

RESIDENTIAL DIMENSIONS

Background

We are concerned about the number of planning applications for new dwellings, and for conversions to provide new flats that indicate small and poorly shaped rooms. Clear guidance and recommendations on sizes of rooms in dwellings would not only reduce the number of sub-standard applications but also provide the planning officers with an aid to considering applications.

We are aware of the results of providing sub-standard properties. Sub-standard properties result in a lack of concern for the property by both the occupant and the owner. Gradually the value of the property reduces, resulting in it not being properly maintained and then it is neglected and possibly ultimately abandoned. Surrounding properties are adversely affected. Surrounding areas are also affected. The consequences are possibly greater in conservation areas.

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), in housing policy statements, has recommended the use of guidance on room sizes and even suggested a return to 'Parker Morris' type standards to combat the gradual reduction in room and dwelling sizes that have been provided over the past few decades. A problem that is likely to increase with the requirement for a large number of new dwellings.

We have therefore prepared a *Residential Dimensions Guide* to assist applicants in the preparation of designs and also to assist the panel when considering planning applications. The guidance is based upon the findings of a report prepared by HATC Ltd for the GLA - see <http://www.hatc.co.uk/GLA Space Standards Report.pdf>

Basis of dimensions

It has been accepted that the best way of determining space standards for residential use is to base the size on the required activities, use or purpose of the space, taking account of the number of likely occupants.

The areas and dimensions have been based on the London Borough of Lambeth's *Draft Residential Standards Supplementary Planning Document* and a report prepared by HATC Limited for the Greater London Authority.

The number of likely occupants is determined by the number of bed spaces provided.

New dwellings and conversions should normally meet, and preferably exceed, the minimum areas. Minimum areas may need to be increased to allow for type and size of fittings or furniture intended to be used.

Ceiling heights

All habitable rooms (rooms used for dwelling purposes but which are not solely a kitchen, utility room, bathroom, cellar or sanitary accommodation)

should have a minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.3 metres, except in rooms with sloping ceilings, where at least 50% of the required floor area should be a minimum of 2.3 metres, provided the remainder of the required area is at least 2.0 metres and where in this reduced area the slope of the ceiling is 40° or greater from the perimeter of the required area. Required areas for habitable rooms exclude any area less than a floor to ceiling height of 2.0 metres.

Bed Rooms

Except in a single person dwelling, the main bedroom should preferably be capable of accommodating twin beds, other double bedrooms should, if possible, be of a size to take twin beds.

Bedrooms often provide space for other activities to the usual sleeping, dressing and clothes storage. These other activities such as study/homework areas should be considered when planning bedrooms.

Ensuite bathrooms or showers rooms do not count towards the minimum area.

Number of rooms

It is preferable that each room be separated by permanent divisions. In the case of living rooms, dining rooms and kitchen these are often successfully combined in some form and minimum sizes for these combinations are provided. In dwellings with four or more occupants it is preferable to have at least one of these rooms separate from the others so that it will allow for a degree of privacy.

We consider that in a dwelling of 4 or more bed spaces is not suitable to combine the living, dining and kitchen into one space if there is no other room available for privacy.

Overall size of dwellings

An overall minimum size for a dwelling has been indicated. The minimum area includes the provision of ancillary accommodation and circulation spaces.

Dwellings are used in a variety of ways, with activities not always taking place in the expected place. Patterns of living change over time and spaces need to be able to accommodate this and have some form of flexibility.

In allowing for this, and the normal increase in the amount of furniture and other contents, it is considered that a dwelling containing only the minimum rooms at or near the minimum sizes may not be sufficient to adequately accommodate its activities and contents over its reasonable life.

To allow for this it is hoped that applicants will increase the overall area by a suitable amount. The additional space can be accommodated wherever the designer thinks it appropriate to meet the intended purpose. Additional beneficial space can often be gained by careful planning and good shaping of rooms.

'Minimum' or 'at least'

Where these words are used in the *Residential Space Standards* documents it means in the case of '*minimum*' that if any dimension falls below the minimum we will probably object to a planning application. In the case of the use of '*at least*' we will take account of dimensions or provisions that fall short of that defined and will comment accordingly, or even object, depending on how serious we consider the matter and/or on the number of shortfalls.

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Areas are in square metres. Bold numbers indicate minimum areas or dimensions. Normal font indicates 'at least' dimensions.

Bed Spaces	1a	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bed Rooms No.	1	1	2	2	3	3	5
Separate							
Living room	12	12	14	14	15	16	17
Dining room	-	5	6	6	7	7	7
Kitchen	6	6	8	8	8	9	10
Combined							
Living/Dining	-	15.5	17.5	18.5	18.5	19.5	20.5
Dining/Kitchen	10.5	10.5	12.5	12.5	13	14	15
Living/Din/Kitch	22	22	24	27	30b	33b	36b
Bedrooms							
Main bedroom	8	12	12	12	12	12	12
Other doubles	-	-	11.2	11.2	11.2	11.2	11.2
Single bedrooms			7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
Bathroom & WC	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Storage	1.0	1.25	1.5	1.75	2.0	2.25	2.5
Overall floor areas	37	45	60	67	81	92	105

To avoid awkwardly shaped rooms:

- Living rooms should have a minimum width of **3.2** metres
- Double/twin bedrooms should have a minimum width of **2.6** metres
- Single bedrooms should have a minimum width of **2** metres
- All bedrooms should have a minimum length of **3** metres

At the planning application stage, applicants should provide details of proposed overall floorspace and a breakdown of room sizes.

- a) Only acceptable in new build housing in special circumstances.
- b) Not recommended.

Bedroom numbers are based on all being double bedrooms except for where one single can make up the number of bed spaces required. If more single bedrooms are used to make up number then the minimum overall space required will be increased.