

# TheAccessOfficer Case Studies



Design standards that not just about disability

## CS2 North Somerset Town Hall, Weston-super-Mare

### Access to a civic building

Produced and written by The Equality and Diversity Team

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## What we wanted to create

The works sought to achieve an accessible entrance to the council building where civic activities would be undertaken. These could be simply tours of the Town Hall by members of the public, council business meetings, or various important personal events for the people of North Somerset such as marriages, civil partnerships or citizenship ceremonies.

It's a fundamental principle of the council that it will always seek to make any building as accessible and inclusive as it is able to for its residents and visitors.

In this case it wasn't straightforward. The Old Town Hall is a Listed Building dating back to the late Victorian period with many features admired by local people.

## How we went about the design

Consultation with local stakeholders and in this particular case, specifically local disabled people, underlined the need to ensure everyone should have the experience of using the main entrance. The use of a "second" entrance would not be acceptable in that the building's focus is on the main portico entrance.

Equally discussions with the council's own Conservation Officer and consultation with English Heritage highlighted that the building's unique appearance would need to be retained. Architect's [Alec French](#), council staff and Wilmot Construction developed an unusual response.



## The Design

The design solution was not to construct a large ramp which would have posed major design, cost and heritage problems and also have closed off the use of the actual portico. Instead, the steps were re-built to conceal a platform lift. Manufactured by [Sesame Access](#), the left half of the steps (see picture) slides back to reveal the lift built into the ground at the foot of the steps. It then operates like any normal platform lift.

[Have a look at Sesame's promotional video.](#)

## Some key lessons

- Seeking feedback from users of buildings to understand where the compromises might be made and what the aims needed to be.
- Having the right project team who can access specialist advice and ideas.

## Accessibility-related features for people with disabilities

- Retained an improved flight of steps with handrails and highlighted tread nosings for disabled people who preferred them
- Installed a lift to overcome the flight of steps for wheelchair users



The entrance in step configuration



## Read more about what they did

- [BS8300:2009+A1 2010 Design of buildings to meet the needs of disabled people](#)
- [Consultation](#)
- [Access to Heritage Buildings](#)
- [Inclusive Project Management](#)

## To seek advice or help please contact us

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