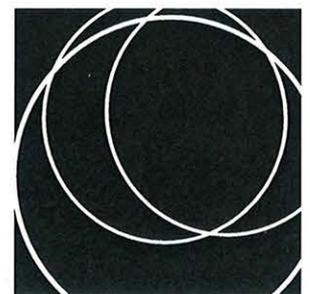


Guidance Note:  
Lifetime  
Homes  
Standard



**EPOA**

Essex Planning  
Officers Association

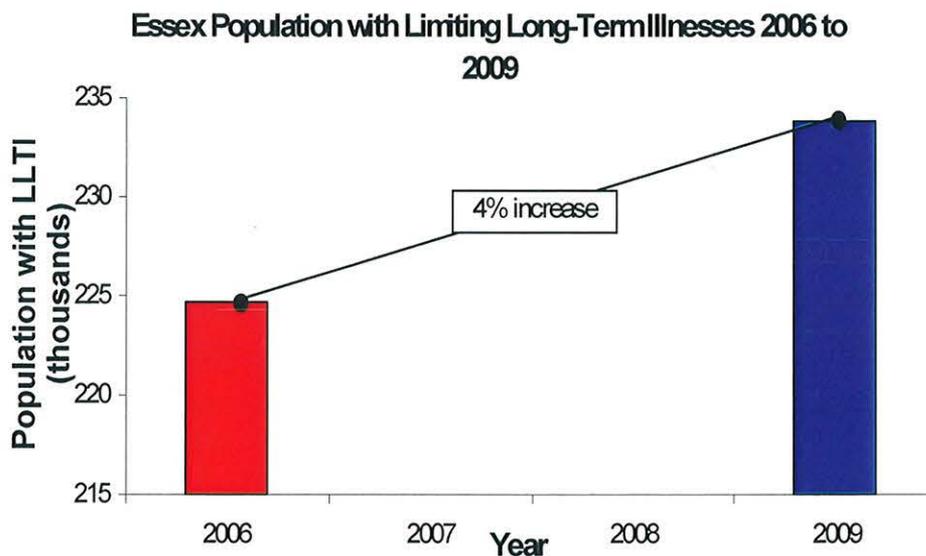
*March 2008*

## Essex Planning Officers Association Guidance Note – Lifetime Homes Standard

### Background

There is a now well understood desire at national and local levels that today's homes should be sustainable. Truly sustainable homes are not just those that minimize the use of resources both during construction and subsequent occupation, but are also adaptable to the future requirements of both occupants and the wider community. The homes built today are likely to last for many decades and need to have built into them a capacity to adapt to the future, they may well house hundreds of different individuals in their life and should be adaptable to the needs of those occupants now and in the future.

In part as a result of better Health Care and other factors the number of elderly people and the number of people with a limiting long-term illness is increasing nationally. This is true across Essex and population projections and trends in Health Care suggest this figure will rise rapidly with increases built into the growth of the general population. Many more of these people are seeking to continue as normal as life as possible, for as long as possible, from their existing home. The demand for adaptations to existing houses is ever-growing.



Source: ECC, based on 2001 census and 2003 population projections

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has developed the Lifetime Homes Standard (LHS) in order to meet an identified need for homes that are more readily adaptable to changing circumstances. The LHS does not require that adaptations themselves are installed in new homes, only that there is scope available to amend the layout and install adaptations if they are required during the lifetime of the home. Ultimately this is both cost effective and more sustainable.

## The Essex LAA

LAA is a three year agreement, based on local Sustainable Community Strategies, that sets out the priorities for a local area agreed between Central Government, represented by the Government Office (GO), and a local area, represented by the local authority and other key partners through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The first Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Essex was first published in March 2006, and subsequently refreshed in March 2007.

The first Essex LAA has been split into four 'blocks' entitled Safer & Stronger Communities, Children & Young People, Community Wellbeing & Older People and Economic Development. Within each of these blocks are a number of priorities, with associated targets which must be delivered. The Community Wellbeing & Older People Block contains the following priority:

### **Priority 3**

Ensure development is designed to promote healthier living in the built environment.

### **Priority 3.2**

The number of new homes built to the Lifetime Home Standard (LHS) in each borough / district will be a minimum of 3% of annual completions by 2009.

As set out in the box above, the Lifetime Home Standard must be implemented across each of the Districts in the County to a minimal level by 2009. All Local Authorities in Essex have signed up to deliver the outcomes of the LAA. This guidance note sets out the policy, justification and implementation plan as a model for all Essex Authorities to use to achieve this objective.

## **Proposed Policy & Text**

The Essex Local Area Agreement currently sets a target that 3% of all new dwellings must meet the LHS. This is recognised as a minimum and is well below what might be argued as appropriate. 6-10% of the population have a mobility problem and this figure is increasing. In addition there is no way of knowing whether the actual people in a house will find that they need to adapt it at a later date. Chelmsford BC in their LDF Core Strategy and Development Policies, which have now been confirmed as "sound", (set out in Appendix 1) have set out to achieve 100% LHS and this objective is also repeated in the Essex Design Guide Urban Place Supplement (Appendix 2). It is appropriate that a standard approach requiring a proportion of new homes to be built to the LHS is adopted across Essex. **The EPOA guidance recommends that seeking to achieve 100% LHS is reasonable** provided it is applied pragmatically. This approach is best achieved via the Local Development Framework of each District, but individual authorities may consider that the adoption of SDP in order to guide Design and Access requirements is a

sufficient policy framework to support the requirement, after all there is national guidance that accessibility is a legitimate aspect for planning to control. PPS3 Housing makes several references to achieving high quality housing which is accessible and makes specific reference to the need to plan for 'the accommodation requirements of specific groups in particular families with children, older and disabled people.'

This has been the approach adopted by Uttlesford District Council in their Supplementary Planning Document – Accessible Homes and Play Space, which again requires all new homes to meet LHS.

Each LPA will need to consider further evidence from its own Housing Needs Survey or other sources to justify the specific policy approach it is adopting.

An alternative approach would be for the LA to set a criteria based policy.

**A Possible Alternative Policy – Accessible and adaptable homes**

On developments providing 10 or more dwellings (or capable of achieving 10 or more dwellings) the council will require that at least X % are constructed in accordance with the Lifetime Homes Standard of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The provision of such homes will be spread across all property sizes and tenures on the site.

In this alternative policy the use of a site threshold recognises that there is a cost involved in meeting the LHS. Where the threshold level is not met, adherence to the LHS will still be encouraged. The policy could be applied to all developments, including where these dwellings are the result of a conversion of an existing building. In respect of a development involving a Listed Building or within a Conservation Area, it is recognised that the full requirements of this policy may be difficult to achieve. In addition the Essex Design Supplement does recognise that to achieve high standards of design there is room for discussion around the application of a couple of the external criteria. Nevertheless, any proposal must demonstrate the efforts undertaken to achieve an appropriate provision wherever possible.

The EPOA recommend the use of a fully 100% compliance policy, which is after all where Governments stated intention is to get to. However if using a criteria based policy Authorities should consider whether to ensure a proper mix of dwelling types across the development, dwellings conforming to the LHS should be spread proportionately across all property sizes or tenures on the site. **However, irrespective of the specific policy criteria adopted by each Council, as a matter of urgency all authorities are advised through the use of any section 106 that dwellings built to provide affordable housing should all meet LHS** because of the higher occurrence of mobility and other disability issues amongst the population likely to be using this accommodation. ALL homes built with Housing Corporation grant are required under the terms of the grant to meet the LHS.

## ***Implementation & Monitoring***

The full requirements of the LHS can be obtained from [www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes](http://www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes). For ease of reference the requirements are reproduced at Appendix 3.

**The Council should require that all Design & Access Statements submitted with relevant planning applications demonstrate the provision of the appropriate level of LHS.** Authorities should amend any Design and Access Guidance appropriately and consider reference in their 1 App local list. The dwellings to be built to this standard should be clearly indicated on an appropriate plan. If 100% it should be clearly stated as such.

**This commitment should then be formalised with the imposition of a condition to this effect.** The developer should also be required within the permission to confirm in writing to the Local Planning Authority that this requirement has been met prior to the occupation of the related dwelling.

Monitoring of the number of new homes built to this standard will be via the completion of the notification process by the developer. Checkable by enforcement representatives as appropriate. The collection of this information should be linked to the completion monitoring process of each authority, required by various sources and will therefore provide the potential for accurate monitoring as required.

**POLICY DC36 - ACCESSIBLE AND ADAPTABLE DEVELOPMENTS**

**All new developments, and particularly housing, shall be designed from the outset so as to promote inclusive design, and ensure that all measures needed to promote accessibility and adaptability are achieved in a visually acceptable manner. This will relate to both facilities needed in the wider public realm and to the individual access arrangements for each building. All new housing developments shall be designed so as to allow the maximum flexibility for future alterations and extensions to meet the potential needs of future occupiers. All new housing developments should seek to meet the Lifetime Homes Standard with a minimum of 3% of new dwellings on developments of 30 dwellings or more built to full wheelchair standards.**

3.85 Developers will be required to show in the design and access statement how the design has taken account of the Lifetime Homes Standard, or conversely, why it is not practicable or appropriate to meet them. Lifetime homes are not specifically properties for people with mobility problems and are not wheelchair standard accommodation. Nationally it is estimated that 2.3% of all people with disabilities are permanently dependent on wheelchairs for mobility. To meet these special needs, at least 3% of new dwellings on development of 30 dwellings or more should be built to full wheelchair standards as set out in the Housing Corporation's "Wheelchair Housing Design Guide". Further guidance is contained in the Making Places Supplementary Planning Document.

**The Urban Place Supplement (EPOA, EEC)**  
Influences Upon Quality – Buildings  
Adaptability, durability and accessibility p110

'Lifetime Homes is a set of design standards that adds to the comfort and convenience of the home and supports the changing needs occurring throughout a family's life-cycle. These standards generally exceed the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations. The features of Lifetime Homes make it possible for people with special mobility needs to occupy any dwelling and improves the potential for building sustainable communities that comprise people of different ages and needs.

**All new development in Essex should meet Lifetime Homes standards, with two exceptions:**

**Lifetime Home Standard 1: Parking**

It is unlikely that many homes in more compact development will have a place outside their entrance to park a car and to universally provide one would seriously harm the quality of the public realm. This aspect of the Standard is therefore not required to be met. Nevertheless, other requirements within this supplement to provide either an accessible ramp or a lift from the parking areas to the street level does ensure that mobility needs are partly met in alternative ways.

**Lifetime Home Standard 4: External Entrances**

The standard to provide a covered entrance to every home would place an unreasonable design constraint upon higher density development. This aspect of the Standard is therefore not required to be met. Information on the standards and applying them to high density developments can be found on the Homes for Life website [www.lifetimehomes.org.uk](http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk). Local District and Borough Council policies may already exist that may take precedent over these standards.

**Requirements of the Lifetime Homes Standard**

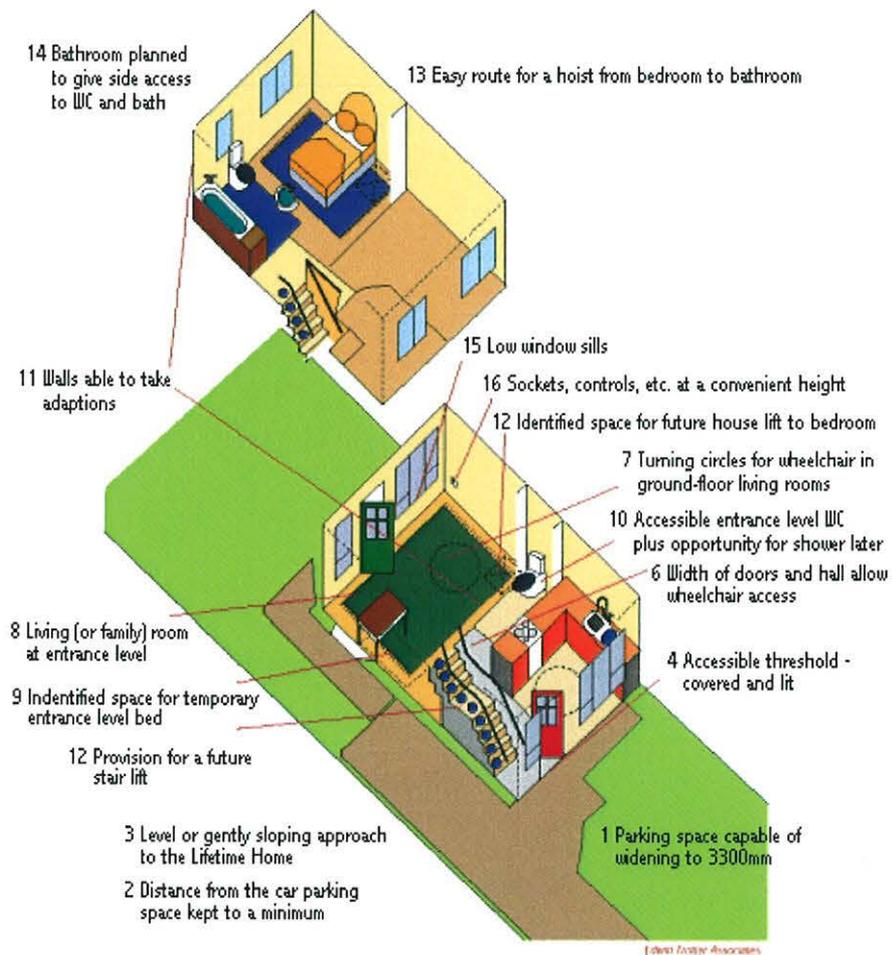
<u>Lifetime Homes Standard</u>	<u>Specification &amp; Dimensions</u>
1 Where there is car parking adjacent to the home, it should be capable of enlargement to attain 3300mm width	The general provision for a car parking space is 2400mm width. If an additional 900mm width is not provided at the outset, there must be provision (e. g. a grass verge) for enlarging the overall width to 3300mm at a later date
2 The distance from the car parking space to the home should be kept to a minimum and should be level or gently sloping.	It is preferable to have a level approach. However, where the topography prevents this, a maximum gradient of 1: 12 is permissible on an individual slope of less than 5 metres or 1: 15 if it is between 5 and 10m, and 1: 20 where it is more than 10m.* Paths should be a minimum of 900mm width
3 The approach to all entrances should be level or gently sloping	See standard 2 above for the definition of gently sloping
4 All entrances should: a) be illuminated relevant parts of 1.3.1.2 E b) have level access over the threshold and c) have a covered main entrance	The threshold upstand should not exceed 15mm
5 a) Communal stairs should provide easy access and b) where homes are reached by a lift, it should be fully wheelchair accessible	<i>Minimum dimensions for communal stairs</i> Uniform rise not more than 170mm Uniform going not less than 250mm Handrails extend 300mm beyond top and bottom step Handrail height 900mm from each nosing <i>Minimum dimensions for lifts</i> Clear landing entrances 1500x1500mm Min. internal dimensions 1100x1400mm Lift controls between 900 and 1200mm from the floor and 400mm from the lift's internal front wall

6	The width of the doorways and hallways should conform to the specifications in the next column.	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;"><i>Doorway clear opening width (mm)</i></td> <td><i>Corridor/ passageway width (mm)</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">750 or wider</td> <td>900 (when approach is head-on)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">750</td> <td>1200 (when approach is not head-on)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">775</td> <td>1050 (when approach is not head-on)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">900</td> <td>900 (when approach is not head-on)</td> </tr> </table> <p>The clear opening width of the front door should be 800mm. There should be 300mm to the side of the leading edge of doors on the entrance level</p>	<i>Doorway clear opening width (mm)</i>	<i>Corridor/ passageway width (mm)</i>	750 or wider	900 (when approach is head-on)	750	1200 (when approach is not head-on)	775	1050 (when approach is not head-on)	900	900 (when approach is not head-on)
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7	There should be space for turning a wheelchair in dining areas and living rooms and adequate circulation space for wheelchair users elsewhere	A turning circle of 1500mm diameter or a 1700x1400mm ellipse is required										
8	The living room should be at entrance level											
9	In houses of two or more storeys, there should be space on the entrance level that could be used as a convenient bed space											
10	There should be: a) a wheelchair accessible entrance level WC, with b) drainage provision enabling a shower to be fitted in the future	<p>The drainage provision for a future shower should be provided in all dwellings</p> <p><i>Dwellings of three or more bedrooms</i> For dwellings with three or more bedrooms, or on one level, the WC must be fully accessible. A wheelchair user should be able to close the door from within the closet and achieve side transfer from a wheelchair to at least one side of the WC. There must be at least 1100mm clear space from the front of the WC bowl. The shower provision must be within the closet or adjacent to the closet (the WC could be an integral part of the bathroom in a flat or bungalow)**</p> <p><i>Dwellings of two or fewer bedrooms</i> In small two-bedroom dwellings where the design has failed to achieve this fully accessible WC, the Part M standard WC will meet this standard</p>										
11	Walls in bathrooms and toilets should be capable of taking adaptations such as handrails	Wall reinforcements should be located between 300 and 1500mm from the floor										

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 12 | The design should incorporate:<br>a) provision for a future stair lift<br>b) a suitably identified space for a through- the- floor lift from the ground to the first floor, for example to a bedroom next to a bathroom | There must be a minimum of 900mm clear distance between the stair wall (on which the lift would normally be located) and the edge of the opposite handrail/ balustrade. Unobstructed 'landings' are needed at top and bottom of stairs |
| 13 | The design should provide for a reasonable route for a potential hoist from a main bedroom to the bathroom  | Most timber trusses today are capable of taking a hoist and tracking. Technological advances in hoist design mean that a straight run is no longer a requirement   |
| 14 | The bathroom should be designed to incorporate ease of access to the bath, WC and wash basin  | Although there is not a requirement for a turning circle in bathrooms, sufficient space should be provided so that a wheelchair user could use the bathroom  |
| 15 | Living room window glazing should begin at 800mm or lower and windows should be easy to open/ operate   | People should be able to see out of the window whilst seated. Wheelchair users should be able to operate at least one window in each room  |
| 16 | Switches, sockets, ventilation and service controls should be at a height usable by all (i. e. between 450 and 1200mm from the floor)   | This applies to all rooms including the kitchen and bathroom   |

\* Providing there are top, bottom and intermediate landings of not less than 1.2m excluding the swing of doors and gates.

\*\* But please note that it is important to meet the Part M dimensions specified to each side of the WC bowl in entrance level WCs (diagrams 10a and 10b). The Lifetime Homes standards for houses of three bedrooms or more require full side transfer from at least one side of the WC.



Source: [www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes/LTHDiagram.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes/LTHDiagram.asp)

## **References / Evidence Base**

Communities and Local Government Planning Policy Statement 3 Housing (PPS3)

Department for Communities & Local Government, Local Area Agreements -  
[www.communities.gov.uk/laa](http://www.communities.gov.uk/laa)

Essex County Council Local Area Agreement (Refresh 2007) -  
[www.essexcc.gov.uk/vip8/ecc/ECCWebsite/dis/gui.jsp?channelOid=15858&guideOid=71902](http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/vip8/ecc/ECCWebsite/dis/gui.jsp?channelOid=15858&guideOid=71902)

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation - [www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes](http://www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes)