

At the Full Council meeting in September, I spoke of the need for 'Accessible Housing planned at the Onset'. I was asked how many accessible homes were available; I did not have the answer. I only get to hear the difficulties that people are having.

But thanks to our principal planner, Steve George, and having read "Banes Local Housing Needs Report", I am still none the wiser. There are some figures for accessible affordable housing but not for Market Housing. But it does say that 8.8%, that's 1 in 12 households, have one or more persons with a health problem that requires adaptation.

That can require planning permission, building contractors, upheaval and in a case I heard of recently where a couple hired an accessible AirBnB at £1,000 per week for FOUR weeks whilst a shower and toilet was added on the ground floor of their house under the stairs, as the wife had broken her hip. It's been 10 months while she lives on the ground floor, and sleeps eats and entertains in one room ... still waiting for the operation. They are both in their 80's.

Statistics say 50% of the population will have a short or long term disability in their life time.

Illness and disability does not discriminate age or life style.

I was having to use a wheelchair at 48 and possibly for the rest of my life, I'd be needing accessible accommodation.

A young couple late 20's buying their first house, their first son born with severe mental and physical disabilities, so as well as a new mortgage they had to find another £47,000 to make their home accessible for the whole family to live together. It took nearly three years to complete. That boy is now 30 years old.

WE ARE ALL ONLY ONE DIAGNOSIS AWAY FROM NEEDING ACCESSIBLE ACCOMMODATION.

We talk about sustainability, health and safety, improved insulation, planning for climate change but as I've explained, illness and disability can strike at any time, any age and in any type of housing.

All that is needed is FIVE CHANGES TO THE PLANNING REGS that could save the NHS, Social Services and the Client, money, time and not having to move house.

So my question still is :

Accessible planning is needed at the onset of new build and
IF NOT, WHY NOT?

Susan Charles Cllr

Corston Parish Council.

Access Banes Chair.