

BUILDING REGULATIONS GUIDANCE NOTE NHBC BUILDING CONTROL

LIFT PROVISION TO NEW NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

The guidance in the 2004 edition of Part M states that a lift is the most suitable form of access for people moving from one storey to another in buildings other than dwellings. This means that the starting point for any new non-residential building should be to provide a lift for access to upper and lower occupied floors. However, what issues and factors should be considered when designing for adequate access?

Benchmarks for the non-provision of lifts, such as the maximum permissible floor areas and references to a 'unique facility' have been removed from the guidance within Part M. It can be concluded that there are no exceptions to the need for a lift other than special cases such as historic buildings and infill plots, where practicable space is an overriding consideration.

The guidance does recognise that universal provision may not be practical and that alternative access arrangements can be justified in an Access Statement. The requirement is for 'reasonable provision', so it is not possible to define specific maximum floor areas that would be suitable in all circumstances. It may be unreasonable to require a lift to all floors in some smaller new buildings. It is important to remember the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act in respect of duties and responsibilities of an employer or service provider, please see our Guide to the Disability Discrimination & Building Regulations.

CONSIDERATIONS

The following factors can be considered when designing alternatives to lift provision:

- The floor area of a new building may mean it would be impractical in terms of available floor space remaining, should a lift be provided. A practical judgement should be made based on the relative size of the new building.
- Where the use of each floor is similar to the ground floor or entrance level, there is a possibility of providing all relevant services where access is feasible. Again the floor area could determine the level of access provision, as larger floor spaces on multiple levels should be provided with the same level of access as the entrance level.

- Where the building has split level accommodation, there may be practical considerations to providing access to all levels. For example, restaurants with multiple levels will need to consider the level of service provision alongside the practical considerations of lift provision.
- The use of each floor and type of building will determine the amount of vertical travel between levels, which in turn will provide a guide to the level of access provision required. A public building for example is likely to require a lift, as it would be difficult to justify non-provision.
- In some circumstances, upper level storage areas could be designed without lift provision. Again consideration should be given to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. A more comprehensive Access Statement is likely to be required for specialised building uses, such as warehouses with high bay racking.
- The location of the planned toilet accommodation will have a bearing on the required level of access provision. The guidance in Part M is for accessible toilet provision to be provided where other toilets are sited, and the distance of travel to an accessible toilet should not be more than 40m.

Whilst the starting point for new buildings is to provide a lift, there are situations where other provisions can be considered as 'reasonable provision'. It is important to consider the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act alongside the Building Regulations, as service provision and employment issues can be more onerous than the Building Regulations.