Access Review of the
Robert Sewell Hall
Curry Rivel

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PURPOSE

To identify where the Robert Sewell new extension could be made to comply with BS8300, Part M National Building Regulations, the Equality Act 2010 and the requirements within these

To offer suggestions of “reasonable” improvements required.

Section 20(4) (9) of The Equality Act 2010 states that avoiding a substantial disadvantage caused by a physical feature includes:

- Removing the physical feature in question
- Altering it or
- Providing a reasonable means of avoiding it

S 149 General Equality Duty:
Parish Council (or others in the position of controlling a public place) must give due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low
The Community Grant given by Area North states the following conditions:-

- Completion of the extension should reflect the recommendations in the recent access review
- The Village Hall management committee to work with the Neighbourhood Development Officer (SSDC) to continue to improve the accessibility for users of the hall, based on the recommendations of the recent access review

Consideration has been given to all these matters in the following report

**METHOD**

The hall is well used by a wide range of the local community. It is a thriving and valuable asset to groups from toddlers upwards. The kitchen is well used to provide hot meals to a number of locals. Members of SSDF visited the site on a number of occasions to ascertain the current situation and what is proposed for the new extension. Discussion was undertaken with members of the hall committee and measurements and photographs were taken

**OBSERVATIONS**

The hall is located in a side street off the main road in Curry Rivel on an elevated site. It is an old Victorian building with extensions and modernisations up to 1980

The concerns identified by South Somerset Disability Forum are as below together with recommendations to identify “reasonable adjustments” or further professional advice to be taken

**Entrance Area**

There is a considerable slope from the road up to the entrance making wheelchair access difficult without assistance. If control were to be lost exiting the hall, the occupant could roll into the road. See “New Extension” for further comments

**Existing Disabled Toilet**
The existing disabled toilet is too small, being only 1.3 metres wide making it impossible to turn around in a wheelchair. Additionally it is approached through a narrow recess which makes getting into the toilet awkward. The disabled WC is located between the existing ladies and gents toilets. There may be sufficient space within the whole combined toilet areas to create a new designated disabled toilet but this will require substantial work to achieve. Following discussion a further option was suggested to the existing disabled toilet in that it could be modified to increase the size by moving the wall adjacent to the gent’s toilet and gain a further 60cm. If the toilet pan is then also moved in the same direction thus gaining further space in which to turn. However it would still not comply with BS8300 part M. A further and preferred option favoured by SSDF would be to reassign what is currently the store room adjacent to the kitchen and in the drawings intended to increase the size of the kitchen.

It is advisable to get further professional guidance to identify the best option to accommodate a new disabled toilet as the current proposals do not meet with the standards required by BS8300 part M.

**New Extension**

The proposed new extension will improve the entrance area but the proposed doors opening outwards pose access problems for persons lacking mobility. There are no details given on the drawing relating to the current or proposed slope to this entrance. From measurements given the proposed slope will be a rise of approximately 45cm over a length of 5000cm. This is approximately 1:11. It would require an angled ramp of at least 1500cm width and with a handrail at a height of 900 - 1000cm. These should be of contrasting colour, comfortable to grip, not cold to the touch and extend 30cm beyond the end of the ramp. (See BS8300 or illustrative adjacent photo courtesy of J & A Stevenson) The surface
does need to be taken into consideration to ensure it is non-slip. The proposed plans do not give any details of the proposed ramp so it is difficult for the Forum to comment. Specific design detail is needed prior to identifying the access path will meet BS8300. The Forum recognises that the whole access route is poor but is clear that as a “new build” it will need to be compliant with BS8300.

As this is the emergency exit the doors must open outwards onto a level area. This can only be achieved by recessing the new doors within the building. This construction would take up most of the current parking area remaining to the front of the hall.

The existing access is only 4.2m wide and should be 4.8m wide to be identified as a “disabled parking bay” to conform to BS8300 part M.

The road is only 6 metres wide and therefore of insufficient width for a set down point to be authorised in the road. Somerset County Council Highways even though there is on street parking permitted (6.6 metres is required before a parking area can be marked out). The public car park nearby belonging to the parish will be the only option available. There is no disabled parking marked in this area and it was already very heavily occupied on the several occasions the site was visited.

CONCLUSIONS

Further negotiation and work should be undertaken with the architect and SSDC building control prior to this project being developed further.

Ramp photo courtesy of J & A Stevenson