LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES

THE BRIGHTER BOROUGH Wandsworth

Housing for all

Specification: Supported Housing Accommodation

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Supported Housing Requirements

Our aim is for supported housing in Richmond and Wandsworth to be designed and built to a high standard which can help people to live with the best quality of life possible. Disabled and older people who move into supported housing may have a range of different support needs including but not limited to, physical, sensory, and cognitive impairment and may be more likely to experience sensory overwhelm. Through good design we can make people's day to day lives easier, reduce the need for care and support, and improve health, wellbeing and quality of life.

This document sets out our expectations and requirements for all types of supported housing developments for different people groups. It is important to remember that these are not general needs buildings, which means that additional facilities and features will be expected and essential. It is important to note that if there are compromises during the build, this may impact on the ability to use the building for the intended purposes.

This document should be read in conjunction with the following guides:

- **PAS 6463:2022 Design for the mind** – Neurodiversity and the built environment – Guide
- '**Considering and meeting the sensory needs of autistic people in housing'** (written by the National Development Team for Inclusion – NDTi – 2020)
- **Wheelchair Housing Design Guide Third Edition** (2018) by Habinteg
- **Inclusive and Accessible Housing documentation** (2023) produced by the Specialist Housing Occupational Therapist based in Wandsworth Council's Regeneration Team.
- **Later Living Design Guide**: Metropolitan Thames Valley

This document has been produced in conjunction with the Specialist Housing Occupational Therapist based in the Enablement and Development Teams in the Housing and Regeneration Department, along with the Adult Social Care (ASC) Commissioning. It provides an outline specification for the potential development of new homes designed for people who require supported accommodation.

General design principles

- **Site location** and topography needs to be carefully considered and any site close to high traffic or other noisy areas should be avoided. Other key requirements include good proximity to transport links and local amenities.
- **Long corridors are to be avoided** as these feel institutional and can be difficult for older and disabled people who may be unable to walk this distance. Also, where possible, front doors should not face one another.
- **Most flats to be designed as ADM1 M4(2) adaptable and accessible** – 55m2 as a minimum size. The LBW/R M4(2) brief must be used to ensure these flats are designed appropriately, with the inclusion of additional facilities which are detailed in this brief, reflecting the fact that this is a supported housing development.

- **Fully accessible wheelchair user ADM1 M4(3- 2b) flats should be included** in the development and be located on the ground floor - 60-65m2 as a minimum size, although larger than this would be preferable for supported housing. Bedrooms must be a minimum of 15m2. These are to be designed as fully compliant M4(3) flats with all communal areas to be accessible (including refuse, cycle store and garden areas). The LBW/R M4(3) brief must be used to ensure these flats are designed appropriately, with the inclusion of additional facilities detailed in this brief.
- **1b2p flats to be provided throughout**, but larger 1b2p flats will provide flexibility and may prove suitable for a couple to share or provide some study space.
- **Adjustments for ageing** are included in this brief and should be built in as standard.

Fire strategy

- **The fire strategy must acknowledge these are supported housing developments**, in line with the proposed care and support arrangements for the service. It is important to note that the arrangements may include single cover or even no staff at some times of the day.
- **Sprinklers must be considered** - refer to NFCC's "Fire Safety in Specialized Housing" and possible inclusion of Mist based system – to be agreed with Fire Engineer,

Specific design principles

Access/Parking

- **Space for dropping off** with easy access and turning routes and close to entrances, for ambulances and essential vehicles.
- **There should be enough disabled parking spaces** in relation to the M4(3) homes provided along with a small number of spaces for staff and visitors.
- **Pedestrian access** must be separate from vehicle access.

Outdoor Areas

- There must be **both private and communal amenity spaces**.
- **Communal outdoor spaces** must be fully accessible with clear open sightlines.
- **The communal area needs to be proportionally larger** than usually provided for general needs developments – quiet secluded space may be required for some residents.
- **There should be the potential for separation** of the communal garden into quiet (sensory garden) and active areas (including allotment area) and provide plenty of shade (both with trees and canopies – although avoid materials which accentuate the noise of rain) and appropriate seating (which does not obstruct pathways).
- **Avoid plants which can be toxic** to people or animals (residents may have assistance pets).
- **Ground surface materials** must be easy to negotiate, i.e. no loose materials as these can be difficult to mobilise on for those who are ambulant and wheelchair users.
- **Consider including a garden room** for additional quiet communal space if possible.

- **Scooter storage is required**. This is not to be placed in communal or fire escape corridors and should be accessed easily rather than residents having to manoeuvre through too many doors and lobbies.

Communal Areas

- The **front entrance needs to be designed to be welcoming without looking institutional**. These are homes and the building should reflect this – the development should not stand out as different to other residential buildings in the area.
- **Communal entrances** to be easy to see and find when approaching the building. Protection from the elements, such as canopies, and seating to be provided.
- There must also be a **clear sense of safety and security** and **increased security** will be required, such as fob access for internal doors as well as main entrance door.
- **Wearable access bracelets** to be considered for all residents and staff. Each fob to be programmed to provide specific access to different areas. Institutional-looking elements must be avoided.
- **Way-finding and signage must be easy and clear** throughout the building with identifiable areas. For example, colour coding different floors or amenities, consistent use of bold simple symbols/pictures with appropriate LRV rating at a comfortable viewing height for seated and standing users.
- **Features which cause sensory overload are to be avoided**, such as reflective materials which cause glare, especially at lower levels (see later sections).
- **Different tonal and textural ground surface or floor finishes internally and externally should be avoided** as this can increase the chances of tripping. Nb: this does not include tactile paving for blind/ partially sighted people.
- **Notifications and timetables** of cleaning and refuse must be clear with simple instructions.
- **Post-boxes** are to be provided in the entrance lobby, clear of any access routes and in an accessible location.
- Inclusion of **indoor planting** to be considered.
- Include **additional seating** for those who may need to sit and rest whilst moving around the building, and to encourage social interaction.
- **A lift must be provided** and clearly visible from the entrance. A lift is a requirement for M4(2) homes above ground floor level (double lift for M4(3) homes above ground floor) and should be as large as possible, given the likely need for people using walking equipment, wheelchairs and needing assistance.
- **Stairwells** should be located in an obvious communal area to encourage stair-use, perhaps at the front of the building. Stair-rails must be suitable for those with reduced grip, such as rounded tubular handrails (rather than flat handrail types).
- **If full-height glazing on upper floors is being considered**, this should be carefully assessed, with the application of manifestations and/or non-reflective film to a lower portion, or the provision of contrasting handrails at a mid-height, without affecting views out.

Individual flats

- **Individual living spaces** should be orientated away from noisier elevations of the building and be sited to overlook communal spaces or gardens rather than car parking or roads.
- **The same products** to be used across the whole development, including bathroom products and all fixtures and fittings. Consideration must be given to ease of use and weight of all products, such as the weight of windows – do not use windows which are heavy to open.
- **Front door locking mechanisms** should be of the slam shut type which automatically lock. Do not use locks where a person has to lift the handle to engage the lock as this can be confusing and also create difficulties when double handed operation is required. Nb: fob access via bracelets will prevent residents locking themselves out.
- **Living space to be separate** from the kitchen/ dining area - open plan spaces to be avoided.
- **Bathrooms to be en-suite** from the bedrooms as well as accessible from the hallway, to provide privacy as well as easy access for visitors.
- **Wet rooms to be provided throughout**, laid out so that a bath can be fitted over the shower area if required (see AKW document – Future Proofing Tenant Bathrooms https://www.akw-ltd.co.uk/document/akw-future-proofing-bathrooms/ and Impey (ref). Also see LBW/R shower room template which allows for a bath to be provided in a shower space if required.
- **Walls to sanitary facilities to provide appropriate additional strengthening** (HEWI recommend 50mm for shower seats and drop-down rails without leg support, or 30mm minimum with leg-support – nb: as legs can be a tripping hazard, 50mm is recommended).
- **Reinforced ceilings** to be provided in all flats, to allow for installation of both hoists and internal swings. The implications of possible hoist installation must be considered with the lighting design (i.e. downlighters/wall lights may need to be specified rather than pendants).
- **Additional tonal contrasting sockets** to be provided throughout the flats for additional equipment and lighting.
- **Curtains, blinds, and alarm systems** with pull cords should be avoided as these can introduce a ligature risk (potential hard-wiring for an alarm system to be considered).
- **Private spaces** for each flat to be provided - balcony safety must be considered including higher balustrades. Frosted glass to be considered for privacy.
- **All balcony and patio handles** must have large D-type handles to both sides and be easy to grip (no cup or finger handles).
- **Vinyl/laminate flooring** with appropriate slip-resistance to be provided throughout, for ease of moving wheelchairs and furniture, and for easy cleaning.

Staff/Communal Flat (where required)

- **The intention is for this flat to be a communal flat** – group activities will take place in this area. The flat should be fully wheelchair accessible, located on the ground floor, with access from the main communal area and with access out to the communal terrace and garden.
- **There should be an additional accessible WC** accessed from the communal area and accessible for all residents.
- **The flat should be easily adaptable** into a general needs flat (preferably an M4(3) flat if ground floor) to future-proof the development in case of changed need in the future.
- **Hallway/ corridor space** should be minimised to ensure there is maximum communal space.

- **The bedroom** is to incorporate an office area for the staff member, and an ensuite shower and WC is required (separate to the communal accessible WC).
- **The communal area should have an open-plan kitchen with living/ dining space** so providing a flexible space which can be used for different purposes.
- **The door to the living room in the communal flat to have glazed panels** so residents have a clear view through from the flat hallway.

Technology

- **All communal doors and M4(3) flats to have full automation**, M4(2) flats to be power-assisted in some way (i.e. Freedor SmartSound | Free-swing door closer | Fireco).
- **Power assisted windows** and curtains/ blinds to be considered.
- **Visual communication** via video access and space for notices/signage to be provided.
- **Intelligent adaptable technology** to be provided (details to be provided by ASC) – this requires WiFi throughout the building.

Kitchen requirements - standard kitchens

*For additional wheelchair accessible kitchen requirements see the LBW/R M4(3) brief

- **Provide only L or U shape kitchens** for ease of use.
- Do not design tall units on end of the kitchen run if it is next to the living room – instead, use **standard height units** where trays can be placed.
- **Corner end units and worktops to be curved** for safety.
- **Wall cupboards** to be within comfortable reach - i.e. 400mm to base of unit from standard worktop.
- **Base and corner base units** to have pull out drawers for easy access, instead of shelves.
- **Glass fronted cupboards** to be considered, so contents can be easily seen and identified.
- **Handles** to be comfortable to grip and should be long and within easy reach.
- **Oven must be waist height** (1000mm to centre), side-opening and in a tall unit with a pull-out heat-resistant shelf below (height to underneath of shelf should be 700mm).
- **Hob on worktop** to be level-surface ceramic or induction (preferable for safety) with easy-to-use front or side controls.
- **Pull-out worktop** and leg space under sink to be considered, to allow for seated preparation.
- **Taps to be swan-neck with lever handles**, with clear hot/cold markings.
- **All controls** to be easy to see, use and understand.
- **Good task lighting and tonal contrast** to be provided.

Bathroom requirements

*For additional wheelchair accessible bathroom requirements see LBW/R M4(3) brief

- **Allow a clear view** from the bedroom to the bathroom/ toilet.

- **Sliding doors** to be considered to avoid door clash if necessary.
- **Level access showers** should be fitted as standard, with the design allowing for a bath to be fitted over the shower if required in the future.
- **There should be no Doc M packs** (see shower templates and rail/ shower pack). Any grab rails should be contemporary and warm-touch versions.
- **The same contemporary and functional products** should be used where possible in the M4(2) and M4(3) bathrooms, such as semi-pedestal WHB with single lever mixer taps, extra long mirrors (for seated and standing use) with longer pull-cord for light and a separate lower height shaver socket. Toilet to have longer projection with paddle flush handle on the transfer side. Shower controls to have lever handles and be easy to use and understand.
- **Task focused lighting** to be installed to reduce falls risk.
- **Thresholds/ threshold strips** in bathrooms should be avoided – they are unnecessary and just introduce a tripping hazard.
- **Larger tiles or** **Altro Tegulis | Tile-effect Wall Panels | Altro** to be installed as this allows for easier cleaning and a provides a contemporary look.

Sensory Design Principles

Soundproofing

- **Noise transfer must be minimal,** with good insulation from both outside and inside, between flats and between rooms, with double/ triple/ acoustic glazing and any equipment emitting noise to be placed in soundproofed cupboards.
- **Noise and location** of all appliances/ heating/ air conditioner/ water pipes/ WC flush must be considered and avoided, WM and MVHR units etc need to be out of living areas and in soundproofed hallway cupboards, low-noise emitting equipment to be chosen, be aware of where bedrooms are located in relation to these.
- **Bedrooms** must not be located near stairs/ communal areas/ lifts/ external doors.
- **Staff accommodation** should be located near entrances (rather than resident flats).
- **Automatic extractor fans to be avoided** – provide separate switches to turn them on/off.
- **Underfloor heating or panel radiators** to be provided as these are quieter forms of heating.
- **Acoustic vinyl flooring** to be provided.
- **Metal curtain rails to be avoided** because the sound can be hard for some residents.
- **Soft closing mechanisms** on cupboards, pads/buffers on all doors, kitchen cabinets and WC lids to be provided.
- **Alarms/ doorbells to have a gentler noise**, choice of tone and adjustable volume (loud alarms could lead to sensory overload and difficulty evacuating the building).
- **Video entry-phone** to be provided to aid lip reading.
- **Include an alternate doorbell** with visual indicator for those who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Lighting and materials which impact on vision

- **Lighting needs to help define areas and be consistent** throughout the building, motion sensors to be provided in communal areas (although those which go out quickly are to be avoided and not to be used in the communal WC as this would be a safety issue).
- **Natural daylight** to be designed in as much as possible, throughout the building.
- **Incandescent (such as Halogen/Tungsten) or warm LED** (dimmable may flicker) to be used. Fluorescent lighting and dimmable switches to be avoided due to glare and flicker.
- **Light shades** to be provided to cover bulbs.
- **Smart bulbs** to be considered.
- **Plenty of sockets** to be provided throughout for lamps.
- **Blackout blinds** to be provided (roller blinds, not slatted which can produce a striped effect).
- **Matt and low-sheen finishes** throughout are preferable as this avoids glare.
- **Flooring should be continuous**, and patterns/ dimples/ sparkles/ gloss/ marble/ geometric and vivid designs must be avoided throughout the development (i.e. flooring, tiling, kitchen cupboards and worktops, as well as all furniture provided).
- **Neutral/ natural/ pastel/ muted colours** for paint, flooring, kitchens and bathrooms to be provided (this also relates to the provision of furniture).
- **A minimum 30 LRV tonal contrast** between floors and base units, worktop and walls, handles and drawers/cupboards, and switches/ sockets/ controls and background walls.
- **Plenty of storage** to be provided to ensure main rooms can be kept clear of clutter.

Control of Odours

- **The spread of odours must be limited** through the building by providing separate kitchen and living space and ensuring there is good ventilation.
- **Low odour** paints and other items must be used (such as adhesive-free flooring).
- **Unscented cleaning products** must be used when completing the development.
- **Refuse area** must be as far away from flat windows as possible.

Touch

- **Warm touch** door and window handles, stair-rails and bathroom grab rails to be provided.
- **Shower screens** (rather than curtains) to be considered – full height and folding.
- **Shower head with adjustable settings** to be provided to allow choice over type of water flow and pressure.

References:

- https://livingmadeeasy.org.uk/dlf-factsheets/adapting-your-home-the-kitchen
- Wheelchair Housing Design Guide Third Edition (2018) by Habinteg
- PAS 6463:2022 Design for the mind – Neurodiversity and the built environment – Guide
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