

Accessible Housing in Local Plans



Overview

In 2018 Habinteg assessed accessible housing requirements in place in local planning authorities across England. We obtained data from 263 planning authorities out of a possible 365. The aim of the research was to discover how many local authorities had made any commitment to building homes to an accessible, or wheelchair accessible standard. In 2015, the building regulations were revised, and the technical specifications for accessible homes were defined as:

- M4(2) Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings
- M4(3) Category 3: Wheelchair user dwellings

These new, optional access standards have superseded the Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing Design Standard. However, these standards can be thought of as largely equivalent to the previous standards. As some local plans have not been updated since before 2015, we included both the old, and new standards in our research.

Background

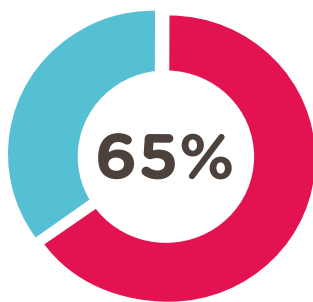
Habinteg recommend that local authorities build 90% of new homes to the accessible, adaptable standard (category 2) and 10% to the wheelchair standard (category 3). This approach has been adopted by the London Plan, meaning all new developments in London should be accessible.

We can broadly split the local authorities surveyed into these categories:

- Those who make no visible reference or commitment to accessible homes
- Those who reference accessible homes but do not make a commitment to build a specific amount
- Those who have a commitment to accessible homes specified in the local plan.

References to accessible housing

Of the 263 local authorities looked at:

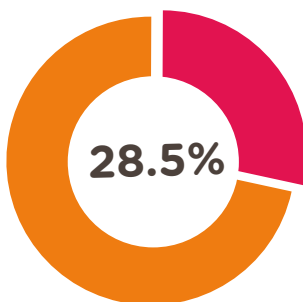


65% of local authorities (**171**) make reference to either the Lifetime Homes standard or category 2

The 55 Local Plans which reference Category 2 were updated and adopted after October 2015. However there are small number of Local Plans which still reference the Lifetime Homes standards despite their plans being adopted post October 2015.

References to wheelchair standard housing

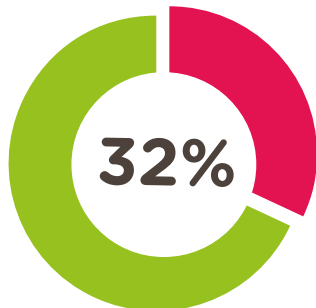
When referencing wheelchair housing design standard or Category 3 the numbers are much smaller. Of the 263 local authorities looked at:



28.5% of local authorities (**75**) make reference to either the wheelchair housing design standard or Category 3.

Commitment to the delivery of accessible, adaptable homes

The number of planning authorities which require developers to build to Lifetime Homes or Category 2 has increased since our last review in 2013/14 when it stood at 24%.



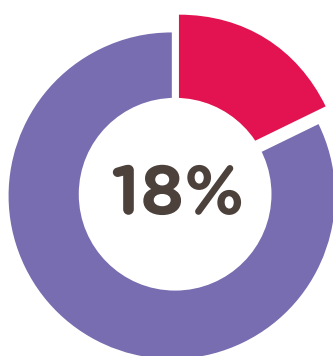
32% of local authorities (84) require all or a proportion of housing units to be built to the Lifetime Homes or Category 2

This equates to 49% of all planning authorities who reference either Lifetime Homes or Category 2 in their local plans.

Local authorities which have committed to providing a percentage of either Lifetime Homes or Category 2 are included in these figures. Local plans which have referenced Lifetime Homes, but have provided no concrete commitment to either Lifetime Homes or Category 2 have not been included.

Commitment to the delivery of wheelchair standard housing

The number of local authorities which require developers to build to the wheelchair housing design standard or Category 3 has doubled from 9% in 2013/14.



18% of local authorities (48) have committed to a proportion of housing units to be built to either wheelchair housing design standard and Category 3

This figure equates to 64% of all local planning authorities which have referenced either the wheelchair housing design standard or Category 3

All local plans which reference the wheelchair housing design standard or Category 3 also reference Lifetime Homes or Category 2. Local plans which have set a target for wheelchair accessible housing do not exceed more than 10% as a minimum, the exception to this is the Northumberland and Uttlesford draft local plan which have set a minimum target of 25% and 15% respectively.

The picture outside of London

As the commitment to accessible and wheelchair standard homes has been adopted in the London plan, planning authorities that fall within London skew the figures quite heavily.

When London is removed from the statistics:

- 24% of local planning authorities (63) have committed to building a proportion of accessible homes.

Case study

Liverpool is a good example of a planning authority outside of London that is building accessible homes. The new draft Local Plan for Liverpool City Council makes a commitment to build 90% of new homes to M4(2) and 10% of homes to M4(3). The Council recognises the importance of accessible housing which helps meet the needs of an ageing population and people with disabilities, in leading independent lives.

Cllr Pam Thomas, Cabinet member Inclusive and Accessible City;

“The Mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson and I, understand the importance of Lifetime Homes, which are adaptable as people’s needs change and allow people to live independently. As part of our Housing Partnership with Redrow Homes, and LMH we now have some Lifetime Homes. However not all housing developers understand the importance of this and we do try to emphasise the need when we receive planning applications.”

Conclusion

The research shows that almost two thirds of local authorities speak of the provision of accessible housing, but only half of that figure make a commitment to building a proportion of their housing to higher accessibility standards. More work needs to be done in embedding and influencing higher accessibility housing provision within local plans. However, it is encouraging that the number of local authorities with a commitment to provide accessible homes is increasing.

Habinteg provides accessible housing, promotes accessible design standards, supports the social model of disability, and publishes a wide range of resources about inclusive, accessible housing and the built environment.

For technical advice on the use of accessible design standards contact Habinteg’s consulting team, the Centre for Accessible Environments on 020 7822 8232 or email info@cae.org.uk. If you have any questions about this report, contact the communications team on comms@habinteg.org.uk