

Please note that text highlighted in **Yellow** is subject to change following the Housing Need Assessment, the Older Person Study and the Local Plan viability Study being completed. This relates the numbers/thresholds and %'s.

### **LPXX: Adaptable & Accessible Homes**

**All new homes** must be designed and constructed in a way that enables them to be adaptable, so they can meet the changing needs of their occupants over their lifetime. Planning permission will be granted for new dwellings subject to the following:

- New homes must be built to meet requirement M4(2) of Part M of the Building Regulations: Category 2 for accessible and adaptable dwellings where practical.
- **X%** of dwellings on schemes involving **major development** being provided as wheelchair adaptable dwellings in accordance with the Building Regulations M4(3) standard: Category 3.

Exemptions will only be considered where the applicant can robustly demonstrate that compliance would significantly harm the financial viability of the scheme in accordance with the approach set out in LP25 Affordable Homes or it is not practical to do so given the flood risk. All residential proposals should be accompanied by a separate document setting out how proposals (including each dwelling type) accord with each of the standards as detailed in Building Regulations. Where exemptions are sought on practicality or viability grounds, the minimum number of units necessary will be exempted from the requirements.

Applicants must submit appropriate supporting evidence of sufficient detail to enable consideration, including where appropriate a viability appraisal.

### **Policy Justification and Supporting Text**

The intention of this approach will be to maximise the flexibility of new housing to accommodate a wider spectrum of housing needs. This will support housing needs of older people but also those with specialist needs such as those who are disabled and wheelchair users leading to positive impacts on health and well-being. Making homes adaptable and accessible from the start will reduce the likelihood of people having to leave their homes as their needs change and allow people to stay within their local communities, creating mixed and inclusive communities.

To deliver sustainable communities means to support the needs of the current population and any future populations. Paragraph 59 of the NPPF states that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed. Paragraph 61 continues: within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies including, but not limited to, families with children, older people, and people with disabilities. Paragraph 127 (point f) of the NPPF states that planning policies should ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Paragraph 008 (Reference ID: 63-008-20190626) of the PPG is clear that 'Accessible and adaptable housing enables people to live more independently, while also saving on health and social costs in the future.' The same paragraph then goes onto clarify that 'accessible and adaptable housing will provide safe and convenient approach routes into and out of the home and outside areas, suitable

circulation space and suitable bathroom and kitchens within the home. Wheelchair user dwellings include additional features to meet the needs of occupants who use wheelchairs, or allow for adaptations to meet such needs.'

The National Building Regulations include specific nationally agreed construction standards (the M4(2) standard) which would deliver accessible and adaptable homes. Homes built to this standard are more flexible and readily adaptable as people's needs change. They are suitable not just for the elderly but also for families with pushchair needs, or those with a temporary or permanent disability or health issue.

A proportion of new dwellings that accord with Category M4(3) wheelchair adaptability on larger housing developments is also required. It is estimated that the national unmet need for wheelchair adaptable properties is the equivalent of 3.5 per 1,000 households. Planning Practice Guidance states that M4(3) should only be applied to properties where the LPA is responsible for allocating, or nominating \ person to live in that dwelling. However, given the level of need the requirement will be applied to **all major developments**.

Where the specific requirements of Building Regulations may not be achievable, an element of flexibility is recognised as being required in the delivery of these standards. This may be due to, site specific challenges around topography, flood risk and/or the relationship to design. It is acknowledged that a significant proportion of the Borough is at risk to flooding, and that this could be a constraint to achieving this. Where developers demonstrate that the M4(2) or M4(3) requirements are not feasible to be delivered on such ground's exemptions will be on a case by case basis on the clear evidence submitted at planning application stage, e.g. the topography of the site makes provision as a whole not feasible and impacts development significantly.

Should financial viability be an issue this will be considered in accordance with approach set in LP25 Affordable Housing.

To support the Local Plan review with up-to-date and proportionate evidence the Borough Council has commissioned and published the following: a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) (Simon Drummond-Hay, 2020) to supersede the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and in collaboration through the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF) with the other Norfolk planning authorities a Demand for Specialist Older Persons Housing and Dementia Care Housing Study (Three Dragons, 2020). And a Local Plan review viability study (Simon Drummond-Hay, 2020).

These studies illustrate that the Borough has a significantly aged population structure, and this characteristic is likely to become more pronounced in the future, with the number of residents over 75 anticipated to increase from 13,288 in 2020 to 19,166 by 2036. And that those requiring specialist accommodation, due to limiting long term illness and difficulty in performing personal care and tasks, will increase from 3,335 in 2020 to 4,810 by 2036.

Additionally, many households have persons with disabilities which require adaptations to homes.

The evidence studies suggest that **all new homes** in Borough should be designed to be adaptable to meet current and future needs. The HNA (page 83/84) states that the need for adaptable and accessible homes in King's Lynn and West Norfolk by the end of the plan period (2036) will be either be 12,354 or 13,215 depending upon if its assumed that all or 50% of all of the institutional population have mobility issues. Therefore, all new homes built in the Borough must meet requirement M4(2) of Part M of the Building Regulations unless it is not practical to do so. The Local Plan review Viability Assessment (Simon Drummond-Hay, 2020) has concluded that it is financially

viable for all new homes to meet this standard. Exceptionally, where it is not possible to achieve step-free access due to the topography of the site or flood risk, these requirements will not be imposed.