

Designing Inclusive Buildings

Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing



1. The requirement for Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing

1.1 All new housing must be built to Lifetime Home Standards, and ten per cent of new homes should be designed to be wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable for residents who are wheelchair users. This requirement stems from **London Plan Policy 3A.4: Housing Choice**, which states:

Boroughs should take steps to identify the full range of housing needs within their areas. DPD policies should seek to ensure that:

- ***new developments offer a range of housing choices, in terms of the mix of housing sizes and types, taking account of the housing requirements of different groups***
- ***all new housing is built to ‘Lifetime Homes’ Standards***
- ***ten per cent of new housing is designed to be wheelchair accessible, or easily adaptable for residents who are wheelchair users.***

1.2 The advice which follows will assist planning applicants to demonstrate compliance with London Plan Policy 3A.4 as applied in Kingston upon Thames. Failure to demonstrate such compliance is likely to lead to planning consent being refused.

2. Lifetime Homes

2.1 According to London Plan Policy 3A.4, all new homes in the Borough should be designed to Lifetime Homes Standards which relate to both external and internal design features. It is important to note that this is a planning requirement, and that Lifetime Homes Standards are not the same as the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations.

2.2 The London Plan SPG ‘Accessible London: achieving an inclusive environment’ states:

SPG Implementation Point 12: Lifetime Homes

The Mayor will and boroughs should seek to ensure that all residential units in new housing developments are designed to Lifetime Home standards. These standards should be applied to all new housing, including conversions and refurbishments, and including blocks of flats, for both social housing and private sector housing, and should cater for a varying number of occupants.

2.3 Applicants should therefore ensure that plans submitted for planning permission, together with the accompanying Access Statement, explain how each of the 16 design criteria for Lifetime Homes (see Appendix 1) has been satisfied in the proposal. Dimensions and turning circles should be marked on plans. More comprehensive design guidance on Lifetime Homes Standards, including the differences between these standards and Part M of the Building Regulations, is available at www.lifetimehomes.org.uk

2.4 It is self-evident that homes built to Lifetime Homes Standards will not give maximum benefit unless potential purchasers are aware of all the accessibility features. When marketing homes built to Lifetime Homes standards the developer should draw potential purchasers'/occupiers' attention to the features that lend adaptability, particularly those features such as trimmed joists to facilitate the installation of a future through-floor lift and reinforced walls to take future grab rails in bathrooms that are not evident from a casual inspection of the dwelling.

The provision of lifts in blocks of flats

2.5 Lifetime Homes criterion 5 sets access standards for communal stairs and lifts. It does not state the circumstances in which either stairs or lifts should be provided.

2.6 The Council's view is that a Part M compliant lift is necessary in all new developments where homes are accessed above the ground floor. This will enable people to access their homes when they can no longer use stairs easily, or at all, in accordance with the overall purpose of Lifetime Homes Standards.

3. Wheelchair housing

3.1 London Plan Policy 3A.4 seeks to ensure that 10% of new housing is designed to be wheelchair accessible. This is applicable to both affordable and private housing.

3.2 The London Plan SPG 'Accessible London: achieving an inclusive environment' states:

SPG Implementation Point 13: Wheelchair Housing

In all housing developments, including conversions and changes of use, the Mayor will and boroughs should seek to ensure that 10 per cent of the units are designed to be wheelchair accessible, or easily adaptable for residents who are wheelchair users. This percentage should be applied to both market and affordable housing, should be evenly distributed throughout the development, and cater for a varying number of occupants.

3.3 To achieve the 10% target the Council will reasonably expect 10% of the units on a site to be wheelchair accessible. Clearly a development of 10 dwellings must therefore provide one wheelchair accessible home. A development of 20 dwellings must provide two wheelchair homes, and so on. In those circumstances the 10% calculation works neatly, but on most schemes the 10% requirement will not translate into a whole number of wheelchair units.

3.4 The Council will take a reasonable approach to its requirements and will not always treat the 10% as an absolute minimum. To do so would mean, for example, that on a scheme of 11 dwellings, 2 wheelchair units (18%) would be needed to meet the 10% requirement. This could be considered unreasonable.

3.5 Instead the Council will consider the scale of the development proposed and will round the dwelling numbers up or down to the nearest ten for the purpose of the calculation. For example, if a scheme is closer in scale to a 10 unit scheme than a 20 unit

scheme (i.e. it is for 11 – 14 units) then the Council will only expect one wheelchair unit. If the scheme is closer in scale to a 20 unit scheme (i.e. it is for 15-24 units), the Council would expect to see 2 wheelchair units provided. On schemes of 25-34 units, the requirement would be 3 wheelchair units, and so on. This will result in some schemes providing slightly more than 10%, and others slightly less than 10%, but it is considered to be a reasonable application of the London Plan policy.

3.6 Much of the new housing development in the borough takes place on schemes for fewer than 10 dwellings. If the Council is to meet the 10% target it must therefore secure wheelchair accessible housing on smaller sites wherever possible. The Council will therefore seek at least one wheelchair accessible home on sites for fewer than 10 dwellings wherever practicable.

Designing wheelchair homes

3.7 Again it should be noted that wheelchair accessible housing is a planning requirement and is not covered by the Building Regulations, and relates to both external and internal design features. Full design details of proposed wheelchair accessible homes are normally required with the planning application.

3.8 Full guidance on wheelchair housing standards is provided in the following publications:

- Best Practice Guidance: Wheelchair Accessible Housing (GLA 2007)
- Wheelchair Housing Design Guide (second edition, BRE Press 2006)

3.9 In addition to the above sources of guidance, the Council has the following specific requirements for wheelchair accessible homes built in the Borough (both affordable and private):

- Where wheelchair accessible homes are accessible by lift, there should be the option of using an alternative lift in case of lift failure
- All wheelchair accessible homes should be designed to include a fully wheelchair accessible shower facility (normally achieved by designing a ‘wet room’).
- Wherever possible kitchens and shower rooms should only be fitted out when the needs of the first occupier are known.

3.10 In relation to the design of wheelchair accessible homes, it is good practice for applicants (or their architects) to liaise closely with the Council’s Disability Equality and Access Officer and, in relation to affordable homes, Housing Services, the RSL and the Council’s occupational therapy service.

Marketing wheelchair accessible homes

3.11 The Planning Authority will normally require the insertion of a clause in the legal agreement to ensure that wheelchair accessible homes are marketed and sold to wheelchair users wherever possible. Appendix 2 provides model wording for such a clause (applicants should check with the Council that they have the latest version).

3.12 Developers are required to market wheelchair accessible homes exclusively to wheelchair users for a specified period (usually six months), commencing at the start of marketing of the development as a whole. The marketing plan for wheelchair accessible homes during this specified period has to be submitted to the Planning Authority for approval. In addition, sale of a wheelchair accessible home during this period to someone who is not a wheelchair user requires the prior consent of the Planning Authority.

Further Help

3.14 The Council encourages pre submission advice. Further help can be obtained from The Council's Access Officer, on 020 8547 5355, email: development.management@rbk.kingston.gov.uk.

Appendix I

Lifetime Homes standards

The main criteria of the Lifetime Homes standards are listed below, but full design guidance is contained at www.lifetimehomes.org.uk. Both the lifetime homes website and this document will be used to determine compliance with Lifetime Homes standards for planning purposes.

The 16 Lifetime Homes criteria are as follows:

- 1) The width of the approach, excluding space for a parked car, should take account of the needs of a wheelchair, stick or crutch user. Excluding the car parking space, the path should not be less than 900mm wide. In-curtilage car parking spaces must be capable of enlargement to 3300mm width (generally by having a 900mm path or garden strip adjacent to the 2400mm space for a car).
- 2) Parking should be adjacent or kept to a minimum distance from the dwelling and convenient for disabled people.
- 3) The approach to all entrances should be level or gently sloping.
- 4) All entrances should
 - a) be illuminated
 - b) have accessible level access over the threshold

The main entrance should also be covered. Where the approach to an entrance is ramped, there should be a level landing measuring at least 1200x1200mm in front of the entrance door.

- 5) Communal stairs should provide easy access (in compliance with Part M Approved Document) and where homes are reached by a lift, it should be fully wheelchair accessible (in compliance with Part M Approved Document).¹

¹ The Council's view is that a Part M compliant lift is necessary in all new developments where dwellings are accessed above the ground floor. This will enable people to access their homes when they can no longer use stairs easily, or at all, in accordance with the overall purpose of Lifetime Homes Standards.

- 6) Front doors should have a clear opening width of 800mm. Internal doorways and hallways should be wide enough to allow wheelchair users to manoeuvre into and out of rooms (including one that contains a toilet). There should be 300mm to the side of the leading edge of doors on the entrance level. Door and corridor widths should conform to the following (the deviation from Part M requirements should be noted):

Doorway clear opening width (mm)	Corridor/passageway width (mm)
750	900 (when approach is head on)
750	1200 (when approach is not head on)
775	1050 (when approach is not head on)
900	900 (when approach is not head on)

- 7) There should be space for turning a wheelchair in dining areas and sitting rooms and adequate circulation space for wheelchair users elsewhere. Where furniture layout is shown, a 1500mm diameter or 1800x1400mm elliptical turning space should be shown. In kitchens a minimum 1200mm space between units and the opposite wall will suffice.
- 8) The living room should be at entrance/ground level.
- 9) In houses or apartments of two or more storeys, there should be space on the entrance level that could be used as a convenient bed space.
- 10) In all new dwellings, there should be a wheelchair accessible entrance level WC, with drainage provision for a future shower.
- a) For dwellings with one or two bedrooms, it is sufficient for this toilet to comply with Approved Document M, i.e.:
- There should be clear space to enable a wheelchair user to access the WC, unimpeded by the washbasin.
 - The clear useable space between the front of the WC bowl and the opposite door or wall should be at least 750mm, and the distance from the central line of the cistern to the adjacent wall should be at least 450mm.
 - Where oblique access is needed, there should be a minimum of 250mm to the side of the door.
- b) For dwellings with three or more bedrooms, **or** for dwellings on one level, there are the following additional requirements to make the entrance level WC fully wheelchair accessible::
- A wheelchair user should be able to close the door when inside the toilet. An outward opening door will normally be required.
 - Drainage and space for a future shower must be within or adjacent to the WC (in a flat or bungalow the WC could be an integral part of the bathroom).
 - There should be a minimum 1100mm between the WC pan front rim and the opposite wall.

- There should be at least 700mm clear space beside the WC to enable side-transfer from a wheelchair.
- 11) Walls in bathrooms and toilets should be capable of taking adaptations such as handrails, i.e. should be reinforced between 300 and 1500mm above floor level.
 - 12) In houses or apartments of two or more storeys, the design should incorporate:
 - a) Provision for a future stair-lift. There should be a minimum of 900mm clear distance between the stair wall and the edge of the opposite stair-rail or balustrade. Unobstructed landing space is needed at the top and bottom of the stairs.
 - b) Suitably identified space for a potential through-floor lift from the ground to the first floor, for example to a bedroom next to a bathroom. This is usually accomplished by trimming the joists.
 - 13) The design should provide for a reasonable route for a potential hoist from a main bedroom to the bathroom. This is best provided by incorporating a knock-out panel between the main bedroom and an area of the bathroom unobstructed by fixtures and fittings, although a route via the landing is acceptable.
 - 14) The bathroom should be designed to incorporate ease of access to the bath, toilet and wash basin. This will normally require an outward opening door, and 1100mm between the front rim of the WC pan and the opposite wall.
 - 15) Living room window glazing should begin at 800mm or lower and windows should be easy to open and operate, including by a wheelchair user.
 - 16) Switches, sockets, ventilations and service controls should be at a height usable by all - between 450mm and 1200mm from the floor. (The guidance in Approved Document M should be followed).

Appendix 2

Wheelchair Housing

Draft Section 106 Planning Obligation

- X
- (a) No marketing of any of the residential units hereby permitted shall take place until a scheme for the marketing of the wheelchair housing units comprised within the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority
 - (b) The scheme for the marketing of the wheelchair housing referred to in (a) above shall be for a minimum period of [six] months (starting with the first marketing of the other residential units comprised in the proposed development), and shall include details of the proposed advertising in specialist publications (as recommended by the Council's Access Officer) and the 'Web'
 - (c) During the [six] month marketing period mentioned in (b) above, not to sell any of the wheelchair housing units to persons other than wheelchair users (unless agreed in writing by the local planning authority beforehand)
 - (d)
 - (i) Within [14] days of the end of the [six] month marketing period mentioned in (b) above to provide evidence in writing to the local planning authority to demonstrate that the approved scheme for the marketing of the wheelchair housing has been fully complied with;
 - (ii) To record the number of wheelchair housing units sold to wheelchair users; and
 - (iii) To send that recorded information on sales to the Council's Access Officer within [14] days following the expiry of the six month marketing period referred to in (b) above.
 - (e) In this clause 'wheelchair housing' means the housing comprised within the development specifically designed to meet the needs of wheelchair users (being [identify units])

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