

Housing Standards – Accessible and Adaptable

Background Paper

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On the 1st October 2015 the changes to housing standards came into force. There are four optional standards which can go beyond mandatory building regulations, all of which require a local plan policy based on evidenced local need, and will be subject to viability. One of these standards is Access, which is about going beyond mandatory building regulations and being able to secure houses that are designed to be accessible, adaptable and wheelchair user accessible. These optional standards will be imposed via planning conditions, with compliance overseen and enforced by building control, subject to viability both in practical terms e.g. steep sloping site and overly long ramps, as well as financial. A summary of the Optional Access Requirements M4(2) and M4(3) is at Appendix A.
- 1.2 If the council chose to pursue a policy that requires a certain percentage of new housing to be accessible, evidence will be required on
- Demographics and data on needs in our area
 - What proportion of overall housing needs will require accessible homes
 - Existing stock that is suitable
- 1.3 The purpose of this paper is to set out the existing evidence with regard to the need for accessible and adaptable housing. The paper will set out the issues and recommend whether it is desirable or necessary to pursue a local plan policy on accessible housing.

2.0 Existing policy context

- 2.1 The current Local Plan does not require a set percentage of Lifetime or accessible homes. Any new build wheelchair accessible homes delivered through the planning system are gained through the negotiation process usually as part of the affordable housing element. The new standards may make these negotiations more difficult, as developers will expect the council to provide evidence of the need for wheelchair accessible housing, and unless an evidenced local plan policy is in place, the council cannot require such housing to be provided.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights the need to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. Paragraph 50 of the NPPF requires development plans to enable a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, taking into account the needs of different groups in the community, including older people and people with disabilities. Paragraph 159 of the

NPPF requires development plans to address the requirement for all types of housing, including that for families with children and older and disabled people, based on an understanding of the housing needs in their area.

- 2.3 The NPPG states that it will be for local planning authorities to set out how they intend to approach demonstrating the need for Requirement M4(2) and / or M4(3) of the building regulations, taking account of several factors including the likely future need for housing for older and disabled people (including wheelchair user dwellings). These two different housing standards provide for distinct household types, with wheelchair accessible homes enabling a greater degree of independence for some people with more complex or distinct needs.

3.0 Existing Evidence – Demographics and Housing Needs

Disabled People’s Housing Needs

- 3.1 An Assessment of the Housing Needs of People with Physical Disabilities (Ecorys 2012) estimated that by 2030 1,366 households in the borough with a disabled member will be in unsuitable accommodation, and will require measures to be able to remain in their home or move to a suitable property. It found that the capacity of existing provision to meet these needs is limited by constraints on public spending, the suitability of existing homes, the affordability of suitable properties, and the increasing demand from increasing numbers of disabled people for the resources available.
- 3.2 In terms of the needs, the study concluded that 63% would need affordable housing, 141 people would need fully wheelchair accessible provision, and that 37% would be able to afford to buy a suitable new home and access private sector provision.
- 3.3 The study noted that whilst many people would like to remain in their existing homes, only about 70 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) have been delivered each year, and only a small proportion (between 7% and 15%) of the households will be able to pay for suitable adaptations themselves, or are able to find and afford an alternative property which meets their needs.

Census 2011

- 3.4 The latest Census data shows that the number of people in the borough whose day to day activities are limited by health and disability issues is above the county, region and national averages.

Long-Term Health Issues and Disability

Limiting Long-term Health Issues and/or disability %	2011			
	Chesterfield Borough	Derbyshire (Administrative)	East Midlands	England
None	77.0	81.4	81.5	82.4
Day to day activities limited a lot	11.5	8.2	8.6	8.3
Day to day activities limited a little	11.5	10.4	9.9	9.3

2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation

- 3.5 Health and disability is a major concern for Chesterfield Borough. The Borough is ranked the 25th most deprived in England for this domain and half of the LSOAs falling within the 20% most deprived within England.

Disabled Living Allowance

- 3.6 One of the most useful indicators of the prevalence of mobility-related disabilities in an area is the take up of Disabled Living Allowance (DLA). DLA was not means tested, so it captures a full range of households. Take-up can be analysed by severity of mobility difficulty, as it distinguishes mobility-related conditions from care-related disabilities (e.g. support for those with learning disabilities, help with washing, cooking meals, communicating etc.) and there are separate rates for lower and higher mobility difficulties.
- 3.7 A claimant is only entitled to the lower level of the mobility component if they need guidance or supervision most of the time from another person when walking out of doors in unfamiliar places. To get the higher rate one or more of the following must apply:
- You are unable or virtually unable to walk without severe discomfort, or at risk of endangering your life or causing deterioration in your health by making the effort to walk.
 - You have no feet or legs.
 - You are assessed to be both 100 per cent disabled because of loss of eyesight and not less than 80 per cent disabled because of deafness and you need someone with you when you are out of doors.
 - You are certified as severely sight impaired by a consultant ophthalmologist.
- 3.8 The study considered that those claiming the higher rate are the most likely to also require housing-related adaptations, or provision of specifically-designed accommodation to meet their housing needs.
- 3.9 In 2015 there were 7810 people claiming disability living allowance in Chesterfield Borough – this represents 8% of the population (total population 103,800). 4175 of these were claiming the higher rate mobility award, which represents 4% of the population.

4.0 What proportion of overall housing needs will require accessible homes

- 4.1 The 2014 SHMA looked at groups needing support:
- Wheelchair user
 - Walking difficulty (not in wheelchair)
 - Learning disability
 - Mental health problem

- Visual/hearing impairment
- Asthmatic/respiratory problem
- Other physical disability
- Limiting long-term illness

- 4.2 The SHMA found that overall there are 27.7% of all households in Chesterfield Borough with one or more members in an identified support needs group. Of this, wheelchair users account for 7.2% (2.0% of all households), those with a walking difficulty account for 55.4% (15.4% of all households), and those with other physical disability account for 28.8% (8% of all households).
- 4.3 In short, physical support needs (including wheelchair users, those with walking difficulties and those with other physical disabilities) account for 25.4% of all households, and due to an ageing population, this is expected to increase.
- 4.4 25.4% of all households equates to 11887.2 households in the borough (out of a total 46,800 in the 2011 census). If it is confined to wheelchair users, to meet M4(3) standards, this reduces the number of households to 936 (2% of all households). In terms of M4(2) standards, the need is around 10,900 (23.4% of all households). It is worth repeating the point that these numbers are likely to increase due to an ageing population.
- 4.5 According to population projections (2012 based sub national population projections) the number of people aged 65 and above in Chesterfield is projected to grow rapidly:

Age Group	2012 Population	2036 Population	Increase	% Change
65-74	10800	14200	3400	24%
75-84	6400	11100	4700	42%
85+	2900	6600	3700	56%
All Persons	103800	110400	6600	6%

5.0 Suitability of existing stock

- 5.1 In terms of social stock, the 2012 Disabled Housing Needs study found that 4.9% of housing association stock in the borough is of wheelchair standard (out of a total of around 1450 HA dwellings, this equates to around 70 properties). There are 4143 properties (almost half) of council housing stock that have adaptations of some sort or other; with over 11,000 individual adaptations.

Council Housing Adaptations

Adaptation	Number of Properties
Adapted for Downstairs Living (House)	5

Adapted Kitchen Units	36
Adapted shower tray (>90 mm high)	88
Adapted shower tray (= \leq 90 mm high)	163
Anti Slip Flooring (Bathroom)	922
Bath on top of soakaway floor	2
Disabled Door Entry System	38
Disabled parking bay	6
Door widening (External)	13
Door Widening (Internal)	69
Electric Shower over Bath	626
Electric Shower over WC	48
Fully wheelchair accessible	17
Grab Rails External	1618
Grab Rails Internal	2254
Hand rail (External)	539
Hoist (Bathroom)	23
Hoist (Bedroom)	32
Hoist (Other Location)	7
Level Access Shower	1302
Lever Taps (Bathroom)	651
Lever Taps (Kitchen)	527
Low Level Bath	218
Low Rise Shower Tray	292
Miscellaneous (Major Work)	20
Miscellaneous (Minor Work)	26
Path alterations	30
Ramped Access (Front)	894
Ramped Access (Rear)	125
Stair rails (Additional)	153
Stairlift (Curved)	19
Stairlift (Straight)	236
Steps alterations	80
Vertical Through Floor Lift	5
Vibration/Smoke Detectors	21
Wash and dry WC (Closomat Toilet)	35
Wash and dry WC (Geberit Toilet)	16
Wheelchair Access WHB	19
Wheelchair Accessible Toilet	37

5.2 The adaptations are to meet individual needs and may not be fully M4(2) or (3) compliant. In terms of M4(3) standard it is relatively straight forward. 17 dwellings are classed as 'fully wheelchair accessible' following adaptations. There may be other dwellings that also meet this standard such as existing bungalows and ground floor flats.

5.3 Consultation with Building Control indicated that it was not possible within the resources available to examine each of the adapted properties to ascertain which of the adaptations in the above list would fully meet the M4(2) standards.

Private Stock

- 5.4 According to the English Housing Survey, 2013, only 6 per cent of homes in England can be visited by someone using a wheelchair, possessing all four of the key features for full visitability (the four visitability features are: level access; flush threshold; sufficiently wide doors and circulation space; WC at entrance level).
- 5.5 There is limited information on adapted private sector stock, although a proportion of the properties that are adapted under the Disabled Facilities Grant will be private sector dwellings.

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 Future proofing homes so that they can be easily adapted if required enables more effective adaptations to be made in a way that is considerably cheaper in the long run. DCLG research found that cost of adapting homes not built to Lifetime Homes standards for use by a disabled person can be substantial. The provision of homes in accordance with accessible and adaptable standards would help address these issues by enabling households to make necessary adjustments and adaptations without needing to move home.
- 6.2 Given the shortfall of specialist homes to meet existing needs and anticipated unmet demand in the forthcoming years, the mainstream stock of homes will be increasingly expected to accommodate older people who are likely to experience mobility and accessibility issues at some point in their life. This means that it is important to ensure new homes are built to an accessible and adaptable standard.
- 6.3 Based on the evidence, there is a case to support a local plan policy requiring adaptable and accessible homes, with a recommended target for 25% of all new homes to be 'adaptable' (M4(2), similar to lifetime homes), and a proportion of new affordable homes (local plan policies for wheelchair accessible homes should only be applied to those dwellings where the LPA is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling) to be wheelchair accessible, subject to viability.

Appendix A - Summary of the Optional Access Requirements M4(2) and M4(3)

The optional access requirements M4(2) and M4(3) are part of a three tier standard for accessibility in Part M (access to and use of dwellings) Volume 1: Dwellings of Schedule 1 of the Building Regulations. The optional access requirement proposed in M4(2) relates to providing 'accessible and adaptable dwellings' and M4(3) relates to providing 'wheelchair user dwellings'. They only apply when conditions requiring dwellings to comply are attached to planning consents.

M4(2) Optional Requirement: Category 2 – Accessible and adaptable Dwellings

- (1) Reasonable provision must be made for people to –
 - (a) gain access to, and
 - (b) use, the dwelling and its facilities.
- (2) The provision made must be sufficient to –
 - (a) meet the needs of occupants with differing needs, including some older or disabled people; and
 - (b) to allow adaptation of the dwelling to meet the changing needs of occupants over time.

Optional requirement M4(2) –

- (a) may apply only in relation to a dwelling that is erected;
- (b) will apply in substitution for requirement M4(1);
- (c) does not apply where optional requirement M4(3) applies;
- (d) Does not apply to any part of a building that is used solely to enable the building or any service or fitting in the building to be inspected, repaired or maintained.

Performance Objectives

The approved document sets out a number of performance objectives to identify where a new dwelling has made reasonable provision for the M4(2) optional requirement, which comprises the following:

- a) Within the curtilage of the dwelling, or the building containing the dwelling, it is possible to approach and gain step-free access to the dwelling and to any associated parking space and communal facilities that are intended for the occupants to use. (This means that all dwellings accessed above the ground floor require a lift access.)
- b) There is step-free access to the WC and other accommodation within the entrance storey, and to any associated private outdoor space directly connected to the entrance storey.
- c) A wide range of people, including older and disabled people and some wheelchair users, are able to use the accommodation, including its sanitary facilities.
- d) Features are provided to enable common adaptations to be carried out at a future date to increase the accessibility and functionality of the dwelling.
- e) Wall-mounted switches, socket outlets and other controls are reasonably accessible to people who have reduced reach.

Optional Requirement M4(3) Category 3 – Wheelchair user dwellings

- (1) Reasonable provision must be made for people to –

- (a) gain access to, and
- (b) use, the dwelling and its facilities.

- (2) The provision made must be sufficient to—
- (a) allow simple adaptation of the dwelling to meet the needs of occupants who use wheelchairs; or
 - (b) meet the needs of occupants who use wheelchairs.

Optional requirement M4(3) –

- (a) may apply only in relation to a dwelling that is erected;
- (b) will apply in substitution for requirement M4(1);
- (c) does not apply where optional requirement M4(2) applies;
- (d) does not apply to any part of a building that is used solely to enable the building or any service or fitting in the building to be inspected, repaired or maintained.

Optional requirement M4(3) (2)(b) applies only where the planning permission under which the building work is carried out specifies that it shall be complied with.

Performance Objectives

The approved document sets out performance objectives to identify where a new dwelling has made reasonable provision for the M4(3) optional requirement, which comprise the following:

- a) Within the curtilage of the dwelling or the building containing the dwelling, a wheelchair user can approach and gain step-free access to every private entrance to the dwelling and to every associated private outdoor space, parking space and communal facility for occupants' use.
- b) Access to the WC and other accommodation within the entrance storey is step-free and the dwelling is designed to have and the potential to achieve step-free access to all other parts.
- c) There is sufficient internal space to make accommodation within the dwelling suitable for a wheelchair user.
- d) The dwelling is wheelchair adaptable such that key parts of the accommodation, including its sanitary facilities and kitchens, could be easily altered to meet the needs of a wheelchair user or, where required by a local planning authority, the dwelling is wheelchair accessible.
- e) Wall-mounted switches, controls and socket outlets are accessible to people who have reduced reach.

Optional requirement M4(3) – wheelchair user dwellings - distinguishes between wheelchair accessible dwellings and wheelchair adaptable dwellings; wheelchair adaptable dwellings are homes that are designed for future adaptability – which means houses would need to be able to accommodate wheelchair access and circulation but all of the equipment would not need to be installed at the time of initial build (eg. through- floor lifting device provision). Wheelchair accessible dwellings are properties which are fully fitted out (e.g. wheelchair accessible) so that they are readily useable by a wheelchair user at the point of completion. However, the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that wheelchair accessible dwellings should be applied only to dwellings that the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in.