Development Control
Advice Note 11
(Revised)

Access for All
Designing for an Accessible Environment

Public Consultation Draft
July 2003

The European Year of People with Disabilities
How to give your views

You are invited to send your views on this draft Development Control Advice Note, DCAN 11 (Revised) ‘Access for All – Designing for an Accessible Environment’.

Comments should reflect the structure of the document as far as possible with references to paragraph numbers where relevant. Responses should be made in writing and sent to: -

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Clarence Court
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Belfast BT2 8GB

It would be particularly helpful if comments could be forwarded by e-mail to: planning.policy@doeni.gov.uk

The consultation period will end on 28th November 2003.

Further copies of the draft DCAN can be obtained by telephoning (028) 905 40716 and by textphone at (028) 905 40642. The document is also available on the DOE Website: www.doeni.gov.uk/planning/ or by writing to the above address.

In keeping with our policy on openness, the Department may make responses to this consultation document publicly available upon request.
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Our built environment has not been designed with the needs of people with disabilities in mind, yet it is estimated that about 20% of the population has some form of permanent or temporary disability (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 2001). This represents some 340,000 people.

Disability covers more than the obvious conditions, such as blindness or use of a wheelchair. Breathlessness, pain, the need to walk with a stick, difficulty in gripping because of paralysis or arthritis, lack of physical co-ordination, partial sight, deafness and even pregnancy can all affect a person’s mobility in the environment.

1.2 The physical barriers often presented by the built environment can severely restrict the mobility of many people. They have also made it difficult, if not impossible for people with disabilities to gain access to jobs, services, housing and entertainment.

1.3 The Programme for Government wants to enable people with disabilities in Northern Ireland “to achieve the highest possible standard of living and to be fully integrated within our society.”

1.4 This complements a central objective of Government policy, namely the creation of an inclusive society, and this means social, economic and physical inclusion. The ultimate goal is a modern, cohesive society in which all members of the community are included in everything that they do – at work, at home and enjoying themselves.

1.5 The needs of disabled people are explicitly recognised in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). This legislation has introduced measures to make it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people and from October 2004 service providers such as shops, restaurants, banks, local authorities and government departments, will be obliged to take reasonable steps to remove or overcome physical barriers to access to buildings where services are provided.
1.6 The new rights introduced by the DDA and the changing state of our built environment - whether by new development, redevelopment of outdated buildings or the upgrading and refurbishment of historic buildings - provide an opportunity to secure a more accessible environment for everyone. It is part of good design and is beneficial to business.

1.7 This Advice Note has been drawn up following discussions with Disability Action, the Equality Commission and the Chief Building Control Officers Group. It seeks to increase awareness among building owners and managers, architects, surveyors and developers about their statutory and legal obligations regarding the needs of people with disabilities. Information about undertaking an access audit is included together with advice regarding improved access to historic buildings and sites.

1.8 The Advice Note also provides supplementary design guidance for developers and their agents aimed at creating a more accessible environment for all in support of the Department’s planning policies.

1.9 The guidance is clearly focused on people with disabilities, but creating a more accessible and hospitable environment will also benefit others, such as the elderly, carers, parents with small children, people with temporary mobility problems (e.g. a leg in plaster) or simply those carrying luggage or heavy shopping.

1.10 The process of achieving a more accessible environment is relevant to all parties involved in the design, procurement, construction and occupation or investment in buildings, as well as for those granting or refusing statutory consents. The Department would therefore encourage all those involved in designing for access to consult widely with disabled users, access consultants and disability access groups who can provide useful advice on how services and access arrangements can be best provided for all employees and visitors.

1.11 Put simply the objective of this Advice Note is to help promote a more inclusive environment with access for all.
2.0 The Relationship between Planning Control and Building Control

2.1 Planning Control and Building Control have complimentary roles to play in extending accessibility of the built environment and ensuring that reasonable access to and into buildings for people with disabilities is provided.

Planning Control

2.2 The arrangements for access to and into buildings and the suitability of the arrangements for use by the public, which includes people with disabilities, raise issues of public amenity which are material planning considerations. Applicants for planning permission should therefore consider the specific needs of people with disabilities at an early stage in the design process and should always aim to provide the highest standard of access possible. This includes proposals for new buildings, alterations to existing buildings, such as the installation of a new shop front, or applications for a change of use. Where appropriate the Department may impose conditions requiring access provision for people with disabilities.

Building Control

2.3 The Building Regulations are concerned with the health, safety and welfare of people in or about buildings. The Regulations impose requirements on all new buildings and certain extensions to secure specific objectives for people with disabilities (see Paragraph 3.25 et seq.). The Department considers it would be inappropriate to use planning control to impose separate requirements in this area. While the access needs of disabled people, including the provision of reserved car parking will therefore be taken into account in the determination of planning applications, the detailed design of features required to facilitate disabled access is a matter primarily for consideration under the statutory building control system.
2.4 The design guidance set out in Section 7.0 of this Advice Note relating to the Approach, Access and Entrances to buildings seeks to promote best practice among developers and designers, but it should however be noted that this guidance does not cover all aspects of the Building Regulations. Anyone considering such development is therefore advised to contact their local Building Control office (see Annex C).

2.5 Developers and designers should note that where access for all is designed in a scheme at the beginning and incorporated at planning stage this will help avoid later problems of compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations or the rights provided by the Disability Discrimination Act. It is also far more cost effective than adapting buildings at a later date.

2.6 The Advice Note does not deal with the internal layout of buildings, as this is not normally material to the consideration of planning permission.
3.0 Legislation and Codes of Practice

3.1 Increasing attention and priority is now being given to disability issues through Government legislation and Codes of Practice. The process of introducing legislation on access to buildings for people with disabilities began in 1970s. The range of legislative application has widened over time and detailed requirements have been extended and refined, most notably with the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995. The following are relevant to both planning and building control and are listed in chronological order.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978

3.2 Section 4 (1) of this Act requires that:

“Any person undertaking the provision of any building or premises to which the public are to be admitted, whether on payment or otherwise, shall, in the means of access both to and within the building or premises, and in the parking facilities and sanitary conveniences (if any), make provision, insofar as it is in the circumstances both practicable and reasonable, for the needs of members of the public visiting the building or premises who are disabled”.

Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Order 1982

3.3 Article 8 of the Order introduced a range of amendments to the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act including specific reference to the Code of Practice for Access for the Disabled to Buildings - BS 5810: 1979.

3.4 Article 5 of this Order inserted Article 17A into the 1972 Planning Order which was further amended by Schedule 18 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986. This now comprises Article 26 of the 1991 Planning Order.
Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991

3.5 Article 26 of the Planning Order requires that the Department when granting planning permission to certain buildings (educational buildings, shops, offices and factories and other buildings to which the public have access), draw the attention of developers to relevant provisions of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 and to the Code of Practice for Access for the Disabled to Buildings. The most up to date Code of Practice is BS 8300: 2001 (see Paragraph 3.32).

Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993

3.6 The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 aim to ensure that workplaces meet the health, safety and welfare needs of each member of the workplace, including disabled people.

3.7 These Regulations among other things require traffic routes, facilities and work stations which are used by disabled people to be ‘suitable’ for them as defined in Regulation 2 (3). Designers should remain aware that the obligations placed on them by the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 and its various Regulations apply equally to disabled people as to non-disabled people.


3.8 This guide produced by the Department for Education and Employment in 1995 is concerned with the design and management of school buildings to achieve optimum accessibility and applies to new construction, extensions and refurbishment. It includes guidance on the process of carrying out an accessibility audit.
The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

3.9 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) includes measures to end discrimination against people with disabilities by providing new rights in the areas of employment, obtaining goods and services, and buying or renting land or property.

3.10 It is now against the law for:

- an employer or service provider to treat a disabled person less favourably than someone else because of their disability;
- for a service provider to refuse to serve someone who is disabled;
- to offer a disabled person a service at a lower standard or on different terms; or
- to discriminate when selling or letting land or property.

3.11 The range of duties on employers and service providers to prevent discrimination against disabled people are contained in Part II and Part III of the DDA respectively. These duties are being introduced in stages to allow time to plan ahead with the final rights coming into force in October 2004.

3.12 Since December 1996 employers and people who provide goods and services to the public have had to take reasonable measures to ensure that they are not discriminating against people with disabilities.

3.13 Since October 1999 Service providers have also a duty to make adjustments to their service. Where a disabled person finds that the use of a service is impossible or unreasonably difficult, a service provider will have to take reasonable steps to change policies, practices and procedures and provide auxiliary aids and services.

3.14 From October 2004 service providers will also be required to make reasonable adjustments to overcome or remove physical barriers to access, so that a disabled person can use the service.
3.15 A service provider includes:

Anyone involved in a business or an organisation that provides goods, facilities or services to the public, or to a section of the public, whether in the private, public or voluntary sectors. It does not matter if services are provided free or in return for payment.

The DDA Code of Practice (see below) offers further guidance on what services are and are not affected by the legislation.

3.16 Employers and service providers will be acting unlawfully if they fail to comply with the duties imposed by the DDA and cannot show that the failure is justified. It will therefore be cost effective for employers and service providers to plan ahead by undertaking an access audit to evaluate whether or not physical improvements to their premises are necessary (See Section 4.0).


3.17 A Code of Practice was issued by the Department of Health and Social Services in 1996 to provide guidance and interpretation of the specific duties placed on service providers by Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act. This was subsequently revised in 1999.

3.18 The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is currently preparing a further revision of the Code which will provide up to date guidance on the additional duties on service providers to make adjustments when the physical features of their premises make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with disabilities to use their services.

3.19 Although these remaining duties do not come into force until October 2004, a draft of the revised Code is already available from the Equality Commission in order to encourage service providers to be proactive and to assist them in preparing for their extended obligations. The draft Code can be accessed at www.equalityni.org
3.20 It is anticipated that a final version of the revised Code of Practice will be issued during 2003. It will accompany new Regulations made under the DDA regarding the duty of service providers in relation to the adjustment of premises.

The Northern Ireland Act 1998
3.21 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that:

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“a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity –
• Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, martial status or sexual orientation;
• Between men and women generally;
• Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
• Between persons with dependants and persons without.”
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3.22 Service providers that are designated as public authorities therefore have a duty to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities (among others). These duties complement and reinforce those required by the DDA.

The Disability Discrimination (Services and Premises) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999
3.23 These Regulations make provision for various things to be treated as physical features for the purposes of the DDA. These include any feature arising from the design or construction of a building and any approach to, exit from or access to a building.

The Equality (Disability, etc.) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000
3.24 This Order ensures that people with disabilities in Northern Ireland have, through the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, rights broadly similar to those available to people
with disabilities in Great Britain through the Disability Rights Commission. This was a major step forward in achieving equality of opportunity for disabled people in Northern Ireland.

The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000

3.25 The Building Regulations, Part R: ‘Access and Facilities for Disabled People’, require new buildings and certain extensions to have provisions that enable disabled people to access them and use their facilities.

3.26 Guidance on technical standards which meet the requirements of the Regulations can be found in Technical Booklet R: ‘Access and Facilities for Disabled People’ (Dec 2000). In the case of educational buildings, guidance can be found in Building Bulletin 91 (see paragraph 3.8)

3.27 In the case of non-residential buildings, the requirements of Part R are for the benefit of disabled people who are visitors to the building or who work in it. These can be satisfied where reasonable provision is made for disabled people so that:

- there is a suitable access to the building from the point of entrance at the boundary and from all car parking within the site;
- elements of the building do not constitute a hazard for a person with a sight impairment;
- access is possible into and within any storey of the building;
- the building’s facilities can be accessed and used;
- suitable sanitary accommodation is provided;
- wheelchair user positions are provided in a building which contains audience or spectator seating;
- aids to communication for people with a hearing impairment are catered for in auditoria, conference rooms and ticket offices.
3.28 In the case of residential buildings, the requirements of Part R are for the benefit of disabled visitors. These can be satisfied where reasonable provision is made for disabled people so that:

- there is suitable access to the building from the boundary of the plot or the point of alighting from a vehicle on the driveway.
- there is access into habitable rooms and a sanitary convenience on the entrance storey or the principal storey.
- switches and sockets are located at convenient heights.
- reasonable provision must be made to allow disabled people to visit occupants who live in flats.

3.29 Whilst Technical Booklet R aims to ensure that buildings are accessible and useable by people with disabilities, designers and developers are encouraged to go beyond the level of provision required. In effect buildings should be designed from the start with an inclusive environment in mind, rather than being adapted at a later stage to comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations.

3.30 At present Part R of the Building Regulations applies to all new buildings and certain extensions. For example, an extension to an existing building where Part R applied to the existing building when it was erected; or an extension to an existing building which is independently approached.

3.31 Where an existing building is to be altered (or a change of use is proposed) the Regulations require that any access and facilities should not be made any worse. It should however be noted that there is an ongoing review of the Building Regulations throughout the UK in relation to the requirements for access and facilities for disabled people. As a consequence Part R is likely to be strengthened.

3.32 This standard 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”.

3.33 As a code of practice, this BS takes the form of guidance and recommendation and it explains how the built environment can be designed to anticipate, and overcome, restrictions that prevents people with disabilities making full use of premises and their surroundings. Guidance on means of escape for disabled people is contained in a separate code of practice BS 5588: Part 8 (Revised 1999).

Disability Discrimination (Providers of Services)(Adjustment of Premises) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003

3.34 These Regulations state where it is reasonable and not reasonable for a service provider to have to remove or alter a physical feature. A time-limited exemption is included for features that were designed and constructed to comply with specifications set out in the Building Regulations Technical Booklet R.
4.0 Access Audits and Action Plans

4.1 Following the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) many businesses and organisations are now undertaking access audits and developing strategies to implement access improvements.

4.2 Undertaking a comprehensive access audit and using this information to prepare an Access Action Plan, will greatly assist in implementing the aims of the DDA.

Access Audit

4.3 An access audit is the first step in planning for the necessary ‘reasonable adjustments’ that an employer or service provider may need to make in relation to their DDA duties. It is more cost-effective to gain an overview of the barriers to and within a building, before beginning to implement access improvements.

An access audit is a means of examining an existing building and/or an area of the built environment, together with its services and the way it is used against predetermined criteria designed to measure its accessibility and ease of use by people with disabilities.

4.4 The process begins a systematic appraisal of a building measured against an agreed set of standards, such as those outlined in British Standard BS 8300: 2001: “Design of Buildings and their Approaches to meet the Needs of Disabled People”.

4.5 An effective access audit should involve a thorough survey of the building. Key issues to be addressed in the audit will be the use of the building, the location and mode of entry of the building, circulation within it, and escape from it. Other issues such as maintenance programmes and management procedures (for instance Health and Safety, and Means of Escape procedures) should also be considered. Staff and other users of the building, including people with disabilities ought to be consulted.
4.6 The audit should include not only assessment of the internal features of buildings, but also their external surroundings, and facilities for car parking and pedestrian routes. Public art or street furniture require the same consideration for access as other external features; for example colour contrast and tactile or non-slip surfaces.

4.7 To be effective the audit should embrace the needs of all disabled people and use the appropriate ‘best picture’ standards for its assessment.

4.8 It is important that the access audit is undertaken by people who have an understanding of the needs of all disabled people and where possible a knowledge of construction (see paragraphs 4.11 – 4.13).

Access Action Plan

4.9 The results of the audit will provide the information for an Access Action Plan to be developed. The plan will prioritise improvements and indicate where they might be included as part of routine maintenance and repairs. It should be viewed as a working document and it can act as a record of all 'reasonable adjustments' undertaken.

4.10 A comprehensive Action Plan will also take account of the need for staff training, to raise awareness and challenge stereotypical assumptions; and the need to review policies, practices and procedures which, along with physical barriers, can discriminate against people with disabilities.

Access Consultants

4.11 Disability Action operates a comprehensive audit service, and through its Disability Access Officers can provide technical advice, information and training for the preparation of Access Action Plans. Further information on the services provided by Disability Action is available at www.disabilityaction.org
4.12 The National Register of Access Consultants is another resource for building owners and managers, which provides, free of charge, a database of reputable access auditors and consultants. Further information is available at www.nrach.org.uk.

4.13 Some local access groups also carry out access audits. Further details can be obtained from Disability Action (see Annex A).
5.0 Planning Policy

5.1 The Department assesses development proposals against all planning policies and other material considerations that are relevant. The main policy considerations relating to accessibility and the built environment are set out in the following documents.

Regional Development Strategy

5.2 The Regional Development Strategy provides an overarching strategic context for the preparation of planning policy and development plans. It sets new directions to achieve a more sustainable pattern of development and desires a more cohesive society based on equality of opportunity and inclusivity of all individuals in our society.

5.3 As part of Strategic Planning Guideline ENV 6.4, the Strategy seeks to:

“Promote the creation of built environments which are supportive to good health and meet the needs of all age groups, men and women, and the particular needs of disabled persons.”

Planning Policy Statement 3: Access, Movement and Parking

5.4 PPS 3: Access, Movement and Parking published for public consultation in December 2002 sets out the Department’s main planning policies that seek to facilitate improved accessibility for all, and ensure that the specific needs of people with impaired mobility are taken into account in assessing development proposals.

5.5 Policy AMP 1 ‘Creating an Accessible Environment’ acknowledges that the integration of good access in all aspects of design will benefit everyone in society through a better thought out, easier and more accessible environment. It states that:
“All development proposals should be designed to help create an accessible environment taking account of the specific needs of people with impaired mobility. Where development involves buildings open to the public, or buildings to be used for employment or education purposes, these will only be permitted where they are designed to provide suitable access for everyone, including people with impaired mobility, as customers, visitors and employees. Where appropriate the design and layout of development proposals will be required to incorporate all or some of the following:

- Facilities to aid access for people with impaired mobility, including ramps, dropped kerbs and tactile paving, together with the removal of any unnecessary obstructions;
- Convenient movement along pathways and an unhindered approach to buildings;
- Pedestrian priority to facilitate pedestrian movement within and between land uses; and
- Ease of access to public transport facilities and taxi ranks.”

5.6 Policy AMP 7 ‘Parking and Servicing in New Development’ deals with the parking and servicing arrangements associated with development proposals and includes a requirement for the provision of dedicated parking provision for people with disabilities. It advises:

“…… In all cases (where car parking is provided) the Department will require a proportion of car parking spaces to be provided and reserved for people with disabilities in accordance with best practice¹. Where a reduced standard of provision for car parking is applied or accepted, the Department will not normally permit the number of spaces to be provided for people with disabilities to be reduced.”

¹ This document provides the Department’s guidance on best practice for reserved parking (see para 6.1).
5.7 Early consultation with the Department prior to submitting a planning application, and following the advice in this document, should ensure compliance with the Department’s policies.
6.0 Improving Access to Historic Buildings and Sites

6.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) intends that people with disabilities should be able to use historic buildings and sites which are open to the public in the same way as everyone else. Following the introduction of this legislation a number of such buildings and sites have already been successfully adapted to make them accessible to disabled people.

6.2 The duties contained in the DDA however can pose great challenges to the owners and managers of historic buildings and sites, but with consideration and attention to detail, the Department believes improved access can be achieved without detrimental effect on their special character.

6.3 The provisions of the DDA do not overrule existing statutory requirements and any alteration which affects the character of a listed building needs listed building consent. Similarly all works affecting a scheduled monument require scheduled monument consent. Accordingly careful consideration of the impact of improved access for disabled people on these important features of the built heritage is needed at an early stage.

6.4 Where a proposal is made which seeks to provide or improve access for a disabled person the Department will expect this to be carried out in a manner consistent with the special architectural, historic or archaeological character of the property or site.

6.5 The importance of allowing people with disabilities dignified and easy access to and within listed buildings is recognised in PPS 6: Planning Archaeology and the Built Heritage which states:

“If access requirements are treated in an integrated and systematic way and a flexible and pragmatic approach is taken, then it is normally possible to plan suitable access for people with disabilities without compromising a listed building’s special interest.”
6.6 The Department would promote the concept of independent access whereby people with disabilities can avoid being carried, lifted or assisted. Wherever possible, historic buildings and sites should be as easily accessed using the primary entrance by disabled people as by others.

6.7 The DDA recognises however that full access to all buildings and sites may not always be possible and the duty of service providers is to take reasonable measures. In relation to historic buildings and sites the Department believes that a satisfactory solution to providing suitable access for all can almost always be found so long as imaginative and innovative approaches are explored fully.

6.8 Early consultation with the Built Heritage section of the Environment and Heritage Service will assist in resolving any possible conflict.

6.9 The Department would also draw attention to the following publications which contain helpful and detailed advice on the provision of access to historic buildings and sites:

7.0 Design Guidance

Reserved Car Parking

7.1 Where car parking is required in association with development, reserved spaces should be provided in accordance with the following standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Parking Spaces Required</th>
<th>Allocation for People with Disabilities</th>
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<tr>
<td>1-10 spaces</td>
<td>Each case treated on its merits with the presumption that some allocation will be made where practicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-20 spaces</td>
<td>Minimum of 1 space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ spaces</td>
<td>5% of spaces or a minimum of 2 spaces (whichever is the greater)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200+ spaces</td>
<td>2 spaces plus 4% of total capacity</td>
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Notes:

(1) In all cases where the percentage allocation results in a proportion of a space, this should be rounded up i.e. a calculation of 2.3 would entail provision of 3 designated spaces.

(2) In cases where the Department accepts or applies a reduced standard for car parking provision overall, the number of designated spaces to be provided should not generally be reduced.

7.2 Reserved parking spaces should be on the level and 3.6 metres wide to allow transfer from a wheelchair into a car. Alternatively a shared 'transfer' space 1.2 metres wide can be provided between two standard bays of 2.4 metres wide. Each space should be 4.8 metres long and wherever possible a 1.2 metre wide safety zone should be provided for boot access or to facilitate cars with rear hoists.
7.3 Bays in line should be 6.6 metres long to allow access to the car boot where a wheelchair may be stowed.

Figure 1. Accessible off-street parking spaces

Figure 2. On-street parking

Figure 3. Sign to accompany reserved spaces

7.4 Reserved parking spaces should be located as near as possible to the building entrance or car park lift, to minimise the travel distance. The route to the entrance or lift from the reserved spaces should be accessible, clearly defined and well lit. Where distances exceed 50 metres a covered way should also be considered.
7.5 Many basement and lower ground parking areas are set below the entrance door level in case of petrol spillage. This forms a step which should have a ramped alternative. The lobbies, doors and lifts en route from the reserved spaces to the building should be fully accessible.

7.6 Ducting installed into basement car parks can often result in restricted headroom. Such obstacles and pedestrian restrictions should be designed away from circulation routes and from the reserved parking spaces.

7.7 If access into the car park is via a security barrier, it should be useable from the driver's seat of the car, avoiding the need to get out of the car until it is parked - it can take several minutes and considerable effort to lift a wheelchair in or out of a car.

7.8 Reserved parking spaces should be correctly marked out on the ground with the international disability symbol and on a signpost or wall at eye level. The spaces and signs should be well lit. The location of reserved spaces should also be clearly signposted from the car park entrance.

7.9 The management of the parking bays should ensure that abuse of the reserved spaces does not occur.

7.10 In large scale developments open to the public (for example supermarket, shopping centre or leisure centre) a parking space (minimum 2.5 metres by 8 metres) should whenever possible be provided as close as possible to the main building entrance as a setting down/picking up area to accommodate disabled transport. At picking up points seats should be provided under cover.

7.11 Further advice on the design of reserved parking bays is contained in Department of Transport - Traffic Advisory Leaflet 5/95: Parking for Disabled People\(^2\).

\(^2\) This is available at www.roads.dft.gov.uk/roadnetwork/ditm/tal/parking/05_95/index.htm
### Approach to the Building

**7.12** Pedestrian routes from adjacent roads, bus stops and taxi drop-off points should be clearly defined and well lit continuing up to entrances to buildings.

**7.13** Pathways should be free of obstacles and at least 1.8 metres wide to allow wheelchairs to pass. A greater width may be required, for example at transport pick up points or where large pedestrian flows are anticipated. Pathways may narrow to 1.2 metres to pass an isolated obstruction.

**7.14** The pathway system should where possible be designed to avoid crossing vehicular routes within the site. Where this is not practicable blister type tactile paving and dropped kerbs flush with the carriageway should be installed at all crossing points, in accordance with the standards used by DRD Roads Service. The tactile surface should be extended the entire width of the dropped kerb. Dropped kerbs should also be located directly opposite one another.

**7.15** Where forecourts or landscaped areas are part of the approach to an entrance, there should be a direct and unobstructed route to the entrance which is well lit. Surfaces should be firm and non-slip and obstacles such as path edges, trees, seats and bollards should be clearly defined to assist partially sighted people.

**7.16** All planting should be well maintained and kept trimmed-back away from pedestrian routes. Overhanging tree branches should not be low enough to cause a hazard and care should be taken to keep low branches trimmed as necessary to ensure this.

**7.17** Colour contrast and tactile finishes in hard landscaping should be used to help define routes, and warn people with mobility difficulties of possible dangers or hazards such as a change in level.

**7.18** Features which may obstruct a route adjacent to a building, such as outward opening doors or windows, can be a hazard to partially sighted people. Textured paving or guard rails should be used to alert people to these.
Access to the Building

External Ramps

7.19 A level approach to a building i.e. an approach which is less steep than 1:20, should be used wherever possible. Where a change in level is unavoidable it should be made as gentle as possible, preferably with a gradient no steeper than 1:20. Short and shallow ramps minimise difficulties for wheelchair users and people with pushchairs for both ascent and descent, and reduce the likelihood of slipping for people with walking difficulties.

7.20 Ramp gradients should preferably be between 1:15 and 1:20. Ramps steeper than 1:20 should always have as an alternative, a flight of steps, for people who can more easily and safely manage steps. A gradient of 1:12 is the steepest permissible and should only be used if unavoidable. Stepped ramps (i.e. ramps broken at intervals by steps) are however unacceptable, as wheelchair users are unable to negotiate these without assistance.

7.21 A level platform at least 1.2 metres long clear of any door swing should be provided at the top and bottom of a ramp. Because frequent stops may be necessary to regain strength or ease pain, level landings are necessary. Ramps with a gradient between 1: 20 and 1: 15 should have a level resting point at least 1.5 m long, every 10 metres. Gradients steeper than 1:15 should have level resting points every 5 metres.

7.22 Ramps should be a minimum of 1.2 metres wide with an unobstructed width of at least 1 metre. 1.8 metres wide is preferred, as this would allow prams and wheelchairs to pass. They should be well lit and use non-slip surfaces. Patterning which simulates steps, such as applied or inserted slip-resistant strips should be avoided.

7.23 In general ramps or steps should be within the curtilage of the development and not encroach onto public footways. A ramped approach to an existing building can often be achieved by recessing the entrance door. Such ramps must not, however, project over adjacent pathways where this would be a hazard.
7.24 Where site characteristics prevent ramping it may be possible to raise the level of the external footway. If the area to be raised is on the public footway, this can only be undertaken where the agreement of DRD Roads Service has been given. Care will be needed to ensure that such an arrangement when provided for several nearby premises will not itself result in a hazard.

7.25 In the case of existing buildings where an extreme level change would require a long circuitous ramp, or where space is limited, a short rise lift may be appropriate.
**External steps**

7.26 Steps should be at least 1 metre wide and no more than 1.8 metres between handrails. There should be at least 1.2 metres of space at the top and bottom of flights clear of any door swing. A level platform should also be provided every 1.2 metre vertical rise of a flight of steps.

7.27 Steps should have a rise not less than 75mm and not more than 150mm and a minimum tread of 280mm. This is provided that the relationship between the rise and tread is that twice the rise plus the tread should not be less than 550mm and not more than 700mm. All risers and treads should be uniform in height and length. Tread nosings should be profiled so that they are not a tripping hazard for people at risk of catching their feet. Tapering treads and open risers are hazardous for blind and partially sighted people and should be avoided.

Figure 6. **External steps**
7.28 Corduroy tactile paving in a contrasting colour from the surrounding paving material should be installed at the top and bottom of a flight of steps (but not on the intermediate landings), to warn blind and partially sighted people of the change in level. The corduroy paving should start 400mm back from the nosing and should extend for a minimum of 800 mm.

7.29 The nosing of each step should be easily distinguishable for partially sighted people for example by use of permanent colour or tonal contrast.

**Handrails**

7.30 Handrails should be 900 mm above the pitch line of a flight of steps or 1 metre above the surface of a ramp or the level of a landing. The handrail should extend horizontally at least 300mm beyond the top and bottom of the ramp or steps, with their ends clearly indicated by turning downwards or to the wall.

7.31 Even on a single step a handrail can provide essential support. Handrails should be smooth, continuous and easy to grasp (e.g. hardwood or nylon coated steel) with a maximum diameter of 38 mm -50mm and at least 45mm from any wall and colour contrasted with the background.

**Entrance to the Building**

7.32 Entrance arrangements to a building should provide a welcome for everyone. Accordingly the access needs of disabled people should be integrated into the design rather than treated separately.

7.33 It is preferable that the approach to the principal or main entrance of the building should be level, so that everyone can enter the building through the main entrance.

7.34 The use of secondary or service entrances to buildings for people with disabilities should be avoided. Nor should disabled people have to ring door bells or wait to be escorted into the building by a member of staff.
7.35 Only in exceptional circumstances, such as certain listed buildings, is it likely to be acceptable to have a secondary entrance as the accessible way into a building. In such cases, a sign outside the building at the main entrance should indicate the way to the accessible entrance, using the international disability symbol.

7.36 Staff entrances and fire exits, as well as the main entrance, should be fully accessible so that people with disabilities can use the same routes as others.

**Entrance Doors**

7.37 Entrance doors should have a clear opening width of at least 800mm and have a glazed panel giving a zone of visibility with an unobstructed space of at least 300mm next to the opening edge of the door, unless the door is automatic opening.

7.38 Automatic sliding doors are the most convenient form of access for people with disabilities. Revolving doors should be avoided. Where these are to be installed an alternative entrance door should be provided.

7.39 Plate glass doors should be easily discernible, for example through use of prominent signs, logos or colour banding, to prevent people accidentally walking into the glass.

**Entrance Levels**

7.40 Entrance thresholds should be built flush with the external level. Traditionally many shop floors were built one step above the external level. Even a single step at the entrance can be very hazardous as it often goes unnoticed. Coping with a step and a door at the same time is impossible for many people with disabilities.

7.41 All new shopfronts and alterations to existing ones should be designed to be accessible to people with disabilities.
Other Elements of the Built Environment

Street Furniture

7.42 Street furniture (lampposts, bollards, litterbins, telephone boxes, seating etc) should be located so that it does not obstruct pedestrian movement along pathways. The use of colour contrast, textured paving or raised kerbs can all help assist in distinguishing street furniture to aid the visually impaired. Bollards should generally be not less than 1 metre high with good colour contrast and linking chains should be avoided.

7.43 'A' boards, menu stands or other freestanding or mobile display material should not be located on pathways because they cause obstruction and are a hazard for blind and partially sighted people.

7.44 Where seating is proposed on the forecourts of premises such as bars or restaurants care should be taken to ensure that this will not obstruct pedestrian movement or represent a potential hazard to people who are blind or partially sighted.

Figure 7. Street furniture – avoiding hazards
Cash dispensers / Automated Telling Machines (ATMs)

7.45 Cash dispenser machines should be accessible from a wheelchair. Controls need to be within reach both horizontally and vertically, and need to be legible. The card slot and dispenser should be no higher than 1.3 metres, preferably 1.2 metres maximum. The display panel needs to be angled so that it is easily seen and usable from a wheelchair. Push buttons which are well spaced, colour contrasted and with tactile or raised numbers can assist partially sighted people.

7.46 The space in front of the machine should be level and clear of obstacles. A recessed area below the machine will create space for wheelchair footplates, but the dispenser should not project into a pathway and thus become an obstacle.

Controlled Crossings

7.47 Where a controlled pedestrian crossing is required as part of development proposals it must cater for the visually and/or hearing impaired and be in accordance with DRD Roads Service standards.
Annex A  Useful Contacts

Disability Action
Head Office, Portside Business Park, 189 Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9ED
Tel :  (028) 9029 7880
Text :  (028) 9029 7882
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Website:  www.disabilityaction.org

Equality Commission
Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DP
Tel :  (028) 90 500600
Text :  (028) 90 500589
e-mail : information@equalityni.org
Website:  www.equalityni.org

ADAPT NI
Albany House, 73-75 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7AF
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Text:  (028) 90 234391
e-mail: cshiels.adaptni@dnet.co.uk

Centre for Universal Accessibility
School of the Built Environment, UUJ, Newtownabbey, BT37 0QB
Tel:  (028) 90 368505
e-mail: g.kane@ulst.ac.uk

Environment and Heritage Service
Built Heritage, 5-33 Hill Street, Belfast, BT1 2LA
Tel:  (028) 9054 3037 (Historic Monuments Enquiries)
e-mail: hm@doeni.gov.uk
Tel:  (028) 9054 3061 (Historic Buildings Enquiries)
e-mail: hb@doeni.gov.uk
Website:  www.ehsni.gov.uk
Employers Forum On Disability NI
Banbridge Enterprise Centre, Scarva Road Industrial Estate,
Banbridge, BT32 3QD
Tel/Text:  (028) 4062 4526
e-mail:  info@efdni.org.uk

Mencap in Northern Ireland
Segal House, 4 Annadale Avenue, Belfast, BT7 3JH
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Royal National Institute for the Blind NI
40 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BA
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Royal National Institute for the Deaf NI
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The William Keown Trust
3 Church View, Dundrum, BT33 0NA
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e-mail:  wkeowntrust@btconnect.com
website:  www.wkeowntrust.co.uk
## Annex B  Planning Service Offices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Council</th>
<th>Divisional Planning Office</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Antrim</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ballymena Divisional Planning Office</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballymena</td>
<td>County Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrickfergus</td>
<td>182 Galgorm Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>Larne</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Armagh</strong></td>
<td><strong>Craigavon Divisional Planning Office</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Newry &amp; Mourne</td>
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<td><strong>Derry</strong></td>
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<td>40 Foyle Street</td>
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<td>LONDONDERRY, BT46 6AT</td>
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<td>Castlereagh</td>
<td>Bedford House</td>
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<td>Newtownabbey</td>
<td>16 – 22 Bedford Street</td>
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<td>BELFAST BT2 7FD</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ards</strong></td>
<td><strong>Downpatrick Divisional Planning Office</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Down</td>
<td>Rathkeltair House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisburn</td>
<td>Market Street</td>
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<td>North Down</td>
<td>DOWNPATRICK, BT30 6EJ</td>
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<td>Tel No: (028) 4461 2211</td>
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<td>Fax No: (028) 4461 8196</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:divisional.planning.office.downpatrick@nics.gov.uk">divisional.planning.office.downpatrick@nics.gov.uk</a></td>
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Access for All: Designing for an Accessible Environment

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## Annex C  Building Control Offices

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<td><strong>Belfast City Council Building Control</strong></td>
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<td>Fax No: (028) 9043 8805</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td><strong>North Eastern Group Building Control</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Carrickfergus</td>
<td>80 Galgorm Road</td>
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<td>Newtonabbey</td>
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<td>Ballymoney</td>
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<td>Derry</td>
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<td>Ards</td>
<td><strong>South Eastern Group Building Control</strong></td>
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<td>Dungannon</td>
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Annex D  Draft Development Control Advice
Note 11 Screening for Equality impact Assessment

Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75) - Statutory Equality Obligations

1.0 General Details

1.1 Title of policy / policy document and date to be introduced:

1.2 Brief summary of the policy / policy document:
The revised Development Control Advice Note (DCAN) is an updated version of one a series of Advice Notes which provide non-statutory supplementary planning guidance in support of the Department’s planning policies. The original DCAN 11 ‘Access for People with Disabilities’ was published in 1991.

It should be noted that the DCAN is not of itself a policy document, rather it is intended to complement the Department’s recently updated policy on the creation of an accessible environment contained in consultation draft Planning Policy Statement 3 ‘Access, Movement and Parking’ (PPS 3) published in December 2002. It is an objective of this PPS to ensure the needs of people with impaired mobility are taken into account in relation to accessibility and parking provision. The PPS includes policy on the creation of an accessible environment – Policy AMP 1 and deals with the provision of dedicated parking provision for people with disabilities – Policy AMP 7.

The draft DCAN provides design guidance for developers and their agents on the creation of a more accessible environment. It focuses specifically on the needs of people with disabilities and includes guidance on:
• reserved car parking;
• the approach to a building;
• access to a building;
• the entrance into a building; and
• other elements of the built environment.

The revised document also seeks to increase awareness among building owners and managers, architects, surveyors and developers about their statutory and legal obligations regarding the needs of disabled people. Information about undertaking an access audit is included together with advice regarding improved access to historic buildings and sites.

1.3 Aims of the policy / policy document:

As noted above the DCAN is not of itself a policy document rather it provides supplementary guidance to support policy contained in PPS 3 Access, Movement and Parking.

The main aims of the Advice Note are:
• to raise awareness about legal obligations and best practice regarding access for people with disabilities, in particular the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; and
• to provide design guidance that will assist in the promotion of a more inclusive environment with access for all.

2.0 Screening Analysis

Screening aims to identify those policies, which are likely to have the greatest impact on equality of opportunity and community relations. This is assessed against the nine categories listed below:

(1) Persons of different religious beliefs
(2) Persons of different political opinions
(3) Persons of different racial groups
(4) Persons of different ages
(5) Persons of different marital status
(6) Persons of different sexual orientation
(7) Men and women generally
(8) Persons with a disability and persons without
(9) Persons with dependants and persons without
2.1 Initial inclusion of DCAN 11 in Equality Scheme

Following preliminary screening, revised DCAN 11 was initially included in the Department’s Equality Scheme approved by the Equality Commission on 8 February 2001. At this time it was anticipated that an Equality Impact Assessment of the DCAN would be required.

As indicated above however the DCAN is not of itself a policy document. The relevant policy is contained in draft PPS 3 ‘Access, Movement and Parking’, which itself was screened for EQIA in December 2002. This concluded that there would be no significant implications for equality of opportunity or community relations.

For these reasons and in view of the length of time since the initial screening the Department considers it prudent to subject the revised DCAN 11 to re-screening to determine whether a full EQIA is necessary.

2.2 Re-screening Process

The following questions need to be addressed in respect of the groups set out in 2.0 above. Preliminary research would suggest the following responses to the questions.

2.3 Is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups within any of the nine categories?

YES ☑ NO (please tick)

The Department considers the guidance contained within the DCAN will not have a differential impact on any of the groups within the Section 75 groups in relation to participation or take up.

2.4 Is there any evidence that particular groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular main policy areas?

YES ☑ NO (please tick)
The DCAN provides guidance to assist the creation of a more accessible environment that will help developers and applicants in drawing up proposals for planning permission, where these involve public access and parking. In this regard, the Department considers that the DCAN will not have a differential impact on any of the Section 75 Groups.

For the public in general, the Department considers that the guidance contained in the DCAN will have indirect positive effects and the Department has identified the following 4 groups as those which may have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities:

- Persons of different ages;
- Men and women generally;
- Persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Persons with dependants and persons without.

The guidance in the DCAN is specifically aimed at assisting the creation of a more accessible environment for people with disabilities. Following this guidance will however also benefit others, such as the elderly, carers, parents with small children, people with temporary mobility problems (e.g. a leg in plaster) or simply those carrying luggage or heavy shopping.

2.5 Is there an opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations by altering policy or working with others in Government or the community at large?

YES ☒ NO (please tick)

Legislation aimed at ending discrimination against disabled people is contained in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). The draft DCAN seeks to raise greater awareness about the implications of the DDA and other legislation.

The draft DCAN has been drawn up following discussions with Disability Action, the Equality Commission and the Chief Building Control Officers Group among others. Such discussions were used to assess the potential impact of the revised guidance and to ensure that it will meet the aim of
assisting the promotion of a more inclusive environment with access for all.

It should be noted that planning control is demand driven. As such the Department cannot require anyone to make a planning application to improve access to their premises, rather the Department’s role is to assess proposals against published policy and guidance. The DCAN seeks to ensure that whenever and wherever proposals are presented for consideration these are designed to assist the creation of a more accessible environment.

2.6 Have consultations in the past with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that particular policies create problems which are specific to them?

[ ] YES [ ] NO [ ] (please tick)

As indicated above the Department has at various levels, held beneficial discussions with Disability Action and the Equality Commission, among others. Both these organisations have represented the interests of people with disabilities and are therefore aware of their views in respect of access needs.

The guidance in the DCAN seeks to incorporate best practice in the promotion of access and parking for all. Public consultation on the DCAN will allow all those groups with an interest to provide further comment.

3.0 Impact Assessment Decision

3.1 Full impact assessment procedure is confined to those policies considered likely to have significant implications for equality of opportunity and community relations.

Do you consider, taking account of the Screening Analysis in Section 2.0, that this policy / policy document needs to be submitted to a full equality impact assessment?

[ ] YES [ ] NO [ ] (please tick)
Reason for Decision

As a result of the screening analysis in Section 2.0 it is considered that there will be no significant adverse implications for equality of opportunity or community relations as a result of the guidance contained in DCAN 11.

In conclusion the Department would reiterate that the DCAN is not a policy document, rather it seeks to support and complement the Department’s policy on access contained in PPS 3. Accordingly decisions on the acceptability of access proposals, including reserved parking, will be taken in the context of the policies of PPS 3, while the DCAN concentrates on raising awareness of the issue of disabled access and providing design guidance which seeks to promote best practice in the creation of a more accessible environment for the benefit of all.