



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY STATEMENT UPDATE HOUSING STANDARDS

Bedford Borough Council

October 2015

Policy statement update – housing standards

1. Through a written ministerial statement on 25 March 2015, the Government introduced new technical housing standards in England and detailed how these would be applied through planning policy¹. The system comprises of new additional ‘optional’ Building Regulations on access and water, and a nationally described space standard (together referred to as “the new national technical standards”). In addition, the statement announced that the Code for Sustainable Homes was withdrawn and could no longer be referenced in new cases.
2. The new technical housing standards came into effect on 1st October 2015. From this date relevant development plan policies and associated supplementary guidance should be interpreted by reference to the nearest equivalent new national technical standard. The Council intends to adopt new technical standards as part of the new local plan currently in preparation. In advance of this, as required by Government, this policy statement sets out how the Council’s existing policies relating to housing standards should be applied in the interim.
3. In addition, in July 2015 the Government announced² that it did not intend to proceed with the previous aim of requiring new housing development to be zero carbon from 2016. However it would keep energy efficiency standards under review, recognising that existing measures to increase the energy efficiency of new buildings should be allowed time to become established.

Access

4. The new Approved Document M of the Building Regulations³ introduces three categories of dwellings:

¹ Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, March 2015 ‘Planning update: written statement’.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2015-03-25/HCWS488/>

² Fixing the Foundations: creating a more prosperous nation. Treasury, BIS July 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-the-foundations-creating-a-more-prosperous-nation>

³ Approved Document M: Volume 1 - Access to and use of dwellings. DCLG March 2015

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/adm/admv01>

- Category 1 - Visitable dwellings.
- Category 2 - Accessible and adaptable dwellings.
- Category 3 - Wheelchair user dwellings.

Category 1 is a mandatory baseline, setting minimum requirements for access to and use of buildings. Categories 2 and 3, which apply optional higher levels of accessibility and adaptability, apply only where required by planning condition and where supported by a local plan policy.

5. The Council's current policy is set out in Policy H34 which states –

To increase the choice of housing available to disabled people the Borough Council will seek to negotiate agreement with developers to construct a proportion of mobility housing on suitable sites. Such units should be spread throughout the areas of development particularly where there is convenient access to shops, services and public transport.

Further guidance on interpreting this policy is contained in the Supplementary Planning Guidance *Mobility Housing*. As a general guideline 10% of new housing should be Mobility Housing and is likely to comprise single-storey dwellings for small households (including ground floor flats). Specific mobility housing guidelines are also set out in the document.

6. From October 2015 the Council's policy should be interpreted as 10% of new housing should meet Building Regulation M4 (3) (2)(a) – 'wheelchair user dwellings'. For detailed guidance on implementation of specific mobility housing guidelines see Appendix 1 of this policy statement update.

Water efficiency

7. The new Approved Document G of the Building Regulations⁴ restricts water use to 110 litres per person per day where required by planning condition and where supported by a local plan policy. The normal requirement is 125 litres per person per day. It should be noted that both of these requirements include external water use (of five litres per person per day).

⁴ Approved Document G - Sanitation, hot water safety and water efficiency. DCLG March 2015
<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partg/approved>

Effectively, the optional requirement is exactly the same as the previous Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 and level 4 requirement of 105 litres per person per day, as this was a measure of internal water use only and did not include external water use in the calculation.

8. The Council's current policy is set out in Policy AD2 which only applies to new residential developments of 10 dwellings and over or 0.3 ha and over. It requires such dwellings to meet Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 in relation to water use.
9. From October 2015 the Council's policy should be interpreted as new housing of 10 dwellings and over or 0.3 ha and over should meet the optional requirement set out in Building Regulation G2. New housing below this threshold should meet the normal Building Regulation G2 requirement.

Internal space

10. The national internal space standard for new dwellings⁵ is an optional standard that can be required through a local plan policy. As the Council does not currently have a policy requiring compliance with an internal space standard, there is no requirement for new dwellings to comply with the optional national standard. The need for such a standard is being considered as part of the preparation of the new local plan.

Energy efficiency

11. The Government's statement in July 2015 announced that it did not intend to proceed with the previous aim of requiring new housing development to be zero carbon from 2016. However, the statement did not specify any immediate changes to existing local policy – only that standards will be kept under review. Unless and until further guidance is issued by the Government, the Council will continue to apply its existing energy efficiency policies in line with the Government's statement in March 2015.
12. The Council's existing adopted standards are set out in Policies AD2 and CP26. Policy AD2 requires new residential developments of 10 dwellings and over or on sites larger than 0.3 ha to meet Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 as a

⁵ Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard. DCLG March 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard>

minimum and to achieve zero carbon emissions (either on-site or through contribution to a carbon offset fund). The Government's written ministerial statement and announcement are clear that the requirement to achieve zero carbon emissions cannot now be pursued. However the remaining energy standard that this policy implies, being equivalent to Code for Sustainable Homes level 4, can continue to be applied.

13. Policy CP26 requires all residential development to reduce carbon emissions by at least 10% below the Building Regulation requirement. For developments larger than 50 dwellings this should include the supply of at least 10% of energy requirements from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources. However, as the Government has capped energy efficiency requirements at the equivalent to Code for Sustainable Homes level 4, it is clear that the carbon emission reduction requirement can only now apply to residential development below the threshold site size set in Policy AD2. Therefore, for new residential developments of fewer than 10 dwellings the Council's requirement is to reduce carbon emissions by at least 10% below Building Regulations (provided that this does not exceed the equivalent of Code for Sustainable Homes level 4). The requirement for developments larger than 50 dwellings to include the supply of at least 10% of energy requirements from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources is unaffected, as this does not require an additional reduction in carbon emissions but rather refers to how the required reduction is to be achieved.
14. The current Building Regulation energy efficiency requirement is set out in Approved Document L1A⁶ which requires that the calculated rate of CO₂ emissions from the dwelling (the Dwelling CO₂ Emission Rate, DER) must not be greater than the Target CO₂ Emission Rate (TER). Therefore the Council's policy for new residential developments of fewer than 10 dwellings requires a 10% reduction in the DER over the TER. This is well within the energy efficiency requirement of the former Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 (which required a 19% reduction).
15. The energy efficiency requirements for new residential development are summarised in Appendix 1 of this policy statement update.
16. Note that this policy statement update applies only to residential development. The requirements of Policies AD2 and CP26 in relation to non-residential development are unaffected.

⁶ Approved Document L1A: Conservation of fuel and power in new dwellings, 2013 edition. DCLG March 2014
<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/part1/approved#ApprovedDocumentL1A:ConservationoffuelandpowerNewdwellings>

How relevant Bedford Borough Council housing standards should be interpreted from October 2015

Previous standard	Standard from October 2015 based on nearest equivalent national technical standard
Access	
10% of new housing should be Mobility Housing and is likely to comprise single-storey dwellings for small households (including ground floor flats). (Policy H34 and <i>Mobility Housing</i> SPG)	10% of new housing should meet The Building Regulations 2010 Approved Document M4 Category 3: wheelchair user dwellings - (2)(a) 'allow simple adaptation of the dwelling to meet the needs of occupants who use wheelchairs'.
For Mobility Housing, a car parking area, ideally covered, at least 3300mm wide, should be provided adjacent to the dwelling or within the curtilage, with a non-slip access to the dwelling no more than 15m in distance from the parking area. (<i>Mobility Housing</i> SPG)	Each designated wheelchair user dwelling should have a car parking space that complies with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.12 a-e.
For Mobility Housing, all entrances should be well lit and the main entrance should be covered. (<i>Mobility Housing</i> SPG)	The entrance to each designated wheelchair user dwelling should have illumination that complies with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.9 f, 3.14 c and 3.22 c (as appropriate).

Previous standard	Standard from October 2015 based on nearest equivalent national technical standard
For Mobility Housing, the main entrance door should have a clear opening width of at least 800mm. (<i>Mobility Housing SPG</i>)	The main entrance door to each designated wheelchair user dwelling should have a clear opening width that complies with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.14 e and 3.22 f (as appropriate).
For Mobility Housing, all doors should have 300mm to the side of their leading edge. (<i>Mobility Housing SPG</i>)	All doors to each designated wheelchair user dwelling should have space to the side of their leading edge that complies with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.14 g, 3.22 e and 3.24 f (as appropriate).
For Mobility Housing, habitable rooms and circulation areas should have sufficient space for easy movement in a wheelchair (ie a turning circle of 1500mm diameter or a 1700mm x 1400mm ellipse is required). (<i>Mobility Housing SPG</i>)	Habitable rooms and circulation areas of each designated wheelchair user dwelling should have sufficient space for movement in a wheelchair that complies with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.14 d, 3.22 d and 3.24 a-g (as appropriate).
For Mobility Housing, the main living room should be located at entrance level. (<i>Mobility Housing SPG</i>)	Main living rooms of each designated wheelchair user dwelling should comply with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.31 a.
For Mobility Housing, in dwellings of three or more bedrooms and in all single-storey dwellings, the bathroom and toilet should be fully accessible to a wheelchair-user. It should be possible to close the door from within the bathroom/toilet and to transfer from a wheelchair to at least one side of the WC pan. A wheelchair turning circle of at least 1500mm diameter should be provided. (<i>Mobility Housing SPG</i>)	Bathroom and toilet facilities in each designated wheelchair user dwelling with three or more bedrooms should comply with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.42 (as appropriate).

Previous standard	Standard from October 2015 based on nearest equivalent national technical standard
For Mobility Housing, bathroom/toilet walls should be constructed to be capable of supporting handrails between 300mm and 1500mm from floor level. (<i>Mobility Housing SPG</i>)	Bathroom/toilet walls in each designated wheelchair user dwelling should comply with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.36 d.
For Mobility Housing, other than in single-storey dwellings, provision should be made for the future provision of a stair lift and a through-the-floor lift from the ground to the first floor. (<i>Mobility Housing SPG</i>)	Other than in single-storey dwellings, each designated wheelchair user dwelling should be capable of simple adaptation to comply with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.29 a-g.
For Mobility Housing, in single storey dwellings, provision should be made in the construction for the future provision of a hoist from a main bedroom to the bathroom/toilet. (<i>Mobility Housing SPG</i>)	In single storey dwellings, each designated wheelchair user dwelling should comply with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.36 e.
For Mobility Housing, ground floor habitable room windows should begin at a height of no more than 800mm so that a seated person can see out. (<i>Mobility Housing SPG</i>)	Ground floor habitable room windows in each designated wheelchair user dwelling should comply with Building Regulation M4 (3) 3.31 c.
For Mobility Housing, wheelchair-users should be able to operate at least one window in each habitable room, including a kitchen window. (<i>Mobility Housing SPG</i>)	Standard removed.

Previous standard	Standard from October 2015 based on nearest equivalent national technical standard
Water efficiency	
Water use in new residential developments of 10 dwellings and over or 0.3 ha and over should meet Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 provided that this does not make the development unviable. (Policy AD2)	Water use in new residential developments of 10 dwellings and over or 0.3 ha and over should meet the optional Building Regulation G2 requirement provided that this does not make the development unviable.
Water use in new residential developments of fewer than 10 dwellings should comply with current building regulations.	Water use in new residential developments of fewer than 10 dwellings should meet the normal Building Regulation G2 requirement.

Previous standard	Standard from October 2015 based on nearest equivalent national technical standard
Energy efficiency	
<p>All residential development to reduce carbon emissions by at least 10% below the Building Regulation requirement. For developments larger than 50 dwellings this should include the supply of at least 10% of energy requirements from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources provided that this does not make the development unviable. (Policy CP26)</p>	<p>New residential developments of fewer than 10 dwellings should reduce carbon emissions by 10% below the Building Regulation L1A requirement provided that this does not make the development unviable.</p>
<p>New residential developments of 10 dwellings and over or on sites larger than 0.3 ha should meet Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 as a minimum and achieve zero carbon emissions (either on-site or through contribution to a carbon offset fund) provided that this does not make the development unviable. (Policy AD2)</p>	<p>New residential developments of 10 dwellings and over or on sites larger than 0.3 ha should achieve a 19% reduction below the Building Regulation L1A requirement provided that this does not make the development unviable.</p>
<p>All residential development to reduce carbon emissions by at least 10% below the Building Regulation requirement. For developments larger than 50 dwellings this should include the supply of at least 10% of energy requirements from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources provided that this does not make the development unviable. (Policy CP26)</p>	<p>New residential developments larger than 50 dwellings should include the supply of at least 10% of energy requirements from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources provided that this does not make the development unviable.</p>