



Derry City & Strabane
District Council

Comhairle Chathair
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DERRY CITY & STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2032



PLAN STRATEGY

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) – Lifetime Homes, DRAFT- June 2025

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Supplementary Planning Guidance **(SPG)**

Lifetime Homes **DRAFT - June 2025**

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Appendix 1: Lifetime Homes Compliance Checklist

1.0. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance has been produced to supplement policies of the Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) Local Development Plan (LDP) 2032, relating to Lifetime homes and wheelchair standards. It is part of a suite of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). It applies to the Derry and Strabane Council area and is intended for use by developers, agents, the public and planning officers in the preparation and assessment of planning proposals.
- 1.2 SPG represents non-statutory planning guidance that supports, clarifies and/or illustrates by example the policies included within the current planning policy framework, including development plans and regional planning guidance. The information set out in this SPG should therefore be read in conjunction with the existing planning policy framework, most notably the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland and the DCSDC LDP Plan Strategy 2032. It should also be read as complementary to other retained or emergent SPG, including development management practice notes (DMPN) and design guides.
- 1.3 The guidance is intended to be of particular benefit to those considering proposals in new housing development and applying the Lifetime Homes criteria. The guidance aims to enable developers, landowners, agents, members of the public and any other interested parties to understand how the Council considers development proposals, and the standard of provision sought.

2.0. Policy Context

Regional Planning Policy and Guidance

Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

- 2.1 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors. The RDS contains guidance to provide policy direction in relation to the economy, society and environment and provides spatial guidance for Northern Ireland by topic. It sets the context in which to make policy and

development decisions to achieve sustainable development throughout the region.

- 2.2 It emphasises the importance of creating sustainable, inclusive communities that cater for the diverse needs of the population, including the elderly and disabled. This aligns with the principles of the Lifetime Homes Standard, which focus on designing homes that are adaptable, accessible, and flexible to accommodate residents' changing needs over their lifetime.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland (2015)

- 2.3 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS). is a statement of the Department's (DfI) policy on important planning matters that should be addressed across Northern Ireland. It has a statutory basis under Part 1 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 which requires DfI to formulate and co-ordinate policy for securing the orderly and consistent development of land and the planning of that development. Its provisions must be considered in the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs) and are material to all planning decisions and appeals.
- 2.4 The SPPS includes objectives of promoting sustainable development and high-quality design including residential environments.
- 2.5 Whilst there is no explicit requirement to meet Lifetime Homes standards, the SPPS recognises at para 4.24 that design should encompass how buildings and places function in use and over the lifetime of a development. It encourages future-proofing developments for modern technology which can help minimise the need for expensive retrofitting. Para 6.136 requires 'quality housing to meet the needs of everyone' and for 'sustainable housing' and to 'maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services'. Para 6.137 promotes 'energy efficient design of housing units' and requires Councils to 'bring forward local planning policy or guidance for achieving quality in residential development'. This is carried forward in para 6.142 (bullet point 14) for LDPs to set out 'local design requirements'.

- 2.6 The Lifetime Homes concept supports the goal of creating inclusive communities by ensuring that housing is suitable for people of all levels of mobility, health and age, promoting independent living, and reducing the need for costly adaptations in the future.

Local Planning Policy

Derry City & Strabane District Council Plan Strategy

- 2.7 The LDP 2032 Plan Strategy (PS) provides the strategic policy framework for the district, across a range of topics. It sets out the vision for the area and the objectives and strategic policies required to deliver that vision. There is a suite of topic-based operational policies.
- 2.8 Policy HOU 7 addresses accessible housing, including the Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Standards. It stipulates that all new housing, regardless of tenure, must comply with the Lifetime Homes standards, as outlined in the Department for Communities (DfC) Housing Association Guide.
- 2.9 Developers must provide a Compliance Statement demonstrating that all dwellings meet the standards.
- 2.10 For developments consisting of more than five units, applicants must specify within their application how they have considered or plan to address the requirement for 10% of units to meet Wheelchair Standards, in line with the DfC's Housing Association Guide.

3.0. Lifetime Homes

- 3.1. The Lifetime Homes (LTH) standard is a set of design principles aimed at ensuring that homes are flexible, adaptable, and accessible. These standards enhance comfort, convenience, and safety for both residents and visitors, making homes more suitable for long-term living.
- 3.2. Accessible housing refers to homes designed in accordance with Lifetime Homes standards or wheelchair housing standards, as outlined in the Department for Communities Housing Association Guide. In Northern Ireland, NIHE already requires these standards on all social housing

developments, ensuring that new homes are built to accommodate a range of mobility and accessibility needs.

- 3.3. Designing homes that meet these standards is increasingly important given the ageing population in the district. The number of over 65's is expected to rise to 21% by 2032, and a further increase to 24% by 2041. By integrating accessibility features from the beginning, Lifetime Homes and wheelchair-accessible housing minimise the need for expensive and disruptive modifications to homes later in life. Within the district, 1 in 5 people has a long-term health problem, that limits their day-to-day activities. It is important that properties can easily be modified for older adults and individuals with disabilities whilst remaining functional for all residents. This boosts their market appeal, enhances their value and makes them more attractive for sale or rent.
- 3.4. The Lifetime Homes standard ensures that housing can evolve alongside residents' changing needs. While some features must be included from the start, others require provisions that facilitate future adaptations. To successfully implement this policy, it is crucial to consider Lifetime Homes principles at the earliest stages of the development, design and planning process.
- 3.5. Lifetime Homes considerations include;
- Ample parking space close to home with level access;
 - Wider doorways;
 - Ground floor living room adaptable as an additional bedroom;
 - Accessible WC on ground floor with shower room potential;
 - Space and design to allow for stair, floor lifts (where possible), hoists and wheelchairs if they are later required.
 - Easy open windows and easy bin access.
 - Location of service controls including light switches, power sockets etc.

4.0. Wheelchair Standards

- 4.1. In Northern Ireland, the Department for Communities (DfC) has established specific design standards for wheelchair-accessible housing to support independent living for individuals with physical disabilities. These standards

are outlined in the Housing Association Guide and apply to all new-build social housing schemes receiving Housing Association Grant (HAG).

- 4.2. In accordance with Policy HOU 7 in the LDP, for all developments over 5 units, every applicant must state within their application how they have considered or will propose to address Wheelchair Standards for 10% of units as set out in DfC's Housing Association Guide.
- 4.3. Key Design Principles include;
- Support for Independent Living: dwellings should enhance the quality of life and well-being of residents by facilitating independence.
 - Universal Design Approach: homes should be inclusive for a wide range of wheelchair users and consider other disabilities, such as dexterity, cognitive function, and sensory impairments.
 - Flexibility and Adaptability: designs should accommodate the changing needs of tenants, including ageing or degenerative conditions, allowing for future adaptations.
 - Assisted Use Design: the default design should cater to 'assisted' wheelchair users, ensuring spaces can accommodate caregivers and necessary equipment.
 - Optimal Floor Space: adequate space should be provided for manoeuvring, larger turning circles, equipment storage, and flexibility in room usage.
 - Diverse Housing Forms: consideration should be given to various housing types, including two-storey homes, to promote community integration and appropriate density.
- 4.4. For detailed specifications, [Annex A](#) of the Housing Association Guide provides comprehensive design standards for wheelchair housing.
- 4.5. Additionally, the DfC offers examples of various wheelchair-accessible dwelling plans in [Annex A1](#) to assist housing associations in developing their designs. These examples illustrate various aspects of the wheelchair housing design standards and can be adapted as necessary. Designs are shown for a variety of house types. Using these standards ensures that housing is accessible and adaptable, promoting long-term usability and comfort for residents with mobility challenges.

5.0. Lifetime Homes in Practice

- 5.1. The DfC's Housing Association Guide specifies that all new-build self-contained bungalows, ground-floor flats, flats served by a lift, and two- and three-story houses must comply with LTH criteria and additional departmental requirements. Flats above the ground floor without a lift should also be designed to LTH standards as far as practicable.
- 5.2. Habinteg have produced guidance on Lifetime Homes on their '[Centre for Accessible Environments](#)' website. DfC have stated (in conversation) that in the near future, the DfC Housing Association Guide will be updated to reflect the Habinteg guidance.
- 5.3. To assist housing associations in meeting these standards, the DfC provides detailed guidelines and additional departmental requirements in [Table 3](#) of the DfC Additional Departmental Standards
- 5.4. Below is a summary of the main requirements from Habinteg's Lifetime Homes guidance and the additional DfC requirements. It focusses on matters that can be demonstrated in planning applications on a block plan, floor plan, elevations or in the Compliance Statement. Note however that all criteria must be met, see the links above. In the text that follows, requirements have been converted from mm to m for ease of understanding.

6.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 1a Parking (on plot, non-communal)

- 6.1. Where a dwelling has car parking within its boundary, at least one parking space should be capable of enlargement to achieve a minimum width of 3.3m.
- 6.2. A 2.4m wide parking space (with a 0.9m level access path adjacent to and level with it) meets this requirement. If no access path is provided, adjacent soft landscaping should be included to allow future resurfacing and widening to 3.3m. Parking spaces should be at least 4.8m long.

- 6.3. Garages are exempt from the width / widening requirements. However, any hard standing for a parked car, leading to any garage, should conform to 1a requirements.
- 6.4. Other private covered parking spaces (e.g. car ports) are exempt from the width widening requirements unless they provide the only parking space available for a dwelling. If they provide the only parking space for the dwelling, they should have a minimum clear width of 3.3m.

General Note: Criterion 1 is not relevant to developments that do not contain any parking provision. However, consultation with the Council regarding parking arrangements for Lifetime Homes and wheelchair accessible properties on such developments will be required.

7.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 1(b) Parking (shared / communal)

- 7.1. Where parking is provided by communal or shared bays, spaces with a width of 3.3m should be provided (in accordance with the below).
- 7.2. Provide at least one parking space at least 3.3m wide x 4.8m deep adjacent to (or close to) each dwelling's entrance or lift core.
- 7.3. The access route between the parking and a communal entrance (or in the case of basement parking, the lift core) should have a minimum clear width of 1.2m.
- 7.4. DfC requirements state that a percentage (ideally more than 25%) of any communal car parking spaces should be capable of enlargement to attain a 3.3m width.
- 7.5. Communal paths should ideally be to the front of the communal parking area with paths to the rear of the communal parking area abutting the road should be avoided where possible.

8.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 2 approach to dwelling from parking

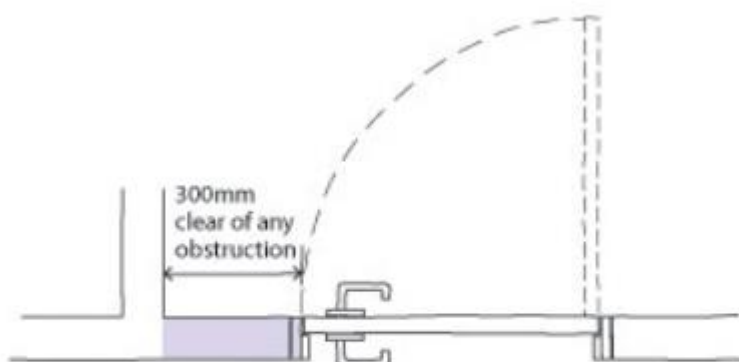
- 8.1. The distance from car parking spaces to the dwelling entrance (or relevant block entrance or lift core), should be kept to a minimum and be level or gently sloping. The distance from visitors' parking to relevant entrances should be as short as practicable and be level or gently sloping.
- 8.2. The distance between all parking and entrances should be as short as practicable. Parking adjacent to entrances is the optimum arrangement. On large developments communal parking should be within 50 metres of the relevant communal entrance or (in the case of underground parking), the lift core. If a distance more than 50 metres cannot be avoided, level resting areas should be provided along the route.
- 8.3. Paths on all approach routes between parking and entrances should have a firm, reasonably smooth and non-slip surface. Those within the curtilage of an individual dwelling should have a minimum width of 0.9m. Communal paths should have a minimum width of 1.2m.

9.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 3 approach to all entrances

- 9.1. The approach to all entrances should preferably be level or gently sloping. (see guidelines for detail on acceptable gradients)
- 9.2. On steeply sloping sites it is accepted that this requirement may not be practicable, or achievable, and should be discussed with the Council to agree a workable solution.
- 9.3. Paths on all approach routes between parking and entrances should have a firm, reasonably smooth and non-slip surface. Those within the curtilage of an individual dwelling should have a minimum width of 0.9m. Communal paths should have a minimum width of 1.2m.
- 9.4. DfC requirements state that a level area (1.2 x 1.2m min) should be provided at main entrances.

10.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 4 Entrances

- 10.1. The minimum effective clear opening width at all entrances to a dwelling (including balcony and roof terrace entrances) should be 0.8m.
- 10.2. The minimum effective clear opening width at communal entrances (and other communal doors) should be 0.8m or 0.825m, depending on the direction and width of approach (see guidelines for detail)
- 10.3. There should be a 0.3m clear space to the leading edge on the pull side of all entrance doors to dwellings and all communal entrance doors. See the below illustration from Habinteg Housing Association;



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- 10.4. As a general guide, an individual dwelling door should have a minimum depth of 0.6m (0.9m being typical). As a general guide, a communal door should have a minimum depth of 0.9m (1.2m being typical).
- 10.5. Minimum dimensions for entrance to an individual dwelling (doors) should be 1.2m x 1.2m. Communal entrance (doors) minimum dimensions should be 1.5m x 1.5m.

11.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 5 communal stairways and lifts

- 11.1. It is not necessary to demonstrate this at the planning stage but the guidelines should be followed in the detailed design.

12.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 6 internal doorways and hallways

- 12.1. Movement in hallways and through doorways should be as convenient to the widest range of people, including those using mobility aids or wheelchairs, and those moving furniture or other objects. As a general principle, narrower hallways and landings will need wider doorways in their side walls.
- 12.2. The minimum width of any hallway/landing in a dwelling is 0.9m. This may reduce to 0.75m at 'pinch points' (e.g. beside a radiator) as long as the reduced width is not opposite, or adjacent to, a doorway.
- 12.3. The minimum width of any hallway/corridor/landing within a communal area is 1.2m, which may reduce to 1.05m at 'pinch points' (e.g. due to a structural column) as long as the reduced width is not opposite, or adjacent to, a doorway.
- 12.4. The minimum clear opening width of any doorway within a dwelling, when the approach to the door is 'head on', is 0.75m. (refer to guidelines for detail if approach to door is not 'head on')
- 12.5. The minimum clear opening width of any communal doorway when the approach to the door is 'head on' is 0.8m. (refer to guidelines for detail if the approach to a door is not 'head on')

13.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 7 circulation space

- 13.1. There should be space for turning a wheelchair in dining areas and living rooms and basic circulation space for wheelchair users elsewhere.
- 13.2. DfC requirements state that there should be space for turning a wheelchair in a kitchen.

- 13.3. It may not always be possible to show the detail of the above in planning drawings but it should be complied with and mentioned in the Compliance Statement.

14.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 8 entrance level living space

- 14.1. A living room / living space should be provided on the entrance level of every dwelling (see guidelines in Appendix 1 for definition of 'entrance level').
- 14.2. DfC requirements state that wheelchair-accessible entrance level WC criteria for 'dwellings of three or more bedrooms' should also apply to two-bedroom accommodation.

15.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 9 potential for entrance-level bed space

- 15.1. The guidelines must be followed, and it may be possible to demonstrate it in floor plans or can be explained in the Compliance Statement.

16.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 10 entrance level WC & shower drainage

- 16.1. The location of the provided WC may be demonstrated via floor plans. The technical specifications in the guidance should be followed.

17.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 11 WC and bathroom walls

- 17.1. It would not be necessary to demonstrate this at planning stage but the guidelines should be followed in the detailed design.

18.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 12 stairs (to facilitate stairlift) & allow through-floor lift in dwelling

- 18.1. It may not be possible to demonstrate this at planning stage but the guidelines should be followed in the detailed design.

19.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 13 potential for fitting of hoists, bedroom and bathroom

- 19.1. It may not be possible to demonstrate this at planning stage but the guidelines should be followed in the detailed design.

20.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 14 bathrooms

- 20.1. An accessible bathroom, providing ease of access in accordance with the specification detailed in the guidelines, should be provided in every dwelling on the same storey as a main bedroom.
- 20.2. The location of the provided accessible bathroom may be demonstrated via floor plans. Technical specifications in the guidance should be followed.

21.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 15 glazing and window handle heights

- 21.1. It may not be possible to demonstrate this at planning stage but the guidelines should be followed in the detailed design.

22.0. Lifetime Homes Requirement 16 location of service controls

- 22.1. It would not be necessary to demonstrate this at planning stage but the guidelines should be followed in the detailed design.

Appendix 1 – Lifetime Homes Compliance Checklist (to be submitted with all planning applications for dwellings)

No.	Lifetime Home Standard <i>In accordance with Habinteg and DfC</i>	Detail requirement has been met
1.(a)	<p>Parking (on plot, non-communal)</p> <p>One space minimum width of 3.3m Or A 2.4m wide parking space with a 0.9m level access path adjacent to and level with it.</p>	<p>Demonstrate on block plan and provide drawing number. Reference in Compliance Statement or enclose with same</p>
1(b)	<p>Parking (Shared/Communal)</p> <p>At least one parking space at least 3.3m wide x 4.8m deep adjacent to (or close to) each block's entrance or lift core.</p> <p>Access route between the parking and communal entrance (or in the case of basement parking, the lift core) should maintain a minimum clear width of 1.2m.</p> <p>A percentage (ideally 25% or more) of any communal car parking spaces adjacent to the home or within a secure compound / basement should be capable of enlargement to attain a 3.3m width.</p>	<p>Demonstrate on block plan and provide drawing number. Reference in Compliance Statement or enclose with same</p>
2.	<p>Approach to dwelling from parking</p> <p>Parking adjacent to entrance(s) or as short as practical.</p> <p>Large developments communal parking within 50 metres of the relevant communal entrance.</p> <p>Approach routes between parking and entrances have firm, reasonably smooth, non-slip surfacing.</p>	<p>Demonstrate on block plan and provide drawing number. Reference in Compliance Statement or enclose with same</p>

	<p>Approach routes within the curtilage of an individual dwelling have a minimum width of 0.9m.</p> <p>Communal paths have a minimum width of 1.2m.</p>	
3.	<p>Approach to all entrances</p> <p>Approach routes between parking and entrances have a firm, reasonably smooth and non-slip surface.</p> <p>Approach routes within the curtilage of an individual dwelling have a minimum width of 0.9m.</p> <p>Communal paths have a minimum width of 1.2m.</p> <p>A level area (1.2 x 1.2m min) should be provided at the main entrances.</p>	<p>Demonstrate on block plan and provide drawing number. Reference in Compliance Statement or enclose with same</p>
4.	<p>Entrances</p> <p>Minimum effective clear opening width at all entrances to a dwelling (including balcony and roof terrace entrances) 0.8m.</p> <p>Minimum effective clear opening width at communal entrances (and other communal doors) 0.8m or 0.825m, depending on the direction and width of approach (see guidelines for detail)</p> <p>0.3m nib (or clear space) to the leading edge on the pull side of all entrance doors to dwellings and all communal entrance doors.</p> <p>Individual dwelling door minimum depth of 0.6m (0.9m being typical).</p>	<p>Demonstrate on floor plan and provide drawing number. Reference in Compliance Statement or enclose with same</p>

	<p>Communal door minimum depth of 0.9m (1.2m being typical).</p> <p>Minimum dimensions for entrance to an individual dwelling (doors) should be 1.2m x 1.2m.</p> <p>Communal entrance (doors) minimum dimensions should be 1.5m x 1.5m.</p>	
6.	<p>Internal doorways and hallways</p> <p>Minimum width of any hallway/landing in a dwelling is 0.9m. This may reduce to 0.75m at 'pinch points'.</p> <p>Minimum width of any hallway/corridor/landing within a communal area is 1.2m, which may reduce to 1.05m at 'pinch points'</p> <p>Minimum clear opening width of any doorway within a dwelling, when the approach to the door is 'head on' is 0.75m. (refer to guidelines for detail if approach to door is not 'head on' and specify if such.)</p> <p>Minimum clear opening width of any communal doorway when the approach to the door is 'head on' is 0.8m. (refer to guidelines for detail if the approach to door is not 'head on' and specify if such.)</p>	<p>Demonstrate on floor plan and provide drawing number. Reference in Compliance Statement or enclose with same</p>
8.	<p>Entrance Level Living Space</p> <p>Living room / living space provided on the entrance level of every dwelling (see guidelines Appendix 1 for definition of 'entrance level').</p>	<p>Demonstrate on floor plan and provide drawing number. Reference in Compliance Statement or enclose with same</p>
10.	<p>Entrance level WC and shower drainage</p> <p>Location of the provided WC shown on plan.</p>	<p>Demonstrate on floor plan and provide drawing number.</p>

		Reference in Compliance Statement or enclose with same
14.	<p>Bathrooms</p> <p>Accessible bathroom provided on same storey as main bedroom shown on plan.</p>	<p>Demonstrate on floor plan and provide drawing number. Reference in Compliance Statement or enclose with same</p>