



Ipswich Local Plan

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Accessible General Housing



IPSWICH

**BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

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Accessible general housing

1.1 There is growing support for incorporating an improved level of access into all housing as part of a wider policy for enabling elderly and disabled people to integrate into the wider community.

1.2 Policy H12 of the Ipswich Local Plan encourages the construction of dwellings designed to general standards of accessibility, which are accessible to people in wheelchairs and capable of adaptation to suit most people with disabilities.

1.3 The following guidelines set out the operation of the Council's policy for access to new housing for people with disabilities. They form supplementary planning guidance to policy H12 of Ipswich Local Plan, which deals with assisting people with disabilities to live as independently as possible.

1.4 These guidelines do not address the housing needs of some more severely disabled people who depend on a wheelchair for mobility. There will continue to be a need for homes to be built to a "Wheelchair" standard for a small minority of disabled people in accordance with Policy H13 of the Local Plan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Accessible general housing

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council defines accessible general housing as housing in which:
- The approaches and entrances are accessible to disabled people, including wheelchair users.
 - The areas normally used by visitors, eg hall, WC and living room, should be accessible to disabled people, including many wheelchair users.
 - Housing on more than one storey or level is designed internally for ease of movement and is capable of modification as required for reasons of limited mobility.

2.2 Accessible general housing is designed to basic standards which can be used as ordinary housing, but will also cater for people suffering from a temporary or permanent physical disability. Physical disability, temporary or permanent, may potentially affect everyone at some stage in their lives. The provision of accessible general housing on an extensive scale will make it less likely that residents are forced to move house as they become older or if disability occurs.

2.3 In order to help to meet the Council's aim to assist people with disabilities to live as independently as possible, the Council will seek to encourage the provision of accessible general housing.

3. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

3.1 The Ipswich Local Plan was adopted in May 1997. It sets out detailed policies and proposals for the development of the Town until 2006. A key aim is the improvement of accessibility within the Town for all, and Policy H12 seeks to ensure that new dwellings will be accessible to most people with disabilities. A copy of this Policy is included in Appendix 1.

3.2 The Building Regulations require appropriate access for people with disabilities to be included in non domestic buildings. Housing remains exempt from this legislation, and access requirements cannot be enforced via Building Regulations.

3.3 The planning system essentially deals with the development of land, which may provide the opportunity to secure a more accessible environment by taking into account access issues. This may include the need for, and access to and into accessible housing. However the internal layout of buildings is not

Accessible general housing

normally a material factor when considering whether to grant or refuse planning permission.

3.4 PPG1 which sets out the general policy and principles of the planning system states:

“The internal layout of buildings is not normally material to the consideration of planning permission. Part M of the Building Regulations 1991 imposes requirements on how non domestic buildings should be designed and constructed to secure specific objectives for people with disabilities. It would be inappropriate to use planning legislation to impose separate requirements in these areas.”

3.5 This SPG does not seek to impose accessible general housing requirements on all houses. Although the Government is assessing the practicality of extending Part M of the Building Regulations, until the results of this review are published it would be outside the remit of the current legislative system to do so. However the Council will seek to achieve the provision of accessible general housing wherever possible via application of Ipswich Local Plan Policy H12.

3.6 The role of this SPG is to define what Policy H12 requires as accessible general housing and to offer clear unambiguous advice to house builders. It should not be viewed as a prescriptive set of guidelines, but more as an educational tool and a basis for negotiation.

4.1 There are three essential design criteria for accessible general housing:

- A The entrance must have a ramped (not exceeding 1:12) or level approach and a threshold of up to 15mm, with a level standing area outside the main entrance of at least 1,200mm x 1,200mm.
- B Entrances and principle rooms (living rooms, dining room, kitchen and at least one bedroom) must have minimum clear opening widths of at least 775mm, and circulation spaces serving those rooms must have a minimum width of at least 900mm. Allowances should be made so that wheelchair users can turn into rooms and corridors.

4. DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

Accessible general housing

- C The WC and if possible the bathroom should be at the same level as the entrance.

4.2 The following information provides more detailed guidance and advice for developers and others in order to create a better awareness of the design requirements and to achieve better access for all.

5. CRITERIA FOR ACCESSIBLE GENERAL HOUSING

5.1 The criteria fall into three main categories :

Essential Criteria

Essential guidelines on the structural shell of the building.

Desirable Features

Advisory guidelines on non structural considerations such as the positioning of light switches and fuse boxes.

Optional Features

Advisory guidelines on the quality of housing provided.

5.2 The remainder of this SPG provides further guidance on each of these categories in turn.

6. ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

6.1 Structural Elements

These are the structural elements of the building which should be incorporated into the design from the outset.

- Entrances to dwellings should, wherever possible have a level or gently sloped approach.
- Where dwellings (usually flats) are accessed by lifts, the lifts should be accessible to wheelchair users.
- Entrances to dwellings should have flush thresholds, and a minimum clear opening door width of 800mm.
- Internal door sets should have a minimum clear opening width of 750mm (see Appendix 2 - Figure 1 Turning Space).
- Circulation spaces at entrance level, (eg halls and corridors) should have a minimum width of 900mm, and allowances should be made so that wheelchair users can turn into rooms and corridors (see Appendix 2 - Figure 2 Circulation Space).

Accessible general housing

- There should be a WC and a living room at entrance level.
- The entrance level WC should allow for access by a wheelchair user who has sufficient mobility to make either a front, diagonal or lateral transfer to the WC unaided (see Figure 3 Entrance Level WC).
- For dwellings on more than one storey or level, a staircase should be designed to allow for possible future installation of a stair lift.

6.2 Design Considerations (See also Suffolk Design Guide 3.9.1-3.9.11)

Approach to the Dwelling

- (i) Wherever possible there should be a level or gently sloped path, with a maximum gradient of 1:20 from the adopted footway to the door of the dwelling. Where ramps are unavoidable, a maximum gradient should be 1:12. Lengths of ramps should be no more than 10m for slopes of 1:15 to 1:20 gradient, and no more than 5m for slopes of 1:15 to 1:12 gradient. A ramp should be accompanied with a suitable handrail and there should, in addition, be steps as an alternative means of access (see Appendix 2 - Figure 4 Accessible Approaches).

Ramps and kerbs should be at least 900mm wide with a firm even surface. Kerbed edges to paths (minimum upstand 100mm) are required if the ground flanking the path or ramp is lower than the path. Any camber provided for drainage purposes should be kept to a minimum, and should be no more than 1:40.

Reasonably level access should also apply in approaches, entrances, hallways and corridors which are communal areas of access for multiple dwellings or flats.

- (ii) There should be a level standing area outside the front door of at least 1.2m x 1.2m for an inward opening door. For an outward opening door the area should be extended by the door swing. Any camber provided for drainage purposes should be kept to a minimum.

Accessible general housing

- (iii) Where steps are unavoidable they should have a maximum riser of 150mm with a minimum going of 280mm, and should not have open risers or nosings (see Appendix 2 - Figure 4 Accessible Approaches). Steps should not occur in the ramped length of a pathway.
- (iv) Approaches should be protected if there is an adjacent drop. If the drop is more than 380mm then it should be protected by a handrail.
- (v) There should be definition between foot and vehicular access to the house discernable to blind or partially sighted people, for example by use of contrasting textured surfaces or kerbs. This effect should be on private drives, not on the highway.
- (vi) On estate roads flush dropped kerbs should be incorporated along main footways and roads at pedestrian crossings .
- (vii) Car parking spaces within the curtilage, or designated spaces, should allow a width of at least 3.3m per vehicle. Where parking space is for two or more vehicles then a shared centre space of at least 900mm, and preferably 1.2m, between each car space of 2.4m should be provided (see Appendix 2 - Figure 5 Car Parking Spaces). This should not be placed on the highway.
- (viii) Vehicular access may be used to gain proximity to the dwelling if the topography precludes the use of accessible footpaths. In this case a level area of driveway should be provided for a person leaving and entering the car and for access to the dwelling. This may be in the garage if appropriate, in which case the garage should be at least 3.4m wide internally and provide adequate space for a wheelchair user to exit.

Parking areas, where provided, should be within 30m of the dwelling.
- (ix) Gateways leading onto the path should be at least 850mm clear opening width. There should be no step at the gateway.

Lifts (provided for access to flats)

- (i) Lifts where provided should be large enough to take an accompanied person in a wheelchair.

Accessible general housing

- (ii) A lift should conform to the standard specified in Part M of the Building Regulations for non domestic buildings.

Thresholds

- (i) There should be a nominally flat threshold through the main front door to the home.
- (ii) There may be a 15mm upstand to permit weathering of the cill or concrete threshold and the provision of a water bar or other means of excluding weather at the foot of the door.

A second external door (rear or side) should be similarly constructed.

Door Widths

- (i) Internal doors should have a clear unobstructed opening width of not less than 775mm.
- (ii) The front door should have a clear unobstructed opening width of not less than 800mm.

Internal Space

Ground floor hallways and corridors must be at least 900mm wide unless :

- (i) where there is a radiator or similar small obstruction, in which case the minimum dimension can be 775mm. However, ease of circulation will be enhanced if obstructions can be recessed (see Figure 6 Corridor Widths).
- (ii) where turning at right angles through a doorway. If the door is 775mm, the corridor must be 1200mm wide. Where there is a wider door, then an appropriately narrower corridor will suffice (see Appendix 2 - Figure 1 Turning Space).
- (iii) when approaching a door which opens towards the user, then there must be a minimum clearance of 300mm between the leading edge of the door and any other obstruction.

Accessible general housing

- iv) junctions of passageways are liable to cause problems to wheelchair mobility. If the junction is 90 degrees and between passageways 900mm wide a chamfered corner may be needed. Alternatively, one of the passageways should be 1200mm wide (see Appendix 2 - Figure 2 Circulation Space).

6.3 There must be a WC at entrance level which allows for access by a wheelchair user who has sufficient mobility to make either a front, diagonal or lateral transfer to the WC unaided. Particular attention should be paid to the positioning of the door, which may be left open if the wheelchair cannot be fully accommodated within the WC compartment during the transfer process. Arrangements should take account of the privacy that would be expected for the use of a WC. An outward opening or sliding door will optimise manoeuvrable space within the WC compartment. The washbasin should be positioned so that it does not impede use of the WC (see Appendix 2 - Figure 3 Entrance Level WC).

- For dwellings on more than one storey, a staircase should be designed to allow possible future installation of British Standard approved stair lifts.

7. DESIRABLE FEATURES

7.1 The following are optional components which contribute to an accessible, easy to use dwelling. They are optional, but most can be achieved at no extra cost, and many are safety and energy features which will give additional marketing advantages :

Door and window ironmongery should be convenient to operate and easily accessible.

Low windows (maximum cill height 750mm maximum glazing height 800mm), providing eye level view for a seated person.

Ventilators should have easily reached controls

Electrical switches should be at waist height (1m) and electrical sockets not less than 600mm from the floor.

An electrical socket convenient for possible stair lift installation.

Heater controls, meters, fuse boxes and water stopcocks should be located within easy reach.

Space for platform or seat should be provided at the head end of bath.

Accessible general housing

Capstan headed tap or lever fittings should be used for basins, baths etc.

There should be space for manoeuvre around bathroom fixtures.

Thermostatic controls should be provided on taps and radiators.

Easy access to waste disposal and clothes drying facilities.

Good illumination outside entrance doors is required.

7.2 The most important factor will be that controls, handles etc are within easy reach for all users. As a guide to positioning most people, including wheelchair users, can easily reach controls between 400mm and 1300mm from floor level. As a general rule controls positioned 1 metre above floor level will be convenient for all.

8.1 Housebuilders are advised to take the following guidelines into account in order to improve access and usability. Where the following facilities are provided it will be more convenient if :

Floor surfaces are non slip.

Work top heights can be adapted to varying heights.

Where a car port or garage is within the curtilage of the dwelling, there is undercover access from the car parking space to the entrance.

8.2 People who use walking aids or who are wheelchair users need more space to move around a house comfortably. Where a generous room size is planned, then extra space is most usefully allocated in the following order of priority :

- bathroom
- bedroom
- kitchen
- storage
- living room

8. OPTIONAL FEATURES

Accessible general housing

8.3 An increase in room size will not automatically be more convenient for use by a disabled person. The following considerations will help :

Bathroom

Plan sufficient space for a wheelchair to turn. Where this is not possible it may be assumed that a wheelchair user enters forward and reverses out.

Bedroom

Allow for positioning of beds and essential furniture so that it is possible for a wheelchair user to come alongside the bed, and to turn.

Kitchen

A continuous sequence of units is recommended. Plan an unobstructed floor space to allow for wheelchair manoeuvre. The minimum clear space should be 1400mm x 1400mm where there is adequate space under units at floor level to accommodate wheelchair footrests. If not 1700mm x 1400mm is recommended.

8.4 Lifts

If a person becomes reliant on a wheelchair for mobility it may be necessary to install a through the floor lift or enclosed lift to gain access to upper floors. This can be facilitated if space arrangements have allowed for this possibility.

Most through the floor lifts run on guide rails attached to a supporting wall. The carriage's internal dimensions need to be at least 1300mm long x 750mm wide and have a clear landing at least 1.5m wide and at least 1.5m long in front of its entrance. Corresponding space allowances need to be made on upper and lower floors.

9. REFERENCES

9.1 The measurements quoted in these design guidelines are taken from :

BS5810, 1979, "Access for the Disabled to Buildings".

The Approved Document Part M of the Building Regulations, 1992 edition.

Institute of Highways and Transportation Guidelines 1991 "Reducing Mobility Handicaps".

Accessible general housing

Selwyn Goldsmith, 1976 “Designing for Disabled People”.

European Manual for Accessible Environments, 1990.

BS5619, 1978, “Design of Housing for the Convenience of Disabled People”.

9.2 This supplementary planning guidance is based on “Building Homes for Successive Generations - Criteria for Accessible General Housing” published by Access Committee for England 1992.

Appendix 1

APPENDIX 1 RELEVANT LOCAL PLAN POLICY

From Ipswich Local Plan, May 1997.

- H12 Wherever possible new dwellings should be constructed to be accessible to visitors in wheelchairs and capable of adaptation to suit most people with disabilities.