

## 8.8 ACCESS REPORT

# Marble Hill Revived

## RIBA Stage 3 – Accessibility Review

February 2017

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Version	Date	Issued/Amended by	Principal Changes
4	10/02/17	JE	Minor text amends

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## Background

Earnscliffe, Making Access Work was commissioned by English Heritage to input to the design development process by visiting site, auditing the existing buildings, attending meetings and design workshops, and by liaising with the consultants for the Marble Hill House Revived project (building works and interpretation); Stable Block refurbishment and extension; Sports Block refurbishment and park (re-landscaping and interpretation). A key area of the appointment was to undertake access reviews throughout the design development stages to demonstrate maximum accessibility.

This report reflects a review of the latest RIBA Stage 3 design proposals for Marble Hill House, Stable Block, Sports Block and park.

The design proposals were measured against current legislation and building standards including:-

- Building Regulations Approved Document M Volume 2 – Buildings other than Dwellings, 2015 edition (referred to in the report as Part M)
- Building Regulations Approved Document K – Protection from falling, collision and impact
- BS8300: 2009 + A1:2010 – Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice
- The Equality Act 2010
- HLF Making your project accessible to disabled people 2012
- Sport England Accessible Sports Facilities 2010.

## Marble Hill Revived

### Access Considerations

#### Landscape

1. Any proposals for physical or intellectual intervention within the landscape will be sensitive to the Grade II\* listed status of the park.
2. Park entrances will provide a good opportunity for marketing the house and events, and to flag up free admission to the house.
3. Orientational maps and signage will be considered at key entrance points and elsewhere in the park showing key buildings, features such as bowling green, and installations (future interventions in the landscape such as artworks etc.). Target audiences, including abused women, as well as visually impaired people and those with learning difficulties in particular, will be reassured and feel safer by the provision of clear signage.
4. Orientational and interpretive interventions will include methods that provide access for those with sensory impairment such as impaired vision, people with learning disability, and those for whom written English is a barrier, including British Sign Language users and those for whom English is not a first language. Provision will include non-text based graphics, touch, localised sound and smell experiences.
5. The existing rumble strip/traffic calming humps used along Sweet Walk are problematic – whilst the area between the humps is sufficiently wide for wheelchair and buggy access, the surface is wholly unsuitable for wheels, with large gaps between raised setts. These also pose a trip hazard to those using walking aids and to visually impaired people. Furthermore, visually impaired people may not detect them if they don't use a cane or guide dog. Two options are being considered 1) removal and making good, and 2) infilling with a

- contrast material to offer a more level surface. New planting along this route will offer a welcoming approach to Marble Hill House and the nearby Stable Block, and will provide a strong visual clue to the main approach.
6. Pathways throughout the park will be improved. The area around Marble Hill House will be surfaced in Cedec self-binding gravel suitable for wheelchairs. Paths in the Pleasure Garden will also be bonded gravel.
  7. Careful planting will enhance views and vistas across the park and towards the river.
  8. The Stable Block courtyard will be re-laid using existing cobble setts. These will be laid level, with mortar infill. It is envisaged that a level path leading from the courtyard entrance to the new extension building café, and an external terrace with café furniture may be surfaced with stone pavers to provide a completely flush surface.
  9. Whilst the area of park to the north of Marble Hill House is relatively level, the area to the south slopes gently down towards the River Thames. All gradients are shallow, for the most part 1:69, at their steepest 1:22. There are no areas that warrant treatment as a ramp.
  10. Bench seating will be provided throughout the park, offering opportunity to rest or to sit whilst observing sculptures, or others engaged in play or sports activities.

## Marble Hill House

11. The proposals for improving accessibility are sensitive to the need to preserve and conserve the original fabric of the Grade I listed building whilst ensuring access for all.

### Ground Floor

#### **Entrance arrangements**

12. The feasibility of providing a sole public means of access into the house via Door DG04 on the northern elevation has been fully explored.
13. The provision of a ramp from this entrance into the new Welcome space to replace internal stepped access and offer a single inclusive solution was deemed unfeasible for the following reasons:-
  - a) there was inadequate clear space for the provision of a shallow ramp - it is widely acknowledged that many disabled people are not able to independently use ramps at gradients steeper than 1:15 – the ramp would necessarily be 1:12 and given the lack of space for intermediate landings every 2m, non-compliant with Part M of the Building Regulations.
  - b) there was inadequate clear space for the provision of wheelchair turning at the bottom and top landings.
  - c) a ramp would eat into the space, leaving little room for any interpretation.
  - d) it was undesirable for all visitors to enter via this route due to a pinch point outside the exit from the Welcome space for turning into the narrow corridor outside the accessible toilet.
14. The proposed alternative proposal is for two means of access, one into the Welcome space that involves a shallow stair of two steps; the second being via the main door (DG01) into the Entrance Hall. This second entrance will offer a dignified means

- of access for wheelchair users and others who cannot use steps, albeit a staff managed solution. The entrance is conveniently close to the new platform lift to be located just off the Entrance Hall opposite the grand stair, providing a great sense of arrival into the house. The lift will need staff assistance and so staff will in any case be stationed close to this entrance.
15. Another advantage of this solution is that it eases congestion in the Welcome space where space is at a premium. Visitors will receive a similar Welcome experience in terms of interpretation, with more personalized, bespoke delivery by staff.

### **Horizontal Circulation**

16. The current configuration offers a very tight exit from the shop, and although the door opening is sufficiently wide at 840mm for the passage of wheelchair users, the corridor immediately outside it is only 1200mm deep. This makes wheelchair turning very difficult.
17. The problem is compounded by the fact that the door to the accessible WC opposite opens out into this corridor and is aligned with that of the shop. The main toilet block corridor also opens out onto this pinch point i.e. there are people travelling in three directions all meeting at this narrow junction.
18. Subject to confirmation that the concrete floor beneath this structural wall is not historic, the design proposals seek to open up a section of the shop wall to ease circulation. This is welcomed, if feasible.
19. The winding corridor between this junction and the Entrance Hall is only 900mm wide, with no visibility or wheelchair passing points. Providing a second entrance to the building via DG01 will greatly reduce the likelihood of congestion, with wheelchair users only needing to use the corridor to use the toilet.
20. Since use of motorised scooters and child buggies will not be permitted in the house to prevent damage to the historic fabric, undercover safe storage for both is to be considered. This is

- most likely to be located close to the marquee where it will not be visually intrusive. A charge point for buggies will be provided here, linked to the marquee electricity supply. This is particularly helpful given the park setting.
21. Where there is limited headroom in the doorway between the Paper Room and Entrance Hall a warning sign will be provided. Visitors will also be forewarned, for instance on the website, to ensure that visually impaired people are alerted.
  22. Circulation elsewhere at this level is unimpeded with suitably wide door openings, level access and ample wheelchair turning spaces.
  23. Seating will be provided at regular intervals where feasible and including in the activity-rich Paper Room.
  24. The palette for the rooms, whilst remaining authentic to the historic house, has been carefully selected to work in combination with conservation-sensitive lighting and interpretive devices, to aid orientation by those with visual impairment.

## **Toilets**

25. Whilst the existing unisex wheelchair accessible cubicle is slightly undersized, being only 2.1m long, it is overly wide at 1800mm, affording wheelchair turning.
26. The proposed wall opening opposite eases the lack of an adequate landing space outside the cubicle.
27. The existing cubicle décor is monotone. An easy remedy of contrast stickers applied to the wall tiles is proposed.
28. The baby change unit currently located in this cubicle is not acceptable under Part M. It is proposed that drop down change tables will be provided in the male and female WCs, as well as the accessible WC for use by disabled parents.
29. A future aspiration is to remodel the existing toilets to provide



ambulant disabled cubicles with integral sinks. This is currently out with the scope of this project due to budgetary constraints.

## **Vertical Circulation**

30. The mahogany stair that rises from the Entrance Hall to the first floor has gentle risers and generous treads and is covered under the Grade I listed building status and so no modifications are proposed.
31. The stone stair from Ground Floor to the Garret is steep and narrow. It is the only visitor access route to second floor, however. Provision for visitors unable to access the second floor will be provided by means of a virtual tour via a fixed tablet.
32. The proposed 900mm x 1250mm Stannah platform lift will be housed in a room just off the Entrance Hall and will provide access to the First Floor. Staff will be on hand to assist, as necessary.

## **First Floor**

### **Horizontal Circulation**

33. Circulation outside the platform lift room is slightly restricted – the stair gallery/landing being only 1430mm deep. However, if wheelchair users need to turn towards the Great Room there is room for elliptical turning (1700mm x 1400mm) which is acceptable.
34. All doorways at this level have adequate wheelchair access in their open position.
35. Seating will be provided at regular intervals, including where the Virtual Tour is provided for ambulant disabled and visually impaired people and wheelchair user companions.

## **Fire safety**

36. The door to the lift room will be fire rated, effectively creating an area of safe refuge inside the room. People unable to use the stairs who are waiting to be evacuated by Evac chair down to Ground Floor via the grand stair opposite will use this.
37. Staff will conduct a manual sweep of the building in the event of a fire emergency.

## **Stable Block – existing**

38. The toilet block in the courtyard that includes an oversized unisex wheelchair accessible cubicle, baby change facility, and male and female cubicles will undergo minor refurbishment works.
39. It is hoped that as part of future works these toilets can be refurbished to include for ambulant disabled and dedicated baby change facilities.
40. Access to the existing Shop will be via a half glazed door with level stone threshold.

## **Stable Block – extension building**

41. Flush thresholds will be provided to the café entrance. Wide sliding glazed doors will offer ease of access.
42. Full height glazing will be safety treated with manifestations at two heights to suit those standing and seated in wheelchairs.
43. The servery counter will be at a height of 850mm to Part M standard for a shared surface and induction loop provided here for the benefit of hearing aid users.
44. Seating and tables will be configured in such as way as to enable ease of access for wheelchair users, those with impaired mobility and vision, and carers with child buggies, with

1500mm<sup>2</sup> turning circles.

45. A buggy park area will be incorporated to ease circulation in the area.
46. Tables will offer knee space of 700mm to accommodate the arms of wheelchairs. A choice of seating with and without arm rests will be provided in line with BS8300.
47. Manifestations will be applied to full height glazing. Measures such as blinds will be used to control natural daylight to prevent glare, whilst artificial lighting will augment daylight levels throughout.
48. An external seating terrace will greatly increase seating capacity in the busier summer months.

### Sport and Recreation Block

49. The approach to the block will be re-landscaped to offer step and ramp-free access into the building, with a very shallow gradient or level access.
50. A wide entrance located in the western corner of the block will offer ease of access to public building users. This discharges into a spacious lobby.
51. Public facilities comprise female, unisex and male changing rooms, showers and toilets, accessed off wide corridors.
52. A Changing Places cubicle was considered, however it was deemed inappropriate for the nature and scale of the facility. The Building Regulations recommend such cubicles in large, complex sports venues such as arenas. In this instance, there are no sports activities within the building itself. Furthermore the building is not sufficiently large to accommodate a cubicle of sufficient dimensions (4m x 3m) without impacting significantly on the standard changing facilities and staff office and meeting space.

53. Nevertheless a spacious unisex wheelchair accessible change/shower/toilet cubicle will be provided and we will endeavor to provide a drop down adult change table within it.
54. Non-public access will be accessed from a separate entrance on the northern elevation, leading to offices, a meeting room and kitchen. Staff can access the toilets and change facilities via the main entrance lobby.
55. The meeting room will have a door that opens out into the park, for direct access and egress. A portable induction loop will be provided for the benefit of hearing aid users.
56. Two sets of fire escape doors are provided along the eastern elevation. The approach on both sides is level. It is envisaged that staff will conduct a manual sweep of the building in the event of a fire emergency.
57. The décor throughout will comply with BS8300 standards for high levels of colour and tonal contrast between walls, floors, doors, fixtures and fittings, for the benefit of visually impaired people.
58. Signage will offer high contrast and high legibility, using large print, accessible typeface, use of icons and minimal text.

## Conclusion

The design proposals for all elements of the project reflect careful consideration of accessibility and inclusive design, appropriate and sensitive to an historic site.

Whilst the limitations of working within the Grade I listed Marble Hill House must be acknowledged in terms of what is possible by way of access improvements, much is still achievable, most notably provision of disabled access to the First Floor.

The Sports Block refurbishment will ensure that disabled people can actively participate in the sport and recreational activities available.

The proposed addition of the accessible Stable Block extension building, combined with existing retail and toilet facilities, will create a visitor hub that supports and enhances the experience of all visitors to the house and park.