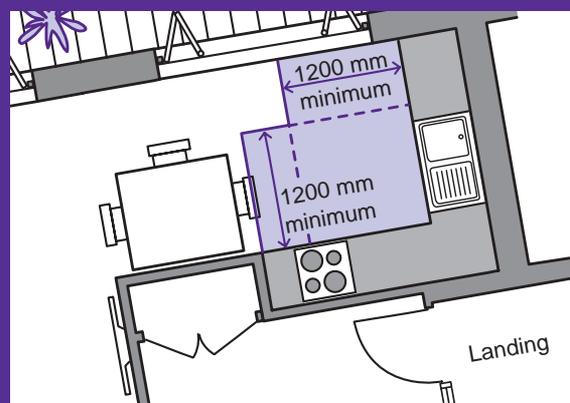


# LIFETIME HOMES DESIGN GUIDE





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Chris Goodman

Habinteg Housing Association



bre press



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## FOREWORD

Designing the built environment, and people's homes within that environment, needs to be right first time if we are to achieve high livability and sustainability standards. People cannot take their home back to the shop because it 'doesn't quite fit', or because it 'doesn't quite suit me'. Few of us will ever have the luxury of commissioning bespoke homes, tailored to our specific needs. Most will have a limited choice, restrained by a budget, and will therefore be buying, or renting, from an 'off the peg' range. It therefore makes sense for the design of all housing to consider, as far as practicable, the diverse needs of the widest range of people who may take up residence — either initially, or during the life of the home.

In addition, housing choices are usually long term. Moving home, or altering the home, can be an expensive, disruptive, and stressful experience. Sometimes a 'forced move' could be prevented if the dwelling had a degree of flexibility designed in that enabled simple adjustments and adaptations to be made to cater for a change in the household's needs. As a household ages, these needs may often relate to reduced mobility or agility, and planning for this in the original design, while initially seeming irrelevant, may prove a huge bonus to the household later on. At the least, it will offer the household choices that would not otherwise exist. For example, providing a slightly wider space to get in and out of the car (essential for those needing to use mobility aids) is also helpful to parents lifting infants in and out of the car. Providing wider parking spaces for 'parents and toddlers' is now standard

at the supermarket so it makes sense to have the same convenience when arriving home.

As well as the obvious benefits to the potential occupiers and their visitors, increasing and mainstreaming housing stock that enables simple adjustments to cater for people's changing needs offers cost benefits. These benefits could save the household the expense of a move, or the disruption and cost of a significant adaptation, or, looking at the broader picture, save significant public money if the flexibility designed in at the outset prevents the household needing specialist accommodation, extensions or significant adaptations.

This design guide discusses the Lifetime Homes Standard, a Standard that embodies the inclusivity, adaptability and value principles alluded to above. The Standard has become the industry's forerunner in the provision of housing that offers accessibility and flexibility in occupation. The guide explains the principles underlying the Standard, gives an overview of its history and a brief explanation of where it sits in current policy and regulation. Most importantly, in its seven distinct functional sections, it offers clear detailed explanation, and instruction, to those seeking to implement the Standard in designing and building new homes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Hemingway".

Wayne Hemingway  
**Designer and Chair of Building for Life**  
 September 2011

# HISTORY OF THE LIFETIME HOMES STANDARD

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The originating idea for the Lifetime Homes Standard came from discussions in the late 1980s between the Helen Hamlyn Foundation and Habinteg Housing Association.

The term 'Lifetime Homes' was first adopted in connection with a project launched by the Helen Hamlyn Foundation in 1989, and applied at that time to the needs of older people.

Habinteg also had concerns about how inaccessible and inconvenient many new homes were for large sectors of the population and recognised that the concept initiated by the Helen Hamlyn Foundation could have a wider application that would fit neatly with its objectives of creating integrated and inclusive housing for a wide range of people with differing needs.

Discussions between the Helen Hamlyn Foundation and Habinteg broadened to others, including the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). The JRF brought together a number of housing experts in the early 1990s to form the JRF Lifetime Homes Group. This Group instructed a technical sub-group, consisting of architects, developers, access consultants and other industry professionals and practitioners, to develop a set of design standards for general needs housing, which would improve access and adaptability for a wide range of households with differing needs. The standards that evolved from this work became the 16 Lifetime Homes design criteria.

In 2008, the JRF transferred the lead role in the promotion, guidance and administration of the Standard to Habinteg. In the following year, Habinteg convened a new technical advisory group, comprising a range of practitioners and planners involved in housing design, development, access consultancy and the provision of adaptations. This group considered the 16 design criteria in great detail, with the aim of making it more practicable for volume developers to implement the Standard across the full range of modern house types and in both high- and low-density developments. At the same time, a research project was carried out on behalf of the UK Government, which canvassed the opinion of key private sector housing developers and architects with regard to implementing the Standard and the clarity of the guidance.

The findings from the research, although not published by the UK Government, were fed into the discussions of the technical advisory group, which then proposed a number of revisions to the 16 design criteria. The proposed revisions were released for public consultation and revisions to the original Lifetime Homes Standard were issued in 2010. The technical guidance in this Guide relates to this 2010 Standard.

In 2010, Habinteg was also officially granted the trademark for Lifetime Homes.

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  - Graham Nickson, Town and Country Planning Association
  - Julia Park, Levitt Bernstein
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  - Kate Sheehan, College of Occupational Therapists
  - Andrew Shipley, Habinteg
  - Rachel Smalley, Access Association
  - Darryl Smith, Access Association
  - Adam Thomas, Design Matters
-

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## WHAT IS THE LIFETIME HOMES STANDARD?

The Lifetime Homes Standard<sup>[1]</sup> was established in the 1990s to incorporate a set of principles that are implicit in good contemporary housing design. Good housing design, in this context, is thoughtful, forward-looking design that maximises utility, independence and quality of life, while not compromising other design issues such as aesthetics or cost effectiveness.

The Standard is an expression of ‘inclusive design’. It seeks to provide design solutions in general-needs housing that can meet the changing needs of the widest range of households. Some of these solutions should be included in the design from the outset, while others can be incorporated at a later stage through simple and cost-effective adaptation. This will give many households more choice over where they decide to live, the type of property they live in and the range of visitors they can readily accommodate.

Lifetime Homes properties are more convenient for most occupants and visitors, including those with less agility and mobility. The original design may negate the need for substantial alterations in order to make the dwelling suitable for a household’s particular needs. The added convenience provided by the Standard is helpful to everyone in ordinary daily life, for example when carrying large and bulky items, or pushing child buggies.

The Standard is based on five overarching principles, as outlined below. These inform the rationale for the Lifetime Homes design requirements.

## OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

### Principle 1: Inclusivity

An inclusive environment aims to assist use by everyone, regardless of age, gender or disability. It does not attempt to meet every need, but by considering the varying needs of individuals and households it aims to break down unnecessary barriers.

The design of a Lifetime Home removes the barriers to accessibility often present in other dwellings. The flexibility and adaptability within the design and structure enables a Lifetime Home to meet a diverse range of needs over time. A new development of Lifetime Homes therefore has the potential to provide for the widest cross-section of individuals within the general population. The high level of accessibility also offers greater ‘visitability’, for example to wheelchair users, so that people are less likely to be prevented from visiting due to the dwelling’s design.

### Principle 2: Accessibility

Inclusive design aims to give the widest range of people, including those with physical and/or sensory impairments, older people and children, convenient and independent access within the built environment (externally and internally) and also equal access to services.

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A Lifetime Home is designed with particular attention to:

- the ease of approaching the home
- circulation within the home
- the approach to key facilities.

Pathways, hallways, doorways, stairways, access to floors above, and spaces to approach and reach essential facilities and controls in the home, are taken into consideration.

### Principle 3: Adaptability

Adaptability means that a building or product can be simply adapted to meet a person's changing needs over time, or to suit the needs of different users. Many adaptations or adjustments within a Lifetime Home should be less disruptive, and more cost-effective, because the original design accommodates their future provision from the outset.

In a Lifetime Home, integral design and specification features, which may not be noticeable, will facilitate adaptations at a later stage for a household that has a family member with a temporary or permanent disability, or a progressive condition. A member of the household, or a visitor, will be able to live, sleep and use bathroom facilities solely on the entrance level for a short period, or the household can benefit from potential step-free access to upper-floor facilities.

### Principle 4: Sustainability

Sustainability, in this context, refers to strong and stable communities underpinned by essential accessible elements aimed at meeting current and future needs, including homes, facilities, goods and services (the design of which contribute to the long-term viability of the neighbourhood and community).

The accessibility, flexibility and adaptability of a Lifetime Home all help to ensure long-term demand for, and desirability of, the dwelling. While sustainability is dependent on a range of factors, dwellings that offer this degree of accessibility and flexibility

are likely to remain popular over time, for both existing and new households, and can therefore contribute to the creation of thriving and popular neighbourhoods and communities.

### Principle 5: Good value

Lifetime Homes are not intended to be complicated or expensive for house-builders or for the people who live in them. The design criteria have been carefully considered so that they can be incorporated into a dwelling's design and construction at building stage, with only a marginal cost effect.

Once occupied, the adaptability of the dwelling should actually save a household money if needs change and the dwelling is quickly and simply adapted to suit the new set of circumstances. Without the Lifetime Homes features, the household may be faced with expensive, complicated and disruptive major adaptation works to a dwelling less suited to change; or possibly (in the case of an existing household) face a forced move to a more suitable home.

Inclusive design and enabling simple adaptation from the outset has potential for considerable cost savings in the future, and long-term cost-effectiveness.

## LIFETIME HOMES AND WHEELCHAIR STANDARD HOUSING

While a Lifetime Home may offer enough flexibility for some households with wheelchair-user occupants and regular visitors, the Lifetime Homes Standard<sup>[1]</sup> is quite different from the wheelchair housing design standard<sup>[2]</sup>. It also differs from other design standards relating to wheelchair users, such as the Greater London Authority (GLA) 2007 best practice guidance<sup>[3]</sup>.

Wheelchair standard housing is considerably more detailed and demanding than the Lifetime Homes Standard in its spatial requirements and specifications. These higher requirements enable the entire property, and all its facilities, to

be fully accessible and/or adaptable to suit many different wheelchair users. A wheelchair-adaptable standard, such as that produced by the GLA, provides spatial and structural requirements so that all areas and facilities within the entire dwelling can be fitted out to become fully accessible.

A wheelchair user living in a Lifetime Home will encounter particular accessibility and spatial compromises, depending on his or her circumstances. Some people will need, or prefer, the increased spatial and specification standards provided by wheelchair standard housing. It is vitally important that local planners and housing providers ensure that good provision of full wheelchair standard accommodation is made to meet this need.

### LIFETIME HOMES AND APPROVED DOCUMENT M OF THE BUILDING REGULATIONS (ENGLAND & WALES)

The Lifetime Homes Standard was considered within a review of Approved Document (AD) M of the Building Regulations for England and Wales<sup>[4]</sup> in the late 1990s. At that time, AD M (dealing with reasonable provision to ensure that buildings are accessible and usable by people regardless of disability, age or gender) was being extended to include provisions for new dwellings. The resultant 1999 edition of AD M (and later editions) includes requirements equivalent to some, but not all, of the Lifetime Homes design and specification criteria. Those included in AD M tend to relate to two requirements:

- basic accessibility and 'visitability' into the entrance level of the dwelling
- access to service controls.

They exclude the Lifetime Homes provisions for future adaptability. A comparison of the Lifetime Homes Standard and AD M can be found on the Lifetime Homes web site ([www.lifetimehomes.org.uk](http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk)).

### LIFETIME HOMES IN POLICY AND REGULATION

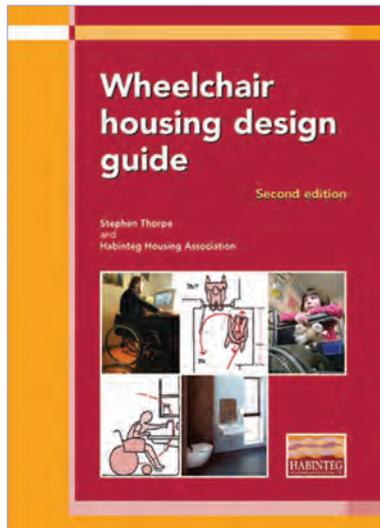
Some planning and funding authorities require newly built homes (or a proportion of new homes) to exceed the AD M requirements<sup>[4]</sup> and achieve the Lifetime Homes Standard<sup>[1]</sup>. As a leading example, the GLA adopted the Lifetime Homes Standard in the Supplementary Planning Guidance of the London Plan, issued in 2004<sup>[5]</sup>. This stated that all residential units in new housing developments should be Lifetime Homes, including houses and flats of varying sizes, in both the public and private sectors.

In 2008, the UK Government adopted Lifetime Homes in its report, *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A national strategy for housing in an ageing society*<sup>[6]</sup>. This announced targets for the building of all new housing to the Lifetime Homes Standard in both the public and private sectors. Following the change of government in the UK in 2010, these targets have not been upheld and responsibility for policy decision and implementation has passed to local authorities and their strategic partners.

Although not a regulatory body, the work of BSI is also relevant, as this work will inform and guide future regulation. In 2007, BSI published a British Standard Draft for Development (DD 266:2007) on the design of accessible housing<sup>[7]</sup>. This document built on, and made some suggested changes to the pre-July 2010 Lifetime Homes design criteria. The Draft is under consideration for conversion to a British Standard. This Draft document, while embracing the principles underlying the 2010 Lifetime Homes Standard, differs in points of detail from the Standard and should not be confused with it.

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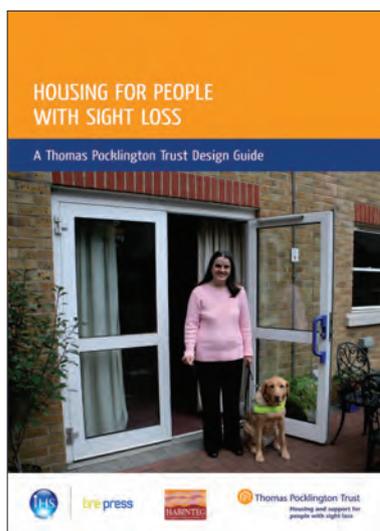


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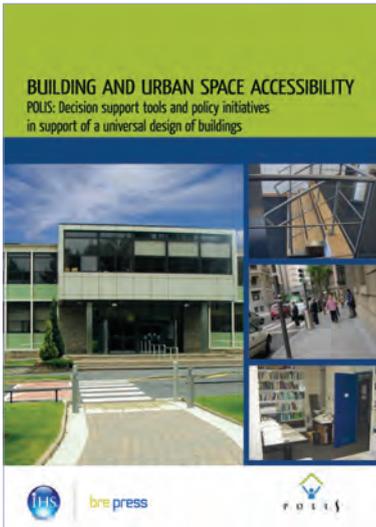


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## LIFETIME HOMES DESIGN GUIDE

This design guide from Habinteg Housing Association describes the design requirements for homes that will meet the differing and changing needs of households. It gives guidance on how to incorporate the Lifetime Homes Standard's design criteria, encompassing the principles of inclusivity, accessibility, adaptability, sustainability and good value. Use of the guide will result in design solutions that cater for the broadest range of needs, and will also enable simple and cost-saving adaptations in the future.



## ABOUT THE LIFETIME HOMES STANDARD

The Lifetime Homes Standard and its 16 design criteria emerged from discussions among a group of housing experts in the late 1980s. The aim was to develop a set of design standards for general needs housing that would improve access and adaptability for a range of households with differing needs. After 20 years of campaigning for acceptance and use of the Standard by policymakers and housing developers, in 2009 Habinteg convened a Technical Advisory Group to review the 16 design criteria and make it more practicable for developers to apply the Standard to different house types and locations. The resulting revisions were incorporated in the updated Standard published in 2010.



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