

Accessible and Adaptable Homes

Compliance with DAP Policy DM6: A Guidance Note for Developers

Newcastle City Council
June 2020

POLICY DM6 ACCESSIBLE AND ADAPTABLE HOUSING

Newcastle City Council adopted the **Development and Allocations Plan (DAP)** on 24 June 2020, providing detailed policies to support the Council's growth ambitions. National planning policy outlines that planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing to cater for different needs, including the provision of accommodation which is adaptable to changes in an individual's circumstances. Newcastle's population is ageing, with the number of people aged 65 and over expected to increase by 14,200 between 2015-2030. Accordingly, Policy DM6 in the DAP will require planning applications to provide a proportion of accessible and adaptable homes:

Policy DM6 - Accessible and Adaptable Housing

The design of new build homes will be required to be flexible and adaptable for the future to meet the needs of the population. This will be achieved by requiring new housing developments of 10 dwellings or more to provide 25% of all new homes to be built to Accessible and Adaptable Standard (Building Regulation M4(2)).

This guidance note aims to advise developers on how to achieve compliance with Policy DM6.

WHAT IS M4(2)?

Building Regulations **Approved Document M** covers the access to and use of buildings, and sets out three tiers of accessibility standards:

- M4(1) Visitable Dwellings
- M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings
- M4(3) Wheelchair User Dwellings

Regulation M4(1) is mandatory for all new dwellings, whereas requirements for M4(2) and M4(3) homes are introduced in the DAP Local Plan and can only be secured through a planning condition. Policy DM6 relates only to M4(2).

The Approved Document summarises the measures in M4(2) in five key criteria:

- a. Within the curtilage of the dwelling, or of the building containing the dwelling, it is possible to approach and gain **step-free access to the dwelling** and to any associated parking space and communal facilities intended for the occupants to use.*
- b. There is **step-free access to the WC and other accommodation within the entrance storey**, and to any associated private outdoor space directly connected to the entrance storey.*
- c. A **wide range of people**, including older and disabled people and some wheelchair users, are able to use the accommodation and its sanitary facilities.*
- d. Features are provided to **enable common adaptations** to be carried out in future to increase the accessibility and functionality of the dwelling.*
- e. Wall-mounted switches, socket outlets and other controls are **reasonably accessible to people who have reduced reach**."*

Detailed requirements, illustrating specific minimum measurements and dimensions, are available in the Approved Document:

MEETING THE COUNCIL'S REQUIREMENTS

Planning Officers assessing major applications for residential development (use class C3) will now be checking that **at least 25% of dwellings meet M4(2) standards**. The following check list is intended to help you apply accessible and adaptable standards in Policies DM6 (& DM8 Specialist Residential Accommodation).

Type	Use Class C3 Dwellings – minor development	Use Class C3 Dwellings – major development	Conversion/ change of Use to C3	HMOs	Prior Approval	Build to Rent (PRS)	Studios (Use Class C3) (inc. student)	Cluster Flats (Use C4/ Sui Generis), Halls of Residence	Care Home (Use Class C2)
Accessible & Adaptable Y/N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Policy DM8 Y- M4(2) or M4(3)

Supporting Information

Developers will be requested to **clearly indicate which units meet M4(2) standards on both the layout plan and the schedule of accommodation**. The **Design and Access Statement** for residential major applications will also set out how the scheme will comply with Policy DM6.

See the example of supporting information in the table below for each house type which should then be identified on the corresponding plots on the site layout plan and inserted into the plan legend/ key.

Example Information

Key



Dwelling Type	Number of units	Accessible & Adaptable	Tenure
HT1 ▪	4	N/a	Affordable rent
HT2 ▪	2	N/a	Private
HT3 ▪	3	M4(2)	Private

Outline Applications should include a statement confirming that 25% of dwellings will meet M4(2), with details to be provided in the Reserved Matters Application. Requirements to demonstrate compliance with Policy DM6 in the layout plan, accommodation schedule and Design and Access Statement will be inserted into the Validation Checklist at the soonest opportunity.

Exceptions

M4(2) homes should be provided on-site unless there are clear reasons why this is not feasible. DAP para. 4.2.6, indicate such circumstances could include;

- vulnerability to flooding
- sloping topography
- stair accessed flatted scheme (no lift)

In these circumstances, off-site contributions towards meeting the citywide need in new build dwellings will be required

Off-site contributions are required in lieu of on site compliance and this should be written into the s.106 agreements (in a manner comparable to the negotiation of off-site contributions to affordable housing). The exception to this will be where demonstratable viability constraints indicate neither on or off site contributions (full or partial) would be appropriate. Where step-free access is not viable, neither M4(2) or M4(3) should be applied.

Failure to meet the 25% threshold without satisfactory evidence that the scheme is unviable or unfeasible (without off site contributions) would render the scheme noncompliant with DM6 and could risk the application being refused.

If permission is granted for the development, it is likely that a condition will be imposed which requires the submission of evidence that plans for the dwellings identified as meeting Building Regulation M4(2) comply with the requirements set out in the Approved Document M. This will usually take the form of a signed report by a suitably qualified person, such as a Building Inspector; a declaration that the report has been shared with the appointed building control body; and a copy of the Building Regulations Notice of the Passing of Plans / Plan Certificate issued by the building control body.

N.B. One year after the adoption of the DAP, Newcastle City Council will begin implementing Policy DM7, requiring all new homes to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). In advance of the introduction of the NDSS requirement, developers are additionally advised to begin including internal floorspace areas in accommodation schedules to demonstrate compliance with Policy DM7.