



# Chelmsford Local Plan Wheelchair Accessible Homes Planning Advice Note

April 2025

# Wheelchair Accessible Homes: Planning Advice Note

## Background

To support the ageing population and the specific needs of disabled people within Chelmsford, the Council expects 5% of all new affordable homes on larger development sites to be wheelchair accessible by meeting the requirements of Part M, category 3 (Wheelchair user dwellings) M4(3)(2)(b) of Schedule 1 (para 1) to the Building Regulations 2010 (as amended).

## Purpose

The purpose of this advice note is to summarise the need for wheelchair accessible homes to enable developers to have regard to this demand when planning to meet the requirement set out Policy DM1 (B) (i).

This note will be updated on an annual basis in April each year to provide the latest summary of need information to inform the bedroom size of wheelchair accessible affordable housing for rent required.

## Local Demand for Wheelchair Accessible Homes

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended), requires councils to give certain groups of applicants 'reasonable preference'. This includes those who need to move due to medical condition or disability and those who need to move for health related or welfare reasons.

Applicants that submit an online health and housing application form as part of their Housing Register application or change of circumstances, are assessed to determine whether their present accommodation is highly detrimental to their medical condition and their condition would improve if rehoused.

This assessment normally involves information applicants provide from their GP, hospital and other relevant medical practitioners or support workers, which may also include housing needs surveys and recommendations from Occupational Therapy Services.

Depending on the category of the health and housing award; applicants will be placed in one of four bands, with bands one and two containing those households with the greatest priority and considered in the highest housing need.

Table 1 page 2 provides the breakdown of households on the Council's Housing Register that require wheelchair accessible housing either indoors or outdoors that are in the greatest priority and considered to be in urgent need of rehousing as of April 2025 – reference to 'Band 1' and 'Band 2'.

Table 2 combines the information for those households in the two highest bands of housing need and demonstrates that the highest proportion of households requiring wheelchair accessible housing are those with a need for one-bedroom affordable housing for rent.

The proportion of households waiting for two and three bedroom wheelchair accommodation is broadly similar, however the turnover of three- and four-bedroom affordable housing for rent generally is much lower than smaller sized accommodation.

The information in Table 2 provides a guide to the mix of wheelchair accessible affordable housing for rent that will be required as part of planning obligations negotiated in the financial year 2025/2026.

**Table 1 Wheelchair Accessible Need by Band and Bedroom Size**

<b>Band</b>	<b>Assessed Bedroom Need</b>	<b>Wheelchair accessible need %</b>
<b>1</b>	1 Bed	12%
<b>1</b>	2 Bed	0%
<b>1</b>	3 Bed	0%
<b>1</b>	4 Bed	0%
<b>2</b>	1 Bed	29%
<b>2</b>	2 Bed	23%
<b>2</b>	3 Bed	24%
<b>2</b>	4 bed	12%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

**Table 2 Combined Wheelchair Accessible Need by Bedroom Size**

<b>Combined Assessed Bedroom Need</b>	<b>Wheelchair accessible need %</b>
1 bed	41%
2 bed	23%
3 bed	24%
4 Bed	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Key Documents

### Local Plan

Policy DM1 (B) (i) requires that in all developments of 30 or more dwellings, 5% of new affordable dwellings should be built to meet the requirements of Part M, Category 3 (Wheelchair user dwellings) M4(3)(2)(b) of Schedule 1 (para 1) to the Building Regulations 2010 (as amended), or subsequent government standard.

### Planning Obligations SPD

The Planning Obligations SPD clarifies that Local Plan policies for wheelchair accessible homes should be applied only to those dwellings where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling – affordable housing for rent.

It also confirms that the Council will apply a planning condition to ensure that 5% of all new affordable homes on developments of 30 or more dwellings meet the requirements of Part M, Category 3 (Wheelchair user dwellings) M4(3)(2)(b) of Schedule 1 (para 1) to the Building Regulations 2010, (as amended); to ensure that the planning permission under which the building works is carried out, meets the needs of occupants of the affordable housing for rent that use a wheelchair at the point of completion.

### **Section 106 Template**

A template Section 106 agreement:

- defines Wheelchair Housing Units as those meeting the standards of Part M, Category 3 (Wheelchair user dwellings) M4(3)(2)(b) of Schedule 1 (para 1) to the Building Regulations 2010 (as amended); and
- requires 5% of the affordable housing to be provided as Wheelchair Housing Units in the form of affordable rented housing.

### **Chelmsford Housing Strategy**

The Chelmsford Housing Strategy 2022-2027 seeks to achieve a mix of new homes designed to help those with a physical disability currently living in homes not suited to the adaptations required, including those living in temporary accommodation including families living with disabled children.

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The Housing Strategy advocates the preparation of this Advice Note to set out the need for different size new build wheelchair accessible affordable accommodation for rent on an annual basis.