

Access Audit

Walsden Cricket and Bowling Club

Scott Street

Walsden

Todmorden

Lancashire OL14 7SX

Conducted on 28/3/2019 by Chris Cammiss

Parking

There is clear signage from the main road visible from both directions. The main buildings lay along Scott Street. There is no allocated street parking here but no double yellow lines either. I would recommend approaching the Council and asking for permission to mark out at least one properly designated disabled parking bay, possibly two. There is potential parking down the road and especially in the space around the corner but you are now a considerable distance from the buildings and on a poor surface if you venture around the corner.

Exterior

Facing the buildings from the street there are various potential entrances and a slope along the side of the building from the street to the ground itself. This slope is a great asset for accessibility and evacuation but needs attention. It needs railing on both sides, preferably at two heights to assist ambulant users and wheelchair users. The flags are broken and it all needs resurfacing. The first section down from the pavement is very steep, well above guidance. It can be negotiated by a wheelchair user if accompanied but not recommended. I think if reconfigured this slope could almost comply with its gradient but this would be considered acceptable as a "reasonable adjustment" in the eyes of the Law.

A quick brick count shows a gradient of about 1:8 could be achieved without compromising other adjacent structures. I think a properly resurfaced, reconfigured and railed slope here would be well worth the expense as long as users were warned about the gradient!

Entrances

The Millenium Suite entrance is the current main entrance for disabled visitors with a wheelchair, mobility scooter or other mobility aid as it is step-free. On entry there is a short, fairly steep slope down to the Bar. It is well carpeted and railed on both sides. The area is well lit. The bottom of the slope levels out gradually before entry to the Bar. This is a perfectly acceptable entry point.

Main Function Bar

This is a large, well-organised space comprising of a pale wood dance floor surrounded by a carpeted area. The carpet is much darker so providing good colour contrast with the dance floor.

There are lots of single loose chairs all of the same design (no arms). There are long tables and small circular ones. These are all very accessible with lots of space and knee room for a wheelchair user or similar.

As a general rule you should potentially have a range of seating available for disabled or older users. Some want arms, some not. Some want a higher seat or a higher back. A larger person might need a stronger seat altogether. This doesn't mean you have to provide all these tomorrow – just be aware of what choices you have on site or nearby so if someone requests a specific type of chair you know where you can quickly find it.

Lighting is good with plenty of daylight when available and lots of electric light sources. The effect is even and strong as required.

There is good colour contrast between the white skirting and grey floor which helps navigation for those with a visual impairment. Good contrast also between gold chair legs and grey carpet aids visibility avoiding trips.

Extinguishers are safely located and there is absolutely no clutter.

Switches and sockets are at an accessible height.

Fire alarms are present but only give an audible signal. These should be upgraded eventually to give audible and visual signals for the benefit of those with a hearing impairment. This is not a critical point as people are unlikely to be alone when the alarm sets off in this building due to it's nature.

General decoration is simple with blocks of colour, nothing too strong, no clashing combinations or busy patterns. All this helps anyone with a visual impairment, mental health issues or dementia.

You should have a hearing loop available for functions, meetings etc. The loop acts like a microphone and can be picked up by someone with a hearing aid switched to the correct channel. It has no effect on anyone else, mobile phones, laptops etc. The loop can be a portable type so you can use it in different parts of the building as required. Take advice from manufacturers as to what would best suit your building.

Bar

The actual bar itself does not have a specific low section but is generally quite low throughout and has great visibility so a wheelchair user will never be missed.

Steps

In a front corner of the function area there are six steps down into another bar which is used on match days. This can be accessed from the outside but currently there is not an easy route from the Function room to the downstairs bar for a disabled person.

Considering the constricted space, current walls, corners etc, I can see no easy way to create access here. There isn't really enough room for a stair lift for someone to sit on and this isn't inclusive as it doesn't cater for wheelchair users, and it would severely block access for able-bodied stair users. Similarly, a vertical platform lift wouldn't quite fit in the space and would block the steps permanently for others. You could probably clear the equipment/cupboard in the back corner and squeeze a lift in but you would have massive problems at the bottom coordinating cornering, accessing doors and so on.

I wouldn't attempt creating access here at all, I would create access from the Function Room to the lower bar through the front of the Function Room.

Access from Function Room to Ground

Currently, from the front of the main Function Bar, there is a short ramp outside into a seating area. This ramp does not extend to ground level, so is of limited use.

There is a plan to reconfigure this ramping to reach ground level.

I would endorse creating this new ramp for the following reasons:-

- It would create a proper fire evacuation route from the main bar if the route to the front door and street is compromised. Currently, a disabled person escaping who couldn't reach the street by the usual fire evacuation route because of the seat of the fire can only get just outside the bar and then wait and hope for the best. There are three huge steps down to ground level. If the ramp were to reach ground level then all persons could reach ground and exit the site step-free.
- It would create easy access from main bar to lower bar for disabled persons.
- It would make the whole site easily accessible. The side ramp would come into its own as a wheelchair user could enter here, watch the match, go up the new ramp into the main bar to reach the toilet and so on. All circulation becomes much easier and independent for disabled visitors with this one simple extension of the current ramp.

Outside spaces

There is fixed seating outside the main bar which will be reconfigured when the ramp is extended. There is no wheelchair space here at present other than on the ramp.

At ground level there are plenty of options for disabled supporters. Looking left when facing the ground from the bar there is a tarmaced area which has bench seating and plenty of space for wheelchair used. This area can also be accessed from outside via the side slope mentioned earlier.

The lower bar can be accessed from this tarmaced area.

There is access all round the ground on grass for anyone who wishes to move around, but there is plenty of level tarmaced surface outside the buildings for those who cannot manage grass.

Toilet Area

Currently there is no accessible toilet provision at all to survey. Management know this situation cannot continue and have put plans in place to construct an accessible facility.

The plans display a simple, uncluttered, large rectangular space for the accessible toilet.

The accessible toilet is well situated for ease of access and maximum usage.

This would seem to be eminently suitable.

During construction make sure entrances are wide so access to the toilet is easy (900 mm is recommended). There is no point having a wide door at the toilet site if earlier access has to be gained through a narrower door. On the plan I have seen the door from the Entrance Hall seems narrow compared to the wide door at the toilet itself.

When fitting the rails and so on check with the reference provided below so that the fittings are in the correct positions as regards the toilet, sink and so on. In that way the user will gain maximum benefit. I can advise you on this nearer the time if required.

The plans still include proper toilet provision for everyone else.

Car Park

The club have access to a small car park (30-40 spaces) at the far end of the ground. Normally I would be very keen on upgrading and extending parking facilities especially for disabled drivers but in this case the car park is too far from the entrance to suit many disabled visitors with mobility impairments. Some may be happy to park there and watch the match from the scoreboard end and that's fine but the main disabled provision should be to allow and/or control street parking directly outside the entrance.

Recommendations

- Construct the accessible toilet as planned making sure the door from the Entrance Hall is as wide as the actual toilet door, and you reference guidance when fitting the toilet or contact myself for specific advice.
- Extend the ramp from the front of the main bar to ground level so creating a proper fire evacuation route for disabled persons, creating full access to the lower bar and creating proper accessible circulation around the whole site.
- Improve the side slope so it can be used safely as an easy access route for disabled supporters.
- Try to get permission to mark out one or two designated disabled parking places on the street outside the entrance.

Reference

Google "Design for Access 2". This is a free download and is a user-friendly take on Building Reg's. It will give masses of information from gradients and railings to parking to door widths etc. It is particularly good on fitting out an accessible toilet with every relative position, height, separation etc.

Chris Cammiss

Chriscammiss@hotmail.co.uk