

LPSPG6 Mobility Standards in New Housing

INTRODUCTION

- S7.1 The vast majority of housing stock has not been designed to suit the disabled and those with limited mobility. The aim of mobility standard housing is to build ordinary dwellings that can be easily adapted to be lived in by most people with disabilities.
- S7.2 Designing new housing that can easily be converted for occupation by those with mobility problems expands their access to the housing market. At the same time other groups within the community can also benefit including the elderly, those with young children and those temporarily disabled through injury or illness.
- S7.3 The demand for easily accessible housing is forecast to rise. There are over six million people in Britain with some form of disability and the number is increasing, particularly as a result of the growth in the elderly. In the Rochford District 17.5% of the population are aged 65 or over and 14.7% of households are made up of a single pensioner (Census 2001).

POLICY BACKGROUND

- S7.4 This Supplementary Planning Guidance note amplifies policy HP15 of the Local Plan and provides information relating to the design criteria to be applied to mobility standard housing in new residential development.
- S7.5 It builds on government advice in PPG3 Housing (2000) regarding provision of housing to help meet the needs of specific groups within the community such as the disabled and the elderly.
- S7.6 Account is taken of the Building Regulations (2000) in particular Approved Document for Part M "Access and Facilities for Disabled People". However it should be noted that the information contained in this leaflet is for guidance only. Clarification should be sought from the Building Control section regarding any Building Regulation matters.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- S7.7 By integrating the essential features of mobility access into the overall design from the beginning small changes can avoid the need for later expensive alterations and can be achieved at the least long term cost.

TOTAL ACCESSIBILITY

- S7.8 The improvement of access to buildings requires consideration of external as well as internal arrangements. Accessibility is about designing and planning inclusive environments that are for everybody.

GOOD LAYOUT AND FLEXIBILITY

- S7.9 The layout should incorporate design features that permit easy access and use by occupants or visitors with mobility problems. Designing successful mobility housing requires a flexibility of room use and fittings. The more adaptive spaces and fittings can be the more they can accommodate future change.

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DESIGN ADVICE

External Features

S7.10 The following section identifies the detailed considerations to be taken into account with regard to location and surroundings.

General

S7.11 Dwellings that are designed to mobility standards should be spread throughout a development in the same way as other types of house would be. To ensure privacy and security all external mobility features should be integrated into the design so that attention is not drawn to the fact that the occupier may be physically impaired

S7.12 In order to promote general access for the disabled throughout an estate a number of easy crossing points such as dropped kerbs may need to be provided at strategic points. In appropriate locations the careful choice of surface treatments can achieve a satisfactory separation of vehicular and pedestrian space without the need for a change in level.

Around the Dwelling

S7.13 It should be possible to move easily to and from and around the dwelling. All external paths should be level. Raised edges and uneven surfaces, such as gravel, which would impede the movement of a wheelchair, should be avoided.

S7.14 Any external features such as waste-bin stores, service meter cupboards and garden taps should be positioned at a convenient height for those who have difficulty bending or are in a wheelchair.

Car Parking

S7.15 Ideally a garage or parking area should be provided adjacent to the principle entrance of the building.

The Approach to the Dwelling

S7.16 The pathway to the house from where a disabled person would get out of a car should be either level or ramped. Level landings will be required at the top and bottom of a ramp and at a change in direction to allow for the passage of wheelchairs. It should be remembered that in wet weather external ramps can become slippery and in cold weather surface moisture may freeze, making it even more hazardous.

KEY ASPECTS

Provision of a level or ramped access from parking area to principal dwelling entrance which is at least 1000mm wide

Where a ramp is unavoidable the gradient should not exceed 1:20 and should incorporate a non-slip surface with effective drainage

A level landing area outside the principle entrance at least 1500m by 1500mm

S7.17 Visually impaired people require greater levels of illumination to enable them to perceive changes, such as direction, level and gradient and consideration should be given to the appropriate lighting of the main entrance

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The Entrance to the Dwelling

S7.18 The entrance to the dwelling should allow for the easy ingress and egress of an unaccompanied wheelchair user.

S7.19 The door threshold should be completely flat. For access purposes even a minimal weatherbar of 10mm can prove an effective barrier to disabled people.

Key Aspects

The principal entrance door should give a clear opening that allows for wheelchair access and should feature a properly worked out flush threshold

S7.19 Whilst it is expected that the provisions will apply to the principal entrance, it is desirable when reasonable to apply them to all external door entrances.

Porches

S7.20 The front or main entrance should have some form of shelter, such as a porch, since disabled people will usually take longer to gain access to their property. However care should be taken not to create areas where potential intruders could be concealed. In some circumstances an open porch or canopy can provide adequate shelter.

KEY ASPECTS

The design of porches should take into account the sizing requirements of wheelchair users

Internal Features

S7.21 These features relate to the design of the internal layout and the factors that need to be considered in order to be able to cater for a range of likely mobility needs.

Circulation

S7.22 Corridors and hallways should be designed to allow convenient circulation by a wheelchair user. For example a long narrow hallway makes movement and turning awkward whilst a square layout can avoid this difficulty.

Key Aspects

Door widths and other internal design arrangements such as room thresholds should allow easy access to wheelchairs throughout the dwelling

S7.23 So that wheelchairs are not required to enter a room in order to turn entrance halls and other key points should be capable of allowing a wheelchair to turn full circle.

Stairs

S7.24 Difficulty using staircases is one of the most common problems faced by those with mobility problems. Particularly for the elderly such difficulty is often progressive and can eventually lead to people effectively being denied the use of a large proportion of their home. The design and layout of the staircase is therefore an important factor in mobility standard housing.

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Key Aspects

Staircase design should take into account the possible need for installation of a stair lift.

S7.25 Provided that the stairs are of sufficient width and are without tortuous bends it is possible to install both seated stair lifts and special lifts that enable wheelchairs to be raised ground to the first floor. The ideal type of staircase design is a straight flight

Ground Floor WC

S7.26 The provision of a ground floor WC is a design aspect of mobility housing that most occupiers find useful. It also allows disabled visitors greater independence.

Key Aspects

The layout should feature a ground floor WC that is fully accessible to wheelchair users.

S7.27 An outward opening door to the WC compartment will facilitate easy use. The fittings particularly the washbasin should be positioned in such a way that they do not impede access.

Ground Floor Bedroom

S7.28 The internal arrangement of the house should be such that it is possible to utilise a room on the ground floor as a bedroom.

Bathrooms and Kitchens

S7.29 A compromise will need to be achieved in terms of fixtures and fittings in bathrooms and kitchens. The use of low level baths and showers designed for wheelchair access will not inconvenience able bodied people in any way. Low level work units in kitchens may only be suitable for a seated person but taps and controls that are designed for easy grip can benefit all users.

Key Aspects

Kitchens and bathrooms should be designed in such a way that there is adequate room for a wheelchair to manoeuvre and so that any modifications can be made with the minimum of fuss

Other Design Considerations

S7.31 Accessible switches and socket outlets should be provided throughout the dwelling so that they are within easy reach for a seated person. The position of such items makes a real difference to the degree to which housing is suitable for those with physical disabilities.

S7.32 Often the force required to open a door can be a significant barrier to a disabled person and a high spring force on a door closer can make a door unusable. Attention should also be paid to the types of handles used, level handles are easier to turn and grip than round knobs.