

Healthy sustainable communities Planning for access

prepared for
Milton Keynes/South Midlands Sub-Region 
Health & Social Care Project Team

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MKSM health and Social Care group

The Milton Keynes South Midlands health and social care group exists to develop proposals with partners towards evolving an appropriate local health and social care infrastructure in support of the Government's sub regional strategy to help deliver unprecedented population growth in six key areas – Northampton and West Northamptonshire, North Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, Bedford, and Luton and Dunstable.

Membership comprises representatives from Social Care and Health, Health, Local Government and Voluntary Sector organisations.

The group's remit includes commissioning research into models of care and receipt of research outputs, pre-consultation and consultation with key stakeholders and their publics, producing recommendations and feeding these back before developing an agreed planning framework for the future provision of health and social care in the Milton Keynes South Midlands sub region.

Ben Cave Associates

Ben Cave Associates Ltd have experience in

- health and social impact assessment;
- integrated impact assessment (including SEA);
- health and social policy;
- participatory evaluation; and
- community development.

Ben Cave Associates Ltd work with regional bodies, local authorities, NHS organisations, regeneration partnerships and the voluntary and the private sectors.

David Bonnett Associates

The information about planning and designing for accessibility and for the needs of people with disabilities is based largely on material provided by David Bonnett Associates, a practice which specialises in access consultancy, research and design.

More information about David Bonnett Associates is available at www.davidbonnett.co.uk

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Planning for access

The Social Model of Disability

In 1975 the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) developed the Social Model of Disability. The Social Model has become internationally recognised as the driving force behind the disability agenda and a cornerstone of the disabled people's movement. The Social Model sees disability as

"... the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by contemporary social organisation which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities". (Fundamental Principles of Disability, UPIAS 1976).

Disabled people do not face disadvantage because of their impairments but experience discrimination in the way we organise society. This includes failing to make education, work, leisure and public services accessible, failing to remove barriers of assumption, stereotype and prejudice and failing to outlaw unfair treatment in our daily lives.

Access Aims

The concept of inclusive design should be at the heart of any master-planning proposals and take account of the requirements of the Local Development Framework. The development should be planned and designed in detail to be inclusive to meet the diverse needs of people of all ages and with a variety of physical and sensory disabilities.

When looking at access issues early in the developments there is opportunity to consider the needs of people who will be using the development as well as the property managers.

Appropriate standards for accessibility meet a diverse range of requirements and should be considered from the outset of any development. To achieve this the developer needs to ensure that the external infrastructure of the scheme is accessible, and convenient, for all by putting the principles of independent and mainstream access to the fore.

Within residential buildings the objectives of the Lifetime Homes Standards set the criteria for inclusive design. Furthermore, in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the developer should ensure that all services, premises and employment provided at the site will be suitable and accessible for people with disabilities.

The Disability Discrimination Act

In the UK the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) says that you are 'disabled' if you have a mental or physical impairment. This should have an adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities and should be long-term (meaning it has lasted for 12 months, or is likely to last for more than 12 months or for the rest of your life). At least one of these areas must be badly affected:

- mobility
- manual dexterity
- physical co-ordination
- continence
- ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects
- speech, hearing or eyesight
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- understanding of the risk of physical danger.

Access Strategy

It is impossible to be prescriptive about access solutions at the early design stage. However it is necessary to create a framework for the designers and operators to incorporate and implement optimal solutions at the right time in the overall development and occupation process. An Access Consultant may be appointed to act as an independent adviser to ensure that access issues are properly considered and resolved to an appropriate level of detail at each step of planning, design, construction and operation of the development. In addition it is sensible to work with a Consultative Access Group to help in this process.

Access Consultants can act as 'access champions' within the wider consultant team to ensure that access concerns are central to decision making and that the appropriate access standards are adopted.

Access Design Process

The key access considerations at each stage are set out below.

Outline Planning Consent

At this stage the developer should commit to the Access Statement and an on-going process of consultation and engagement with local access interests, including implementing Lifetime Homes Standards in residential properties. Lifetime Homes Standards are set out in Annex 1.

Site Wide Access Strategy for the External Infrastructure

Pursuant to the Outline Consent, the developer should develop a Site Wide Access Strategy in collaboration with the Access Consultant and the Consultative Access Group. This Site Wide Strategy will define access principles across the development. The key access considerations will relate to:

- the mix of land uses
- inter-relationship between roads, cycle routes and pedestrian routes/ areas
- public transport and public transport interchanges
- car parking policies
- public open space and the public realm
- the relationship between the site and the surrounding infrastructure

Development Plans, Land Uses and Circulation

Development plans need to address the following considerations relating to land use and circulation within a particular area:

- access for buildings at the main circulation levels
- access to facilities in the buildings
- access to public facilities, including retail, leisure and eating places, that are above or below street and circulation levels
- important sight-lines and visibility of entrances
- access to private car parking within streetblocks
- pedestrian routes, pavements, street and kerbside detail
- level changes within the public realm
- public transport – access and internal arrangements
- access to public car parking facilities
- access to public open space
- lighting and colours at all public realm levels
- wayfinding, signage and public information systems

Reserved Matters relating to Detailed Building Design

The access considerations for individual buildings, include:

- arrival - car parking, drop off
- approach to entrances within the curtilage of the buildings
- entrances to buildings

- access to amenity space
- internal horizontal circulation
- stairs and lifts
- WC facilities
- Escape
- Internal wayfinding
- Lifetime Homes Standards

Detailed Building Fit-Out

The developer, in consultation with both the Access Consultant and Access Group will ensure that detailed design matters address the needs of disabled people.

The key considerations will be:

- reception
- signage
- internal decor
- floor finishes
- ironmongery and fittings
- control switches
- auditory communications

Post Occupancy

The developer should continue their commitment to the consultative process beyond the completion of the development into the post occupancy phase, in so far as their remit allows. At this stage access requirements will be met by anticipating the need for adjustments in collaboration to suit individual workers or residents.

Key Workspace Considerations may include:

- individual lighting
- seating
- workstation
- work equipment
- management support
- personal emergency egress

Key Residential Considerations may include:

- lighting
- switches and sockets
- kitchen fittings
- bath/ shower fittings
- hearing enhancement systems
- alarm systems

Sources of Advice – List of Technical Standards and Guidance

The key standards adopted will be:

- Building Regulations Approved Document M (2004)
- British Standard 8300 2001
- British Standard 5588 Part 8

Annex 1

Lifetime Homes standards

1. Where there is car-parking space next to the home, it should be capable of enlargement to 3.3 m width.
The general provision for a car-parking space is 2.4 m width. If an additional 0.9 m width is not provided at the outset, there must be provision (eg a grass verge) for enlarging the overall width to 3.3 m later.
2. The distance from the car-parking space to the home should be kept to a minimum and be level or gently sloping.
A level approach is best. However, if the topography prevents this, a maximum gradient of 1:12 is permissible on an individual slope of less than 5 m or 1:15 if it is 5-10 m, and 1:20 where it is more than 10 m (provided there are top, bottom and intermediate landings of at least 1.2 m excluding the swing of doors and gates.)
Paths should be at least 0.9 m width.
3. The approach to all entrances should be level or gently sloping.
See standard 2 above for the definition of 'gently sloping'.
4. All entrances should:
 - a) be illuminated;
 - b) have level access over the threshold; and
 - c) have a covered main entrance.The threshold upstand should not exceed 15 mm.
5. Communal stairs should provide easy access and, where homes are reached by a lift, it should be fully accessible to a wheelchair.

Minimum dimensions for communal stairs

Uniform rise not more than 170 mm

Uniform going not less than 250 mm

Handrails extend 300 mm beyond top and bottom step

Handrail height 900mm from each nosing

Minimum dimensions for lifts

Clear landing entrances 1500 x 1500 mm

Minimum internal dimensions 1100 x 1400 mm

Lift controls between 900 and 1200 mm from the floor and 400 mm from the lift's internal front wall

6. The width of the doorways and hallways should conform to the specifications below.

Doorway clear opening width (mm)	Corridor/ passageway width (mm)
750 or wider	900 (when approach is head-on)
750	1200 (when approach is not head-on)
775	1050 (when approach is not head-on)
900	900 (when approach is not head-on)

The clear opening width of the front door should be 800 mm. There should be 300mm to the side of the leading edge of doors on the entrance level.

7. There should be space for turning a wheelchair in dining areas and living rooms and adequate circulation space for wheelchair users elsewhere.
A turning circle of 1500 mm diameter or a 1700 x 1400mm ellipse is required.

8. The living room should be at entrance level.
9. In houses of 2 or more storeys, there should be space on the entrance level that could be used as a convenient bed-space.
10. There should be:
 - a) a wheelchair-accessible entrance-level WC, with
 - b) drainage provision enabling a shower to be fitted in the future.
 All homes should have drainage provision for a future shower.

Homes with of 3 or more bedrooms

For homes with 3 or more bedrooms, or on one level, the WC must be fully accessible.

A wheelchair user should be able to close the door from within the closet and achieve side transfer from a wheelchair to at least one side of the WC. There must be at least 1100 mm clear space from the front of the WC bowl. The shower provision must be within the closet or adjacent to the closet (the WC could be an integral part of the bathroom in a flat or bungalow). But please note that it is important to meet the Part M dimensions specified to each side of the WC bowl in entrance-level WC's (diagrams 10a and 10b). The Lifetime Homes standards for houses of 3 bedrooms or more require full side transfer from at least one side of the WC.

Homes of 2 or fewer bedrooms

In small 2-bedroom homes where the design has failed to achieve this fully accessible WC, the Part M standard WC will meet this standard.

11. Walls in bathrooms and toilets should be capable of taking adaptations such as handrails.
Wall reinforcements should be located between 300 and 1500 mm from the floor.
 12. The design should incorporate:
 - a) provision for a future stairlift;
 - b) a suitably identified space for a through-the-floor lift from the ground to the first floor, for example to a bedroom next to a bathroom.
 There must be at least 900 mm clear distance between the stair wall (on which the lift would normally be located) and the edge of the opposite handrail/balustrade. Unobstructed 'landings' are needed at the top and bottom of stairs.
 13. The design should provide for a reasonable route for a potential hoist from main bedroom to the bathroom.
Most timber trusses today are capable of taking a hoist and tracking. Technological advances in hoist design mean that a straight run is no longer a requirement.
 14. The bathroom should be designed to incorporate ease of access to the bath, WC and washbasin.
Although a turning circle is not required in bathrooms, there should be enough space for a wheelchair user to use the bathroom.
 15. Living-room window glazing should begin at 800 mm or lower and windows should be easy to open/operate.
People should be able to see out of the window while seated. Wheelchair users should be able to operate at least one window in each room.
 16. Switches, sockets, ventilation and service controls should be at a height usable by all (i.e. between 450 and 1200 mm from the floor).
This applies to all rooms including the kitchen and bathroom.
- For more information on Lifetime Homes go to www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes