

Appendix A: Assessment of Residential Space Standards

Purpose

This report provides background evidence in support of the Council's proposals to amend the internal space standards as set out in the revised Watford Residential Design Guide. The revised standards replace those in: Supplementary Planning Guidance 6: Internal Space Standards (2004).

Why alter the existing standards?

The existing standards are no longer considered fit for purpose and are not comparative to standards set by other local authorities and regional agencies. Furthermore they do not reflect the Council's aspirations for larger family homes and national aspirations for more flexible residential properties.

A comparative analysis of existing standards

The Council initially undertook a comparative analysis of existing standards, judging them against other local authority figures including those in London and Hertfordshire and other assessments already undertaken nationally. A specific assessment of dwelling size standards in major schemes granted consent in the Borough in the previous year was also undertaken. Table 1 provides a brief snapshot of the comparative analysis results.

A review of dwelling size standards

The Council's current SPG standards for dwelling sizes are set out below:

Box 1: Existing internal space standards

Bed-sits and studio flats – **32.5 sqm**
1 or 2 person flats and houses – **34.5sqm**
3 person flats and houses – **38sqm**
4 person flats and houses – **44sqm**
5 person flats and houses – **52sqm**
6 person flats and houses – **58sqm**

The comparative analysis of dwellings showed a variety of ways of defining a dwelling type and its standard size. However, standards were predominantly based upon gross internal floor areas and on the basis of number of bedrooms and persons per dwelling (e.g. a 2-bed or 3-person flat). Furthermore, some local authorities/agencies did not provide standards for certain household configurations, particularly 3 person flats and 5 and 6 person houses.

Regardless of this complexity the research shows that the Council's existing standards are considerably below the majority of others, including London and those in more rural areas. In comparative terms, the difference between studio flats was minor compared to the differences between larger family homes with multiple bedrooms, but all types were lower. As a result of this review, all dwelling typologies have increased in size. It is recommended that the standards should continue to be assessed on persons per dwelling. This is due to the fact that the number of

bedrooms in a property does not accurately reflect the potential number of people living there and therefore the amount of other habitable and non-habitable areas.

Research looking at the internal space sizes provided in major applications in the previous 12 months shows that developers are generally designing residential units above the existing minimum standards already.

The Council has decided to use a simplified version of the space standards featured in the London Housing Design Guide (2010) and utilised by two other Local Authorities in Hertfordshire (Hertsmere and Broxbourne). There is a strong evidence base that led to the adoption of the aforementioned standards and it is sensible for Watford to follow best practise in the sub-region. Using similar standards also helps provide consistency for developers working in different boroughs. The Watford standards are however simpler than the aforementioned standards from elsewhere as there is no additional requirement for buildings with two or three storeys and the standards are blanket ones covering all properties regardless of building height.

The internal space standards are minimum requirements, which helps to keep them simple. While a one bed flat has the same minimum general internal space standard irrespective of the number of bed spaces, additional detail covers for examples where there are additional bed spaces (i.e. a two person flat instead of a one person flat). This includes additional requirements relating to the minimum size of a double bedroom and standards for built-in general internal storage space.

Box 2: Proposed internal space standards

Bed-sits & studio flats – **37sqm**
1 person flats/houses – **37sqm**
2 person flats/houses – **38.5sqm**
3 person flats/houses – **61sqm**
4 person flats/houses – **61sqm**
5 person flats/houses – **74sqm**
6 person flats/houses – **74sqm**

Private Garden Space Standards

The revised Residential Design Guide utilises the existing basic standards for private amenity space that are included in the existing Residential Design Guide (2008). However, as the existing standards only provide a single standard for private garden space (50sqm) and communal garden space (25sqm), the revised document includes incremental increases for larger private/communal garden space (e.g. for houses with more than one bedroom). The incremental increases have been set at 15sqm, which is a simplified version of the previously adopted garden space standards in Supplementary Planning Guidance 5: Private Gardens (2001).

Table 1: Comparative analysis of dwelling size standards

Local Authority/Agency	Dwelling type						
	Studio	1 or 2 person flat	3 person flat	1 or 2 person house	3 person house	4 person house	5 or 6 person house
Scott Wilson CABE report (Mean ave of 250 units)	32 sqm	47 sqm for 1 61 sqm for 2	87 sqm	64 sqm for 1 71 sqm for 2	95 sqm	120 sqm	163 sqm for 5
Lambeth Council	37 sqm	45 sqm	60 sqm	45 sqm	60 sqm	70 sqm	85 sqm
Broxbourne Council	37 sqm	50 sqm	60 sqm	60 sqm	75 sqm	85 sqm	100 sqm
Hertsmere Council	37 sqm	50 sqm	61-74 sqm	83 sqm	87-96 sqm	87-100 sqm	96-107 sqm
London (Housing Design) Guide	37 sqm	50 sqm	61-74 sqm	83 sqm	87-96 sqm	87-100 sqm	96-107 sqm
Mid Sussex Council	32.5 sqm	51-66 sqm		77 sqm	93 sqm	111 sqm	
Worthing Council	32 sqm	51-66 sqm		77 sqm	93 sqm	106 sqm	
Homes & Communities Agency	45-50 sqm	45-50 sqm	57-67 sqm	45-50 sqm	57-67 sqm	67-75 sqm	75-85 sqm
Harlow Council		48 sqm	61 sqm		71 sqm	80 sqm	96-114 sqm
Ashford Council		50 sqm	61 sqm		71 sqm	83 sqm	96-114 sqm
Sandwell Council	40 sqm	50 sqm	65 sqm	65 sqm	65-80 sqm	80-100 sqm	100 sqm
Average dwelling size granted consent in 2013		49 sqm	62 sqm	66 sqm	89 sqm	98 sqm	131 sqm
Existing SPG	32.5 sqm	29.5 sqm	38 sqm	29.5 sqm	38 sqm	44 sqm	52-66.5 sqm (5-7 persons)
Mean average including existing SPG	36 sqm	47 sqm	61 sqm	63 sqm	74 sqm	85 sqm	96 sqm
Median average including existing SPG	37 sqm	50 sqm	61 sqm	64.5 sqm	73 sqm	84 sqm	96 sqm
Proposed revised Watford Borough Council	37 sqm	37-50 sqm	61 sqm	37-50 sqm	61 sqm	70-74 sqm	86-99 sqm