



Access Statement for Guided Tours of Lancaster Castle

August 2023



This access statement does not contain personal opinions as to our suitability for those with access needs but aims to accurately describe the facilities and services that we offer all our visitors.

Information in alternative format

This access statement can be provided in large print on request.

ACCESS STATEMENT FOR LANCASTER CASTLE

Lancaster Castle is located on top of a hill, approaches from all directions are steep. The visitor entrance is the main gateway to the castle at the front of the building known as the John O'Gaunt Gate.

Entry to the courtyard area is free of charge.

Guided tours run regularly throughout the day between 10:00 and 16:00 (specific tour times vary and are subject to change). The admission price for guided tours is:

- Adults £8.00
- Concessions £6.50 (over 65, people with a disability, unwaged and students)
- Children £6.50 (under 5s free)
- "Family Ticket" £ 22.50– Two full price and 2 concessions/children; 1 full price and 3 concessions/children; 4 concessions/children (one of whom must be over 16 years).
- Carers – free

The tour incorporates the (outdoor) castle courtyards, A Wing, C Wing, the Old Cells, Hadrian's Tower, Crown Court, Shire Hall, Grand Jury Room and Drop Room, and exits through the rear of the building. Access across the site (and thus on the tour itself) is via uneven floor surfaces. The tour route has changing floor levels, low doorways and flights of stairs throughout. Tours last approximately 60-75 minutes.

The tour route is not suitable for pushchairs or buggies. If your infant is able to walk, or you are able to carry your infant for the duration of the tour, there is a place part-way round the route where buggies can be left, on request, at your own risk. **The tour route is also not suitable for wheelchairs.** Visitors with limited mobility are asked to please call ahead to speak directly to our tour guides.

Access for out-of-hours tours is via the door at the rear of the castle, opposite the Priory Church. This is for private tour bookings only and will be mentioned at the time of booking.

PRE-ARRIVAL

Lancaster Castle is located in the centre of the city and is signposted from junctions 33 and 34 of the M6 motorway. The castle is situated at the top of a hill, and so **all pedestrian routes to the building are via a steep climb.** The castle is approximately 300m from the railway station and 450m from the bus station. The streets surrounding



the castle are a mixture of paving flags, cobbles, and tarmac, and are very uneven in places.

ARRIVAL & CAR PARKING FACILITIES

Please note that the Lancaster City Council car park known as "Castle Car Park" does not belong to the castle and is located a significant way from it (>350m and up a very steep hill).

There is **no dedicated visitor parking** at the castle although there is a small private car park at the back of the building where (by prior arrangement) we will always try to accommodate visitors with mobility problems. Limited-mobility visitors are strongly recommended to contact us in advance with regard to car parking. Any visitor using the private car park will need to provide a vehicle registration number so that that we can inform security.

The area immediately outside the gatehouse is cobbled and extremely uneven [Photo 1] but it is possible for vehicles to drop off/pick up people with mobility problems there. It should be emphasised however that this is not always possible and can only be offered by prior arrangement. Permission will be required from castle security (non-LCC). Call ahead on 01524 64998 to arrange a drop off. Vehicles cannot enter the perimeter of the walls.

The private car park is lit at night by streetlight-style lamps. It is primarily tarmac and generally level, with some cobbles on the lower part of the approach to it. From the car park, access to the gatehouse involves walking around the walls keeping the castle on your left.

This car park is a 300m walk from the ticket office in the castle courtyard – the route is partially over a tarmacked path but is sometimes over uneven, cobbled, surfaces, there is one step up and one step down each way. The route traverses paths not administered by LCC. At the gatehouse end this path is particularly steep and is cobbled. The width of the gatehouse is 3 metres 30 centimetres.

There are also 'pay and display' spaces around the castle perimeter, and other car parks are available within walking distance. 'Blue badge' holders should consult Lancaster City Council policies in regard to the use of blue badges in pay and display spaces (Tel. 01524 582000).

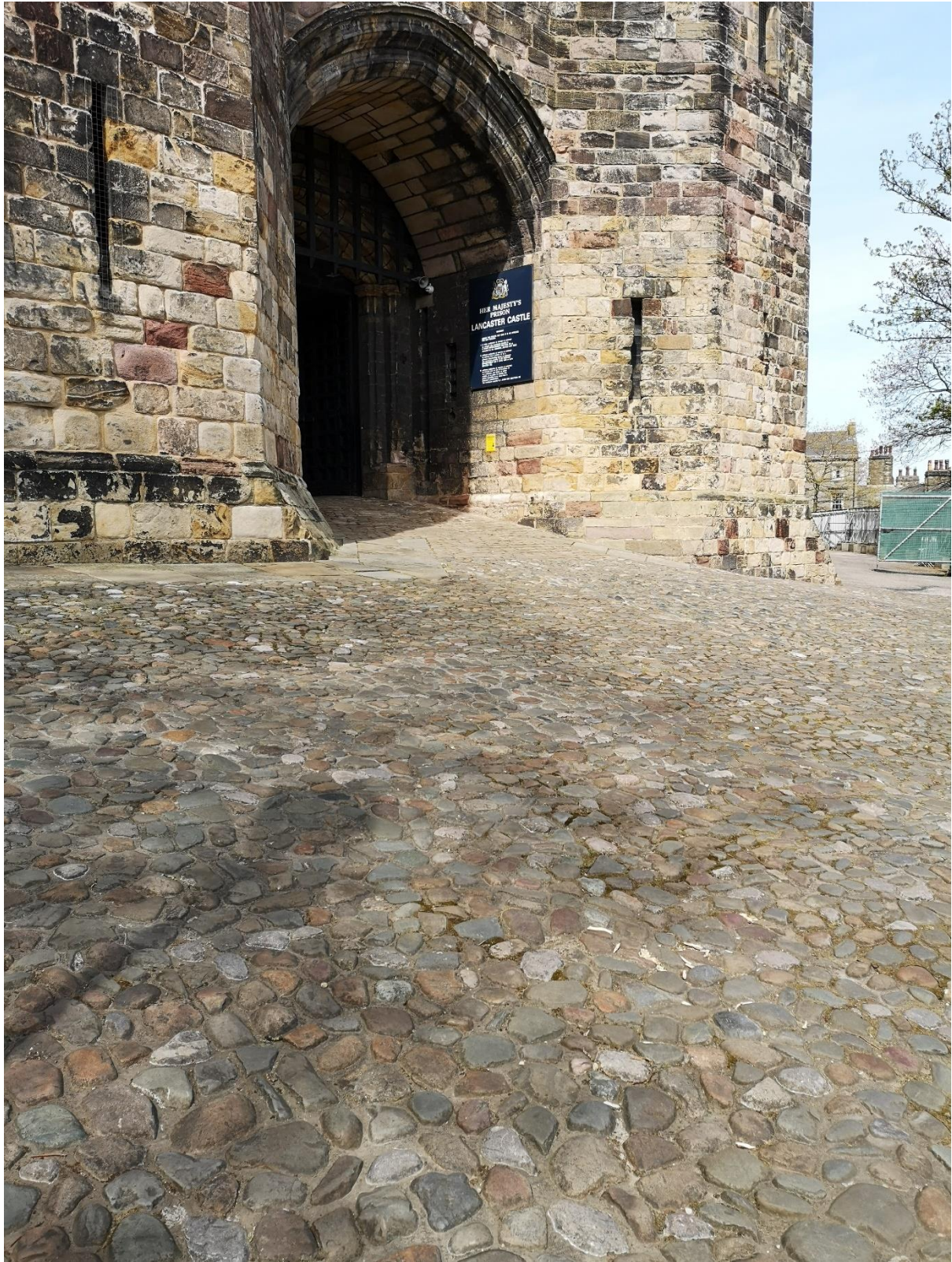


Photo 1: The Approach to the Gatehouse

THE TOUR ROUTE

The tour route is across multiple floor levels with no lift/ramp access and is only traversable via stairs. Upon request buggies, prams, wheelchairs etc. can be left in a designated spot prior to the start of the tour at the owner's risk. This designated space is not covered or supervised. Please ask a member of staff before the tour if you would like to do this. Baggage and personal belongings cannot be stored anywhere on site at any time, including with buggies, prams or wheelchairs.

There are a total of **85 stair-steps (risers)** on the tour route (20 up, 65 down). The longest stretch of steps down consists of 28 risers, the longest stretch of stairs up consists of 14 risers. There is a 2-3m section of ascending/sloped floor with no handrail. There are no handrails within the Shire Hall Courtroom itself (a large room approx. 25m wide) and visitors are reminded not to use the backs of the seating as a handrail because the chairs are not fixed to the ground and will not support a person's weight.

The tour starts in the former prison/courtyard. Floor surfaces in the former prison are a mixture of flagstone, cobbles, tarmac and concrete. Particular care should be taken of steep steps and deep drainage gullies. In the former prison these are not white lined. The prison blocks visited in the former prison (A Wing and C Wing) are lit with bulbs/tubes etc., A Wing has a glass ceiling and is well lit with natural light. C Wing has much lower light levels and is sometimes dark/gloomy compared to the external courtyards where the tour comes in. A Wing has a narrow doorway (66cm width) and small step near the final entrance door (depth of step 3.5cm) [See Photos 8,9 and 10]. C Wing can only be accessed via a steep flight of 8 steps up (and down again on exit) [Photo 7].

From the former prison the tour moves inside the court complex. The tour goes to a number of different height levels within the building which require the ascent and descent of flights of stairs (detailed above). There is limited seating in most of the rooms viewed on the tour. Floor surfaces in the court complex are a mixture of flagstone, vinyl, stone, concrete and wood. The courtrooms themselves are well lit, with a variety of bulbs/tubes used, including fluorescent, low energy bulbs, LEDs, fibre optics, spotlights and floodlighting. The exit for the tour is via the rear of the building which leads on to the previously mentioned private car park. In total the tour route is approximately 350-400m in distance travelled. Visitors should note the distance from the tour exit back to the ticket office is approximately 300m (keeping the castle walls on your left), this is across an area not administered by the County Council and is outside the grounds of Lancaster Castle. Visitors will not be accompanied by LCC staff when traversing this route. Visitors should be aware that whilst the footpath around the castle is itself even there is a step up (22cm) and a step down (13cm) to reach/exit it and a very steep, very uneven, cobbled ramp between it and the main castle gate. [See Photos 11 and 12].

Some of the rooms on the tour are small and can cause some people to feel claustrophobic. It is not possible to socially distance if the tour group is large (we take up to 49 people per tour). There is often a strong contrast in light levels (and sometimes temperature) moving into the Old Cells from the courtyard. No ambient sounds are used in our interpretation although some of the rooms are very echoey

(notably the Shire Hall) and there is a gentle electrical buzz from some of the lights (and fire alarm air sampling systems) in the court complex. Visitors will occasionally hear unexpected banging noises either from high winds affecting doors/windows and/or building users and contractors working around the site.

Due to the use of the Shire Hall complex as a crown court building, we are unable to provide interior photographs for that part of the guided tour.

OUT-OF-HOURS (COURT-COMPLEX ONLY) TOURS

Please note that because out-of-hours tours enter the building via a different door the tour route for these differs and does not include areas of the former prison. The out-of-hours tour route has a total of 131 stair-step risers (65 up, 66 down). If required, we are able to adjust the tour route for privately-booked out-of-hours tours upon request (NB whilst we can reduce the number of stairs traversed there is no route that can avoid them altogether).

TOUR SUMMARY:

Step-free access: No

Number of step/stairs: 85 (20 up, 65 down)

Lighting: Mixed

Floor surfaces: Mixed, sometimes uneven and steep

Route length: Approximately 350-400m (tour) plus 300m return route to ticket office/courtyard. Total 650-700m

Duration: 60-75mins





Photo 2: The Lower Courtyard



Photo 3: Ramp adjacent to the cloister and tour booking office

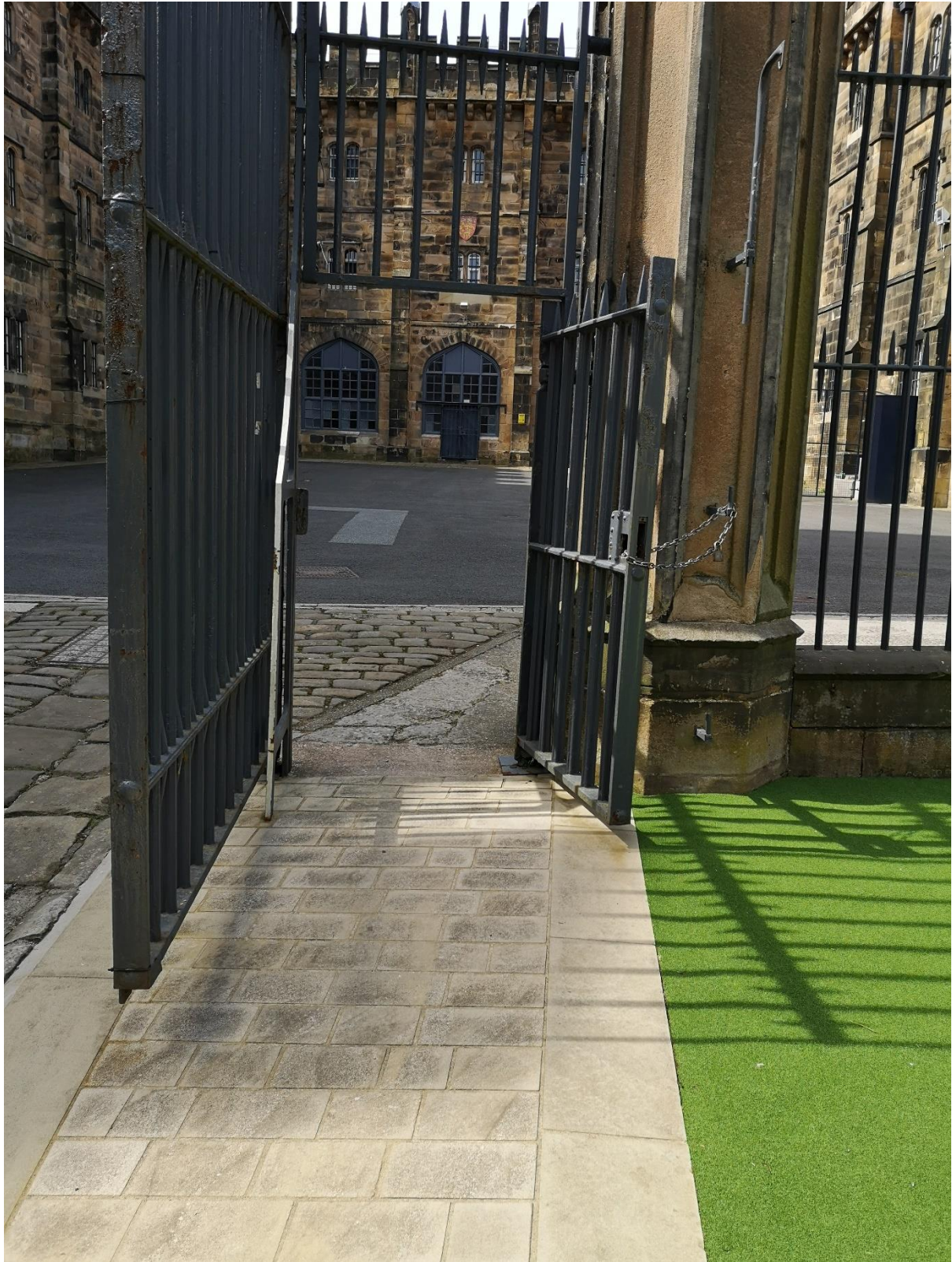


Photo 4: Entrance to the Upper Courtyard



Photo 5: The Upper Courtyard



Photo 6: Chapel Yard



Photo 7: Steps to Access C Wing



Photo 8: Doorway to A Wing



Photo 9: Narrow doorway to A Wing



Photo 10: Step to Access A Wing



Photo 11: Step to Access Perimeter Path (outside castle site)



Photo 12: Step from Perimeter Path (outside the castle site) nr. Main Gate

TOILETS

A disabled toilet is available on site, it is located in the toilet block adjacent to the café in the former prison. There are public toilets in the same area. The toilets are lit by low energy bulbs or fluorescent tubes. The floors are vinyl and the taps are a mixture of standard fittings, push fittings and lever fittings. Baby changing facilities are also located here. (These toilets are not accessible on out-of-hours tours because they are located in the former prison).

Access to toilets on the guided tour itself is severely limited. Prospective visitors are advised to contact the castle on 01524 64998 if limited access to toilets might be problematic and to discuss specific arrangements prior to a planned visit.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Visitors are alerted to a fire emergency within the Castle courtyards and/or former prison buildings via audible sounders (in A Wing there is also a flashing light).

Visitors are alerted to a fire emergency within the Shire Hall Complex via audible sounders and flashing lights.

All Lancashire County Council staff are trained in emergency evacuation procedures and a safety announcement is made prior to the start of all tours.

All Lancashire County Council staff also receive relevant equality and diversity training.

Assistance dogs are welcome.

Colin Penny: Museum Manager

Lancaster Castle Museum

The Shire Hall

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