

# Enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland's homes consultation (Scottish Government)

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland. For information only to England, Northern Ireland and Wales

## 1 Executive summary

The Scottish Government are consulting on enhancing the accessibility, adaptability and usability of Scotland's homes. The consultation closes on 21 December 2023. [Click here](#) to complete the consultation, [click here](#) to read the consultation paper and [click here](#) to read the consultation summary paper. They are also hosting two online consultation engagement events on [Wednesday 8 November](#) from 2pm to 4pm and [Friday 10 November](#) from 9:30am to 11:30am, which are open to anyone with an interest in the consultation.

The consultation covers the proposed updates to Part 1 of the Housing for Varying Needs design guide and to building standards and guidance. Housing for Varying Needs is a guide used by house designers to make homes as suitable as possible for people with different abilities. The guide is now 25 years old and with people living longer, what they need from a home has changed with the increasing preference for independent living without care assistance.

From 2001 to 2021, the percentage of people aged 65 and over in Scotland has increased by 20%. The Government also want to ensure homes are digitally-enabled from the point of construction, are able to be adapted to assist people with disabilities or long-standing illnesses, with private or communal outdoor space and a space for home working or study; they also want to achieve better standards and more accessible accommodation for public sector Gypsy/Traveller sites. Improvements can be made to the language used in the updated guide to ensure it is presented in a respectful, positive and non-discriminatory way.

6	The overall plan of the dwelling	Proposed Housing for Varying Needs update	Proposals for the Scottish Accessible Homes Standard
6.1	<b>The needs</b>		
6.1.1	All dwellings within themselves should be free of 'barriers', or potentially so. Even a house on a steeply sloping site or an upper floor flat that internally is designed to be barrier free can be of benefit to an occupant who is temporarily impaired, to those who can manage steps but are otherwise disabled, or a disabled visitor who may need assistance up steps or stairs, but once inside is able to move around.	<b>Remove</b> – superseded by the proposals set out within Chapter 2 of this consultation paper.	<b>Not applicable</b>  <b>Exception A</b> Clause already identified as being included in or superseded by building standards.

Annex F from [Pages 117 to 329](#) in the main consultation report detail the proposed Housing for Varying Needs update alongside the proposals for the Scottish Accessible Homes Standard for each section of the report, as shown in the image to the left.

The proposed changes are also detailed in the questions below with clauses on individual dwellings being step free, entrance doors to communal areas having clear opening widths, decorating different floors of communal dwellings with distinguishing tones to help people find their way, proposals for circulation and access spaces, kitchen spaces allowing for wheelchair access, minimum numbers of power sockets in different rooms and opportunities for comments on the Scottish Accessible Homes Standard and Building Standards Domestic Technical Handbooks. The consultation is extremely wide ranging.

## 2 Consultation questions

1. How do you feel about the proposal to not include the clauses within Sections 1 to 5 of Part 1 of the current Housing for Varying Needs design guide in the updated guide?
2. How do you feel about the proposals for Section 6 of Part 1 of the current guide?
3. How do you feel about the proposal to update clauses 7.5.1 and 7.5.5 of the current guide to require that:
  - all entrances to individual dwellings should be step free
  - all entrances to individual dwellings should have an accessible threshold, and
  - there should be a level area of at least 1200mm by 1200mm immediately in front of each entrance
4. How do you feel about the proposal to update clauses 7.6.3 and 7.6.5 of the current guide to require that the entrance platform should have dimensions of at least 1500mm by 1800mm in cases where a communal entrance door opens outwards?
5. How do you feel about the proposals for the rest of the clauses within Section 7 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex G of the consultation paper?
6. How do you feel about the proposal to update clauses 8.2.1 and 8.2.2 of the current guide:
  - to require that entrance doors to communal access areas – including those doors giving access to external facilities such as drying areas, gardens and refuse stores – have a

- minimum clear opening width of 850mm between the door face on one side and the door stop, or second door, on the other, and
- to allow any weather moulding at the base of the door to intrude into this opening width
7. How do you feel about the proposal to update clauses 8.3.3 and 8.3.4 of the current guide to require:
- that communal entrances should have automatic opening and powered swing doors installed as standard
  - that a suitable open/ release pad-type button positioned on the perpendicular wall internally, outwith the swing of the door, should be provided
  - that a fob-type or similar access system to enter the building from outside should be provided
  - that the timing of the stay open duration should be adjustable, and
  - that communal entrance doors would need to be able to be manually opened and closed in circumstances where the automatic opening devices have failed
8. How do you feel about the proposal to require that internal doors within communal access areas should have a minimum clear opening width of 850mm between the door face on one side and the door stop, or second door, on the other?
9. How do you feel about the proposal to include reference to the following design guidance within the updated guide:
- in multi-storey buildings containing dwellings, the walls of each floor containing dwellings may be decorated in distinguishing tones to help people to find their way, and
  - this may be further enhanced by providing visual indicators at the entrance to each floor
10. How do you feel about the proposals for the rest of the clauses within Section 8 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex H of the consultation paper?
11. How do you feel about the proposal to update clauses 9.2.1, 9.2.3 and 9.2.4 of the current guide:
- to require that entrance doors to dwellings should have a minimum clear opening width of 850mm between the door face on one side and the door stop, or second door, on the other, and
  - to allow any weather moulding at the base of the door to intrude into this clear width
12. How do you feel about the proposal to include reference within the updated guide to the fact that entrance doors to individual dwellings may be personalised/made distinctive from other neighbouring entrance doors, subject to any local planning restrictions that may be in place?
13. How do you feel about the proposal to update clauses 9.6.1 and 9.6.4 of the current guide to require:
- that the main entrance door should open into a circulation area and not a room
  - that the entrance door should open into a space of at least 1200mm by 1200mm, and
  - that the area should extend for at least a further 600mm with a minimum width of at least

1200mm

14. How do you feel about the proposal to update clause 9.6.6 of the current guide to require:
  - that the circulation space immediately inside the door should have a minimum width of 1800mm extending at least 1800mm back from the face of the door, and
  - that the area should extend for at least a further 500mm with a minimum width of 1200mm
15. How do you feel about the proposals for the rest of the clauses within Section 9 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex I of the consultation paper?
16. How do you feel about the proposal to update clauses 10.2.1, 10.2.2 and 10.2.3 of the current guide:
  - to require that corridors in individual dwellings should be at least 1200mm wide
  - to require that other than on a wall opposite a doorway, an obstruction such as a radiator should project by no more than 100mm, reducing the corridor width to not less than 1100mm over a maximum length of 1200mm, and
  - to include reference within the updated guide to the fact that, in cases where a corridor has an exposed right angle turn, a splay of 200mm to 300mm at the corner would allow easier circulation
17. How do you feel about the proposal:
  - to require that a through floor lift should be installed between floors in cases where the dwelling is specifically designed for wheelchair users and is constructed on more than one level
  - to require that the entry to the lift at any level should not be in an area which impacts on an occupant's privacy, for example, in a bedroom
  - to require that the floor of the lift should be a minimum size of 1650mm by 1100mm, and
  - to require that there should be space allowance for an 1800mm clear turning circle directly outside of the entrance to the lift on each floor
18. How do you feel about the proposal to update clauses 10.5.1 and 10.5.7 of the current guide to require that:
  - internal pass doors, including doors to walk-in cupboards, should have a clear opening width of at least 850mm, and
  - door frames should not have threshold plates
19. How do you feel about the proposals for the rest of the clauses within Section 10 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex J of the consultation paper?
20. How do you feel about the proposal to update clause 11.1.2 of the current guide to require:
  - that the space that is needed for circulation and access to each item of furniture and to the windows, heating appliances etc within the living room(s) and all bedrooms must be 800mm wide, and
  - that there should be space for a wheelchair to turn through 180 degrees, that is a circular

area of 1800mm diameter, in the living room(s) and all bedrooms to enable a wheelchair to turn through 180 degrees?

21. How do you feel about the proposals for the rest of the clauses within Section 11 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex K of the consultation paper?
22. How do you feel about the proposals for Section 12 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex L of the consultation paper?
23. How do you feel about the proposal to require that pelmet lighting under wall units should be provided in kitchens?
24. How do you feel about the proposal to update clause 13.5.4 of the current guide to require that kitchens should be of a size that allows a clear space of 1800mm in front of fittings and appliances to allow a wheelchair user space to manoeuvre and turn through 180 degrees, that is a circular area of 1800mm diameter?
25. How do you feel about the proposals for the rest of the clauses within Section 13 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex M of the consultation paper?
26. In cases where a wet floor shower facility is not provided in the dwelling, how do you feel about the proposal to update clause 14.2.6 of the current guide to require:
  - that an electrical connection and a capped drainage connection should be installed in the main bathroom to allow for its future installation
  - that the floor build up in the proposed area for a future wet floor shower should be able to accommodate a tray former and associated plumbing with minimal disruption at a later date
  - that if the floor is of solid concrete construction, a dropped section should be built in to meet the requirement of the second bullet point above, and
  - that adjacent walls should be of robust construction to be capable of supporting a shower screen to enclose the shower area or grab rails if required?
27. How do you feel about the proposal to update clause 14.8.2 of the current guide to require:
  - that accessible sanitary accommodation located on the principal living level, where the accessible bath or shower is located on another level, should be capable of being adapted to accommodate a future shower or form a larger space for wheelchair users at a later date
  - that this space allowance should contain an electrical connection and a capped drainage connection
  - that the floor build up in the proposed area for a future wet floor shower should be able to accommodate a tray former and associated plumbing with minimal disruption at a later date
  - that if the floor is of solid concrete construction, then a dropped section should be built in to meet the requirement of the third bullet point above, and
  - that adjacent walls should be of robust construction to be capable of supporting a shower screen to enclose the shower area or grab rails if required
28. How do you feel about the proposal to update clause 14.9.1 of the current guide:

- to require that the layout and dimensions of the bathroom should allow for a wet floor shower area with floor gulley, a wash-hand basin and WC and their associated activity spaces
  - if no bath is provided, to require that space, plumbing and drainage allowances should be made to facilitate the future installation of a bath
  - to require that activity spaces should not overlap the space allocated for a future bath
  - to require that the bathroom must have a sealed impermeable floor and all fittings must be of a design to suit wheelchair use, and
  - to include within the updated guide reference to the fact that it is beneficial if bathrooms in dwellings within a development contain different layouts to allow for different hand preference?
29. How do you feel about the proposal to update clause 14.9.2 of the current guide:
- to require that the space in the bathroom should allow for someone in a wheelchair to turn through 180 degrees, that is a circular area of 1800mm diameter, without being impeded by the door
  - to include within the updated guide reference to the fact that, except in very large bathrooms, this is helped by the door opening outwards, or by the use of sliding or pocket doors as an alternative to hinged doors – but only in cases where the use of sliding or pocket doors would be appropriate for the needs of the household
  - to require that the plan of the dwelling should ensure that if the door opens outwards this does not cause a hazard
  - to require that there is space for a helper alongside a wheelchair in the bathroom, and
  - to require that the allowance for a turning circle should not overlap the wet floor shower area or the area identified for the installation of a bath (where no bath is provided)
30. How do you feel about the proposal to update clause 14.11.6 of the current guide to require that all WCs in dwellings should have a suitably protected fused spur adjacent to each WC to allow for any future installation of a WC with washing and drying facilities?
31. How do you feel about the proposals for the rest of the clauses within Section 14 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex N of the consultation paper?
32. How do you feel about the proposals for Section 15 of Part 1 of the current guide?
33. How do you feel about the proposal to require that the main living room within the dwelling should be provided with a glazed area of not less than 1/8th of the floor area of that room?
34. How do you feel about the proposals for the rest of the clauses within Section 16 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex P of the consultation paper?
35. How do you feel about the proposals for Section 17 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex Q of the consultation paper?
36. How do you feel about the proposal to update clause 18.2.3 of the current guide to require:
- that all dwellings should have:

- at least eight power sockets in the kitchen
  - at least eight power sockets in the living room
  - at least six power sockets in each remaining room, that is any other room which is not a bathroom or WC compartment, and
  - at least six power sockets elsewhere in the home
  - that power sockets within the above requirement should be included at the designated desk or work space, and at both the telephone and television outlets, and
  - that a power socket in addition to the above requirement should also be provided at each flight of stairs within a dwelling to allow, for example, for a future stair lift installation
37. How do you feel about the proposals for the rest of the clauses within Section 18 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out in Annex R of the consultation paper?
  38. How do you feel about the proposals for the rest of the clauses within Section 19 of Part 1 of the current guide, as set out on Annex S of the consultation paper?
  39. How do you feel about the proposal to not include the clauses within Section 20 of Part 1 of the current Housing for Varying Needs design guide in the updated guide?
  40. Are there any other design changes that you would like to see included in the updated guide?
  41. Do you have any practical suggestions for improving how the updated guide should be structured and/ or presented?
  42. How do you feel about the exceptions that we are proposing be used to identify the design criteria within the updated guide that will not be transposed into building standards?
  43. Do you feel that the indicative design criteria listed in Table 1 would be appropriate to apply to all new housing across all tenures?
  44. Are there any other design criteria that are not currently proposed to be transposed into building standards that you would wish to see included within the Scottish Accessible Homes Standard?
  45. Do you have any comments on the existing design guidance for stairs contained within Standard 4.3 of the Building Standards Domestic Technical Handbooks?
  46. Do you have any examples of situations where you have gone beyond the minimum standards for stairs or access between storeys set out by building regulations, and the benefits such an approach has delivered?
  47. Do you have any other comments on our proposals for the Scottish Accessible Homes Standard?
  48. Do you have any feedback on any possible impacts that the proposals set out within Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of the consultation paper may have on groups of people with protected characteristics, as identified in the Equality Act 2010?
  49. Do you have any feedback on any possible impacts that the proposals set out within Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of the consultation paper may have on island communities which would be significantly different from the impact on other communities?

50. Do you have any feedback on any possible impacts that the proposals set out within Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of the consultation paper may have on the challenges that people can face as a result of socio-economic disadvantage?
51. Do you have any feedback on any possible impacts that the proposals set out within Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of the consultation paper may have on the human rights and wellbeing of children and young people?
52. Do you have any feedback on any possible impacts that the proposals set out within Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of this consultation paper may have on businesses and the third sector?

### **3 APSE Comment**

APSE encourages our members to engage with the contents of the report and the consultation. There are also consultation online events taking place this month that APSE members may wish to attend to engage with the consultation further. The changes proposed in the report will have a significant impact on how local authorities design and build the homes and living spaces of the future, so it is important that our members consider how these changes will impact their services.

APSE has engaged in a lot of research into housing such as Housing for a fairer society: The role of councils in ensuring stronger societies that can be [viewed online here](#) alongside our many other publications on council best practice. APSE supports the premise that homes should, so far as possible, be future-proofed, to address not only the needs of older people in future years but to recognise, in public policy terms, that housing that is safe, affordable, and appropriate to need, will be essential if we are to meet the demands on care and health services in the future. Enhancing accessibility, adaptability and useability on homes across all sectors is therefore welcome but resources must also follow to ensure that socially rented homes are equally able to meet the future challenges of an ageing population.

APSE Scotland's Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance advisory group is another excellent source of best practice and information sharing. The group is free to attend for APSE members, more information about the group can be found [on our website here](#).

The consultation closes on 21 December 2023. [Click here](#) to complete the consultation.

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