

**Draft**



## **Mobility and Wheelchair Housing**

A guide to well-designed Lifetime  
and Wheelchair Standard Homes

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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 to 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.

- PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) - places emphasis on the effective protection of all aspects of the historic environment. It sets out the general presumption in favour of the preservation of Listed Buildings and includes guidance on their use, alteration/extension and demolition. The duty on Local Authorities to designate Conservation Areas and bring forward proposals for their preservation and enhancement is reinforced, and the need for policy to address the quality of townscape in its broadest sense is emphasised.

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.

## Planning Policy statement

The Mobility and Wheelchair Housing draft working document has been produced as a Supplementary Planning Document [SPD]. It is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal [SA], which provides the necessary background regarding the social, environmental and economic considerations which have been applied throughout the production of this document. 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. The contents of this SPD are intended to provide additional guidance to assist developers and those preparing planning applications to achieve well-designed accessible homes.

This SPD is supplementary to Policy H18 of the Harrow Unitary Development Plan [HUDP] and will form part of the Local Development Framework [LDF]. Furthermore, this SPD has been produced in-line with the Mayor of London's Spatial

Development Strategy for Greater London and in particular policy 3A.4.

### **Policy H18**

**"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."**

*(UDP, 2004)*

## **London Plan - Policy 3A.4**

"Boroughs should take steps to identify the full range of housing needs within their area. UDP 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, such as students, older people, families with children and people willing to share accommodation
- All new housing is built to Lifetime Homes standards
- 10% of new housing is designed to be wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable for residents who are wheelchair users."

(London Plan, Spatial development strategy, Mayor of London, February 2004)

## **Application of Policies**

### **New Homes**

In-line with the above policies the Council will require Lifetime Homes standards as a minimum on all new developments and will in the main require 1 in every 10 new properties to be built to Wheelchair Standard Housing (up to a maximum of 10 in any one development). However, there may be very rare situations in which extenuating circumstances or site constraints prevent adherence to Wheelchair Standard Housing, eg: on a steeply sloping site where landscaping solutions are not viable. Any proposed deviation on the above requirements should be documented as part of a planning applicant's formal Access Statement submission.

### **Existing homes**

The Council will expect existing properties being converted or re-developed (for example conversion of a house into flats) to conform to Lifetime Home Standards where feasible.

# Access Statements

Access Statements must be submitted with a planning application to avoid unnecessary delays or rejection of an application. An Access Statement is a document illustrating what has been done from the start to ensure buildings, facilities and services are accessible to disabled and non-disabled people alike.

Access Statements are now central to the Planning Application process and Harrow Council is empowered to formally address detailed access issues as a key principle for granting permission. Designers, developers and clients are now obliged to provide statements covering the finer details of access as part of the development process.

An Access statement submitted as part of a housing development scheme should demonstrate compliance with Lifetime Home standards and the additional requirements of Wheelchair Standard Housing. In addition, the Access Statement must reflect work in harmony with good design principals set out in the Design statement. The

Access Statement will need to clearly demonstrate the following stages in the Development process:-

- Pre-Planning Stage
- Planning Application stage - compliance with all 16 Lifetime Home Standards and Wheelchair Standard Housing, as appropriate, see Appendix 1. Plans submitted should be clearly labelled to highlight the individual features and the range of standards used in designing the scheme. For applications to be considered, plans should provide clear details of all dimensions and materials.
- Building Control stage - the same detail presented as part of the planning application taking on board any changes that were required to achieve planning consent.

Further information about writing an Access Statement can be obtained from Harrow Council's Development Control Department.



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

A Lifetime Home is a home for life, which embraces 21st 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 with 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. Criteria must demonstrate:-

1. Car Parking - adjacent, capable width > 3.3m
2. Car parking - space between car park and home level
3. Entrance - approaches level or gently sloping
4. Entrance - illuminated, level & covered
5. Lifts - wheelchair accessible
6. Width - position of doors and halls
7. Internal turning space - 1500mm diameter
8. Sitting room - at entrance level
9. Bedroom - ground floor
10. Downstairs W.C - wheelchair accessible & shower
11. W.C. Walls - adaptable i.e. handrails
12. Future Stair lift Provision
13. Provision for ceiling tract hoist
14. W.C & Bathroom - side approach
15. Windows - 800mm or lower
16. Switches - 450mm to 1200mm

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

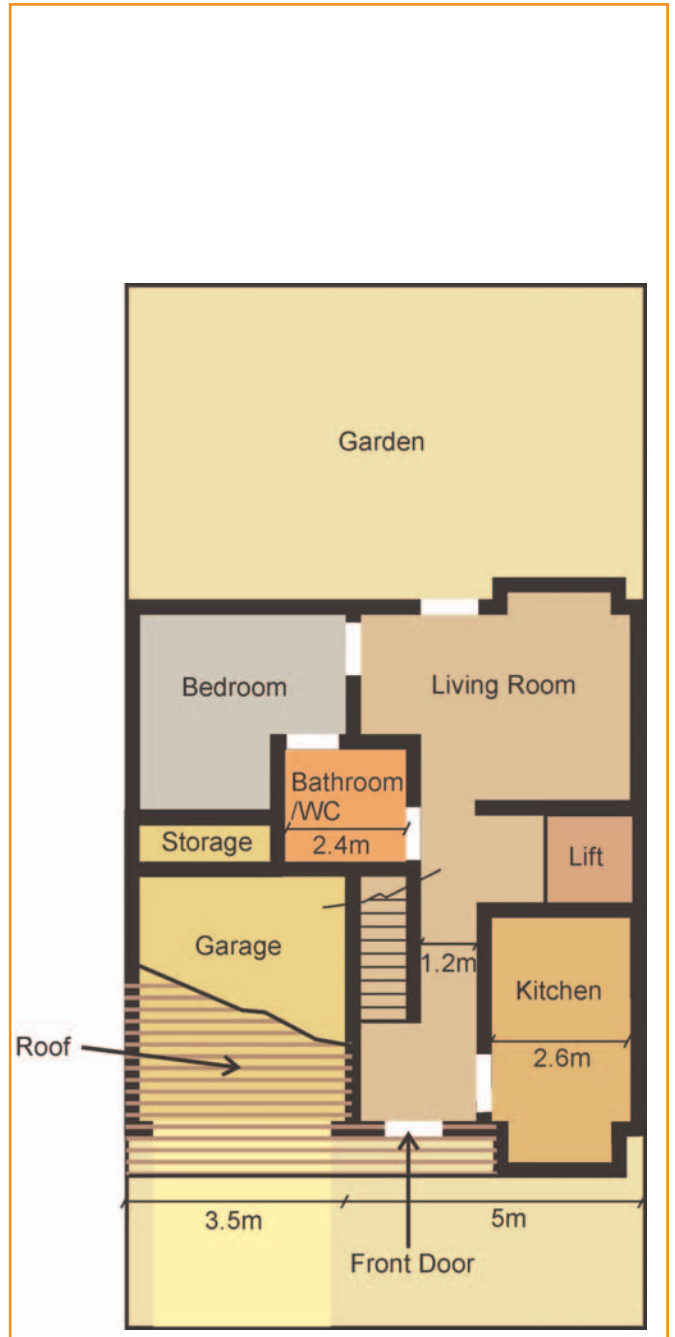
Whilst a Lifetime Home goes some way towards being suitable for wheelchair users, it is not ideal. A Wheelchair Standard Home promotes subtle but highly effective differences, to achieve a design that enables wheelchair users to maximise personal independence, without compromise.

In basic terms a Wheelchair Standard Home is more spacious, allowing a wheelchair user to move around unhindered. These homes 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. Criteria must demonstrate:-

1. Car parking - covered
2. Storage space - outdoor mobility vehicles
3. Letter Box - type and height suitability
4. Circulation areas - 1200mm minimum
5. Internal doors - to open > 90 degrees
6. Leading Edge - 550mm from adjacent wall
7. Bathroom - 2400mm x 2400mm
8. Kitchen - 1400mm x 1400mm
9. Storage cupboard - disabled equipment



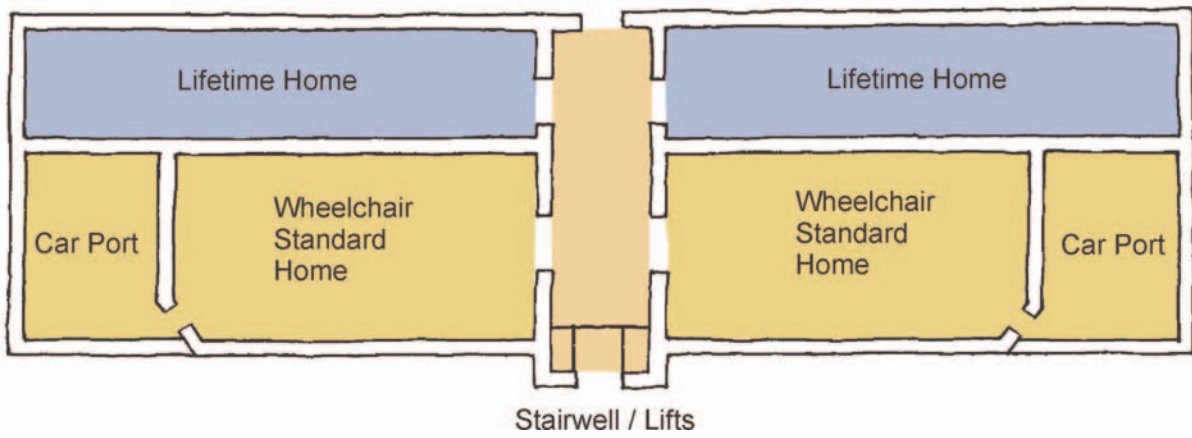
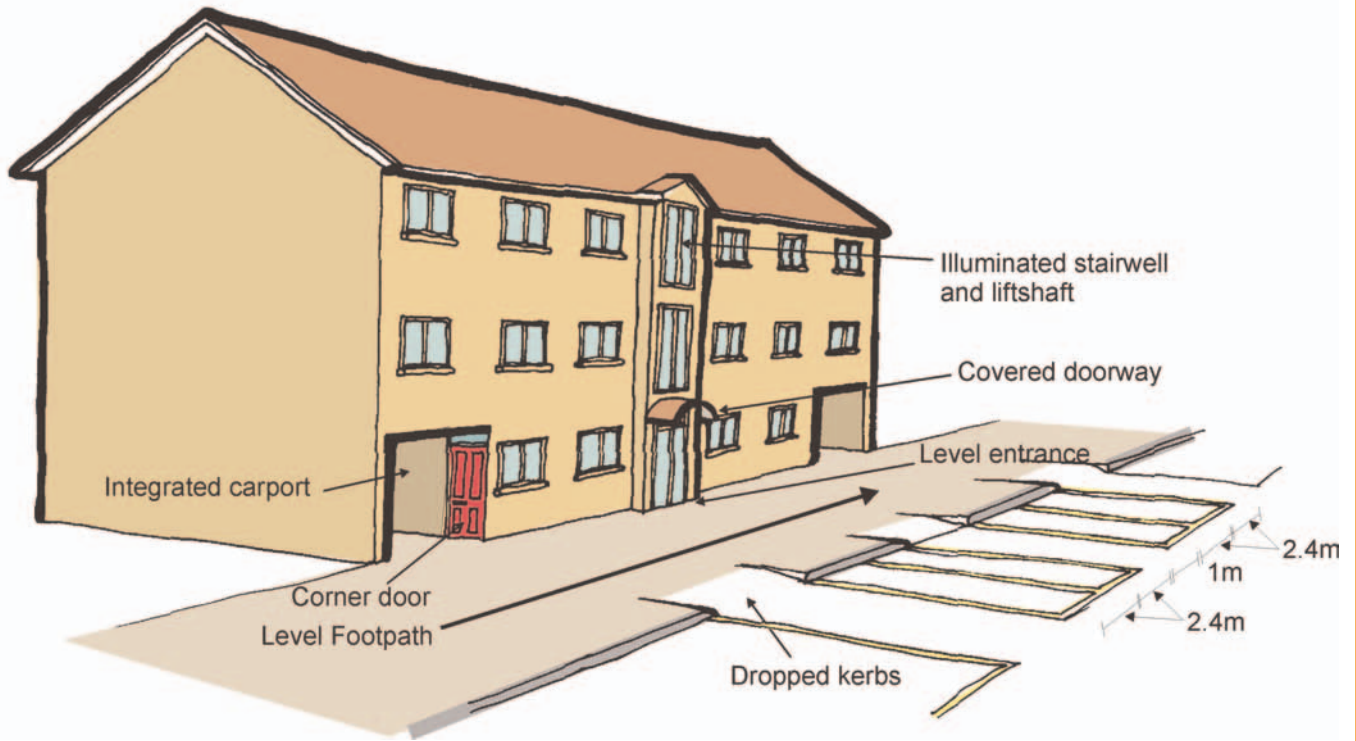
**Example of good practice....**



**Wheelchair Standard Homes**

# Example of good practice....

# Wheelchair Standard Flats

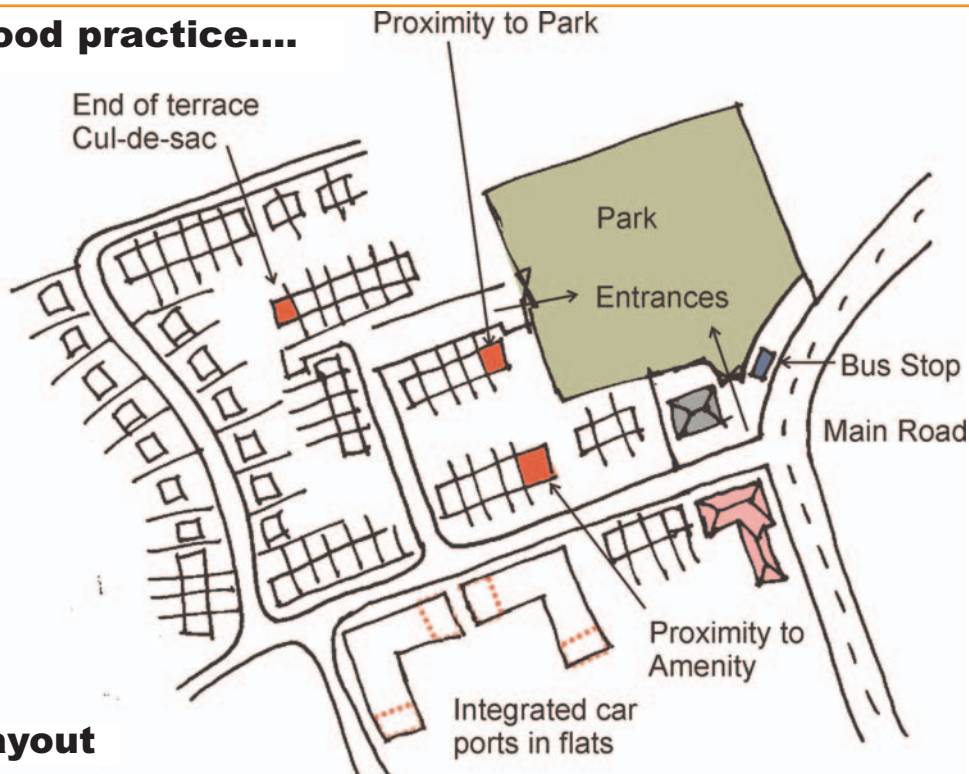


# Layout of Residential Development

The overall design and layout of a residential development plays an important role in creating communities which are safe, easy to navigate and accessible. The Council therefore welcomes developments that provide convenient walking and cycling routes, are nearby to local services and amenities, as well as within easy reach of public transport services.

Wheelchair Standard Homes should be located conveniently within the development, including corner plots to reduce any adverse effect on housing density, and should be made available for private sale as well as through affordable housing schemes. Wheelchair Standard Homes should be evenly distributed throughout a residential development, to 'design out crime' and promote social inclusion.

## Example of good practice....



## Residential Layout

# Car Parking

## Lifetime Home

Car parking should comply with Part M and should be:

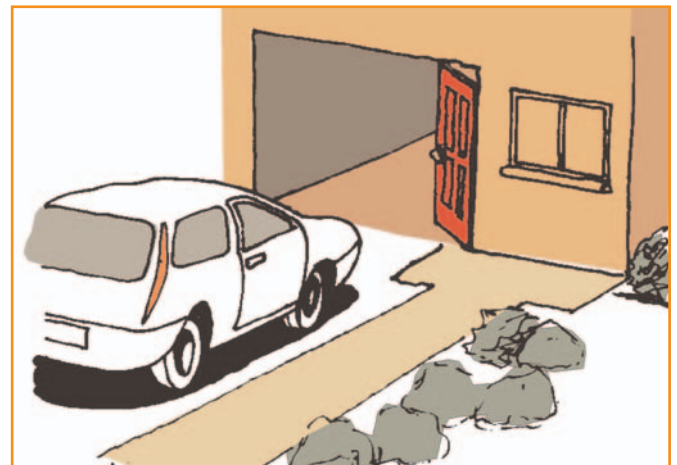
- on the same level as the home
- adjacent to the home and be capable of enlargement to a width of 3.3m to allow a car door to be fully opened and a wheelchair pulled up alongside.
- adjacent or kept to a minimum distance from the front of the property.



## 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 integral and aesthetically compliments the home



# 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.

# Circulation Areas

## Within the home

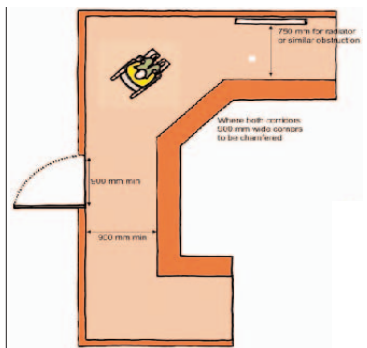
### Lifetime Home

Circulation areas should comply with Part M

All doorways and corridors should

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)

meet the following standards  
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.



## **Communal areas**

### **Lifetime Home**

### **Wheelchair Standard 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.
- Lifts and stairwells and entrance doors should be located at the front of blocks of flats.
- Turning space for wheelchairs to be provided, ie 1400mm by 1700mm in the kitchen, dining and living room areas and sufficient circulation space elsewhere.

## WC's, Showers and Bathrooms

### Lifetime Home

A WC must be provided on the entrance level (not at the front of the property) 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.

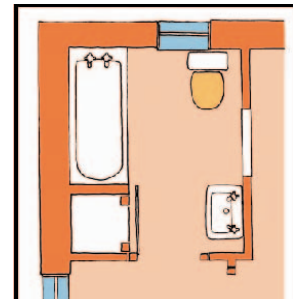
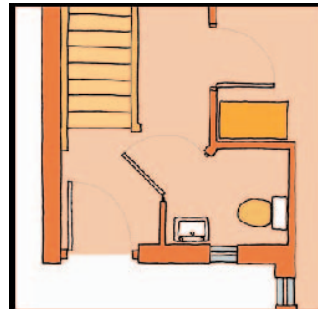
Walls in bathrooms and WC's should be capable of adaptations where significant load may be applied, eg: handrails.

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.



## **Wheelchair Standard Home**

- 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.

## Lifetime Home

Kitchens should be located at the front of a house

## Kitchens

## Wheelchair Standard Home

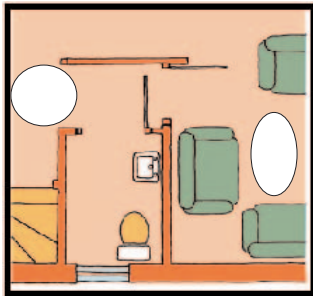
Kitchens are to have a minimum 1400mm x 1400mm clear floor space between fixed units?????

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.

## Bedrooms

Bedrooms to be located at the rear of the property where possible

## Fixtures and Fittings

### Lifetime Home

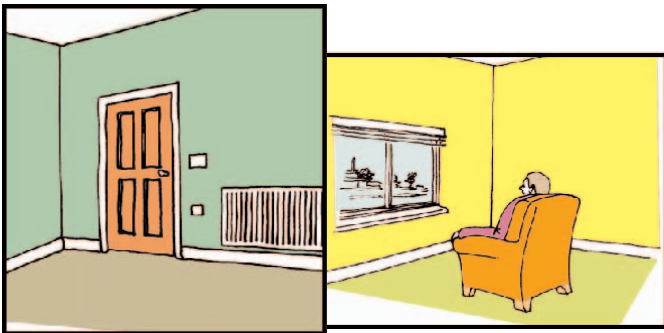
Easy to operate/open living room windows with glass at a height of 800mm or lower

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



## **Conclusions**

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

## **Appendix 1**

### **Criteria: Lifetime Homes Standard Housing**

### **Criteria: Wheelchair Standard Homes**