



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of the Environment, Planning and Infrastructure Strategy

Department of Planning

**PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE ON ACCESSIBILITY
AND ACCESS STATEMENTS**

1.0 Introduction

This guidance note explains the importance of creating an accessible environment that everyone can use. It offers advice on how to create an accessible built environment and an accessible design of building, and how you can use an Access Statement to demonstrate your commitment to creating a development that is accessible to everyone.

2.0 What is an accessible environment?

An accessible environment is an environment that is safe, predictable, well designed, and easily used by everyone regardless of age or disability. Everyone benefits from an accessible design of building and an accessible built environment but particularly people with disabilities, older people, and families with young children.

The integration of access design criteria into the design of a development can help to create an accessible, inclusive environment. It is more cost effective to ensure that access design criteria are integrated into a development at the early design stages before the proposal is submitted for planning approval.

The following access design criteria provide a logical guide for thinking of movement from one place to another and to successfully creating an accessible environment.

(a) Approach

- level or adequately ramped
- sufficient width and obstacle free
- firm, durable, slip resistant surface
- well lit and clearly identified
- dropped kerbs with tactile surfaces

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- contrasting colour on bollards and street furniture

(b) Parking

- adequate number, and suitably designed and marked parking spaces for disabled persons
- parking spaces as close as possible to the accessible entrance
- dropped kerbs onto a level, obstruction free route to the accessible entrance
- appropriately located and signed drop off points

(c) Entrances

- clear signing to the accessible entrance
- level or adequately ramped and stepped if necessary with appropriately designed handrails
- ramp gradients as shallow as possible
- level area in front of the door and threshold
- easy to open or powered entrance doors
- sufficiently wide door
- doors to have contrast

(d) Lobbies

- sufficient size and shape to allow a wheelchair user to move clear of one door before opening the second door
- floor surfaces that do not impede movement (e.g. avoid matwells)

(e) Receptions

- lowered wheelchair accessible counters
- easily identifiable

(f) Levels

- provide a lifting device and suitable stairs to all storeys above and below ground
- ramps for internal changes within a storey
- any raised areas should be accessible to everyone

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(g) Circulation

- adequately wide corridors
- sufficiently wide doors
- clear, well lit signs
- colour contrast within the building
- corridors free of obstructions

(h) Facilities

- adequate provision of wheelchair accessible washrooms
- wheelchair accessible hotel bedrooms where appropriate
- appropriately designed sockets and switches
- listening systems

3.0 What requirements are there to provide an accessible environment?

Planning and building control regulations ensure that new development is of a high quality design and development standard, and that land uses and developments comply with the policies and land use zonings of the Bermuda Plan 2008 and the Bermuda Building Code 1998.

One of the main goals of the Bermuda Plan 2008 Planning Statement is:-

STY.5 (e) To encourage a high quality of design and accessibility in all new developments

Two key objectives of the Bermuda Plan 2008 Planning Statement are:-

DSN (7) To ensure that new buildings and alterations to existing buildings to which the public have access are accessible to persons with physical disabilities

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TPT (2) To provide for the safe movement of traffic and pedestrians including disabled and elderly persons

The Bermuda Plan 2008 Planning Statement emphasises the need to provide safe and convenient pedestrian access in all new developments and to provide specific parking spaces for disabled persons.

Policy TPT.16 All development proposals shall take into consideration the need to ensure safe and convenient pedestrian access including provisions for disabled and elderly persons.

Policy TPT.22 In any parking area designed to accommodate 10 or more cars, the minimum number of parking spaces to be provided for disabled persons shall comply with the following table, and these spaces shall be provided in a convenient location and designated and reserved specifically for use by disabled persons.

<i>Total number of car parking spaces</i>	<i>Minimum number of car parking spaces required for disabled persons</i>
10 to 25	1
26 to 50	2
51 and more	3

Policy TPT.23(c) specifies that a car parking space for a disabled person shall be not less than 15 feet in clear length, 12 feet in clear width and 7 feet in clear height.

Policy TPT.25 of the Bermuda Plan 2008 Planning Statement further requires that, where appropriate, parking, servicing and vehicular circulation areas shall be designed to provide adequate, safe and appropriately designed pedestrian and disabled access links from the parking area.

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Policy DSN.25, chapter 8 of the Bermuda Plan 2008 Planning Statement specifically requires that new buildings and alterations to existing buildings which are open to the public shall be accessible to persons with disabilities in accordance with the Bermuda Building Code 1998.

Policy DSN.25 New buildings and alterations to existing buildings to which the public have access shall be accessible to persons with disabilities in accordance with the Bermuda Building Code 1998 (and any subsequent revisions).

Building design and construction is governed by the Bermuda Building Code 1998. Chapter 11 of the BOCA National Building Code 1996, part of the Bermuda Building Code 1998, sets the minimum legal standards for the design and construction of facilities to be accessible to physically disabled persons and where they are required.

Chapter 11 of the BOCA National Building Code 1996 includes regulations related to accessible routes exterior to buildings, accessible routes within buildings, parking facilities, and specific user group requirements. It is recommended that an applicant consult the Department of Planning's Building Control Officer to get further advice and guidance with regard to these requirements.

The requirements of chapter 11 of the BOCA National Building Code 1996 also apply to historic buildings or listed buildings that undergo alterations or a change of occupancy unless the applicant can show that the requirement is 'technically infeasible'. 'Technically infeasible' is defined as "an alteration of a building or a facility that has little likelihood of being accomplished because the existing structural conditions require the removal or alteration of a loadbearing member that is an essential part of the structural frame, or because other existing physical or site constraints prohibit modification or addition of elements, spaces or features which are in full and strict compliance with the minimum requirements for new construction and which are necessary to provide accessibility".

People of all ages and abilities should have access to historic buildings that are open to the general public. Every effort should be made to ensure comfort and dignity for the user requiring special access, while preserving the integrity of the building. This is best

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achieved by first identifying the heritage value and character-defining features of the building, and designing a workable access solution that has the least possible impact on the building and its setting. Any short-term improvements should be reversible. The architect or agent should explore options early in the design stages. The Department of Planning's Listed Building Record Sheet may provide useful information on character-defining features. Early consultation with the Department of Planning's Heritage Officer is strongly recommended.



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4.0 Access Statements

To ensure that access design issues are considered at the earliest possible stage in the development process and to ensure that the facilities are integrated in an inclusive manner, applicants are required to submit an Access Statement with a planning application for all developments requiring the consideration of accessibility and access design criteria, in accordance with the relevant policies of the Bermuda Plan 2008 Planning Statement.

The purpose of the Access Statement is to outline how a project has been designed to deliver an accessible environment. The Access Statement should indicate how the development complies with the Bermuda Building Code 1998 and should clearly demonstrate how the access needs of all potential users and particularly disabled persons and less mobile people have been addressed with regard to the following:-

- Approaches to the development and around the site, including transport links and sidewalks
- Parking
- Entrances and lobbies
- General circulation and layout arrangements
- Appropriate use of surface materials and tactile elements
- Facilities within the building for special needs users including listening systems, wheelchair accessible washrooms etc
- Wayfinding and signage
- Means of escape

For developments which also require the submission of a Design Statement in accordance with policy DSN.3 (1), chapter 8 of the Bermuda Plan 2008 Planning Statement, the Access Statement should be included as part of the Design Statement.