



# ALBION AUTISM GUIDE



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**WELCOME TO THE HAWTHORNS, OUR HOME SINCE 1900. WE HOPE THAT WE CAN PROVIDE SOME USEFUL INFORMATION FOR YOU TO HELP YOU PLAN IF YOU'RE CONSIDERING JOINING US FOR A MATCH.**

We are very proud to say that the Albion Family is a truly diverse fan base, and we look to making The Hawthorns as accessible as possible so that all fans are safe and cared for when attending the stadium, whatever their needs.

Over recent years we have made many improvements to the facilities and services that we provide to all visitors whether that is on a match day or non-match day.

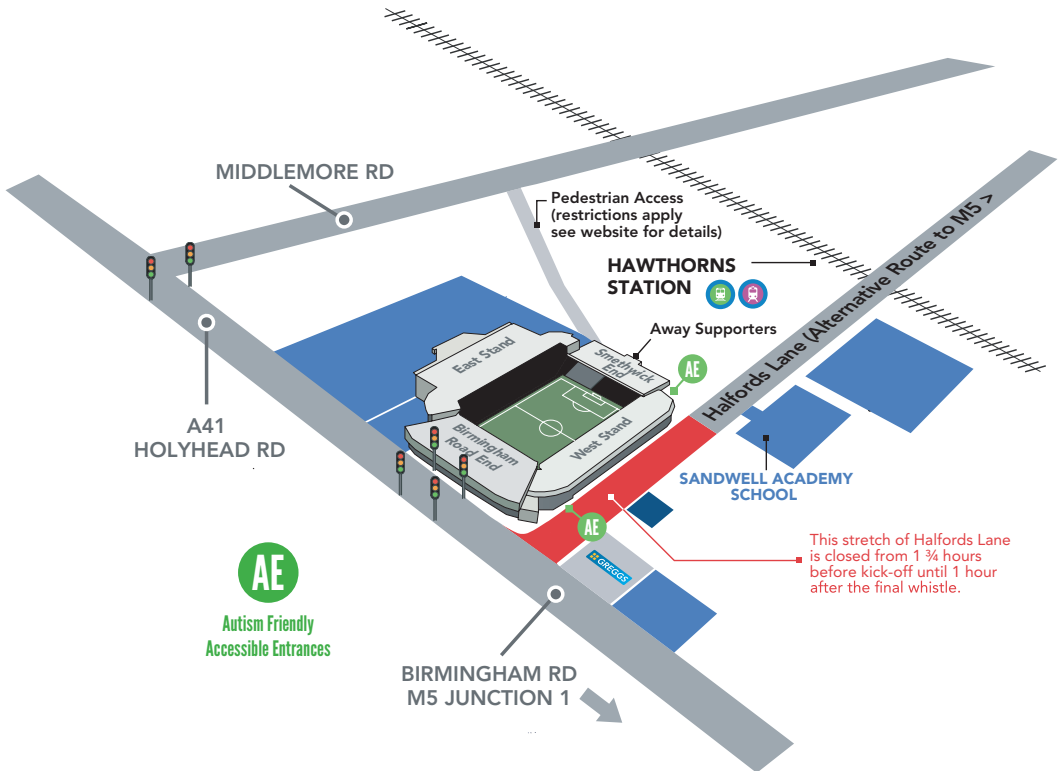
We understand that anyone affected by autism face a particular set of challenges when planning to attend an event where there are lots of people, noise, lights etc.

We hope that the information provided in this 'Supporters Road Map' and the associated video and links will help you to make an informed decision, and should you decide to give the club your support then we look forward to welcoming you to the Albion Family and making your time with us a great experience.



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## THE HAWTHORNS STADIUM



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## CHALLENGES YOU MAY FACE

We understand that for someone with autism and their family, coming to watch 'The Baggies' could be overwhelming and stressful. The noise, lights and smells, as well as the uncertainty of what to expect, could cause anxiety.

Below we present a step by step guide as to what your approach to the stadium would look like, what to expect as you enter, what the facilities look like and then taking up your seats within the stadium. Visit our Autism Guide section on [wba.co.uk](http://wba.co.uk) to watch a video to help you visualise these steps and links to listen to typical matchday noises.

Watching live football can be a brilliant experience, sharing the highs and lows with loved ones and fellow supporters is amazing but we want you to feel safe and secure when doing so.







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## GETTING TO THE STADIUM AND CAR PARKING...

Your mode of transport will most likely dictate where you park and the direction you will approach the stadium. There are numerous privately operated car parks relatively close to the stadium. These vary in price, distance from the stadium and quality of car park surface, and the Club has no control over their activities. However, many have operated for a long time and present no issues and can be a good option depending upon your requirements.

The Club has limited official parking available and it is often sold out, it is advised that you can contact the Ticket Office in advance and enquire as to any availability.

We have excellent Public Transport connections and the local services to the stadium are extensive, however they are often busy and on matchday they can also be very noisy.

For detailed information as to your public transport and parking options then click here for the Access Statement and scroll down to the relevant section.

If you are coming as an organised Group and using a minibus or dedicated coach, then please contact the Club in advance so that arrangements can be made with regards to potential drop – off and pick – up points closer to the Autism Friendly entrance / exit:

For further information, please contact Disability Liaison Officer Liz Massey, email [liz.massey@wbafc.co.uk](mailto:liz.massey@wbafc.co.uk) or contact the Ticket Office on 0121 227 2227





## **WHERE TO SIT? PURCHASING A TICKET, ENTERING AND ACCESSING YOUR SEATS...**

The Hawthorns has four Accessible entrances and exits, the two located in the West Stand have dedicated accessible concourses and refreshment facilities.

The Accessible entrance / exit located at the West Stand / Smethwick End corner is the Autism Friendly entrance / exit.

You may wish to consider purchasing tickets for the Smethwick Corner so that you can access the facilities.

\*Seat block map with S/C highlighted\*

You can purchase your tickets online at [tickets.wba.co.uk](https://tickets.wba.co.uk), by telephone on 0121 227 2227 or in person, visit [wba.co.uk/club/](https://wba.co.uk/club/) opening-hours to check when we are open. We would ask that, wherever possible, you detail the nature of your disability to our Ticket Office so that we are able to assist your purchase in an informed manner and to offer you seats most suited to your requirements (subject to availability).





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## THE AUTISM FRIENDLY ENTRANCE / EXIT – WEST STAND – SMETHWICK END CORNER.

### ADVANTAGES

- The Autism Friendly entrance / exit is signed appropriately (see picture), well lit, on the level and easy for both ambulant and wheelchair users, with access to the seating area on the level.
- 4 disability toilets, the sensory area and a changing place toilet facility.
- Sensory Area has tactile seating and toys, soothing lighting and graphics, a bubble wall and TV with live match feed.
- Has a dedicated refreshment facility, with Sensory Bags available to purchase.
- Has a dedicated Disability Steward, easily identifiable by their white bib with lettering.
- Short walk to seating area at approximately 20 metres.
- An option of some seating that has no further seating behind.
- In that immediate area there is traditionally a relatively stable environment in terms of excessive singing, boisterous behaviour. Please note that all areas of the stadium can experience sudden crowd noises and momentary standing as events take place during the game.
- Great weather protection.

### CHALLENGES

- This entrance / exit is for both home and away disabled fans although there has never been any issues and it has proved to be a nice experience for fans to mix in this location
- The dedicated concourse area can be busy for the initial half hour prior to kick off, at half-time and upon exit at full time.
- Although the seating area is within a separate stand, it is adjacent to a noisy, singing section of the ground in the Smethwick End. The distance between the Smethwick End and Smethwick End corner is approximately 30 metres.
- The seats that have no additional seating behind are accessed up a significant number of steps, seats further down have much fewer steps to navigate but have further seating behind.
- The Sensory Area is not in pitch view.





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**THERE ARE 3 OTHER ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCES / EXITS AVAILABLE IN OTHER AREAS OF THE STADIUM – GATE 6, WEST STAND / BIRMINGHAM ROAD END CORNER AND TWO ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCES / EXITS LOCATED FROM THE EAST STAND CAR PARK..**

***THESE ALLOW ACCESS TO DIFFERENT VIEWING AREAS AND HAVE DIFFERING ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES.***

## ***ADVANTAGES***

- Gate 6, West Stand / Birmingham Road End corner and the East Stand Accessible entrances / exits are signed appropriately (see pictures), well lit, on the level and easy for both ambulant and wheelchair users.
- Gate 6, West Stand / Birmingham Road End corner provides easy access to some of the privately operated car parking on the Birmingham Road, as do the East Stand Accessible entrances / exits.
- Gate 6, West Stand / Birmingham Road End corner provides 4 disability toilets, East Stand Accessible entrances / exits provides two.
- Gate 6, West Stand / Birmingham Road End corner has a dedicated refreshment facility. East Stand Accessible entrances / exits give access to kiosks with lowered counter sections.
- All have dedicated Disability Stewards, easily identifiable by their white bib with lettering. All Stewards receive disability awareness training as part of their NVQ.



## ***CHALLENGES***

- All concourse areas can be busy for the initial half hour prior to kick off, at half-time and upon exit at full time.
- There is no sensory area and no changing place toilet facility – access to these is a considerable distance away in another area of the stadium.
- The travel distance to seating is approximately 30 metres and down a slight ramped / tunnel area.
- A limited option of some seating that has no further seating behind.
- West Stand / Birmingham Road End corner has a traditionally noisy, singing section. The East Stand has a traditionally relatively stable environment in terms of excessive singing, boisterous behaviour but please note that all areas of the stadium can experience sudden crowd noises and momentary standing as events take place during the game.
- Both stands have lesser weather protection and the East Stand has greater exposure to bright sunlight and lighting from the stand and the floodlights.
- The seats that have no additional seating behind are accessed up a significant number of steps, seats further down have much fewer steps to navigate but have further seating behind.





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## STEWARDING AND SEARCHING

All Stewards receive disability awareness training as part of their NVO.

Ground Regulations and security processes require that body & bag searches take place however Stewards will undertake a considered, polite and appropriate approach to searching of bags etc





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## LEAVING THE STADIUM..

All the exits are always stewarded, so should you wish to leave earlier for whatever reason then just contact your nearest Steward who will facilitate your request.

The exit arrangements are a reverse of your access, will always be well lit and clear signage and directions will ensure that you exit safely.

Please note that traditionally (but not always) fans will start to exit the stadium anything from approximately 20 minutes prior to the final whistle (depending on how the match is going of course!)

There is always a busy period for leaving once the final whistle has gone and so concourses and exits will be busy, the surrounding areas of the stadium will also be busy, noisy and sometimes challenging areas to navigate.

Sometimes it is easier to leave a few minutes earlier or if practical, wait for a few minutes after the end of the game to allow people to disperse.

The car parks and traffic pressure after a match is always considerable so please allow for this when planning your attendance.

And that's it ... hopefully we have helped you to make an informed choice and we would love to welcome you to the Albion Family and to join us at a match soon! C'mon You Baggies!

