

## **Women and Equalities Select Committee Inquiry on Disability and the Built Environment – CIOB submission**

*The Chartered Institute of Building submission to the Women and Equalities Select Committee on the Call for Evidence on Disability and the Built Environment*

Submitted by Frances Marley, Policy, Public Affairs & Communications Officer, on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Building registered at 1 Arlington Square, Downshire Way, Bracknell RG12 1WA.

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For any queries or follow-up please contact [policy@ciob.org.uk](mailto:policy@ciob.org.uk)

### **1. About CIOB**

1.1 The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) is at the heart of a management career in construction. We are the world's largest and most influential professional body for construction management and leadership. We have a Royal Charter to promote the science and practice of building and construction for the benefit of society, which we have been doing since 1834. Our members work worldwide in the development, conservation and improvement of the built environment. We accredit university degrees, educational courses and training. Our professional and vocational qualifications are a mark of the highest levels of competence and professionalism, providing assurance to clients and other professionals procuring built assets.

1.2 Professionalism at all levels and stages within the construction industry is at the core of our work. We play a leading role in the development and continued improvement of standards in the industry at a national and international level. We recognise the challenges facing the built environment, such as the unprecedented skills shortage in the professions, the ageing workforce and the complexity of developing policy that improves coordination, design and the overall decision-making process, and we work with government and industry to outline and implement solutions.

**1. Government policy on and current provision of accessible properties (including homes and commercial premises)**

**1.1 How adequate is the supply of accessible properties (including homes and commercial premises)?**

1.2 Over the last two decades, the UK has witnessed a number of legislative changes which have sought to influence the quality and accessibility of the nation's housing stock. The changes have helped ensure that the stock of housing and commercial properties is fit for purpose and complies with the needs of users that require reasonable adjustments to be made. There are, however, a number of issues involving the extent to which historic buildings can reasonably be adapted given the costs of readjustment and retrofitting.

**1.3 To what extent is the Government taking current and future needs for accessible homes into account in its policies on increasing housing supply?**

1.4 The CIOB believes the government is taking the needs of individuals requiring reasonable adjustments into account in its policies on housing supply. Nevertheless, the supply of new housing remains as a whole well-below demand. Whilst Government undoubtedly has a key role to play in setting industry expectations, we believe that its intentions could be reflected more effectively on the ground. Given this assessment, we would welcome a review of the industry's business model and the incentives currently available to developers and built environment professionals to build more accessible homes.

1.5 The CIOB is also leading on the skills, materials and new technology work-stream of The National Housing Taskforce – which is a sectoral and political coalition convened by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Housing and Planning. It was established to develop clear, workable proposals for government and industry to address the UK's chronic shortage of housing.

1.6 The National Housing Taskforce is operating across 12 distinct areas of work, covering everything from planning reform to housing associations, construction skills to mortgage finance.

1.7 The CIOB is charged with addressing the main issues in the construction labour market, including availability, productivity and diversity and would welcome engagement with the Women and Equalities Select Committee. Additionally, it will look at materials and new technology, primarily off-site manufacture and modern methods of construction (MMC), and how they link to skills issues. Ultimately, the work-stream will develop ideas for action for both government and industry, aimed at ensuring we have the capacity to deliver the homes we need.

**2. How effective are the planning and building regulations systems in ensuring the provision of new accessible / lifetime homes?**

2.1 The CIOB considers it too premature to begin to measure the effectiveness of the Building Regulations - particularly as changes to Part M were only introduced on 1 October 2015 to include Lifetime homes and optional standards for wheel chair accessibility. Given the changes have been in force for 12 months, we are unable to comment on its success to date.

2.2 Despite being unable to comment on the effectiveness of the changes, we believe the standards are likely to be successful in helping to streamline expectations. Under certain situations CIOB members consider planning requirements are decided too prematurely to fully appreciate accessibility requirements. To overcome this, industry should ensure that it does not end up simply fulfilling planning requirements that have no real impact on the lives of those occupying the buildings. For these reasons, developers should be encouraged to build their understanding of issues around accessibility and inclusivity to ensure that reasonable adjustments are not an after-thought in the construction process.

2.3 We also believe that local planning authorities should not introduce differing standards to those contained within the Building Regulations unless there is a local need and it can be clearly justified within local plans.

### **3. What can be done to increase the accessibility of existing housing stock to support independent living?**

3.1 To increase the accessibility of the existing housing stock we need to be more flexible about design and the use of residential space. In practise this means creating wider hall ways, installing downstairs bathroom facilities, stair lifts and ensuring sockets are placed at convenient heights. Non-slip flooring can also support independent living by helping to reduce the likelihood of a fall within the home. These findings were revealed in the CIOB's report: [\*Exploring the impact of the ageing population on the workforce and built environment\*](#) which outlined a number of means to improve the inclusivity of homes and workplaces. We recognise that many of the measures listed are already in a number of homes and would welcome their expansion more widely. As noted previously in this response, the CIOB recognises the complications of adapting historical buildings and some of the oldest housing stock.

### **4. Could financial or other mechanisms be used to encourage developers to go beyond minimum standards of accessibility?**

4.1 We believe that financial measures could be adopted to encourage developers to go beyond the minimum standards for accessibility and would welcome a review of the existing incentives.

### **5. The effectiveness of UK legislation, policies and standards on accessibility in the built environment**

#### **5.1 How well do Part M of the Building Regulations and Approved Document M perform in providing reasonable levels of accessibility in the built environment and what could be done to improve performance?**

5.2 At present we believe that Part M of the Building Regulations is working well. The standards in Part M are generally reasonable and there is a relatively low incidence of enforcement cases across local authorities in the UK.

5.3 Whilst most developers are aware of the requirements contained in Part M of the standards, we believe it is too premature to begin to gauge the legislation's effectiveness. This owes, in part, to changes introduced to Part M in October 2015, which include the new optional requirements for wheel chair users.

**6. Is there sufficient compliance with building regulations and requests for reasonable adjustment? If not, what more could be done to increase compliance?**

6.1 We believe there is sufficient compliance with the building regulations at present.

**7. Do current standards regarding accessibility in the built environment take account of the full range of disability and impairment needs? (For example, are the needs of people with dementia, the visually impaired, those with mental health issues and older people given sufficient consideration? If not, what more could be done to increase inclusivity?)**

7.1 We recognise the need to ensure measures designed to increase accessibility are suitable for individuals with complex disabilities and impairments. We believe the current regulations could be strengthened to take the needs of dementia patients into consideration. This group of patients may be more comfortable with simpler changes and renovations and we understand that the DCLG is considering further research on this issue.

**8. What is the role of reasonable adjustments in delivering accessibility?**

8.1 We believe the term reasonable adjustments remains open to interpretation. Generally, reasonable adjustments refer to the measures introduced to workplaces, leisure facilities and the home to make these environments more accessible. Given that the term is open to interpretation, the CIOB would welcome greater clarity on this issue.

**9. Design and management of the public realm**

**9.1 What opportunities are there for delivering greater accessibility and inclusivity alongside more age-friendly towns and cities, including liaison with the NHS?**

9.2 We consider that there are a number of opportunities for architects and developers to collaborate and design more inclusive and accessible towns and cities. Whilst most built environment professionals already have accessibility high on their agenda, a better understanding of the needs of various groups and end users would prove beneficial.

**10. The role of designers, architects and built environment specialists in ensuring accessibility and inclusivity**

**10.1. To what extent is the need for accessibility taken into account in the design of buildings and public spaces? What can the professionals who are responsible for the creation; maintenance and retrofitting of our built environment do to ensure that buildings and public spaces are as accessible and inclusive as possible?**

10.2. We believe that professional bodies play a key role in helping to ensure members are kept up-to-date with the latest industry developments and have access to a network of like-minded professionals. Given this, and the CPD available to members, professional bodies have a key role to play in ensuring accessibility remains a central topic within its educational frameworks.

**10.3. How well is inclusive design built into training for built environment specialists such as planners, designers, architects and building inspectors? Is there sufficient continuing professional development on inclusive design for such specialists? What tools and techniques are needed to infuse inclusive design into education and training programmes?**

10.4. As noted previously in this response, professional bodies play a key role in helping to ensure members are kept up-to-date with the latest industry developments.

10.5. The CIOB also welcomes the progress made by the Government on the Built Environment Professional Education (BEPE) framework which has subsequently become part of the Construction Industry Council's (CIC) portfolio. As part of its involvement with the project, the CIOB has worked with the Quality Assurance Association on the review of the subject benchmark statement (SBS) for Land, Construction, Real Estate and Surveying. The SBS outlines what graduates might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their programme of study.

10.6. In doing so, the Institute is working to ensure that the next generations of built environment professionals have accessibility and inclusive design firmly on their agenda.

**10.7. How can changes to the way we create and adapt our built environment, such as building information modelling and modern methods of construction, contribute to making environments more accessible and inclusive?**

10.8. Digital technologies, including BIM, are helping to transform the way the industry does business by assimilating and streamlining data. Similarly, modern methods of construction are helping to reduce project timescales. Both processes have the potential to transform output in the sector. With reference to the latter, modern methods can help to increase the production of standardised pods suitable for the basis of a downstairs bathroom. To this effect, both have the potential to help streamline the building process and should be seen as a useful addition to both existing and future efforts to create a more inclusive and accessible built environment.