

# Guide to meeting the requirements of Part M on vertical circulation in non-domestic buildings

Technical guidance for building control surveyors, designers and architects



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## Introduction

To assist in determining the most appropriate way of achieving vertical circulation in non-domestic buildings, this guidance offers alternative ways that compliance with the Building Regulations may be achieved. The Building Regulations, and its supporting Approved Document M 'Access to and use of buildings', set out how all new and altered buildings can meet minimum standards on accessibility for all people.

Approved Document M recommends that it is preferable to provide a passenger lift in all non-domestic buildings of two storeys or more. It recognises that in some buildings a conventional passenger lift may not always be possible and sets out alternative ways that compliance with the Building Regulations may be achieved.

## Key Issues

The objective of Part M of the Building Regulations is to enable people to travel vertically within buildings conveniently and without discomfort in order to make use of all relevant facilities. Therefore, the provision of a lift must be seen as the most suitable solution for vertical travel. Whatever lifting device is chosen, internal stairs should always be provided as set out in Approved Document K (protection from falling, collision and impact).

Approved Document M (section 4.1) states people must have access to and use of all facilities provided in a building. They should also be able to participate in proceedings, which include lecture/conference facilities, and at entertainment and leisure amenities as participants, audience or staff. It further states in section 4.14 that all public areas should be accessible; this includes lavatories, public telephones and terraces.

Where it is proposed that a full passenger lift is not installed, an access statement should be provided setting out the reasoning for such a decision. This should include factors on equality, employability and any potential discrimination that may result. Floor area and use, occupancy levels and the height of the building are also significant factors.

Approved Document M (2004 edition incorporating 2010 and 2013 amendments) does not take account of the floor area of buildings when considering the need for the provision of a lifting device.

## Meeting the requirements of Part M

In new buildings, the presumption is people will, wherever possible be provided with a full passenger lift as set out in Approved Document M. In existing or extended buildings it is more likely that a case may be put forward for not meeting the requirements on full accessibility; however it must be remembered the intention of the Building Regulations is for all existing non-domestic buildings that are materially altered or extended to be accessible to all.

On some small scale new developments with particular constraints (e.g. historic buildings or an infill site in an historic town centre) a vertical lifting platform or wheelchair platform lift may be suitable in place of a full passenger lift. Such alternative solutions should be supported by a full access statement.



Single seat stair-lifts and wheelchair stair-lifts may help with compliance

Of key importance is the use of the building. If there is no public access on upper floors and it can be demonstrated the type of work activity specifically precludes people with disabilities, the provision of a full passenger lift may be considered unreasonable. However, this decision cannot be made without knowing the intended occupancy and usage of the building. Account should also be taken of possible future changes in occupancy type.

Factors that may influence the provision of or type of lift chosen:

- Access is to one or two floors only and the area is limited
- Occupancy/floor space factors are low
- The building does not exceed three storeys
- Floor space does not contain a unique facility
- The constraints of the building preclude alterations, particularly if it is of historic interest
- Means of escape provision may not be achieved due to floor space/layout constraints
- Members of the public are not permitted on the floor
- Nature of business precludes the use of persons with significant mobility difficulties
- Space constraints of a site or unusual/irregular plan layout may limit provision of a passenger lift
- All of the “unique facilities” and an accessible WC could be provided at an accessible level
- Management arrangements are in place to cater for employees with a disability and visitors
- The provision of certain types of lifting devices may restrict means of escape routes i.e. stairlifts.

#### Factors to consider when deciding on the provision of lifts

In new buildings there is an “expectation” that a passenger lift will be provided, but there may be circumstances where an alternative option is acceptable. This may include small low rise buildings, parts of buildings with low occupancy factors, or extensions and material changes of use of buildings.

The requirement is for “reasonable” provision to be made for people to gain access to and use the building and its facilities. This allows for a variation of the requirements in cases where the provision of a passenger lift might be considered unduly onerous.

Ways of demonstrating compliance with Part M.

- Full passenger lift plus at least one general access stair (preferred option)
- Platform lift or access to a goods lift plus at least one general access stair
- Wheelchair platform stair-lift plus at least one general access stair
- Single folding seat stair-lift plus at least one general access stair
- At least one general access stair or ramp
- (Minimum option, exceptional cases only)



A lift must be seen as the most suitable solution for vertical travel

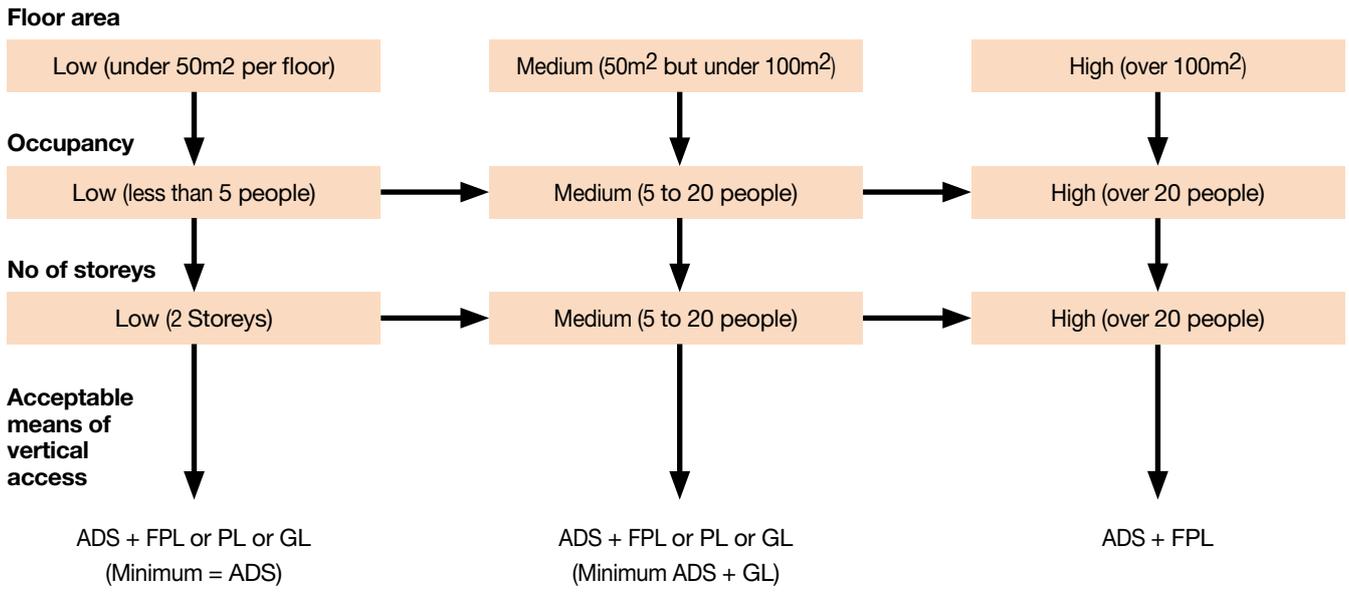
In every case where a full passenger lift is not to be installed, the access statement should state the reasons why, and include what alternative facilities are being provided. Whilst a small floor area or low occupancy may be a reason for the non-provision of a lift, judgment should not be made solely on these factors.

If it is decided a lift is not required, provision for future easy installation should be recommended. Whilst a building may be considered too small for a lift, future extension may trigger a requirement for a lift. Consideration should be given to future installation through the provision of a removable section of floor in a suitable location.

At all times it is important to consider whether the lack of any vertical lift device will prejudice any of the buildings users or occupants.

**Table A** offers a work flow approach to the decision making process.

**Table A – Means of vertical circulation in non domestic buildings**



When using the flowchart, if any of the three factors (floor area, occupancy or number of storeys) moves from low to medium or medium to high then the higher requirement should be applied.

there is no danger to the user at the points of access or egress, the controls are in accordance with ADM, and assistance or a call alarm is available

**Key to types of lift/means of access**

- ADS** = General access stairs
- FPL** = Full passenger lift,
- PL** = Wheelchair platform Lift,
- GL** = Use of goods lift,

**Notes:**

1. Floor areas slightly greater than 100m<sup>2</sup> may be acceptable in certain circumstances if justified in the access statement
2. The use of a goods lift should only be considered where

3. Single seat stair-lifts and wheelchair stair-lifts may be used where the total rise is one storey or less and the width of the stairs is such that they do not impede means of escape
4. When considering the type of lift provision, account should be taken of all the factors included in this guidance
5. Whilst the above are minimum provisions, the aim should be to use the best possible means of access available given the constraints of the building and, therefore, a higher level of provision is always preferable.

**Key points to consider**

- A full passenger lift plus at least one general access stair is always the preferred option
- Approved Document M takes no account of the floor area of buildings when considering the need for the provision of a lifting device

- In all cases where a full passenger lift is not installed an access statement should be provided to justify this
- If a lift is not provided provision for future easy installation of a lift should be recommended
- Always consider whether the lack of any vertical lift device will prejudice any of the building's users or occupants.

**Further guides and useful links**

Approved Document M [http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR\\_PDF\\_AD\\_M\\_2013.pdf](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR_PDF_AD_M_2013.pdf)

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