



# **Flintshire Housing Standard**

**Draft**

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Produced by Project Development Workshop Ltd for Flintshire County Council

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### ABOUT THE FLINTSHIRE HOUSE STANDARD

The Flintshire House Standard is a set of key design principles that is intended to ensure new homes built or facilitated by Flintshire County Council are of high quality and excellent value.

The expectation is that the Standard helps to ensure new homes provide a successful legacy in respect of both the individual homes and the neighbourhoods in which they are located.

The Standard is intended not to be onerous or impractical and seeks to avoid duplicating other good practice standards. Instead it should utilise these relevant standards as a frame of reference and provide clarity on the extent to which these other standards should be applied.

The Standard also avoids duplication with principles that are already outlined by the Council's planning guidance and Building Regulations.

The Council may require different standards on occasion, for instance if attracting funding from the Welsh Assembly Government or if there are particular specialist requirements, for instance for a supported or specialist housing development.

In addition, the Council understand that quality new homes rely not only on clear design requirements, but also quality collaborative processes and strong communication. These are equally important aspirations from any of the Council's partners.

## **DESIGN REQUIREMENTS**

### **1. General Design Requirements**

#### **Building for Life**

The Council require the use of the **Building for Life 12** assessment to consider the merits of development proposals and what successful, sustainable development looks like. The Building for Life 12 principles should be applied to measure how well designed, well integrated, functional, attractive, and sustainable new homes and neighbourhoods are.

See: <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/knowledge-resources/guide/building-life-12-third-edition>

The Council will expect all schemes to receive mainly green traffic lights and amber when constraints of the site mean that a green is not possible.

#### **Welsh Housing Quality Standards and Welsh Design Quality Requirements**

Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS), which was revised in 2008, outlines the Welsh Assembly Government's vision that all households in Wales should have the opportunity to live in good quality homes. WHQS sets standards for all social housing, including existing homes.

Welsh Design Quality Requirements of 2005 (WDQR), overlaps to much of an extent with the WHQS, but applies to housing association new build projects. As it applies to new build it is therefore generally more relevant to the Flintshire Housing Standard.

**General compliance with WHQS and WDQR internally/externally for all Council and Affordable Properties is expected, other than where the exceptions detailed within this guidance apply and/or where the standards have been superseded by the Flintshire House Standard (e.g. amended Lifetime Homes requirements) or have become outdated.**

When viable, the Council would also welcome Private Market properties meeting these standards.

### **2. External Appearance of Homes**

External appearance of Council, Affordable, and Private Market Properties should be "tenure blind". This will ensure that the Flintshire Standard will leave a lasting legacy in terms of external appearance and creating coherent mixed tenure neighbourhoods. This does not mean that properties must be identical or have the same internal layout, nor does it mean that the developer's standard house types cannot be used.

**This means that the external appearance of the properties is not an obvious clear indication of occupier's tenure.**

The Council also expect that new homes and developments have distinctive character through the use of materials, finishes, building styles and landscaping details. This will provide a development with a coherent appearance, where new homes complement each other, without all homes looking exactly the same.

The design of homes should also consider how they fit in with the local surroundings and topography.

### 3. Space Standards and Room Layouts

Flintshire's new homes should provide sufficient space and smart design to allow the intended household size to live, study, play, work, host guests, and comfortably store everyday household items.

Floor space dimensions for the Council and Affordable homes should generally be in accordance with Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) and Welsh Design Quality Requirements' (WDQR), stipulated minimum expected furniture per room (and the expected size of different furniture items detailed in the WHQS and WDQR), circulation, and storage requirements. **There is clear guidance in the WDQR on this, so it is not duplicated in the Flintshire Standard.**

Where viable, it is proposed that these principles will also be applied for private market properties

It is important to note that, because of the Council's flexibility on some elements of Lifetime Homes (as listed below), a slightly different set of space standards is included in the Flintshire House Standard to the notional standards suggested in the WDQR, which includes provision for full Lifetime Homes. Subsequently, the Council expect new homes built to the Flintshire House Standard to meet the following space requirements:

Type	Anticipated Metre <sup>2</sup>
1 bed 2 person flat	45 – 51
2 bed 3 person flat	57 – 65
2 bed 4 person house	71 – 83
3 bed 5 person house	85 – 94

The above are some typical expected house types. Further guidance will be provided if other house types are required, which will be in alignment with these principles.

The aim of offering a range of sizes is not to encourage always building to the lower end of the range, but to offer some flexibility to respond to site and viability constraints whilst maintaining a minimum acceptable level. Generally the Council will expect homes to be built towards the middle-higher end of the ranges provided.

The ceiling height is to be 2.4m for all Council, Affordable and Private Market Properties.

### **Storage**

Adequate built in storage should be provided for both clean items (e.g. laundry etc) and dirty items (e.g. mops).

Minimum internal storage required should include:

1 bedroom	1.5m <sup>2</sup>
2 bedrooms	2m <sup>2</sup>
3 bedrooms	2.5m <sup>2</sup>

Some storage will need to be 2m high, in order to store tall items – e.g. brooms.

External storage will be required for bikes and gardening equipment (when applicable) as per the WDQR.

### **Studying and working from home**

All new homes should allow space for studying and working from home, with relevant services (e.g. plug sockets, internet, telephone connections) relating to the identified space.

### **Garden sizes**

Gardens for houses and bungalows should be a minimum useable area of 30m<sup>2</sup> unless otherwise agreed by the Council and should include a level, paved area (min 3m<sup>2</sup>) accessible from the back door, and paved access to the garden gate (if applicable).

Further guidance on sizes and sloping requirements are provided in the WDQR.

## **4. Access and Circulation**

### **Front entrance**

The external front entrance to new houses should be accessible (as per Lifetime Homes), covered (e.g. canopy), and illuminated.

### **Entrance from front door to living room**

The front door to new homes should not open directly into the living room. Front doors should open into a lobby area, circulation space, or entrance hall that will act as a buffer.

### **Access to gardens**

Generally it should either be possible to access the garden from the kitchen without needing to pass through the living room, or to reach the rear garden from the street without having to pass through the main living room.

All family homes should be provided with gardens that are convenient to access and safe for small children to play in.

### **Circulation Space**

Generally all separate rooms should be accessed from corridors/circulation space, as opposed to through a different room.

However, this should not discount the option of open plan kitchen-dining-living spaces, which could be considered as a single room accessed from the corridor if agreed by the Council and if this makes sense to the requirements of the target markets identified for the homes.

## **5. Sustainability and Energy Efficiency**

Ensuring homes are energy efficient and affordable to keep warm whilst mitigating the impact of new homes on the environment are key aims of the Flintshire House Standard.

While noting that the improvement to Building Regulations Part L have superseded elements of the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH), a minimum of **CSH** Level 3 is required on all elements. The only exception is the Energy & CO<sub>2</sub> element where level 4 standards are expected as a minimum for all Council, Affordable and Private Market Properties.

A “fabric first” approach should be adopted to achieve required levels of energy efficiency.

Due to the high levels of energy efficiency required, it will be essential to demonstrate ventilation strategies early on, and how these will help to avoid condensation and meet Building Regulations. Sufficient levels of controllable ventilation are essential.

It will also be important to demonstrate strategies for preventing overheating that are not reliant on mechanical ventilation.

## **6. Parking**

The Council wish to see development that is car friendly, but not dominated by cars. The maximum parking ratios, as defined in the Council’s supplementary planning guidance on

parking, should be followed alongside discussions with planners on a site by site basis that will also consider visitor parking.

The Council would like parking to be visible to residents, but recognise that the viability of this will need to respond to the individual context of each site and its constraints. Therefore this will be a planning consideration on a site by site basis.

Guidance should also be taken from Building for Life 12 and WDQR.

Parking should be easily identified as being linked to the home that the space serves.

Access from the parking space to the home should be convenient, clear, safe, and well-lit. Parking spaces should not be within 2 metres of any window.

## **7. Lifetime Homes**

The Council is eager that new properties are flexible so as to meet future needs of the residents. The Council will not require full Lifetime Homes standards to be met, but will welcome proposals from developers on the use of key elements of the Lifetimes Homes standard to apply to all Council and Affordable homes, and when viable, Private Market Properties. It is anticipated that the most important aspects of Lifetime Homes for the Council would be:

- First floor bathroom side access to WC and bath
- First floor bathroom space potential to convert to walk in shower
- Ground floor level WC
- Sockets controls etc. at a convenient height
- Turning space for wheelchairs in ground floor living rooms
- Space provision for a future stairlift
- Walls able to accommodate fitting of future handrails etc.
- Wide enough doors and halls to allow wheelchair access
- Accessible threshold, covered and lit
- Level or gently sloping access to entrance (when practical)

While a ground floor WC is required in houses, the ability to create a future ground floor level access shower (as per full Lifetime Homes) is not required, as the elements of Lifetime Homes retained should enable the continued use of the upstairs bathroom, irrespective of mobility (see below). This also mitigates the requirement for a potential through-floor lift.

For bungalows or specialist homes, full Lifetime Homes and additional standards may well be required and details of the different requirements will be confirmed in such instances.



## **8. Stairs**

Due to the design requirement that the upstairs bathroom has the potential to be adapted into a level access walk in shower, the potential to install a stairlift is also required. It is therefore anticipated that **winders on stairs** will typically not be appropriate, unless it is clear how future adaptations will be possible (i.e. the stairlift) and how other challenges associated with winders, such as movement of furniture can be mitigated.

At least one handrail should be provided on the stairs.

## **9. Service Meters**

Service meters for utilities (e.g. gas, electricity, and water) should be clearly marked and accessible for utility companies outside of properties. Care should be taken that the meter cupboards are discreetly positioned and do not dominate the external appearance of the properties in an unattractive manner.

## **10. Sprinkler Systems**

It is important to note the Welsh Assembly's intention to make sprinkler systems mandatory in all new homes, with this expected to come into force in 2016.

## **11. Communal Areas**

Areas that will require maintaining via a service contract (for instance communal landscaping) should be minimised as much as possible at the design stage in consultation with the Council. This is to reduce the need for service charges, which will have affordability consequences for both the Council and its customers.

Detailed specification for communal spaces will be agreed with the Council on a case by case basis, but there will be an emphasis on communal space, where it is required, being attractive, safe, visible, and cost effective to maintain and manage.

## **12. Apartments**

While the Flintshire House Standard focuses mainly on houses, the Council recognises the role that apartments can play in parts of the Flintshire housing market and that these will be appropriate for certain sites for various reasons.

It is important to the Council to minimise the extent of internal communal circulation space within any apartment blocks and to ensure efficient external space that is easy and cost effective to manage and maintain whilst still being attractive.

The council will consider "cottage flat" type arrangements, in which the occupier of the first floor apartment can access their home from their front door on street level. The Council will also consider access via secure (resident only) open air stairwells that minimise management costs and liabilities. These would be subject to the detail of these offering an attractive design solution (a return to the 1960's style deck-access approach would not be welcome).

The Council understand that in some cases, to achieve high levels of design, cost efficiency, and appropriate density, some apartment blocks may require internal circulation space. In such instances the Council expect a real emphasis on these being designed to be secure spaces, maximising visibility, and designing out communal hidden areas. In these scenarios the Council also expects these to be efficient spaces in terms of management and maintenance costs.

Lifts will only be considered in older person, specialist, and supported blocks or apartment blocks greater than four storeys. The lift manufacturer will need to be agreed with the Council and the lift should be open protocol in terms of maintenance.

### 13. Loft Space

All roof voids must have a roof access hatch in a circulation area. Access must avoid door swings and stairs. Hatches should be lockable and insulated as per the adjacent ceiling.

The Council does not generally expect lofts to be fully boarded, although boarding should be used to prevent any loose/fibrous insulation from becoming airborne.

Some developments should have full boarding as part of the detailed specification, subject to feasibility and whether this will have a detrimental impact on achieving other priorities.

If loft mounted services have been unavoidable, access ways should be provided (e.g. plywood) between the access hatch and service area. The hatch should be of an appropriate size to allow servicing of equipment.

### 14. Flooring

The Council will typically require flooring in kitchens and bathrooms to be non-slip vinyl flooring or an alternative (as agreed with the Council), with choices to be agreed with the Council.

### 15. Kitchens

Kitchens should meet the requirements outlined in WDQR. They should include space for all appliances within the kitchen or adjacent utility room if applicable.

### 16. Bathrooms

All two storey (or more) houses will require an accessible ground floor WC and hand-wash basin.

The first floor bathroom should include a bath and a shower, and have the ability to be adapted to a level access shower in the future.

## **17. Gardens and Boundaries**

WDQR provides guidance on gardens and boundary requirements that should be followed.

Gardens should be turfed or seeded as per agreement with the Council.

Boundaries between gardens should be at least 1200mm high and be fenced with timber close boarded fencing or an alternative as per agreement by the Council.

## **OTHER REQUIREMENTS**

### **18. Detailed Specification**

The Flintshire House Standard provides key overarching design principles for Flintshire's New Homes Programme, which will inform the delivery of the Council's Strategic Housing and Regeneration Partnership.

The Council expect to agree a detailed specification as part of the contract documentation, which will include performance requirements for each building contract/site delivered through the SHARP or by a separate arrangement.

In addition to further detail on the above items, the Council will require specific agreement, as part of any contract documentation of the following items:

#### **Specification**

- Heating and hot water
- Ventilation systems
- Internal decoration
- External decoration
- External doors
- Internal doors
- Windows
- Bathroom and sanitary ware
- Telephone, TV, and internet installations
- TV aerials
- Communal digital TV services (apartments)
- Door intercom systems (apartments)
- Warden call systems (when applicable)
- Hard and soft landscaping detail
- Sprinkler system
- Fire alarms, heat and smoke detectors
- Ironmongery
- Timber and Joinery
- Refuse storage
- Internal lighting
- External lighting
- Kitchen unit manufacturer and range
- Sheds (when required)
- Rainwater goods
- Service installations
- Meter positioning
- Intruder alarms (when required)
- Lifts
- Site signage
- Any other items identified by the Council

#### **Process and other information**

The Council will also expect to obtain and agree detail of the following as part of each site/contract:

- Building warranty
- Number of keys

- Collateral warranties
- Performance bond
- Component whole life costings
- Handover process requirements for the Council
- Defects liability information, response times, and key performance indicators for during the defects period
- Tenant choices
- Maintenance and H&S manuals
- Supply chain details
- Tenant handover packs
- Local labour
- Considerate construction scheme
- Fire risk assessments

## **19. Building Information Modelling**

The Council would encourage the use of Building Information Modelling (BIM), which allows greater depth of collaboration at design stage and the modelling of the proposed buildings in a digital form. The expectation is that BIM can help encourage a better understanding of what is being built, whilst encouraging efficiency and value for money in relation to the construction and whole life of the new building. The outcomes of using BIM should also mean a more considered design and ultimately a better home for the tenant to live in.