

## 1 Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to supplement Policy H18 – Accessible Homes in the saved Harrow Unitary Development Plan (HUDP adopted July 2004). The policy is set out in Section 4. It is intended to provide this additional guidance to assist developers and those preparing planning applications.

At the outset it would be helpful to clarify certain definitions. The glossary in the HUDP includes a brief definition of the terms ‘Mobility Housing’ and ‘Lifetime Homes’, These can be amplified as follows:-

Mobility Housing is ordinary housing built to a certain basic standard so that it can be adapted to be lived in by most people with disabilities. Even amongst those who use wheelchairs a high proportion can manage without them inside their homes. Mobility Housing is also suitable for visitors in wheelchairs. The principle features are:

- (a) a level or ramped approach and flush threshold at the main entrance;
- (b) corridors and door sets to the principal rooms (including a bedroom) wide enough for wheelchair use; and
- (c) a bathroom, WC and at least one bedroom at entrance level.

Houses on two storeys are suitable if they have a downstairs WC and a straight flight staircase suitable for the installation of a stair-lift. Overall space standards are the same as for ordinary housing, and mobility housing need cost no more to construct. Indeed the particular design features of mobility housing are desirable and convenient for any potential occupier, not just people with disabilities.

Lifetime Homes are dwellings which are designed to a standard that allows easy adaptation to meet the needs of occupiers throughout their whole life. The criteria and design standards have been defined by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

In addition, Wheelchair housing can be defined as follows. It is housing needed by people permanently confined to wheelchairs (estimated to be about 2-3% of all people with disabilities). It generally needs to be on one level and in addition to easy access, it has above-average space standards in order to allow for full wheelchair manoeuvre throughout. As such it will be desirable for any occupier, not solely people confined to wheelchairs. The principal features required at construction stage in order to permit adaptation to full wheelchair standards at a later date are:

- (a) a level or slightly ramped approach and flush threshold at the main entrance;
- (b) internal planning for wheelchair manoeuvre in all principal rooms, with 1200mm passageways and 900mm door sets or sliding doors;

- (c) a downstairs bedroom and bathroom, or in a two storey house, a downstairs WC a straight flight staircase suitable for the installation of a stair or chair lift; and
- (d) bathrooms and toilets large enough to permit lateral transfer from wheelchair to WC/Bath.

People who use wheelchairs are as varied in their housing needs as the rest of the population. Very little current housing, or new conversions, are suitable for people permanently confined to wheelchairs. In order to redress this imbalance and give people with disabilities a choice of housing of different types and tenures and to enable more people to remain in their homes if they become disabled, a proportion of new build, general purpose housing needs to be built to be suitable for adaptation for wheelchair occupants. Because there is an additional cost in providing the more generous than average space standards required, it is appropriate that wheelchair housing is provided in larger schemes. There may occasionally be overriding reasons why certain sites are unsuitable; for example where there are overwhelming conservation reasons for architectural conformity which would make it impracticable to provide satisfactory level access to the dwelling.

## **2 Reason for the Production of the Mobility and Wheelchair Housing SPD and Plan Options**

This Mobility and Wheelchair Housing SPD aims to ensure that new residential developments, including conversions and extensions, are of good quality in order to maintain and enhance the residential component and character of the Borough. More importantly it aims to provide and retain a range of housing types and sizes, of a satisfactory standard and design, to meet the varied physical and economic needs of the Borough's residents. The London Plan requires London boroughs to ensure that all housing developments are built to a minimum of Lifetime Home standards.

Older people and people with physical disabilities require housing which is designed to help them retain maximum independence. There is also a need for housing which is not specifically designed for disabled people but adaptable and designed to be adjustable in accordance to the changing physical and medical circumstances. The Council considers that Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair housing should generally form part of the fabric of general housing.

The London Plan targets of 100% Lifetime Homes, 10% wheelchair-accessible homes, and its general requirements for access for all, are fundamental to providing the right homes in the right place. It requires London Boroughs to ensure that all housing developments are built to a minimum of Lifetime Home standards. The London Plan also acknowledges that successful high-density housing will not be possible without the highest standards of urban design.

At present the majority of Mobility, Wheelchair or Lifetime housing is secured through negotiations with the Council's Access Officer. This SPD addresses both the delivery of Lifetime and Wheelchair Standard housing and ensuring good design in the delivery of such housing, and housing in general.

The potential number of people who would benefit from the provision of Lifetime and Wheelchair standard housing is substantial. This observation results from both the number of older and disabled people living in Harrow and because Harrow has a growing aging population.

There is no precise information about the quality, quantity and distribution of Wheelchair Housing in the Borough. However the demand for this type of accommodation has increased over the years especially now that people mostly prefer to remain in their homes. The Mobility and Wheelchair Housing SPD will enable the Council to influence new housing developments so that they are designed in a way which will reduce the need for adaptations in the future.

### **3 Purpose of The Guidance**

The Council wishes to amplify on the implementation of policy H18 and further emphasise its commitment to securing Lifetime housing. Dwellings originally built as Lifetime homes avoid the need for costly adaptation at a later date, and reduce the costs of personal or residential care. Therefore this guidance supplements the HUDP policy by setting detailed advice on how to achieve the maximum levels of Mobility and Wheelchair housing in the Borough. This would assist in the promotion of inclusive society and allow people who become disabled at any time to remain in their premises despite changed circumstances.

Whilst the purpose of Part M of the Building Regulations would assist in terms of internal arrangement, this guidance deals with the total environment that is internal and external. It covers parking circulation areas, access and furniture.

At this stage it is worthwhile acknowledging the possible confusion that may be caused by the title of this SPD, linked to the Accessible Homes Policy. To avoid possible future confusion, the Council wishes to amend the title from 'Mobility and Wheelchair Housing SPD' to 'Accessible Homes SPD'. This will be secured through a change to be notified in the Annual Monitoring Report which reports on progress on the Local Development Scheme timetable.

### **4 Policy H18 – Accessible Homes**

The Mobility and Wheelchair Housing SPD is supplementary to the Harrow Unitary Development Plan [HUDP] and will form part of the Local Development Framework [LDF]. The SPD amplifies policy H18 which states:

THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING CHANGES OF USE AND CONVERSIONS OF BUILDINGS INTO FLATS, TO BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL. IN LARGER RESIDENTIAL SCHEMES, THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THAT A PROPORTION OF THESE ARE BUILT AS LIFETIME HOMES OR CAPABLE OF ADAPTATION TO WHEELCHAIR HOUSING. ALL WHEELCHAIR HOUSING, PROVIDED AS PART OF A NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, SHOULD BE IN A SUITABLE LOCATION IN ORDER TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE OCCUPANTS.

## **5 Application of the Guidance**

Wheelchair Housing units should generally be integrated with general housing and should have easy access to communal facilities such as car parking. They should be designed to be suitable for residents who have to use a wheelchair all the time. The dwelling should be designed in a way that make it possible for the occupier to gain access to all principal rooms. In general terms this requires more than above average space standards.

In addition to promoting well-designed Wheelchair Standard homes, the SPD will encourage developers to adhere to the guidance and detailed specifications, in an effort to create wheelchair accessible homes that are not grouped together and which are designed to blend in with the surrounding properties. This will ensure that those with specific housing needs have a greater degree of housing choice, are integrated within society, and will be less susceptible to disability related burglary and hate crime.

Wheelchair housing units should generally be integrated with normal housing. This is to ensure that such housing types are integrated and inclusive, thereby also reducing the chances of break-ins to housing which is known to belong to disabled people. Hence special attention should also be given to avoiding problems associated with isolation

## **6. Considerations on individual developments/sites**

Policy H18 indicates that applicants will be encouraged to provide a proportion of the numbers of dwellings on any site to Lifetime and Wheelchair housing standards. When deciding the level of Lifetime and Wheelchair housing required in any scheme the following factors are paramount:

- Gradients on the site;
- Transport links; and
- Local shopping other facilities and services.

In addition to the above, consideration should also be given to other factors such as:

- Age structure of the local population
- The dwelling types

The Council may carry out an assessment of the individual site in accordance to the principles of design set in this guidance. The detailed guidance below will aid developers and the Council in negotiating the appropriate levels of Lifetime and Mobility housing in a housing scheme. This guidance should not simply be applied on a mechanical basis but always applied as part of an assessment of site considerations

## **Accessible Homes: Mobility and Wheelchair Housing:**

**A guide to well-designed Mobility and Wheelchair Housing**

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## **FOREWORD**

With demand increasing for living accommodation that truly embraces the needs of our diverse community, Harrow Council is driving forward its commitment to promote homes which meet the demands of people, throughout their lifetime, irrespective of disability, old age or changes in lifestyles.

In today's world it is difficult to perceive a public place that is successful if it is not accessible to everyone. Likewise, when we consider people, their houses, and their living requirements as a primary concern, we come to realise that successful and sustainable communities are achieved only by making access considerations a pre-requisite of good design.

In recognising the social and economic benefits that accessible homes bring to the community, Harrow Council will only welcome development applications that support the principles of access as an integral part of the whole design. With concerted effort and teamwork, accessible developments that are attractive, profitable and fit for 21st century living, can be built to serve the entire community.



## Introduction

Government legislation requires Harrow Council to ensure that new residential developments meet the needs of most householders. These design features provide for a home which is flexible enough to meet whatever comes along in life: a teenager with a broken leg, a family member with serious illness, carrying in heavy loads, or the frailties of old age. Harrow Council is fully committed to the principle of producing well-designed homes and therefore, will not welcome development applications that potentially involve the future adaptation of a home.

The aim of this guide is to highlight the most important principles in designing accessible homes and is particularly aimed at architects, developers and builders of a range of residential developments. Produced as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), this guide seeks to illustrate the best ways to achieve well-designed accessible homes that seamlessly integrate with the surrounding area, by illustrating examples of homes that are 'universal' in their appeal and application.

When designing new homes, it is now necessary to take account of three sets of requirements:

- The first is Part M of the Building Regulations that has been extended to include all new homes
- The second is Lifetime Homes' standards, which many commissioning clients and local authorities now require.
- The third is Wheelchair Standard Housing, which is now a requirement under London Plan Policy 3A.4.

The design solutions for all three sets of requirements are broadly similar. The Lifetime Homes standards and Wheelchair Standard Housing are more comprehensive than Part M to the Building Regulations 2004, in their requirements to achieve an inclusive and adaptable living environment.

As these additions are minor, the Council will require all housing developments to meet the minimum requirement of Lifetime Home standards. In addition, the Council will require a proportion of all new housing to meet the Wheelchair Housing standards detailed in this document, as this ensures that suitable housing for long-term wheelchair users and those with high assistance needs is provided in suitable location across the borough.

Harrow Council actively welcomes early discussions with architects, developers and builders, as accessible design is key to meeting planning application requirements and our ultimate goal to create an environment that is accessible to all.

## **Statutory Context**

## **What is a Lifetime Home?**

A Lifetime Home is a home for life, which embraces 21<sup>st</sup> Century living and is achieved through good building design that meets 16 specified criteria. For example, features such as level access and wider doors can allow parents using pushchairs to gain easy uninterrupted entry. Likewise, people with temporary disabilities (eg: someone with a broken leg) could still enjoy independent mobility using a wheelchair or crutches.

The costs involved in meeting the criteria are negligible. The initial minor expense will prevent costly adaptations later. Additionally, the expenses of care services required in old age will be greatly reduced.

Features such as removable ceiling and wall panels concealed within the design of Lifetime Homes are often invaluable as we become older and perhaps less mobile. A person no longer needs to endure extended periods in hospital whilst their home is adapted.

A carefully designed Lifetime Home does not normally take up more space and being well designed, has a greater sales potential.

## **What is a Wheelchair Standard Home?**

Whilst a Lifetime Home goes some way towards being suitable for wheelchair users, it is not ideal. A Wheelchair Standard Home promotes subtle but highly effective differences, to achieve a design that enables wheelchair users to maximise personal independence, without compromise.

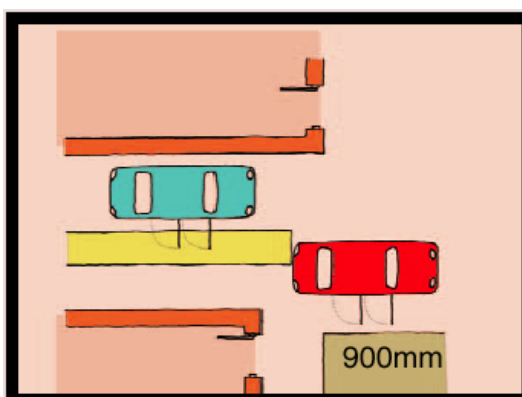
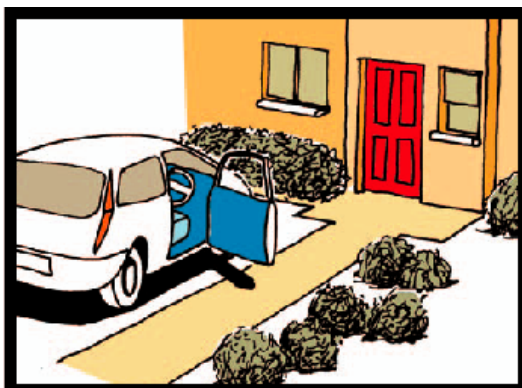
In basic terms a Wheelchair Standard Home is more spacious, allowing a wheelchair user to move around unhindered. These properties should be designed for wheelchair users with more complex requirements and should be built already adapted for use, including pre-installed features such as low-level kitchen facilities, infrared light switches, pre-installed handrails, etc.

# 1. Car Parking

## Lifetime Home

Car parking should comply with Part M and should be:

- adjacent to the home and be capable of enlargement to a width of 3.3m to allow a car door to be fully opened and a wheelchair pulled up alongside.
- adjacent or kept to a minimum distance from the dwelling.



## Wheelchair Standard Home

Car parking should comply with the standards of Lifetime Homes and in addition should:

- be 3.6m wide to include an integrated wheelchair user transfer area
- provide a covered transfer area which is integrated and aesthetically compliments the home

**Diagram to be produced**



## 2. Approaches and Entrance

### **Lifetime Home**

Approaches to dwellings should comply with Part M and also need to:-

- be level or gently sloping; maximum gradient 1:20
- have a covered, illuminated entrance and level access over the threshold with a maximum upstand of 15mm
- have front doors with a clear opening width of 800mm
- have pathways leading to the property not less than 900mm wide, non-slip and clearly defined
- landscaped and planted carefully to avoid danger or injury to people with visual impairments.

Where plot gradients are steeper than 1:20, access to the dwelling must be provided by a ramp, designed in accordance with Part M to the Building Regulations.

### **Wheelchair Standard Home**

Approaches to dwellings should comply with Lifetime Home Standards and should:

- have pathways leading to the property not less than 1200mm wide
- provide storage space for charging outdoor mobility pavement vehicles
- have a letterbox of a type and height suitable for use by a wheelchair user.

**Diagram to be produced**

**Diagram to be produced**

### 3. Circulation Areas

#### Within the home

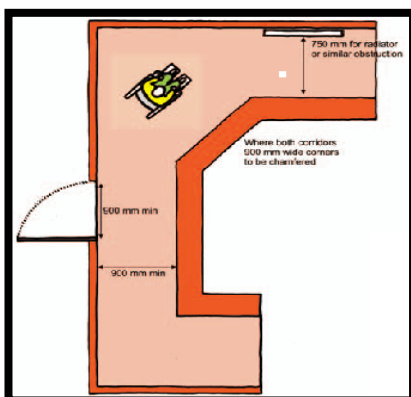
##### Lifetime Home

Circulation areas should comply with Part M

All doorways and corridors should meet the following standards

Doorway clear opening width (mm)	Corridor/Passageway width (mm)
800	900
750	1200 (when approach is not head on)
775	1050 (when approach is not head on)

Widths of doorways and hallways to be dependent upon position in relation to each other to allow wheelchair access.



A removable ceiling hatch should be positioned to allow for future installation of a 'through the floor' type wheelchair lift, eg: from a downstairs hallway to an upstairs landing.

Lifts should be positioned to allow convenient use without disturbance/disruption to the commonly used rooms in the home. In addition they should allow for the future installation of a stair lift.

##### Wheelchair Standard Home

Doorways and corridors should be over and above the standards of Lifetime Homes and

- all circulation areas in corridors and halls of dwellings to be 1200mm minimum width with a 1500mm turning circles at corridor junctions
- internal doors to open more than 90° to ensure handles do not project into opening width
- Leading edge of doors should be 550mm from an adjacent wall.

**Diagram to be produced**

### 3. Circulation Areas (Cont'd)

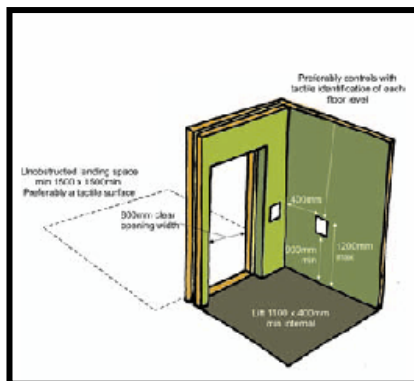
#### Communal areas

##### Lifetime Home

A wheelchair accessible passenger lift of 1100 x 1400mm should be provided.

Communal stairs should be designed in accordance with the standards set out in BS 8300. There should be 900mm clear distance between stair wall and the edge of the opposite handrail/banister, to allow for installation of a stair or platform lift.

##### Wheelchair Standard Home



#### Turning Circles

- Turning space for wheelchairs to be provided, ie 1400mm by 1700mm in the kitchen, dining and living room areas and sufficient circulation space elsewhere.



## Lifetime Home

## Wheelchair Standard Home

### WC's, Showers and Bathrooms

A WC must be provided on the entrance level, fitted with a recessed floor gully, to allow future installation of a shower. In addition the area must be suitably designed and sealed to allow the whole area to be used as a shower room.

Walls in bathrooms and WC's should be capable of adaptations where significant load may be applied, eg: handrails.

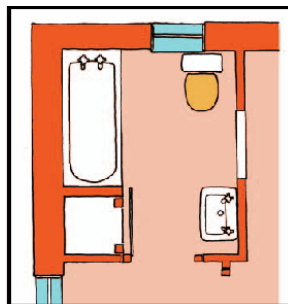
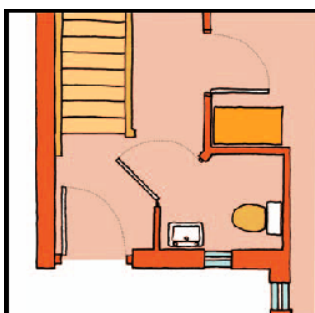
There should be a minimum of 1100mm in front of the WC, between the door and the toilet bowl and 700mm between the side wall and WC, to allow side transfer, or between items of furniture, eg: between bath and toilet.

Washbasins should also be accessible.

Where a bath is fitted, it must, in addition, provide floor drainage so that the bath can be replaced if required in future.

Provision for a direct route for a ceiling rack hoist from a main bedroom to a bathroom to be installed at a later date.

- Bathrooms are to be of minimum internal dimensions 2400 x 2400mm
- Bathroom fixture and fittings centrally positioned to allow access from either side.
- Handwash basin to be sited so that it can be used whilst seated on the WC.
- Provision of more than one toilet facility per home.



## Kitchens

### Lifetime Home



### Wheelchair Standard Home

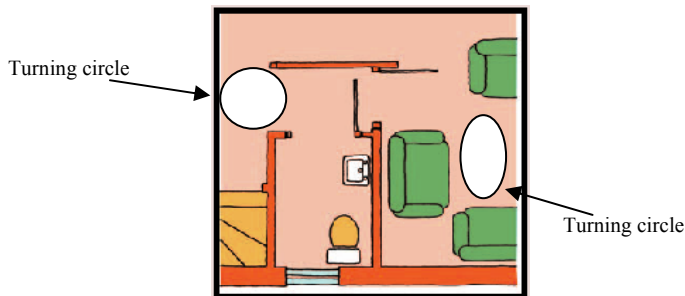
Kitchens are to have a minimum 1400mm x 1400mm clear floor space between fixed units?????

Storage cupboard or area for disability related equipment

## Living Rooms

Living rooms should be at entrance level.  
In dwellings of two or more storeys a space should:

- be available for convenient temporary bed space
- have adequate turning space, ie 1500mm diameter.



## Fixtures and Fittings

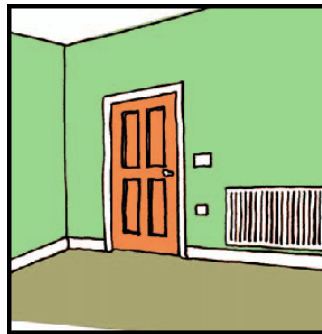
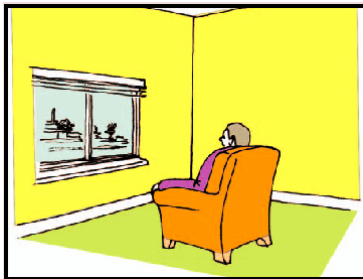
### Lifetime Home

Easy to operate/open living room windows with glass at a height of 800mm or lower

Switches, sockets, ventilation and service controls between 450mm and 1200mm from the floor

Windows should be located so that wheelchair users are able to open/close at least one window in every room, eg: maximum reaching point of 1.2m.

The living room glazing should start at a height of 800mm.



### Wheelchair Standard Home

## CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

The following case study example is intended to illustrate how some of the accessible homes requirements can be seamlessly integrated into the design of different types of residential developments.

1. Stanmore Park - suburban housing scheme example
2. Peterborough Road – infill urban high density example
3. Ad Astra – single house example.

The example chosen illustrate that when inclusive design is considered at an early stage in the development process, well design accessible developments are the result. As shown in this case study example, the requirements of inclusive design can be seamlessly integrated into existing development by applying considered design interventions.

# CASE STUDY EXAMPLE ONE

Stanmore Park

## CASE STUDY EXAMPLE TWO

Peterborough Road

## CASE STUDY EXAMPLE THREE

Ad Astra

## DESIGN SOLUTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

End of terrace wheelchair standard homes

Integrated car ports for wheelchair standard homes

Corner front doors addressing street for wheelchair standard homes

Two-storey wheelchair standard homes only



## CONCLUSIONS