

Gunners focus on accessibility

The Emirates Stadium is one of the most spectacular and technologically advanced football stadiums in Europe, incorporating state-of-the-art facilities with stunning features – it is also one of the most accessible stadiums in the world



Designed by HOK Sport, the venue at Ashburton Grove is at the centre of a £390 million project that opened in July 2006 and became fully operational for the start of the 2006-2007 football season.

HOK designed the £200 million stadium with a strong emphasis on public access. The designers reduced the secure area of the stadium to within the building itself, so freeing up outside areas to be used as public spaces.

The stadium sits on a

podium above ground level, separating the pedestrian area from the traffic below.

The podium is carved out so the stadium's entrance plaza is at street level. This area is designed as the development's 'front door'. The plaza is bounded by the club's box office, the stadium's disabled entrance and a 10,000m² megastore. From the plaza, a sweeping ramp and stairs lead to the east and west sides of the podium.

Eight cores each house four stairways, a passenger lift

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plus service access. They are also useful landmarks for helping spectators find their seats. The seating bowl is arranged into four tiers. Lower and upper levels accommodate general admission spectators while the middle and box tiers accommodate club and corporate spectators.

Very little provision has been made for fans arriving by car. Instead, the developers aimed to ensure Arsenal continues its good record for use of public transport in line with Islington's green policies. ▶



Currently, 70% of fans arrive by bus, train or London Underground, the highest proportion in the Premiership.

Facilities for disabled supporters include places for up to 390 wheelchair users – 240 places are located throughout the general spectator areas. This exceeds the recommended minimum seating provision set out in the Government's Guide to Safety at Sports Ground legislation.

Disabled supporters who have first registered with the club are then eligible to buy match tickets at the concessionary rate of half-price for themselves and free for their carer/companion. The same rule applies for disabled away supporters.

The stadium includes provision for match day parking for more than 100 disabled people holding valid blue disabled parking badges.

For easy stadium access, the stadium is divided into four colour-coded quadrants – orange and blue at the North end of the stadium, and yellow and green to the South.

Surface finishes, street furniture, landscaping, lighting and signage both in and around the ground reflect the needs of all disabled people.

The stadium is fully Part M and BS8300 compliant and features include:

- Ramped, stepped and lift access to all public areas
- Wayfinding features
- Disabled seating on all levels
- Baby changing facilities (non-match days)
- Fully accessible media facilities
- Ambulant/disabled changing room facilities for stewards and staff
- Toilet facilities for guide dogs, unique to Arsenal

“THIS EXCEEDS THE RECOMMENDED MINIMUM SEATING PROVISION SET OUT IN THE GOVERNMENT'S GUIDE TO SAFETY AT SPORTS GROUND LEGISLATION”

- Low counters to all shop/food/service areas
- Headphone commentary available for the visually impaired
- Induction loops

Parvez Aslam, Islington Council's Building Control Manager, said: “The council's Building Control Team and Access Officers played an integral role in the stadium's design from the initial stages.

“This enabled a number of issues to be easily discussed and resolved throughout the





▶ construction process. For example, the stadium's fire safety design had to be capable of evacuating people with disabilities quickly and safely if a fire occurred, so evacuation lifts and safe waiting areas have been accommodated.

"Stewards have all been trained so they know the right procedures for evacuating people, including those with disabilities.

"Our Building Control and Licensing Officer, Geoff Weaver, worked closely with the stadium's designers to

decide where to position signs and made sure they were used consistently before it became a problem."

Islington Council's former Access Officer, Alan Kerr, said: "Arsenal were very keen from the off to go that extra mile as far as Part M and disability accessibility was concerned with, initially, bi-monthly meetings with disabled supporters that included people with a range of impairments, both sensory and physical.

"The group was asked their views on a variety of different

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topics and included, amongst other things, types of handrails and textured surfaces. The club have clearly set the standards for others to follow," he added.

The stadium management continue to review arrangements and work closely with the Council on both safety and licensing issues.