Building Regulations Approved Document M provides guidance on access to and use of buildings. In the 2006 survey carried out by the DCLG into Approved Document M compliance levels only 13 of the sample dwellings met all the provisions of Approved Document M. It was concluded that clarification is needed to raise current compliance levels specifically in relation to parking, WC provision, access and circulation.

Lifetime Homes Standards consist of 16 design criteria which create an adaptable, accessible environment to live in, these consist of three sub headings which are Access, Inside the Home and Fixtures & Fittings.

The following guide seeks to provide clarification on Approved Document M and guidance on building to Lifetime Homes Standards.
Access - parking & approach

Parking & approach: approved document m

Level approach is required to principal entrance with 1:20 maximum gradient and 900mm minimum width. Width of approach should exclude space for parked vehicle.

Where existing site topography exceeds 1:15 a stepped approach may be acceptable when designed for ambulant disabled users. A minimum clear unobstructed path width of 900mm is required with 900mm long landings at top & bottom. Steps should have risers between 75 and 150mm and goings 280mm minimum. Where flight comprises 3 or more steps a handrail should be provided on one side of the flight.

Parking & approach: lifetime homes standard

Where car parking is adjacent to the home, it should be capable of enlargement to attain 3.3 metres width. The distance from the car parking space to the home should be kept to a minimum and should be level or gently sloping. The approach to all entrances should be level or gently sloping. Gradients for paths should be 1:12 up to 2 metres long, 1:15 up to 5 metres long and 1:20 up to 10 metres long. Level landings are required at top and bottom of slopes not less than 1.2 metres long excluding the swing of doors and gates.

Paths approaching principal entrance from communal/shared parking require a minimum clear width of 1200mm. The maximum distance from parking to principal entrance should not exceed 50 metres.

Buildings should be located and slab levels decided to allow unstepped access to all dwelling entrances from parking facilities.
Apartments approach: approved document m

The requirement is “to make reasonable provision for disabled people to visit occupants who live on any storey”.

Lifts should have 1500mm wide x 1500mm long clear landing (figure 2). Lift doors should have 800mm clear opening width. The minimum car size is 900mm width x 1250mm long, other dimensions are accepted when provided with test evidence. Controls should be positioned between 900 and 1200mm from landing and car floor, set 400mm from the front wall.

If no passenger lift is provided an ambulant staircase is required with distinguishable nosing’s, 170mm maximum risers (closed), 250mm minimum goings, continuous handrail both sides set 900mm above pitch line continuing 300mm beyond top and bottom of flight. Figure 3 shows staircase configuration.

Figure 4 shows an example of handrail design which should be provided both sides with 900mm clear width between.
Apartments approach: lifetime homes standard

Where homes are reached by a lift, it should be wheelchair accessible. The requirements for wheelchair accessible lifts are the provision of clear landing 1.5m x 1.5m in front of the lift (figure 2). Minimum internal lift car dimension should be 1100mm width x 1400mm long. Lift controls should be between 900 - 1200mm from the floor and 400mm from front wall of lift.

Communal access stairs should provide easy access regardless of whether a lift is provided. Staircase specification is the same as specified for Approved Document M.

Entrance: approved document m

Where a level or ramped approach is provided an accessible threshold should be provided.

Entrance: lifetime homes standard

All entrances should be illuminated and have level access over the threshold, and the main entrance should have covered canopy. Canopies providing weather protection should project 600mm minimum for individual dwellings and 900mm for communal access doors. Width of canopy should correspond with door and any controls.

Threshold details should be as the following diagrams with 15mm maximum rise and transition units where required.

Maximum sill slope 15 degrees

Fig. 5: Accessible threshold

Internal transition unit with 15 degree maximum slope

Fig. 6 Accessible threshold with transition unit.
Inside the home

**Door & corridor widths: approved document m**

Door widths relate to corridor widths as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Effective clear width (mm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrance door</td>
<td>775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal doors:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750 from 900mm wide corridor approached head-on and right angle approach from 1200mm wide corridor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>775 from 1050mm wide corridor with right angle approach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 from 900mm wide corridor with right angle approach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Door & corridor widths: lifetime homes standard**

The width of the doorways and hallways should accord with the Access Committee for England’s standards as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Effective clear width (mm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrance door</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal entrance doors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 head on approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 at right angles to access route 1500mm wide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>825 at right angles to access route 1200mm wide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal doors:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750 from 900mm wide corridor approached head-on and right angle approach from 1200mm wide corridor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>775 from 1050mm wide corridor with right angle approach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900 from 900mm wide corridor with right angle approach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300mm unobstructed space on pull side of internal doors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clear door opening widths are measured as indicated in figure 7 adjacent.

Corridor widths exclude any obstructions, such as radiators.

Fig 7: Clear door opening widths
Circulation space (wheelchair turning): lifetime homes standard

There should be space for the turning of wheelchairs in kitchens, dining areas and sitting rooms and adequate circulation for wheelchair users elsewhere. Figure 8 to the right indicates a kitchen layout with the 1.5 metre turning circle indicated by the broken line. An alternative is 1.7 x 1.4m turning ellipse.

Where movement between furniture is required a 750mm clear width is recommended. In kitchens a 1200mm clear space is recommended in front of units and appliances.

In the main bedroom it is recommended that a 750mm clear space is provided to both sides and the foot of the bed. For secondary bedrooms a 750mm clear space is recommended on one side of the bed.

Living/bedroom space: lifetime homes standard

The sitting room (or family room) should be at entrance level. In houses of two storeys, there should be space on the ground floor that can be used as a convenient bed space, unless a permanent bedroom is provided.

Figure 9 adjacent demonstrates a living/dining room arrangement, with wheelchair turning circle indicated within the living area. The rear of the room serves as a dining area with tables and chairs, should the need arise these could be removed. A bed and partition as indicated by the broken line could be installed to fulfil the function of bed space.
**wc provision: approved document m**

A wc should be located in the entrance storey of a dwelling, or at principal storey if the entrance storey does not contain habitable rooms. The wc may be located in a bathroom. The door to the wc compartment should open outwards. Figure 10 shows an example layout in compliance.

![Fig 10: wc layout](image)

**wc provision: lifetime homes standard**

There should be a downstairs toilet which should be wheelchair accessible, with drainage and service provision enabling a shower to be fitted at any time. Figure 11 shows an example layout with green outline indicating future shower provision. The blue shaded area indicates 1100 x 700mm access zone for wash basin, red shaded area indicates 1100 x 700mm frontal transfer zone for wc.

![Fig 11: future shower provision](image)

**bathroom handrails: lifetime homes standard**

Walls in bathrooms and toilets should be capable of taking adaptations such as handrails. Internal partitions constructed from steel or timber studding, can be a problem for fixings, however the provision of plywood sheeting secured to partition studs prior to plaster boarding as shown in figure 12 is a simple and cost effective way of achieving this requirement. Fixings for handrails are often required between the zones shown in figure 12.
Vertical circulation: approved document m

On severely sloping plots a stepped change of level may be acceptable within entrance storey with continuous handrail both sides, clear width of 900mm minimum and risers 220mm maximum and goings 220minimum with 42 degree minimum pitch.

Vertical circulation: lifetime homes standard

The design should incorporate provision for a future stair lift and a suitably identified space for a potential house lift (through-the-floor lift) from the ground floor to the first floor, for example to a bedroom next to the bathroom.

Fig. 13 Stair lift provision

A 900mm minimum clear space is recommended between wall and handrail to allow for future stair lift, with 700mm long x 400mm wide space at foot of stairs and at landing level. Provision of an electrical supply in the vicinity of the staircase will enable ease of future installation.
A nominal space allowance of 1500mm deep x 1000mm should be allowed for future through the floor lift. Figure 14 adjacent illustrates the floor joists doubled up around future opening and the broken lines being those floor joists which can be removed to allow for the future lift. Lift controls should be between 900 and 1200mm from floor and 400mm from front wall of lift. As with stair lift, a power supply in the vicinity will assist in future adaptation.

**Fig14: Through the floor lift**

**bedroom/bathroom circulation: lifetime homes standard**

The bed/bathroom ceiling should be strong enough, or capable of being made strong enough, to support a hoist at a later date. Within the bath/bedroom wall provision should be made for a future floor to ceiling door, to connect the two rooms by a hoist.

Modern roof construction using preformed trusses can be designed to allow for future hoist fixing with relative ease.

**Figure 15: Hoist provision**
Accessible bathroom: lifetime homes standard

The bathroom layout should be designed to incorporate ease of access, probably from a side approach, to the bath and WC. The wash basins should also be accessible.

There should also be provision for future floor level shower, this could replace the bath at a future stage. 1100 x 700mm space is required in front of wash hand basin and w.c.

Wheelchair turning space is also required of 1500mm diameter or 1700mm x 1400mm ellipse. The wc should be 400-500mm to the centre line from the wall, and have flush control located furthest way from the wall.

Fig 16 Accessible bathroom

Fixtures and fittings

Windows: lifetime homes standard

Principal living area window glazing should begin at 800mm or lower to allow people to see out when seated.

Each window in habitable rooms should have 750mm approach to the window with easy to open/operate controls set no higher than 1200mm for ease of use.

Fig17: Living room glazing
Service controls: approved document m

Switches and sockets outlets for lighting & other equipment should be between 450mm and 1200mm from finished floor level.

Service controls: lifetime homes standard

Switches, sockets and service controls should be at a height useable by all. e.g. between 450mm and 1200mm from the floor and 300mm minimum from internal corners.

The table below indicates where capped off sockets for future installations are recommended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location &amp; position of capped-off electrics/fused spur</th>
<th>Power supply to enable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stairwell at bottom of stairs.</td>
<td>Chair stairlift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home/ platform lift position at high level on rear wall of lift route above trimmed opening.</td>
<td>Through floor lift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance level wc/shower space at high level over floor drain.</td>
<td>Electric shower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaccessible windows, where no other accessible window in room, to one side of window at sill height</td>
<td>Automatic window opener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent knock out panel from bedroom/bathroom: Light switch height adjacent panel within bedroom At high level adjacent knock out panel within bedroom.</td>
<td>Bathroom light switch. Tracking hoist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen, on wall beneath wall cupboards</td>
<td>Task lighting under wall cupboards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography/Further Guidance

BSI, 2009, BS 8300: Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - code of practice, British Standards Institution, London.


Habinteg 2010, Lifetime Home (LTH) revised criteria, Lifetime Homes, London.

