

Inclusion London Briefing for DDPOs on: Supply of Accessible Housing

All the Information

March 2023





London needs more **accessible** homes.

These homes help Disabled people live on their own and join in with society.

Accessible means it is easy for everyone to use, no matter who they are or what their needs are.

When we talk about housing, it means things like wheelchair ramps or handles for getting out of the bath.

It means many other things too. These are just some examples.



The Mayor of London says London needs 66,000 new homes every year.

Some of these homes must be accessible for Disabled people.



Disabled people often cannot find accessible homes.

When they do find them, they often cost too much.



People and group who build homes in London must make them more accessible.

They must add accessible features to some homes.



These are things like lifts, wet rooms and easy-to-reach plug sockets.¹



This brief talks about accessible houses in London.

In it we explain these things:



The rules for building homes. How decisions about homes in London are made and what happens if rules are broken.

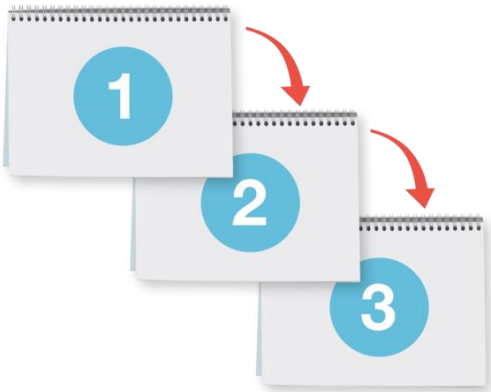


What makes an accessible home.

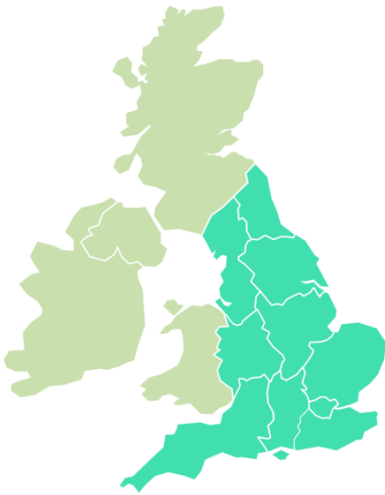
What a home needs to be accessible.



Problems. Why not enough accessible homes are being built in London.



Next steps. What DDPOs can do to help get more accessible homes.



In England, there are plans to decide how many and what kinds of home can be built in an area.

This happens before the homes are built.



These plans follow rules called planning policy.

We will explain these things:

What planning policy is.



National, London, and local planning policies.

Rules for accessible homes in England and London.

What is planning policy?



Planning policy has rules for what can be built in an area.

This means:

Builders must ask the local council to build new homes.



The council will say yes if the new homes follow the rules for that area.

In London, planning policy comes from three places.



These three places are:

National level. These are rules from the national government.

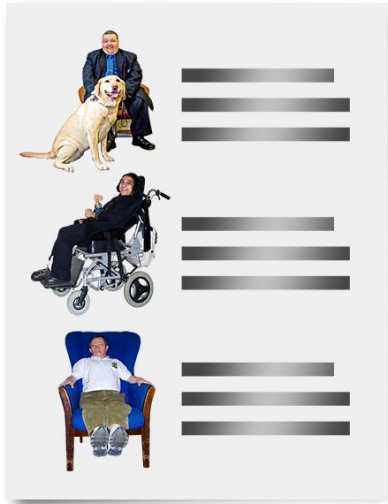


London level. These are rules from the Mayor of London and Greater London Authority.



Local level. These are rules from local councils.

Why is it important to understand planning policy for accessible homes in London?



Planning policy has rules for what is and what is not an accessible home.

It has information on how many accessible homes need to be built.



In London, local councils and the Greater London Authority decide how many new accessible homes are built.

How does Planning Policy in London work?



National level policy must be followed by everyone planning to build homes in England.



In London, people must follow London level policy and National policy.



In local areas, people must follow local policy, London policy, and National policy.



This means there are some differences in policy in local areas.

It also means many things are the same because they are rules for the whole of England.

What is the National Planning Policy Framework?



This is a set of rules from the government for planning in England.

Local councils and the Mayor of London follow these rules when making their own plans.

It helps local decision makers decide what to build.

What guidelines are in the National Planning Policy Framework?



London and local councils should find out what homes are needed.

To do this, they use something called a Strategic Housing Assessment.



They must think about accessible homes.

They must plan homes for now and the future.



They must use the government's rules for accessible homes.



Local councils may say okay to some building works with extra **obligations.**

These are deals between the people building the homes and the council.



The people who want to build the homes have to agree to do something.

Sometimes they must agree to do good things for the community.



For example, if their plans meant they had to get rid of a park, usually the council would say no.

But, if the people agreed to build a new park, the council might say yes.



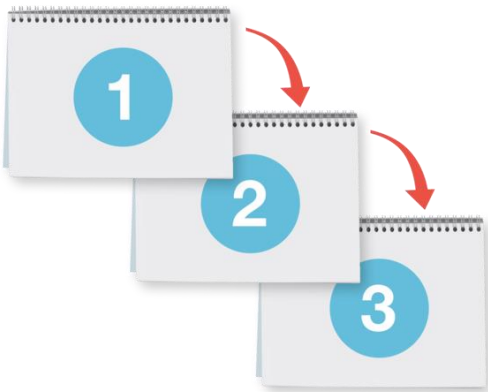
A council could ask them to make more accessible houses as part of the deal because the area needs them.

What are the Building Regulations 2010?

These rules are about building new houses in England.



Part M of the Building Regulations 2010 says how to make homes accessible for everyone.



There are three levels of accessible homes.

The most important are M4(2) and M4(3).

M4(1) are homes you can visit.



Most disabled people can visit these homes.

Wheelchair users can enter and use a toilet on the entrance floor.



M4(2) are accessible homes that can be changed to fit someone's needs.

For example, there's space for a stair lift.



Some things are already accessible, like:

There are no steps to enter or in shared areas.

Bathrooms that work for different needs.



M4(3) are homes for wheelchair users.

There are two kinds: **M4(3a)** adaptable and **M4(3b)** accessible.



M4(3a) are homes that can change for wheelchairs.

These homes can be changed to work with wheelchairs.



There are no steps to enter or in shared rooms on the ground level.

Space for a lift if needed.

Easy-to-reach switches and controls.

Bathrooms and kitchens can be changed for wheelchairs.

M4(3b) are homes ready for wheelchairs.



There are no steps inside the home.

There's a lift if there's more than one floor.

Bathrooms and kitchens already work for wheelchairs.

For more information, you can look online.



Access to and use of buildings:
Approved Document M - GOV.UK
([Approved Document M](#))

What is the London Plan?



The London Plan is a big plan for London's future.

The Mayor of London makes this plan.



It covers the economy, environment, transport, and people for the next 20-25 years.



The plan also talks about accessible houses in London.

The plan uses the 2017 Strategic Housing Market Assessment to prove how many houses of each type are needed.

The London Plan follows rules from the National Planning Policy Framework and Building Regulations 2010.



The National Secretary of State must approve it.

The latest plan came out in 2021.

What guidelines are in the London Plan?



The Mayor of London says how many new homes must be accessible and affordable in the London Plan.

90% of homes must meet **M4(2)** and 10% must meet **M4(3)**.



This means London's rules are better than the Building Regulations 2010 Part M.

To see if your local area meets the targets, visit:

www.data.london.gov.uk



Each London council must follow the London Plan when making their local plans.

What are Local Plans?



A Local Plan is a plan made by each London borough for their future.



It follows rules from the London Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework, and Building Regulations 2010 Part M.

How are local planning decisions made?



Council Planning Committees make decisions.

These are **elected** people who decide local planning rules.

They decide on big building plans.

Elected means they are voted into their role.

People had to vote for who they wanted to be their councillors.

Then these people represent the people of that area.



They must follow national, London, and local policies for new houses.

But they can make their own rules to do better if they want.



Planning Departments also make decisions.

These are paid workers.

They help with agreements between the council and builders.



They decide on small building plans.

They check if builders did what they promised after the work is done.



Some Problems



Problem 1: Viability Assessments

Viability Assessments check builders make enough money to cover the cost of new houses.

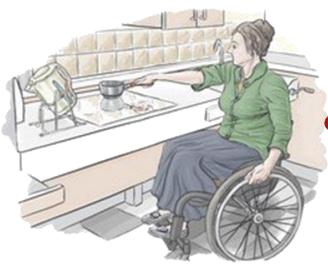
They need at least 20% profit.



This is a problem for accessible housing.

If builders do not make enough profit, they can change the extra **obligations** they agreed to.

For example:



A council and builder may agree that 50% of homes must meet M4(3).

But if the profit is too low, they might build fewer M4(3) homes. They might only build 25%.



Councils often don't have enough people or knowledge to check if the Viability Assessment is right.



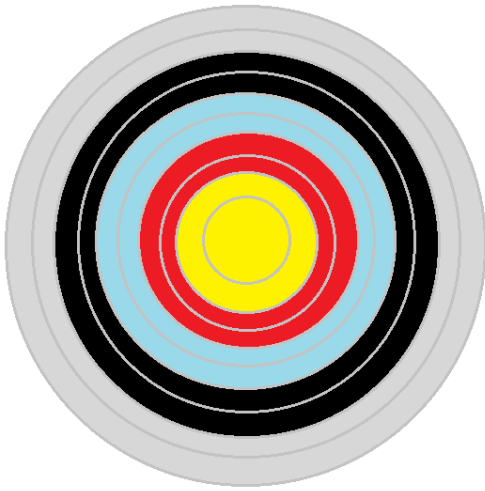
These assessments guess future costs, which can be wrong.

Councils may not be able to challenge this.



Councils do not usually say they think a Viability Assessment is wrong.

This can lead to less accessible housing being built.



Problem 2: Are the targets being met?

Councils may not meet targets because they do not have enough knowledge or time.



For example, they might not have the knowledge and time to:

Look at planning information and check if designs follow the accessibility rules.

Make sure builders make the agreed amount of accessible housing.



Problem 3: Are the targets enough?

Local authorities often don't know enough about disabled people in their area or their needs.



This means they do not know the types of housing they need.

This makes it hard to plan the right number of homes.



Planning rules don't say if a home must be **M4(3a)** wheelchair adaptable or **M4(3b)** wheelchair accessible.

Adaptable homes still need changes before a wheelchair user can live there.

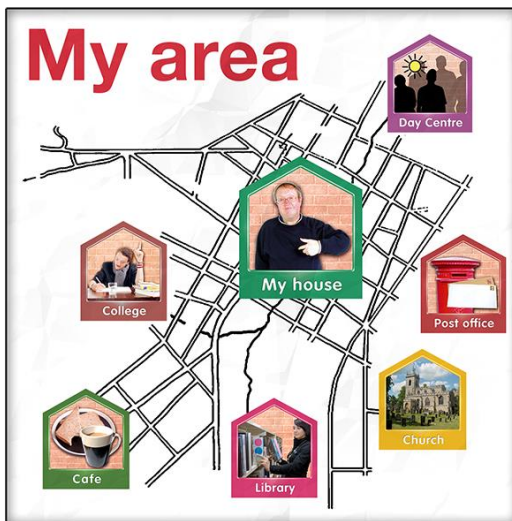


It is hard to find out if houses that are built cost too much or not.

If houses cost too much, it does not matter if they are accessible.

Disabled people will not be able to buy them.

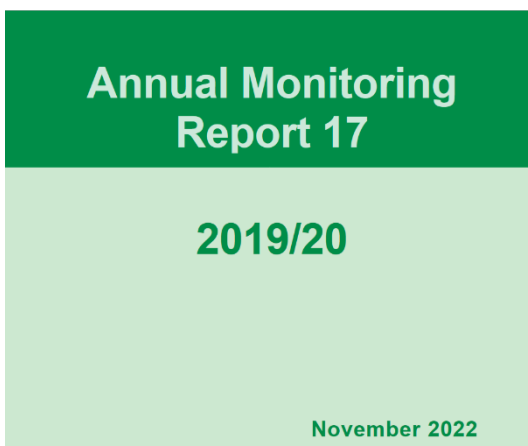
Next steps for DDPOs



Learn about your local area.

You can check how many accessible houses are being built.

You can check that the houses do not cost too much.



The London Plan Annual Monitoring Report has this information ([click here to find them](#)).

The [London Planning Datahub](#) dataset has more information.

LONDON DATASTORE

You can see how many M4(2) and M4(3) homes are approved and built yearly in each borough.



Talk to your local council.



If your area is not meeting accessible housing targets, you can report this.

You can tell your Cabinet or Lead Member for Housing.

ⁱ Credit for “An accessible bathroom with a shower unit and toilet”: Nancy Hugo, CKD.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/nancyhugo/2526306971>

Other images either in the public domain or from Photosymbols: License 5666341257271