

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM



Conference Park Access Statement October 2015

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Birmingham Conference Park is accommodated within 5 principal buildings located on both sides of Edgbaston Park Road, which represents the North-Eastern boundary of the academic accommodation of the campus of the University of Birmingham.
- 1.2 The Conference Park offers all year round B&B accommodation, currently with 3* Visit Britain accreditation. Situated in one of the UK's most vibrant cities, based in the quiet suburbs of Edgbaston and within 10 minutes walking distance from the centre of the University of Birmingham, this hotel and conference centre provides a peaceful, comfortable getaway set within quiet lawns and gardens, featuring FREE Wi-Fi and FREE Car Parking. The Conference Park provides an ideal base for business travellers and people looking for a short weekend break. Centred around five accommodation blocks with two restaurants, one of which being situated within the conservatory of adjoining property Hornton Grange, an Edwardian red-brick residence with fabulous garden and water feature.
- 1.3 The Conference Park offers a total of 106 bedrooms and an assortment of function and conference rooms spread over the following 5 buildings:

Lucas House: A four-storey building offering 30 bedroom, together with catering, (restaurant and bar), and 4 conference rooms, which can accommodate up to 80 delegates within a range of seating arrangements.

Peter Scott: A three-storey building offering 35 bedrooms, including 2 accessible bedrooms, plus 5 conference rooms, which can accommodate up to 45 delegates within a range of seating arrangements.

Hornton Grange: A two storey Edwardian building offering catering, (restaurant and bar), and 8 conference rooms, which can accommodate up to 60 delegates within a range of seating arrangements. This building is also licensed as a venue for civil marriage ceremonies.

Hornton Grange Accommodation Blocks 400 and 500

A separate two-storey building offering a total of 32 bedrooms, of which there is one accessible bedroom per block.

Garth House A three-storey late-Victorian building with a Grade II* English Heritage listing, offering 9 bedrooms, plus 4 conference rooms which can accommodate up to 25 delegates within a range of seating arrangements.

- 1.4 3 self-catered apartments will soon be added to the portfolio of accommodation available to the Conference Park within the Coach House of the adjacent building Westmere House.
- 1.5 Additional conference facilities are available within the neighbouring Nicolson Building where 1 conference facility is available for up to 120 delegates.
- 1.6 The present access arrangements across the Conference Park are dependent upon which building one is to be accommodated within, (whether that relates to bedroom or conference activities). The current arrangements, (as described below), 'can' offer access to the building and the services and activities offered therein. However, the present arrangements do not fully embody the principle of 'inclusivity' as embodied in the original Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and subsequent amendments leading up to and including the Equality Act (2010), which amongst other things heralded the end of the days when the use of the an alternative entrance for wheelchair users, for instance, to that available to other, non-wheelchair using contemporaries, would be deemed acceptable as a means of entry.
- 1.7 Legislation to address access issues for persons with disabilities has developed towards specific duties whereby operators of public buildings have a duty to offer access to all persons the same level of service in gaining access to buildings and facilities, together with an anticipatory responsibility to consider that the 'next person entering their facility might have some form of disability'.

2. Current Access Provisions

2.1 External Approach

- 2.1.1 The five main buildings comprising the Conference Park are all approximately 0.75km from the centre of the University of Birmingham.
- 2.1.2 None of the venues are situated on a steep gradient, (although the same cannot be guaranteed if visitors venture onto the rest of the campus).
- 2.1.3 The venues are approximately 1.25km from the University railway station, and 150m from nearest bus stop.
- 2.1.4 The accessibility of routes to the individual buildings are varied, (the major impediment to access to the Conference Park being that the site

is dissected by Edgbaston Park Road), which borders the University campus. Lucas House and Peter Scott House are situated on the eastern side of the road, with Garth House, Hornton Grange and the Hornton Grange accommodation blocks being on the western side.

2.1.5 This causes a particular issue on arrival as Hotel registration for the Conference Park is administered at Lucas House. Where a new arrival 'could' find that they have been allocated a room within one of venues across Edgbaston Park Road.

2.1.6 Non-vehicular access, to and from, the entrance of Lucas House for ambulant and non-ambulant visitors alike can be challenging as pedestrian access between the buildings is seriously affected by the dissection of the site by Edgbaston Park Road.

- There is no pavement on the eastern, (Lucas House) side of the road.
- There is no dropped kerb in the pavement on western, (Hornton Grange) side, approaching the car park of Lucas House.

2.1.7 The route between the venues within the Conference Park Buildings is varied:

- The approach to Garth House, Hornton Grange and the accommodation blocks from Lucas House, is a challenge, visitors traversing this route have to share the route from Lucas House to Edgbaston Park Road with the vehicular traffic entering and exiting the Conference Park car park at that side of the road.
- Once Edgbaston Park Road is reached the next obstacle is the lack of a dropped kerb on the western (Garth House / Hornton Grange) side of the road.
- Once Edgbaston Road has been crossed, the pedestrian route to the Conference Park venues at that side of the road still presents a challenge as the surface of the tarmac pathway is uneven.
- In the opposite direction, the same is true in reverse.

2.2 Accessible Parking

2.2.1 Accessible Parking offers another challenge to the accessibility of the Conference Park Buildings:

- Peter Scott House and Lucas House are both serviced with 2 accessible parking spaces positioned approximately 24m from the main entrance of Lucas House. The parking spaces are correctly appointed and laid out with appropriate yellow hatching and symbols.

- There are dropped kerb facilities and a very gentle gradient to the main entrance. Although there is no level landing directly in front of the main entrance door.
- Garth House, Hornton Grange and Accommodation Blocks 400 & 500. These buildings are serviced with 2 accessible car parking spaces in the main car park situated roughly equidistant between Hornton Grange and the Accommodation blocks and Garth House, (between 25 and 31m of the individual buildings). These spaces are only recognisable as accessible spaces by the wheelchair symbol. They are similar size to 'standard' car parking spaces, with no hatching to clearly differentiate the spaces from their neighbours. An ideal recommendation is to have these spaces re-marked with appropriate hatching and dimensions.
- The entrances of Garth House and Hornton Grange are inaccessible, with access to through the main entrance needing one to negotiate steps, although an alternative accessible entrance is available.
- The Hornton Grange Accommodation Blocks have level access from the accessible car park spaces into each block.

2.2.2 In all instances, the car park areas are uncovered, open air spaces, with visitors being discharged onto a level tarmac surface

2.3 Entrance Doors

2.3.1 All of the access doors are manually operable and are heavy.

- Peter Scott House and Lucas House each have 2 double door sets which open outwards requiring visitors to pull the doors to gain entry.
- Garth House and Hornton Grange have traditional 'front door' arrangements with single door entrances which open inwards requiring visitors to push to gain entry.

2.3.2 In each case the operable door opening is wider than the 800mm minimum standard for an entrance.

2.4 Reception Arrangements

2.4.1 The main reception for the Conference Park accommodation is managed via Lucas House. Visitors not being accommodated within Lucas House are directed to the neighbouring properties accordingly. The accessible bedrooms are located within Peter Scott House and the Hornton Grange Accommodation Blocks.

- Peter Scott House is adjacent to Lucas House with a sloping pathway linking the two buildings. This route is well lit, with a gradient sloping towards Peter Scott House, with limited 'landing' levels built into the slope.
 - Garth House and the Accommodation Blocks 400 and 500 are on the opposite side of Edgbaston Park Road.
- 2.4.2 The reception desk at Lucas House is situated within 8m of the main entrance, with level access and a lowered section for wheelchair using visitors or persons of small stature.
- 2.4.3 There are no permanent facilities in place to assist visitors with a hearing impairment. It is recommended that a portable induction loop is permanently located on the reception desk, with the appropriate symbol being visible to visitors who may require such a service.
- 2.4.4 Lighting levels are good and there are no distractions such as background or piped music in this area.
- 2.4.5 Assistance should be available to visitors / delegates to be accommodated in the neighbouring buildings.
- 2.4.6 Conference Park staff are routinely trained in Diversity Awareness and will therefore have an understanding of the issues relating to the variety of disabilities that visitors may present as users of the Conference Park. It is recommended that welcome and 'orientation' documents offered on registration be available in alternative formats, (e.g. Braille or Large Print), if so required.

2.5 **Access within the Buildings**

2.5.1 Internal access within the buildings varies with the venues

2.5.2 Lucas House

- Access to the public areas of the building, the restaurant, bar, and Conference Rooms available within this building is achievable via the lift, which is situated within 7m of the main entrance of the building.
- The lift services the lower ground, ground and first floors of this building, however the lift ideally requires updating as it does not include;
 - A mirror to aid reversing out of the lift
 - A visual floor indicator
 - An audible floor announcer
 - The controls are set at an inappropriate height for a wheelchair user

- The controls have neither tactile nor Braille markings
- The lift does not allow access to the 2nd floor
- Access to the various public spaces is via reasonably wide, well-lit corridor spaces.

2.5.3 Peter Scott House

- Access to all floors is achievable via the lift, which is situated within 5m of the main entrance, however the lift ideally requires updating as it does not include;
 - A mirror to aid reversing out of the lift
 - An audible floor announcer
 - The controls have neither tactile nor Braille markings
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- Access to the various public spaces is via reasonably wide, well-lit corridor spaces.

2.5.4 Garth House / Hornton Grange / Hornton Grange Accommodation Blocks (400 & 500)

- Access for mobility restricted visitors would be limited to the ground floor as these buildings do not have lift facilities, it must be noted that some of the corridor spaces with Hornton Grange and Garth House have narrow, restricted access.

2.6 **Bar and Restaurant facilities**

- 2.6.1 The bar / restaurant facilities on the Conference Park can be provided at Hornton Grange and Lucas House, with the former offering catering facilities for private hire events, (such as weddings)and conferences, whilst Lucas House provides catering facilities for the hotel residents, conference delegates and private functions.
- 2.6.2 Apart from evening service at Lucas House, where full table service is offered to individuals and small groups, there are no such arrangements for other meal times, (although this could be arranged, if requested). Day time table service at Hornton Grange is mainly restricted to private hire events).
- 2.6.3 When table service is not in operation, food is ordered from a service counter. Special arrangements would need to be made for wheelchair visitors
- 2.6.4 The menus are hand-held format only and are not readily available in Braille or 'large print' format. It is recommended that the Conference Park investigates the provision of the menus in alternative formats, if so required.

- 2.6.5 Drinks can be purchased from the separate bar areas, neither venue has a lowered section of the bar

2.7 General Facilities

- 2.7.1 Accessible toilet facilities within Garth House and Hornton Grange are available on the ground floor, with similar facilities available on the lower ground floor of Lucas House, with each facility offering appropriate grab rails etc. associated with such facilities.
- 2.7.2 Emergency alarms facilities are provided within the accessible toilets within Hornton Grange and Lucas House rooms, local management must ensure that such emergency facilities are not tied up, (for the convenience of cleaning staff), out of reach. Such emergency pull cords must be available at a height no higher than 100mm from the floor level, in order to be accessible to a person lying prone on the floor after a fall.
- 2.7.3 If activated the alarm will be activated at the reception desk, which is manned 24/7.
- 2.7.4 Within Hornton Grange, the alarm in the accessible toilet activates a light and an audible alarm, which would attract the attention local staff on duty.
- 2.7.5 There is no emergency alarm fitted into the accessible toilet within Garth House.

2.8 Conference Room Facilities

- 2.8.1 Within Garth House, there are four rooms available on the ground floor with a variety of capacities, the largest arrangement being 25, the smallest being 8.
- 2.8.2 By virtue of being on the ground floor these spaces are reasonably accessible
- 2.8.3 At Hornton Grange, there are 8 Conference Rooms available offering a variety of options in terms of seating style and capacity; the largest group that can be accommodated being 60, the lowest 8.
- 2.8.4 Of these 8 rooms, only those on the ground floor are accessible as vertical circulation can only be achieved via the stairs there being no lift installed within this building.
- 2.8.5 At Lucas House, there 4 Conference Room available, with capacities ranging from 8 to 80, however only 3 of these rooms are accessible as the lift car only services the lower ground, ground and first floors.

- 2.8.6 Within Peter Scott House, there are 5 accessible Conference Rooms, with a maximum capacity of 45 and a lowest of 8.
- 2.8.7 The Conference Park has access to an additional conference space within the neighbouring Nicolson Building which offers facilities for up to 120 delegates.
- 2.8.8 None of the Conference Rooms available across the Conference Park have assisted hearing systems to assist persons with hearing impairments. It is recommended that such facilities should be investigated in the future with respect to any refurbished space or future redevelopments.

2.9 Bedrooms

- 2.9.1 The Conference Park accommodation comprises 106 en-suite bedrooms across 5 venues, Garth House, Hornton Grange Accommodation Blocks 400 & 500, Lucas House and Peter Scott House.
- 2.9.2 The accommodation available across the Conference Park is offered in the following format:
- Garth House – 9 rooms in total (1 double room and 8 singles - none of which are accessible).
- Hornton Grange Accommodation Blocks 400 & 500 – 32 rooms in total (17 double rooms, 11 twin rooms, 4 single rooms – of which 2 are accessible rooms)
- Lucas House – 30 rooms in total (10 double rooms, 4 twin rooms, 16 single rooms - none of which are accessible)
- Peter Scott House – 35 rooms in total (1 double room, 2 twin rooms, 32 single rooms – of which 2 are accessible)
- 2.9.3 There are a total of 4 accessible bedrooms available within the current portfolio of bedrooms available within the Conference Park, which equates to 3.8% of the total available rooms, compared to the recommendation within BS8300:2009 which suggests that 5% of all rooms should be wheelchair accessible.
- 2.9.4 All of the accessible facilities are situated on the ground floor of the buildings wherein offered. These are rooms 6 and 7 within Peter Scott House and rooms 408 and 508 within the Hornton Grange Accommodation Blocks.
- 2.9.5 Whilst accessible bedrooms are available, none of the rooms provide auxiliary aides for persons with mobility impairments, visitors / delegates required to bring their own equipment.

- 2.9.6 None of the rooms have auxiliary aids for persons with sensory impairments.
- 2.9.7 Assistance Dogs are welcome to accompany delegates / visitors when using visiting and staying at the Conference Park and are welcome in any of the bedrooms.
- 2.9.8 All of the accessible facilities offered are single bedrooms, which precludes disabled visitors staying in the Conference Park with partners etc.
- 2.9.9 There is no adjoining rooms available within the Conference Park, (for assistants or helpers), to be accommodated.
- 2.9.10 Within the accessible rooms there is sufficient space for a 'turning circle' for most powered or manual wheelchairs in order to allow manoeuvrability within the room.
- 2.9.8 The facilities such as the beds and light switches are positioned at accessible heights from the floor, allowing for their use by a wheelchair user.
- 2.9.9 The colour contrasts within the bedrooms within either venue are good and the lighting levels available are reasonable.
- 2.9.10 Emergency alarms facilities are provided within the accessible rooms at Peter Scott House, (both within the bedroom and en-suite bathroom facilities). Local management must ensure that such emergency facilities are not impeded in any way, as there is evidence that these cords are routinely tied up out of reach, (for example, for the convenience of cleaning staff or when the rooms are utilised by visitors not requiring accessible facilities). When the rooms are to be offered to visitors requiring such facilities, local management must ensure that the emergency pull cords are maintained at no higher than 100mm from the floor level, in order to be accessible to a person lying prone on the floor, in the event of an emergency, such as a fall.
- 2.9.11 There are no emergency alarms fitted within the accessible bedrooms in the Hornton Grange Accommodation Blocks. It would be advisable for such a pull-cord alarm to fitted, which, on activation, would alert staff at the main Conference Park reception at Lucas House, which is manned 24/7.

2.10 Bathroom facilities

- 2.10.1 The bathroom facilities within the accessible bedrooms within the locations offered on the Conference Park offer shower facilities plus a standard Doc M toilet installation, together with the aids and adjustments one would associate with accessible facilities, including;

- appropriately positioned grab rails
 - installation of lever operable taps
 - appropriately positioned mirror facilities
 - drop-down shower seat, set at 420mm from the floor level
 - emergency alarms with pull-cord systems, which should, on activation, alert staff at the main Conference Park reception at Lucas House.
- 2.10.2 Within Peter Scott House the doors into the en-suite bathrooms are via sliding doors, whilst at the Hornton Accommodation Blocks the doors open outwards into the bedroom space. Both types of door are locked with a twist, thumb-turn type of lock.
- 2.10.3 The shower facilities within the accessible bedrooms within both venues have adjustable shower head positions, with controls that are 'twist/turn' for the user.
- 2.10.4 The position of the hand wash basin varies between the two venues. The accessible bathroom facilities within the Hornton Grange Accommodation Blocks has a hand wash basin which is within the required tolerance of distance from the toilet pan, allowing the user to wash their hands whilst seated on the toilet. The position of the hand wash basins in Peter Scott House do not allow this.
- 2.10.5 The colour contrasts within the bathroom facilities, and those contrasting the en-suite facilities to the bedroom are good in either venue.
- 2.10.6 An additional feature of an accessible bathroom and toilet exists within Peter Scott House along the corridor leading from the communal area of the ground floor to the position of the accessible bedrooms, rooms 6 and 7. This feature includes:
- a toilet with appropriately positioned grab rails
 - appropriately positioned hand wash basin
 - a bath with grab rails
 - an emergency alarm with a pull cord.

3. Future Proposals

- 3.1 There is a proposal to develop the Conference Park on a single site solution on the western side of Edgbaston Park Road, providing both Conference Centre and Hotel facilities.
- 3.2 By developing a single site option, the new facility will address the most significant challenge to access across the existing site, the requirement to cross Edgbaston Park Road.
- 3.3 The new facility should be designed to be accessible by design and in accordance with the anticipatory duty of the Equality Act 2010, to

anticipate that the first/next visitor to the facility would be a person with a disability whether sensory or mobility-related.

- 3.4** The new facility should incorporate fully accessible facilities throughout, attempting to address the access needs of as many potential visitors as possible, therefore addressing sensory as well as mobility-related disabilities within the new facilities created.
- 3.5** In order to maximise the utility and utilisation of the rooms, the future design should be designed and furnished to be as accessible as possible. (When not required by wheelchair users, the accessible rooms should be made available for non-wheelchair users, possibly with the utilisation of height adjustable beds and making adjustments to the alarm cables etc. for instance). This would require careful 'local management linked to the registration procedures of the hotel facility.
- 3.6** The new Conference Facilities should be designed to address sensory disabilities such as the introduction of assisted hearing systems into the Conference rooms and reception as standard.