

Submission from York Disability Rights Forum Access group to NPPF, September 2024

York Disability Rights Forum is a disabled people led organization (www.udrf.org.uk). We are submitting this response with reference to three particular areas:

- Assessment of housing needs
- Transport planning
- Public Sector Equality Duty

Underpinning our comments is our contention that the document as currently written fails to fully comply with both the Equality Act and the Human Rights Act by its disregard for enabling disabled and older people to fully participate in society.

Q19 Assessment of Housing Needs

The proposal regarding housing construction contains no requirement for housing to be built to a standard suitable to enable it to be modified should the need arise owing to acquired impairment through age or any other cause, to enable continued residence in the accommodation.

In 2022, the previous government committed to establish the M4(2) standard as the regulatory baseline for all new homes, but required there to be one further round of industry consultation before coming into force which they failed to achieve. The support for the move to M4(2) was substantial during stakeholder consultation and has been emphasised by successive Select Committee inquiries and without doubt, should be implemented in any new issue of the NPPF. Some Local Authorities have already embraced it as policy either in total or in part. Where others have not, this delay to date has clearly resulted in a large amount of housing being built that is not suitable as 'lifetime homes' and hence will require residents to move out as they grow older or otherwise become disabled.

There also needs to be a clear requirement included within the Planning Regulations for ALL developments to include provision for a suitable level of Wheelchair User Dwellings ADM M4 (3a or 3b) above the level of local requirements. This would address the chronic shortage in the currently available stock.

The method for assessing housing needs should be informed by up-to-date data on provisions, tenure, distribution, size, quality and typology of existing M4(2) and M4(3) dwellings within the planning authority areas. Such data should include existing unmet demand and anticipate future demographic needs for such accommodation.

Q69 Transport Planning

The terminology used regarding the Public Realm is no advance on that currently used which results in footways being developed that are not suitable for safe use by disabled people, but are used as a combined cycle track. Such cycle tracks are also increasingly being used by powered vehicles exceeding the speed allowed on footways by those permitted to use them.

The street design needs to be one that provides everybody with a space suitable for their means of mobility, be that an exclusive footway suitable for all mobility aids, a segregated cycle track, bus lanes and a carriageway for all other vehicles. Suitable crossing facilities between routeways designed for different transport modes should not adversely affect groups with protected characteristics, including disabled people.

Developments built with insufficient parking spaces result in undesirable on-street parking - often on the footway and thereby restricting access for all but particularly adversely affecting those with protected characteristics, including disabled people. It is also undesirable that EV charging be housed on footways.

All modes of public transportation should have safe, easy and unaided access for both alighting or disembarking so that all disabled and older people have the ability to 'Turn Up and Go', like the rest of the population.

Achieving inclusive design requires the involvement of organisations and individuals with knowledge of the needs of the disabled and older community either by lived experience or appropriate education and training or both. As a minimum, a co-design approach should be adopted with regular dialogue so that the aims above are achieved and maintained throughout the life of the development.

We believe that in order to meet the transport needs of disabled and older communities, much more research and data collection is needed to inform the goal of enabling members of these communities to travel freely and easily. Together these groups constitute at least a third of the population currently and numbers are growing (see Appendix A).

It must be recognised that for some within these groups a private vehicle will always be needed to enable their participation in society. As such, provision for blue badge holder parking and access must be maintained within extended pedestrianisation schemes and through traffic management measures such as bus gates. Penalising those unable to make modal shift owing to significant impairment must be resisted in order to not move even further away from an equitable, fair society.

Q70 Healthy Communities

As above, we believe the promotion of healthy communities is achieved by all disabled and older people having a travel pathway without threat from other modes of transportation so that no one is deterred from leaving home and accessing facilities.

Where constructed, all new or refreshed children's playground equipment must make provision for inclusive play for disabled children and the necessary expertise sought to achieve this.

Q106 Public Sector Equality Duty

York Disability Rights Forum access group believe that the proposals as currently drafted will have a considerable adverse impact on existing disabled people or those who become disabled in the future, older people and those who do not identify as disabled but have impairment of body or mind that results in access need.

We feel there should be significantly more consideration given to design and access in both housing and the public realm. It should be clearly stated that all designs must provide free and easy movement for disabled people both on completion and during the construction phases of new developments. Inclusion of the views of those with lived experience must be given more weight in decision making, earlier in the process and significant input of specialised knowledge must be remunerated accordingly.

Appendix A

UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences Research Briefing – House of Commons Library. Published Wednesday, 23 August, 2023

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9602/CBP-9602.pdf>

The prevalence of disability rises with age: around 11% of children were disabled, compared with 23% of working age adults and 45% of adults over State Pension age. However the proportion of children and young people who are disabled is also growing.

An ageing population

The UK's population is also ageing. In 2022, there were around 12.7 million people aged 65 or over in the UK, making up 19% of the population. According to the ONS's population projections, by 2072 this could rise to 22.1 million people, or 27% of the population. By contrast, 50 years ago in 1972 there were around 7.5 million people aged 65 or over, or 13% of the population. -

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2022>

According to [data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/old-age-dependency-ratio.html), there are currently around 33 people aged 65 or over for every 100 people aged 20 to 64 in the UK. This ratio is similar to the average for the European Union, but higher than some countries- <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/old-age-dependency-ratio.html>

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 30 January 2024, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [National population projections: 2021-based interim](#)

Over the next 15 years, the number of people over 65 will increase from 1.6 million (2.5%) to 2.6 million (3.5%)

Our Ageing Population | The State of Ageing 2023-24 - the most detailed, varied and up-to-date report about ageing in England.

<https://ageing-better.org.uk/our-ageing-population-state-ageing-2023-4>

Excerpts include:

- Four million older people want to move but only a fraction will do so. Moving house is expensive and complicated, and it can be difficult to find a property that meets a person's needs. Fewer than one in ten (9%) homes have even the four basic access features for the

lowest level of accessibility (a WC at entrance level; flush threshold; sufficiently wide doorways and circulation space; level access).

- **Make all new homes accessible** so that disabled and older people can live in a home that enables them to live independently and with dignity. To do this, the government must urgently deliver on its longstanding commitment to raise accessibility standards for all new homes without further delay.

The UK's changing population House of Commons Library, Published Tuesday, 16 July, 2024

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/the-uks-changing-population/#:~:text=The%20UK%E2%80%99s%20population%20is%20growing%2C%20primarily%20because%20of,is%20projected%20to%20increase%20to%2027%25%20by%2020722>