

MP Briefing

Accessible Homes Forecast, February 2021

About the forecast

The *Forecast for Accessible Homes* details findings of analysis carried out in 2020 and is the second such exercise Habinteg has conducted.

To generate the forecast, we assessed all 322 English local plans, looking at their housing delivery plans and their policies for delivery of accessible homes. We combined this data to estimate the trajectory for delivery of accessible housing from 2020-2030.

Why accessible housing is so important

The need for accessible housing has never been greater. The global pandemic has put a sharp focus on the importance of safe and adequate housing for all. Yet for many disabled people the experience of lockdown was made even more difficult due to the inaccessibility of their homes.

Data from the English Housing Survey shows that 91% of homes do not provide the four basic accessibility features to be considered even 'visitable'. Habinteg estimate that over 400,000 wheelchair users are living in homes that are neither adapted nor accessible.

We believe that raising accessibility standards for all new homes is a vital step in ensuring that more disabled and older people have housing that meets their needs and can adapt with those needs as they change.

How do local plans influence what gets built?

Since October 2015 Building Regulations Approved document M4 Volume 1 has provided three technical accessibility standards that can be used in new homes.

- M4 Category 1 is the mandatory baseline, offering minimal accessibility features.
- M4 Category 2 is the Accessible and adaptable standard, similar to the older Lifetime Homes standard
- M4 Category 3 is the wheelchair user dwelling standard.

M4 Categories 2 and 3 are 'optional technical standards'. Planning authorities have the option of setting a requirement in their Local Plan for a proportion of new homes to be built to each standard. This requirement is subsequently applied through planning conditions placed on individual developments.

Headline forecast findings

- More than half (170) of all local plans make no requirements for any accessible housing standard (2019:184)
- Plans indicate that between 2020 and 2030 only a third (31.5%) of new homes in England will be required to meet accessible housing standards, down from 34.4% in our 2019 forecast.
- Just 2.4% of new homes are due to be suitable for wheelchair users (ie meeting the highest level of access specified in regulations) outside London this figure is just 1.5%
- Regional variations are marked. Whilst the South East there is one accessible new home planned for every 70 people in the population, Local Plans in the west midlands indicate one for every 656 people.
- The West Midlands region doesn't have any local plans which require any homes to be built to meet the needs of wheelchair users.
- Some policies still refer to outdated access standards. Just 25% of the homes due to be built in England are specified to the current Optional Access standards set out in Part M4 of building regulations - these are the standards required by the NPPF.
- Although overall the number Local Plans specifying the up to date (M4) standards has increased slightly since Habinteg's first forecast (up to 119 plans from 96), they are not planning for the same number of accessible homes as had been the case when using the older standards, such as the Lifetime Homes standard.

You can access and download our full forecast briefing from [Habinteg's website](#). And if you'd like to see a summary of findings in your region you can find this on pages 14-17.

What is Habinteg asking for?

From September to December 2020 the government ran a consultation on raising accessibility standards for all new homes. Habinteg called for the *accessible and adaptable* standard to be fixed as the new national regulatory baseline, and for a proportion of all new homes to meet the wheelchair user dwelling standard.

This is our priority. As we look to the ambitious post pandemic house building goals and the challenge of *building back better* we cannot afford to miss the opportunity to ensure that all our new housing is fit for the needs of the whole population.

Get in touch

If you have any questions about the briefing, want to arrange a meeting or speak to us about what we can do to improve the accessible housing landscape, contact us on the below:

Mamun Madaser, Parliamentary and Research Officer, mmadaser@habinteg.org.uk

Christina McGill, Head of Communications, cmcgill@habinteg.org.uk

Nic Bungay, Director of Strategy & External Affairs, nbungay@habinteg.org.uk

About Habinteg

At Habinteg, we champion inclusion by providing and promoting accessible homes and neighbourhoods that welcome and include everyone.

With over 50 years' experience in housing and disability we manage over 3,300 accessible properties across 86 local authorities. We believe that people are disabled by barriers in society and negative public attitudes, rather than by their own impairments.

February 2021