a landing of 1500mm x 1500mm clear of any door swing at an entrance point. Price dependent on solution but assuming £600/m2 over 27m2		*	
External Areas	External Lighting	The site was assessed during the day (Wet and cloudy conditions) and so artificial lighting levels could not be fully assessed. However, on inspection there appeared to be only 1 bulk head light set away from the most likely route between pavement and entrance doors.	It is recommended that lighting is added to this area to give a minimum of 50 lux and preferably 100lux on the main route to entrance doors. In fact the design of a linear lighting scheme could further improve the entrance identification of this area. Price to add 10 new lights		£3,000	
External Areas	Weather Protection at Entrance	There is no place for shelter and there is no canopy over the entrance doors to protect visitors from the weather as they wait to be permitted entry to the building.	It is recommended that a canopy is added over the landing and doorway area to the entrance. This should have integrated lighting to assist visitors and staff to see the door controls, intercom etc.			£2,000