



ISLINGTON

# Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Users Housing

ISLINGTON COUNCIL  
**Planning Service**

Approved June 2000  
(Updated Aug 2002)

ISLINGTON'S UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**supplementary**planning**guidance**

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## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) sets out the Council's standards for lifetime homes, and the circumstances in which it will seek to achieve these standards. It also includes a short section on wheelchair users housing. The SPG updates the guidance on housing contained in section 5 of the January 1996 version of the Council's Planning Standards Guidelines and is a supplement to Islington's Unitary Development Plan 2002. It was agreed by the Council in June 2000, and re-published in August 2002 following the adoption of Islington's Revised UDP in June of that year.

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## 2. Lifetime Homes

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- 2.1 The term 'lifetime homes' describes any properties which incorporate 16 basic design criteria. These criteria, set out below, mean that the properties are accessible, flexible and adaptable. Further details on how to meet the criteria can be obtained from the Planning Service (contact the Council's Access Officer on ☎ 020 7527 2394).
- 2.2 Lifetime homes are not properties for people with special needs. They are, however, designed so as to be able to cope with households containing one or more members with moderate mobility problems. Some people with more severe mobility difficulties, or those in wheelchairs, may choose to live or continue to live in lifetime homes. Lifetime homes are not wheelchair standard accommodation but offer design solutions that allow for maximum flexibility in improving accessibility or carrying out adaptations at a later date. The properties are carefully designed to offer convenient, flexible and safe accommodation for the whole household and its visitors, including wheelchair users.
- 2.3 Support in the promotion of lifetime homes comes from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). This has meant that the concept has been co-ordinated, researched and promoted much more widely than would otherwise have been possible. Recent Rowntree publications on lifetime homes are:
- Costing Lifetime Homes 1997
  - Designing Lifetime Homes 1997
  - Meeting Part M and Designing Lifetime Homes 1999

- 2.4 Cost benefit analysis carried out for the JRF shows that the cost of adapting a lifetime home is less than half the average cost of adapting a comparable traditional dwelling. £350 million per annum is spent nationally on adapting homes, 60% of which is spent in the public sector. It is expected that 13% of all dwellings over the next 30 years will require adaptation and whilst for social housing this is likely to be nearer 20%. If every new house was built to lifetime homes standards from now on, potential savings in adaptations expenditure nationally is estimated at £39 million per annum across all housing tenures.
- 2.5 Other benefits include reduced costs of personal care, residential care and quicker and easier adaptations. Enforced moves due to physical mobility problems would be dramatically reduced. Quality of life issues, whilst difficult to measure, would also figure as a benefit accruing from lifetime homes.
- 2.6 Some lifetime homes criteria exceed current Housing Corporation Scheme Development Standards. However, many of these improvements to the basic standards can be achieved at little or no cost.
- 2.7 The research identified the actual costs of achieving all of the criteria and estimated that these will vary from £90 to £283 per property depending on dwelling size, nature of the site and specification.
- 2.8 Incorporation of lifetime homes standards is possible as part of a modernisation programme. For example the Habinteg Housing Association has worked successfully with local authorities on such programmes and found that 75% of lifetime homes standards are readily achievable in improvement works.
- 2.9 Research carried out by the Rowntree Foundation on user satisfaction with lifetime homes found that 90% of residents felt the features in a lifetime home should be incorporated into all homes.

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### **3. Wheelchair Users Housing**

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- 3.1 Given that housing built to lifetime homes standards will be far more accessible to wheelchair users than conventional housing, the Council will not seek to require that houses built to full wheelchair mobility standards are provided as part of private housing developments. However, it is recognised that housing association schemes often include units built to full

wheelchair standard as set out in the Housing Corporation's 'Wheelchair Housing Design Guide' and the Council will continue to seek wheelchair housing as part of such schemes. Where wheelchair housing is proposed as part of a private housing scheme, the Council will encourage such housing to meet the same standards as in housing association schemes.

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## **4. Planning Policy**

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4.1 In order to reflect and properly underpin the above criteria, policies H20, H21 and H22 of Islington's Unitary Development Plan state:

**H20** The Council will require that in proposals for new housing development dwellings with ground floor access and all dwellings accessible by lift are built to lifetime homes standards. The Council will also encourage all other dwellings within new build schemes to be to lifetime homes standards.

**H21** Conversions should normally include dwellings to lifetime homes standards whenever these are physically achievable, particularly at ground floor level.

**H22** Where wheelchair housing is provided within private housing schemes, the Council will require such housing to meet the standards set out in the Housing Corporation's 'Wheelchair Housing Design Guide'. Within affordable housing schemes the Council will require that wheelchair housing is provided in suitable locations, sufficient to meet the needs of long term wheelchair users with very limited independent mobility.

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## **5. Lifetime Homes Criteria**

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5.1 The Lifetime Home criteria are set out below, although designers are encouraged to refer to the latest relevant Joseph Rowntree Foundation publication for more detailed advice (currently 'Meeting Part M and Designing Lifetime Homes').

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION										
1	Where there is car parking adjacent to the home, it should be capable of enlargement to attain 3300mm width. Where parking is provided separately, then a proportion of the spaces should be capable of enlargement to 3300mm.										
2	The distance from the car parking space to the home should be kept to a minimum, and the route to the entrance of the residence should be wheelchair accessible.										
3	The route from back of pavement to all ground floor entrances should be level or gently sloping (maximum gradient 1:12).										
4	All entrances should be illuminated and have level access across the threshold. The main entrance should be covered.										
5	Where homes are reached by a lift, it should be fully wheelchair accessible (including minimum internal dimensions of 1100x1400mm and fittings to Part M standard). In larger developments lift access to upper floor units should normally be provided.										
6	<p>Doors, halls and corridors should be wide enough and positioned to allow wheelchair users to gain access to all rooms. Front doors should have a clear opening width of 800mm and internal doors a clear opening width of 750mm. There should be 300mm space allowance between any corner and the opening edge of the door. Corridors should conform to the following:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="496 1431 1390 1883"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="496 1431 914 1534">Doorway clear opening width (mm)</th> <th data-bbox="914 1431 1390 1534">Corridor/passageway width (mm)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="496 1534 914 1585">750</td> <td data-bbox="914 1534 1390 1585">900 (when approach is head on)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="496 1585 914 1684">750</td> <td data-bbox="914 1585 1390 1684">1200 (when approach is not head on)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="496 1684 914 1783">775</td> <td data-bbox="914 1684 1390 1783">1050 (when approach is not head on)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="496 1783 914 1883">900</td> <td data-bbox="914 1783 1390 1883">900 (when approach is not head on)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Doorway clear opening width (mm)	Corridor/passageway width (mm)	750	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)
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CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
7	There should be turning space for wheelchairs in dining and living rooms and adequate circulation space for wheelchair users elsewhere. Where furniture layout is shown, a 1500mm turning space should be shown. In kitchens a minimum 1200mm space between units and the opposite wall will suffice.
8	There should be living space at entrance level.
9	In houses of two or more storeys, there should be space on the ground floor that could be used as a convenient bed space.
10	There should be an entrance level toilet. In smaller units this should be at least to Part M standard. In larger units (3 bedrooms or more) on more than one floor, the WC should be wheelchair accessible and also provide a floor drain, suitable to allow future shower installation. The wheelchair user must be able to close the door from within the closet. An outward opening door will normally be required. There should be a minimum 700mm between the WC pan rim and one side wall, and 1100mm between the WC pan front rim and the opposite wall.
11	Walls in bathrooms and toilets should be capable to taking adaptations such as handrails.
12	<p>The design should incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) provision for a future stair-lift. There should be a minimum of 900mm clear distance between the stair wall and the edge of the opposite stair-rail or balustrade. Unobstructed landing space is needed at the top and bottom of the stairs.</li> <li>b) suitably identified space for a potential through-floor lift from the ground to first floor.</li> </ul>
13	The design should provide for a reasonable route for a potential hoist from a main bedroom to the bathroom.
14	The bathroom should be designed for ease of access, to the bath, WC and wash basin. This will normally require an outward opening door, and 1100mm between the front rim of the WC pan and the opposite wall.

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
15	Living room window glazing should begin at 800mm or lower and windows should be easy to open/operate.
16	Switches, sockets, ventilation and service controls should be at a height useable by all (i.e. between 450mm and 1200mm from the floor).

## References

Islington's Unitary Development Plan 2002

Costing Lifetime Homes Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1997

Designing Lifetime Homes Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1997

Meeting Part M and Designing Lifetime Homes Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1999

Housing Corporation 'Wheelchair Housing Design Guide' (WHDGY CI/sfb 848-1997)

(Available from CRC Ltd, tel: 0207 505 6622)