

# DRAFT SHEFFIELD PLAN

Our City, Our Future

Accessible and Adaptable Housing  
Optional Technical Standard Topic Note  
– March 2024



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## **1. Purpose of the background paper**

- 1.1 The topic paper sets out the evidence used to inform Local Plan policy NC4 housing for independent and supported living, which sets out requirements for homes to be accessible and adaptable.
- 1.2 The policy requires for general needs housing 100% of properties on smaller sites (less than 50 homes) to be built to building regulations optional technical standards M4(2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings); and on larger sites (over 50 units) altering this to 98% M4(2) with 2% M4(3) (wheelchair user dwellings).



## 2. Relevant Policies in the Draft Plan

- 2.1 Policy NC4: Housing for Independent and Supported Living is in Part 2: Development Management Policies and Implementation, of the draft Sheffield Plan, and set out below:

### **POLICY NC4: HOUSING FOR INDEPENDENT AND SUPPORTED LIVING**

#### **General needs housing**

All new homes should be designed to enable independent living. This means:

- a) in developments of fewer than 50 new homes, 100% should be designed to be accessible and adaptable dwellings;
- b) in developments of 50 or more new homes, 98% should be designed to be accessible and adaptable dwellings and the remaining 2% should be wheelchair adaptable dwellings.

Wheelchair adaptable homes should be located on the flattest part of a site and, where feasible, as close as possible to local facilities.

Exceptions to the required gradients for driveways to wheelchair accessible and adaptable dwellings may be made where it can be demonstrated that the topography of the site makes this impractical.

#### **Specialist housing designated for older or disabled people**

Specialist housing designated for older or disabled people will be promoted in areas of need. Proposals will be acceptable where the accommodation would be close to local facilities, particularly public transport, shops, and health services.

All specialist housing designated for older or disabled people, including supported accommodation (including hostels providing an element of care), and non-supported accommodation should be wheelchair adaptable or fully wheelchair accessible throughout. The provision of secure internal storage for mobility aids will be required.

### **Definitions**

**‘Accessible and adaptable dwellings’** – homes that meet the needs of occupants with differing needs including some older and disabled people whilst allowing adaptation of the dwelling to meet the changing needs of the occupants over time. This means they should be designed to meet the Building Regulations Optional Technical Standard M4(2), or future revisions.



**‘Wheelchair adaptable dwellings’** – homes that can be easily adapted to meet the needs of a household which includes wheelchair users. This means they should be designed to meet the Building Regulations Optional Technical Standard M4(3)(2)(a), or future revisions.

**‘Wheelchair accessible’** – homes readily useable by a wheelchair user at the point of completion. This means they should be designed to meet Building Regulations Optional Technical Standard M4(3)(2)(b), or future revisions.

**‘Close to local facilities’** – distances will vary depending on the mobility of the intended residents of the new homes and will usually be less than 400 metres.

**‘Specialist housing designated for older or disabled people’** – includes age-restricted housing, sheltered housing, extra care housing or housing with care and residential care homes and nursing homes.

**‘Areas of need’** – as set out in the Older Persons and Independent Living Strategy.

### National Planning Policy Framework

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out how planning policies should reflect the housing needs of different groups in the community: *These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing; families with children; older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes); students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes<sup>1</sup>.*

### National Planning Practice Guidance

2.3 The Government published National Planning Practice Guidance in relation to planning for housing for people with specific housing needs, these are:

- NPPG Housing needs of different groups<sup>2</sup>;
- NPPG Housing: optional technical standards<sup>3</sup>;
- NPPG Housing for older and disabled people<sup>4</sup> states that ‘Planning policies for accessible housing need to be based on evidence of need, viability and a consideration of site-specific factors’.
- Planning policy for traveller sites, to be read in conjunction with the NPPF. A separate topic paper (HS10) reviews how the Council have planned for this specific need.

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<sup>1</sup> NPPF, December 2023, para 63 [National Planning Policy Framework publishing.service.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework)

<sup>2</sup> NPPG [Housing needs of different groups - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nppg-housing-needs-of-different-groups)

<sup>3</sup> NPPG [Housing: optional technical standards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nppg-housing-optional-technical-standards)

<sup>4</sup> NPPG [Housing for older and disabled people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nppg-housing-for-older-and-disabled-people)



### 3. Summary of evidence

#### *Housing for Older People*

- 3.1 The **2021 census** informs us that 17% of Sheffield's total population are aged 65 and over, this is compared 18% nationally<sup>5</sup>. Between 2011 and 2021 there has been an increase of 10.6% in people aged 65 years and over<sup>6</sup> in Sheffield, and this follows the national trend that the population has continued to age.
- 3.2 The **2021 Housing, Economic Growth and Demographic Modelling report**<sup>7</sup> (HS06) informs us that the projected population growth from 2021 to 2038 shows the largest growth will be in people aged 65 and over. In 2038 it is projected there will be 120,800 people aged 65 and over in Sheffield. This is an increase of 24,900 from 2021, representing 26% growth. The population aged 85 and over is projected to increase by an even greater proportion, 41% (HS06, table 4.3).
- 3.3 The **2019 Sheffield and Rotherham SHMA**<sup>8</sup> (HS05) sets out the housing demands of specific groups in Sheffield. For older households, the household survey undertaken as part of the SHMA shows that downsizing is a primary motive for moving home, followed by a desire to increase accessibility in the home and be near family and friends. The majority of those needing to move for additional support wish to stay in general needs accommodation, raising questions about the characteristics of the existing stock and accessibility standards of newly built housing.
- 3.4 Table 7.10 below from the 2019 SHMA, shows for older households expecting to move accommodation, most will likely remain in general needs accommodation which is, or will be, adapted to meet their needs. Those anticipating a move into sheltered housing is relatively low in comparison to this and may reflect the changing nature of this provision. Expected moves into extra care housing is very high in comparison when the level of this provision in Sheffield is relatively low.

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<sup>5</sup> [How life has changed in Sheffield: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup> [Sheffield population change, Census 2021 – ONS](https://ons.gov.uk)

<sup>7</sup> [Core Document HS06 bfaa55b779c694f09a649018db7daef9 Final Draft Report Clean.pdf \(amazonaws.com\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Sheffield and Rotherham SHMA July 2019 \(Core Document HS05\)](#)





**Table 7.10: The future accommodation type for those expecting to move and needing additional support (gross-weighted)**

	Rotherham	Sheffield	SRHM
Adaptations to the home that help you live as independently as possible (e.g. a stair lift)	1,836	2,896	4,732
Something other than these	583	1,248	1,830
Sheltered housing for older people	406	1,295	1,701
Independent accommodation with visiting or live in support	203	1,307	1,510
Extra care housing for older people	322	846	1,167
Residential/nursing home	-	202	202

Source: Household survey, 2018.

- 3.5 The Housing for Older People’s Supply Recommendations (HOPSR) model, used to inform the SHMA analysis, recommends a supply of over 1,000 units of extra care by 2035 in Sheffield<sup>9</sup>. However, responses from the household survey show there would appear to be more demand for extra care housing than the HOPSR model predicts, meaning demand may outstrip supply.
- 3.6 Research undertaken as part of the DWELL project (Designing for Wellbeing in Environments for Later Life) produced a report in 2016 called **Retirement Housing in Sheffield: Supply and Demand to 2034**<sup>10</sup> which uses two models from Three Dragons Consultancy and the Shop@ model, to enable predictions to be made of the surplus and shortfall of retirement housing in Sheffield. The findings show, by 2034 it is estimated that 7,567 households over the age of 65 will be seeking to move, with a majority being owner occupiers. Based on the current supply (calculated in 2017), this will mean delivering around 280 additional units of specialist older people’s housing each year up into 2034, or 4,200 units for the 15 years being modelled (more than is currently being delivered).
- 3.7 The Council **Older Persons Independent Living (OPLIL) Strategy 2017-2022**<sup>11</sup>, uses the DWELL research to provide further evidence on where in Sheffield specialists older people’s housing is needed and which tenure. The most significant shortfalls until 2034 would be the South-East housing market area (-882 units), North East (-717 units), South West (-705 units) and South (-523 units). It is expected two thirds of specialist OPIL housing will need to be for ownership. Local Plan Policy NC4 is informed by the evidence in the OPIL Strategy, by promoting new schemes in areas of need. The OPIL Strategy is

<sup>9</sup> Sheffield and Rotherham SHMA 2018, paragraph 7.25.

<sup>10</sup> Retirement housing in Sheffield: Supply and Demand to 2034 [DWELL - Retirement housing in Sheffield](#)

<sup>11</sup> [older peoples independent living housing strategy 2017 - 2022.pdf \(sheffield.gov.uk\)](#)





being updated for 2024-2029 and will be published later this year alongside the Council's wider Housing Strategy.

- 3.8 The factors affecting decisions about housing moves in later life are complex. Evidence from the SHMA tells us that whilst the decision to choose either general needs housing or specialist accommodations is a key one, other factors such as access to local facilities, transport connectivity and being part of a community are also important. Ensuring that homes are adapted for, or can be adapted to enable people to live as independently as possible is a significant consideration.

#### *Housing for Disabled People*

- 3.9 The **2021 Census** informs us that 9% of Sheffield residents were identified as being disabled and limited a lot. The way the Census identifies disabled people has changed (previously limiting long-term illness) between 2011 and 2021 to align with the definition of disability more closely in the Equality Act (2010), and therefore it is difficult to make comparisons between 2011 and 2021. Disability and age are closely related, with older people being more likely to be disabled. Data from **POPPI (Projecting Older People Population Information)** informs us in 2040, it is projected 29% of those aged 65 and over in Sheffield will have a disability or limiting long-term illness.
- 3.10 The DCLG Guide to available disability data<sup>12</sup> referenced by NPPG Housing: optional technical standards, shows that 3.3% of households in England currently have at least one wheelchair user, and this is much higher for social rented properties (7.1%), and for those aged 65 and over the rates increase further.
- 3.11 The SHMA (HS05) sets out the needs arising from households with a disability or limiting long-term illnesses, specifically:
- 3.12 **24% of households** in Sheffield have a member with a disability or limiting long-term illnesses, with the highest numbers in the South-East and North East housing market area. This evidence is based on the Household Survey from 2018, which equates to **58,381 households** (HS05, Table 7.1).
- 3.13 **9.2% of households** in Sheffield said their home had been adapted to meet the needs of a disabled resident, with the highest rate in social rented properties. An adaptation could include simple changes such as a grabrail, so although 9.2% of households said their home had been adapted, this doesn't necessarily make the home accessible; Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) identified four key features of a visitable dwelling: level access, flush threshold, doors/circulation that meets Part M of the Building Regulations and ground/entry level WC. Only **2.1% of households** said their home had been adapted for a wheelchair user, with the highest rate in social

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<sup>12</sup> [Building regulations: guide to available disability data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/building-regulations-guide-to-available-disability-data)



rented properties. This is very low in comparison with the amount of households that include one or more people with mobility problems.

- 3.14 **10% of all households** with a disability or limiting long-term illnesses (5,576 households) say their homes are inadequate due to needing improvements or repairs, which equates to **2.25% of total households in Sheffield** (HS05, Table 7.3). The survey reveals the types of adaptations these households would need, with accessibility improvements the most required, and this includes wheelchair adaptations and safe access to external areas; all of which are adaptations needed to meet the needs of occupants who use wheelchairs.
- 3.15 **16% of households** with a disability or limiting long-term illnesses (9,341 households) say they need to move house to resolve inadequacy, which equates to **3.77% of total households in Sheffield** (HS05, paragraph 7.7). Specifically, 1,930 households (6.8%) need to move because their current home is unsuitable for adaptations.
- 3.16 The evidence clearly points to the need to ensure that going forward, new homes built in Sheffield, should be built to be better able to meet the current and future needs of the increasing numbers of older and disabled people who require adaptations to enable independent living.



## 4. Our approach

- 4.1 The objective of policy NC4 is to increase the supply of accessible and adaptable homes to enable people to live independently for longer. Sheffield's elderly population is forecast to grow markedly, and it is the Council's strategy to enable people to live independently in their homes for longer with appropriate support, therefore it is considered highly likely that the number of households living in or requiring adapted properties is expected to increase over the plan period and beyond. This is why the approach in policy NC4 for 100% of general needs housing to be designed to meet the Building Regulations Optional Technical Standard M4(2) has been taken. This approach reflects the recent commitment from Government to raising the accessibility standards for new homes, by mandating the current M4(2) (Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings) requirement in Building Regulations as a minimum standard for all new homes<sup>13</sup>. The Council is waiting for further information on when the statutory changes will be implemented and expect transitional provisions will be necessary.
- 4.2 Evidence from the SHMA, DWELL study and OPIL Strategy, inform us that housing choice is important for older and disabled households, therefore another objective of policy NC4 is to increase the supply of specialist accommodation (for which there is a high demand) that's sustainably located near local facilities and public transport.
- 4.3 The provision of new specialist housing designated for older or disabled people, is required to be built to building regulations optional technical standard M4(3)(2)(a)(wheelchair adaptable), however the policy is worded with 'should be' to allow for flexibility in the provision of 100% M4(3)(2)(a). In addition, National Planning Practice Guidance<sup>14</sup> on viability allows for site specific testing on particular types of development which significantly vary from standard models of development for sale, such as housing for older people.
- 4.4 The requirement for new specialist housing designated for older or disabled people, to be fully wheelchair accessible throughout (Building Regulations Optional Technical Standard M4(3)(2)(b)), will only be applied to dwellings where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling (as set out in National Planning Practice Guidance<sup>15</sup>).
- 4.5 The need for new housing to have a higher disabled access standard is because only a small proportion of Sheffield's housing stock is wheelchair accessible, which is insufficient to meet the growing needs of Sheffield disabled and elderly population. Therefore, by requiring 2% wheelchair adaptable housing in new developments over 50 homes, this will enable more options

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<sup>13</sup> [Raising accessibility standards for new homes: summary of consultation responses and government response - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/raising-accessibility-standards-for-new-homes)

<sup>14</sup> [Viability - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/viability) Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 10-007-20190509

<sup>15</sup> [Housing: optional technical standards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-optional-technical-standards) Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 56-009-20150327



over time for those who are disabled and limited a lot, to access homes to meet their needs.

- 4.6 The requirement for general needs homes to be built to building regulations optional technical standards M4(2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings); and M4(3) (wheelchair user dwellings) has been viability tested in the Whole Plan Viability Assessment (Document reference VI01, paragraph 8.40-8.45, 10.64, 12.89); with options of 100% M4(2) and 10% and 20% M4(3) tested. It was necessary to settle on a 100% accessible and adaptable M4(2) with 2% Wheelchair Adaptable M4(3) policy, as this allowed the requirements of this policy (NC4) to be balanced with other policies in the Plan (in particular, those relating to affordable housing and the reduction of carbon emissions).



## 5. Evidence Documents

5.1 The evidence documents referenced throughout the topic note are listed below:

Local Plan Document Reference (if applicable)	Evidence Source/Document Name	Website Link
	Census 2021	<a href="https://ons.gov.uk">How life has changed in Sheffield: Census 2021 (ons.gov.uk)</a>
	Census 2021	<a href="#">Sheffield population change, Census 2021 – ONS</a>
	DWELL project (Designing for Wellbeing in Environments for Later Life)	<a href="https://sheffield.ac.uk">DWELL (sheffield.ac.uk)</a>
HS06	Housing, Economic Growth and Demographic Modelling, 2021	<a href="#">017f5b_65251df642554e9aa4ad1f32cb9fad21.pdf (localplanservices.co.uk)</a>
	Older Persons Independent Living (OPLIL) Strategy 2017-2022	<a href="#">older peoples independent living housing strategy 2017 - 2022.pdf (sheffield.gov.uk)</a>
	POPPI (Projecting Older People Population Information)	<a href="https://poppi.org.uk">Projecting Older People Population Information System (poppi.org.uk)</a>
	Retirement Housing in Sheffield: Supply and Demand to 2034	<a href="#">DWELL - Retirement housing in Sheffield</a>
HS05	Sheffield and Rotherham SHMA, 2019	<a href="#">017f5b_65251df642554e9aa4ad1f32cb9fad21.pdf (localplanservices.co.uk)</a>

