

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee **DATE:** 31st October 2018

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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR DECISION**

SPACE STANDARDS FOR NEW HOMES

1. **Purpose of Report**

To seek approval for the Council as Planning Authority to adopt minimum standards for space in new homes based upon the Government's nationally described space standards (2015) and to withdraw the room size element of the Council's 1992 'Guidelines for flat conversions'.

2. **Recommendations**

That the Committee is requested to resolve to :

- (a) Adopt the Government's current nationally described space standards (2015 with 2016 update) as supplementary planning guidance when considering new planning applications for new homes.
- (b) Withdraw the room size element of the Council's 1992 Guidelines for flat conversions.
- (c) Replace 76sqm with 79sqm as the definition of a family home in the Core Strategy 2006-2026.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The proposal ties in with Priorities 4 Housing and to a lesser extent 3 Improving mental health and wellbeing re good quality living conditions.

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The proposal will help deliver Outcome 4:

Our residents will live in good quality homes

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no financial implications of proposed action.

(b) Risk Management

Recommendation	Risks/Threats/Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
(a) Adopt the Government's nationally described space standards.	Small risk of fewer homes being provided. Opportunity for better homes.		n/a	Occasional review of impact of guidelines.
(b) Withdraw flat conversion guidelines.	Might limit houses coming forward for conversion – which lessens loss of family homes.			
(c) 79sqm family home definition	None			

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

None

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 The Council wishes to see good quality new homes in the town under outcome 4 of the Five Year Plan. Adopted planning policy seeks this also. Details of relevant policies to support the proposal are in para 5.7 below.

5.2 It is also relevant to point out that for the many office to residential conversions that have taken place in the town, under permitted development rights, the Council has no opportunity to challenge developers or even be informed of dwelling floorspace proposed. As it is expected that many do not meet the national standard it is important for the Council to seek, where it can, better quality homes to help counterbalance poor quality new homes in the town.

5.3 The Government have set out 'nationally described space standards' and, under its Planning Practice Guidance it gives local planning authorities the option to set these standards when considering planning applications for new homes. It also asks planning authorities to gather evidence to justify setting appropriate policies in their Local Plan. Furthermore planning authorities must consider the impact of these standards as part of their Local Plan viability assessment.

- 5.4 The Government introduced the 'nationally described space standards' under its Housing Standards Review in 2015. Two reasons for the introduction were the withdrawal of the Code for Sustainable Homes and concern about varying standards being used across the Country; the Government does not want Council's to use their own locally derived standards.
- 5.5 The Council adopted minimum room sizes for conversion of houses to flats in 1992 (extract at Appendix A). Those guidelines are still sought for conversions, and on many occasions, new build. Some local agents and builders are quite familiar with them. These flat conversion standards are in a different format to the national standard, so not easily compared, and are limited in scope. One key comparison is bedrooms; the 1992 standards are 3% under the national standard and for a second bedroom 11% or 13 % under.
- 5.6 Many developers choose to meet the new Government standards either wholly or substantially. Planning officers now normally ask developers to comply with the new standards as an aspect of good design. Formally adopting the national standard gives more weight to Council requests to developers and it will confirm that the old 1992 standards are withdrawn.
- 5.7 The policy justification for introducing the national standard is based upon the national planning practice guidance, referred to in para. 5.3, and the following local Development Plan policies :

Slough Core Strategy 2006-2026 :

Strategic Objective C – homes to be designed and built to high quality standard.
Core Policy 8 – requires homes to be high quality design and practical.

Local Plan 2004 (saved policies) :

EN1 Standard of Design
H20 Satisfactory living accommodation for houses in multiple occupation.

- 5.8 It should however be noted that until a specific policy requiring the standards is in place as part of the review of the Local Plan, that will be tested through consultation and public inquiry etc., the standards can only be treated as guidelines. Also there may be specific circumstances where some relaxation of the standards is appropriate. This is particularly so when converting existing buildings especially heritage property, or where there are other wider design considerations alongside a need to optimise floorspace on a site. Bearing in mind viability on redevelopment sites can be an issue it should be noted that insisting upon the national standards could mean that fewer homes are achieved. This is only likely to happen in large developments.
- 5.9 The nationally described standards are comprehensive covering occupancy (persons per home), number of bedrooms and storey height of buildings. They specify overall floorspace of dwellings (gross internal space) and in addition bedroom sizes and width, storage and floor to ceiling height. They apply to new build and conversions. The 2015 'nationally described space standard' as published by the Government is at Appendix B inclusive of a minor 2016 update.
- 5.10 If adopted as supplementary planning guidance it is recommended the new standards are introduced now and used when considering new planning

applications received after the proposal is approved. But with short term exceptions made where applicants have not been asked to comply with the standard as part of pre application advice issued prior 31st October. This allows for applicants recent costings, valuations and negotiations re land purchase etc. not to be disrupted because of short notice introduction of the new standard before they have prepared a planning application. The short term can extend to at least 1st January 2019.

5.11 The minimum floorspace for a 4 person house is 79 sqm in the national standard. A 4 person house with garden is treated, in the Core Strategy, as the minimum size of a family home but in terms of floorspace 76 sqm. is the published threshold. This is based on now withdrawn Housing Corporation space standards. Whilst the 76 sqm figure cannot be taken out of the glossary of the published Core Strategy it is proposed to treat 79 sqm. as the new threshold and publish this alongside the new space standard requirement.

5.12 The supplementary planning guidance will be incorporated in the existing Developers Guide.

5.13 For information, regarding space standards for accessibility, adaptability and wheelchair standards in new homes a separate report will follow in the next few months.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

None consulted

7. **Appendices Attached**

'A' - Floorspace element of Council 1992 flat conversion guidelines.

'B' - The nationally described space standard (DCLG 2015) 2016 update.

8. **Background Papers**

'1' National Planning Practice Guidelines – Housing – Optional technical standards 2015.

Figures from 1992 flat conversion guidelines

Guidelines for Flat Conversions

Internal Layout

In order to avoid the creation of excessively cramped and sub-standard accommodation the Council has approved the following minimum room sizes relating to this type of unit to be created:-

Unit Size	Living Area	Kitchen (Sitting and dining)	Bedroom 1	Bedroom 2
1 bedroom (2 persons)	160 sq.ft (14.86 sq.m)	60 sq.ft (5.57 sq.m)	120.sq.ft (11.4 sq.m)	n/a
2 bedroom (3 persons)	180 sq.ft (16.72 sq.m)	60 sq.ft (5.57 sq.m)	120.sq.ft (11.4 sq.m)	70 sq.ft. (6.5 sq.m)
2 bedroom (4 persons)	200 sq.ft. (18.58 sq.m)	60 sq.ft (5.57 sq.m)	120.sq.ft (11.4 sq.m)	110 sq.ft (10.2 sq.m)

Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard

Introduction

1. This standard deals with internal space within new dwellings and is suitable for application across all tenures. It sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling height.
2. The requirements of this standard for bedrooms, storage and internal areas are relevant only in determining compliance with this standard in new dwellings and have no other statutory meaning or use.

Using the space standard

3. The standard Gross Internal Areas set out in Table 1 are organised by storey height to take account of the extra circulation space needed for stairs to upper floors, and deal separately with one storey dwellings (typically flats) and two and three storey dwellings (typically houses).
4. Individual dwelling types are expressed with reference to the number of bedrooms (denoted as 'b') and the number of bedspaces (or people) that can be accommodated within these bedrooms (denoted as 'p'). A three bedroom (3b) home with one double bedroom (providing two bed spaces) and two single bedrooms (each providing one bed space) is therefore described as 3b4p.
5. This allows for different combinations of single and double/twin bedrooms to be reflected in the minimum Gross Internal Area. The breakdown of the minimum Gross Internal Area therefore allows not only for the different combinations of bedroom size, but also for varying amounts of additional living, dining, kitchen and storage space; all of which are related to the potential occupancy.
6. Relating internal space to the number of bedspaces is a means of classification for assessment purposes only when designing new homes and seeking planning approval (if a local authority has adopted the space standard in its Local Plan). It does not imply actual occupancy, or define the minimum for any room in a dwelling to be used for a specific purpose other than in complying with this standard.
7. Minimum floor areas and room widths for bedrooms and minimum floor areas for storage are also an integral part of the space standard. They cannot be used in isolation from other parts of the design standard or removed from it.

8. The Gross Internal Area of a dwelling is defined as the total floor space measured between the internal faces of perimeter walls¹ that enclose the dwelling. This includes partitions, structural elements, cupboards, ducts, flights of stairs and voids above stairs. The Gross Internal Area should be measured and denoted in square metres (m²).
9. The Gross Internal Areas in this standard will not be adequate for wheelchair housing (Category 3 homes in Part M of the Building Regulations) where additional internal area is required to accommodate increased circulation and functionality to meet the needs of wheelchair households.

Technical requirements

10. The standard requires that:

- a. the dwelling provides at least the gross internal floor area and built-in storage area set out in Table 1 below
- b. a dwelling with two or more bedspaces has at least one double (or twin) bedroom
- c. in order to provide one bedspace, a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5m² and is at least 2.15m wide
- d. in order to provide two bedspaces, a double (or twin bedroom) has a floor area of at least 11.5m²
- e. one double (or twin bedroom) is at least 2.75m wide and every other double (or twin) bedroom is at least 2.55m wide
- f. any area with a headroom of less than 1.5m is not counted within the Gross Internal Area unless used solely for storage (if the area under the stairs is to be used for storage, assume a general floor area of 1m² within the Gross Internal Area)
- g. any other area that is used solely for storage and has a headroom of 900-1500mm (such as under eaves) is counted at 50% of its floor area, and any area lower than 900mm is not counted at all
- h. a built-in wardrobe counts towards the Gross Internal Area and bedroom floor area requirements, but should not reduce the effective width of the room below the minimum widths set out above. The built-in area in excess of 0.72m² in a double bedroom and 0.36m² in a single bedroom counts towards the built-in storage requirement
- i. the minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area

¹ The internal face of a perimeter wall is the finished surface of the wall. For a detached house, the perimeter walls are the external walls that enclose the dwelling, and for other houses or apartments they are the external walls and party walls.

Table 1 - Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m²)

Number of bedrooms(b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

*

Notes (added 19 May 2016):

1. Built-in storage areas are included within the overall GIAs and include an allowance of 0.5m² for fixed services or equipment such as a hot water cylinder, boiler or heat exchanger.

2. GIAs for one storey dwellings include enough space for one bathroom and one additional WC (or shower room) in dwellings with 5 or more bedspaces. GIAs for two and three storey dwellings include enough space for one bathroom and one additional WC (or shower room). Additional sanitary facilities may be included without increasing the GIA provided that all aspects of the space standard have been met.

3. Where a 1b1p has a shower room instead of a bathroom, the floor area may be reduced from 39m² to 37m², as shown bracketed.

4. Furnished layouts are not required to demonstrate compliance.