Medway Housing Design Standards

CONSULTATION DRAFT

November 2010

Contents

Background

Medway is currently experiencing major growth and development including regeneration projects such as Rochester Riverside, Gillingham Waterfront, Chatham Centre and the new settlement at Lodge Hill Chattenden. At a smaller scale many existing properties are being converted to residential use but there are concerns in some cases over the internal space and general amenities available to residents.

It is important to ensure that all new development:

- provides a standard of accommodation that enables occupants to comfortably undertake their day-to-day living activities;
- is flexible and generous enough to allow adaptation to meet future demands and cater for changing lifestyles;
- combines efficient land use with the environmental benefits of well-designed, well-managed housing.

In meeting these objectives, space standards are of key importance and lie at the core of this document. In addition, guidance is provided on a range of related issues such as privacy, security and sunlight. The document avoids over-detailed specification and does not seek to reinterpret the numerous other standards, regulations, codes and requirements governing the development of housing. These standards are intended to provide a clear and consistent approach to design in the development management process – an approach that will result in higher quality neighbourhoods and efficiency savings for developers.

Status of the Medway Housing Design Standards

The Medway Housing Design Standards is a proposed Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that expands upon and provides further details to the saved Medway Local Plan policies BNE1: General Principles for Built Development and BNE2: Amenity Protection.

The draft Medway Housing Design Standards SPD is being issued for public consultation and all responses will be carefully considered before formal adoption by the Council. The public consultation will run from Monday 1 November until Friday 10 December 2010. There will be a press notice advertising the consultation and key stakeholders will receive a letter asking them to respond with their comments on the draft SPD. The document will also be available to view on the Medway Council website. Respondents are invited to comment either in writing or by e-mail to the following addresses:

- Medway Housing Design Standards Consultation, Design and Conservation, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR.

- design.conservation@medway.gov.uk

The consultation will also provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the use of the Building for Life assessment tool as a basis for judging the quality of submissions for residential planning permission in Medway. Building for Life has been developed by Design for Homes, CABE and the Home Builders Federation. In addressing the Standards set out within this guide and the twenty Building for Life criteria developers and their agents will benefit from a clear understanding of the criteria that Medway Council will use to evaluate and assess proposals.

Working with the Standards

This guide provides developers, landowners and their advisors with advice on the main principles and minimum layout and space standards that will be expected in the design of new housing and in the conversion of existing properties. Compliance will be a consideration in the granting of planning permission and will apply to all proposals involving new units of accommodation.

The space standards have been selected to be in conformity with the minimum gross internal floor area (GIFA), room sizes and dimensions set out in the Interim Edition of the London Housing Design Guide. Full details of the definition of GIFA are contained in the appendix at the back of this document. Housing which exceeds these minimum standards will always be encouraged.

The introduction of minimum internal space standards is underpinned by the principle of ensuring long term adaptability of the housing stock and the potential for flexibility to meet the changing needs of occupants. It also aims to ensure that residents enjoy a minimum standard of amenity. Ideally, all development should take an inclusive approach for all users but for practical considerations, Lifetime Homes criteria are encouraged for all housing but are not a mandatory requirement of this guidance.

Every effort has been made to make this guide applicable to every development. The Council's initial advice will always be based on this guide. Only where there are good and valid reasons for departing from the guide will alternatives be considered. The applicant should contact the Council's planning department at an early stage of developing a planning application to determine whether the unique circumstances of a proposed development go beyond the advice given here.

Required material and evidence

The summary table on the following pages sets out what materials developers should submit as part of their pre-application proposals and their subsequent planning application to allow assessment of compliance with the standards. Design teams should refer to this section on an ongoing basis to assess their own work against the standards.

Summary Table Of Medway Housing Design Standards

1.0	From Street to Front Door	Required material and evidence
1.1	Shared Access and Circulation	
1.1.1	No more than eight dwellings per floor should share circulation cores.	Buildings plans (1:50-1:100).
1.1.2	Lifts should be provided in all apartment buildings where dwellings are entered at or above the fourth storey.	Buildings plans (1:50-1:100).
1.1.3	Two lifts should be provided where individual access cores serve 25 dwellings or more.	Buildings plans (1:50-1:100).
1.1.4	Access corridors and entrance lobbies should have a minimum width of 1.5m.	Buildings plans (1:50-1:100).
1.1.5	Access controls systems and doors should be accessible to all users.	Management Plan
1.1.6	Access cores serving more than four dwellings should provide entry phones in all homes linked to a main front door with electronic lock release.	Management Plan
1.1.7	Ground floor flats should generally have private on-street entrances to maximize active street frontages and minimize the number of dwellings sharing an access core.	Buildings plans (1:50-1:100).
1.1.8	Good quality light and views out should be provided to double loaded corridors.	Buildings plans (1:50-1:100).
1.2	Management	
1.2.1	There must be a Management Plan which specifies who will manage the development and how.	Management Plan
1.2.2	The plan should provide a means of communicating with all tenants and include an obligation to consult them on management matters.	Management Plan
1.2.3	There should be a Maintenance Plan setting out objectives and standards, the method of response to reports of failure, and the frequency and scope of cyclical works.	Maintenance Plan
1.2.4	The Maintenance Plan should specify how replacement and maintenance works will be funded and the charge that the freeholder or landlord will make to procure and manage them.	Maintenance Plan
1.3	Car Parking, Cycle Storage and Utility	
1.3.1	Car and cycle parking requirements are available from the Environment section of the Medway Council website.	Design and Access Statement: statement of compliance with current Car and cycle parking requirements

1.3.2	Careful consideration should be given to the siting and organisation of car parking within an overall design for open space so that car parking does not negatively affect the use and appearance of open spaces.	Illustrative or detailed layout drawing showing the arrangement and orientation of buildings and locations for parking and main walking routes (1:500). Illustrative or detailed layout drawing showing hard and soft landscape treatments (1:500).
1.3.3	Cycle storage should be located in a convenient storeroom, private garden or secure common space close to the street.	Buildings plans (1:50-1:100) or illustrative or detailed layout showing location for cycle parking (1:500).
1.3.4	Requirements for waste and recycling are available under the Environment section of the Medway Council website in the guidance document,'*Waste and recycling requirements for new residential developments in Medway*'	Buildings plans (1:50-1:100) or illustrative or detailed layout showing location waste and recycling storage (1:500).
1.4	Outdoor Amenity Space	
	For sites with a gross area of 0.8 hectares or greater, a minimum of 5% of the gross area is required for outdoor amenity.	Design and Access Statement: state size of site (in hectares) and % gross area provided for outdoor amenity.
	At least one outdoor amenity area should be a minimum of 20m in width.	Illustrative or detailed layout drawing showing hard and soft landscape treatments (1:500).
	Communal outdoor amenity space can be used to meet the requirements for Informal Open Play Space (subject to other considerations).	Design and Access Statement: Landscape design strategy and statement of management arrangements.
1.5	Outdoor Playing Space	
	The provision for outdoor playing space requirement should always be met on site where possible, in accordance with FIT standards.	Design and Access Statement: statement of compliance with FIT standards.
2.0	**Dwelling Space Standards**	
2.1	Internal Floor Area	
	The following GIFA must be met as a minimum in new developments: **Dwelling Size** (bedrooms/persons) — **Essential GIFA** (sq.m) **Flats** 1b2p — 50 2b3p — 61 2b4p — 70 3b4p — 74 3b5p — 86 **2 storey houses** 2b4p — 83	Minimum internal floor areas relate to the design occupancy level of a home (the number of occupants each dwelling has been designed to accommodate), GIFAs and the design occupancy level must be provided for every dwelling. This may be achieved by annotation of the submitted floor plan drawings (1:50-1:100) and/or by inclusion of a table in the Design and Access

	3b4p 87 3b5p 96 4b5p 100 4b6p 107 **3 storey houses** 3b4p 82 3b5p 102 4b5p 106 4b6p 113	Statement.
	The GIFA of proposed new dwellings in existing buildings must not fall more than 5% below the GIFAs set out above.	As above.
2.2	Living/Dining/Kitchen	
	Aggregate floor areas for living/kitchen/dining areas in new development: **Floor areas for living/kitchen/dining** (persons) (sq.m) 2 23 3 25 4 27 5 29 6 31	Minimum aggregate floor areas for living/kitchen/dining areas relate to the design occupancy level of a home (the number of occupants each dwelling has been designed to accommodate), Aggregate floor areas for living/kitchen/dining areas and the design occupancy level must be provided for every dwelling. This may be achieved by annotation of the submitted floor plan drawings (1:50-1:100) and/or by inclusion of a table in the Design and Access Statement.
	The aggregate floor areas for living/kitchen/dining areas in proposed new dwellings in existing buildings must be no more than 10% below the essential aggregate floor areas for new development set out above.	As above.
	With the exception of the kitchen area, the minimum width of a living area should be 3.2m at the narrowest point in new development and 3m in flat conversions within existing buildings.	The minimum dimensions of all proposed kitchen and living areas should be annotated in the submitted floor plan drawings (1:50-1:100) and/or included in a table in the Design and Access Statement.
2.3	Circulation, Storage and Utility	
	A storage cupboard with a minimum floor area of 0.8sq.m. should be provided for 2 person dwellings (in addition to that provided in bedrooms). For each additional occupant a minimum of 0.15sq.m. storage area should be provided.	Minimum internal floor areas for storage cupboards relate to the design occupancy level of a home (the number of occupants each dwelling has been designed to accommodate),

		Storage cupboard floor area and the design occupancy level must be provided for every dwelling. This may be achieved by annotation of the submitted floor plan drawings (1:50-1:100) and/or by inclusion of a table in the Design and Access Statement.
2.4	Bedroom	
	The minimum area of a single bedroom should be 8 sq.m.	Minimum floor areas for bedrooms relate to whether they are designed as single or double/twin bedrooms. Floor plan drawings (1:50-1:100) should show bedroom floor areas and furniture layouts showing no. of bedspaces per room. Alternatively this information could be provided for every proposed dwelling in a table in the Design and Access Statement.
	The minimum area of a double or twin bedroom should be 12sq.m.	
	The minimum width of a single bedroom should be 2m.	The minimum dimensions of all bedrooms should be annotated in the submitted floor plan drawings (1:50-1:100) and/or included in a table in the Design and Access Statement.
	The minimum width of a double or twin bedroom should be 2.75m.	
2.5	Private Open Space	
	A minimum of 5 sq.m of private outdoor space should be provided for 1-2 person flat and an extra 1 sq.m should be provided for each additional occupant.	Minimum private outdoor space areas relate to the design occupancy level of a flat (the number of occupants each flat has been designed to accommodate), Minimum private outdoor space areas and the design occupancy level must be provided for every flat. This may be achieved by annotation of the submitted floor plan drawings (1:50-1:100) and/or by inclusion of a table in the Design and Access Statement.
	Houses should have a private garden with a minimum length of 7m (although 10m will normally be expected).	Illustrative or detailed layout drawing showing the arrangement and orientation

		of buildings (1:500).
2.6	Visual Privacy	
	A minimum distance of 20m is required between the rear facades of homes in new development and between new and existing dwellings.	Illustrative or detailed layout drawing showing the arrangement and orientation of buildings (1:500).
	Ground floor habitable rooms should be separated from adjacent public or communal space by a 1.2m buffer strip or have a floor level raised a minimum of 1m above the level of the adjacent external space.	Buildings plans (1:50-1:100) or Buildings sections (1:50-1:100).
2.7	Floor to Ceiling Heights	
	A minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.5 m is required in all habitable rooms in new development (finished floor level to finished ceiling level).	Buildings sections (1:50-1:100) or statement of compliance in Design and Access Statement.
	An area of glazing equivalent to 30% of room floor area is required for all habitable rooms in single aspect flats in new development.	
	An area of glazing equivalent to 30% of room floor area is required for living rooms that do not have windows that face within 90degrees of due south.	

1. From Street to Front Door

The design of access to the home at the interface of the building and street environment affects the experience and sense of safety and security of all users. Entrances and shared circulation areas influence management strategies and the social dynamics of an apartment block. The design of parking and provision for the collection of refuse and recycling are key factors in the perceived quality of the street environment.

1.1 Shared Access and Circulation

The entrance to a building, whether it serves an individual house or block of flats should feel welcoming and safe. Entrances should be well lit and over looked, visible from public spaces and easy to find. Clear naming and numbering of properties is important to assist residents, visitors and emergency services.

Forms of shared access and circulation vary by housing type. With good design and management, all types have been shown to result in successful housing.

Important considerations for shared circulation include:

- The number of dwellings sharing a circulation core and landing;
- Design considerations including width, enclosure, view, light and ventilation of circulation spaces;
- The number of lifts;
- The type of access controls and security measures.

Common entrances should lead to a hall large enough for people to manoeuvre with shopping and buggies, and for wheelchair users to move with ease. In larger developments entrance lobbies may be used for post, cycle storage and buggies.

Buildings with flats arranged on both sides of an internal access corridor are generally discouraged. Where used, the design should provide a good quality of light and ventilation to circulation corridors, views out, and generous circulation space.

- No more than eight dwellings per floor should share circulation cores.
- Lifts should be provided in all apartment buildings where dwellings are entered at or above the fourth storey.
- Two lifts should be provided where individual access cores serve 25 dwellings or more.
- Access corridors and entrance lobbies should have a minimum width of 1.5m.
- Access controls systems and doors should be accessible to all users.
- Access cores serving more than four dwellings should provide entry phones in all homes linked to a main front door with electronic lock release.
- Ground floor flats should generally have private on- street entrances to maximize active street frontages and minimize the number of dwellings sharing an access core.
- Good quality light and views out should be provided to double loaded corridors.

Exception:
Lobbies and access corridors that are less than 1.5 m in width will be acceptable within building conversions where it can be demonstrated that existing constraints do not allow compliance with this standard.

1.2 Management

Housing developments with a significant element of communal space are particularly reliant on high quality management for their enduring success.

The Council will require a management plan to be submitted for approval as a condition of granting planning permission. The plan must be detailed in order to be effective and provide for cleaning and maintenance of common parts (including roofs and external walls and windows), collection of service charges and enforcement of conditions of leases. There must also be provision for residents to have an ongoing say as it evolves in response to changing circumstances.

- There must be a Management Plan which specifies who will manage the development and how.
- The plan should provide a means of communicating with all tenants and include an obligation to consult them on management matters.
- There should be a Maintenance Plan setting out objectives and standards, the method of response to reports of failure, and the frequency and scope of cyclical works.
- The Maintenance Plan should specify how replacement and maintenance works will be funded and the charge that the freeholder or landlord will make to procure and manage them.

1.3 Car Parking, Cycle Storage, Refuse and Recycling

Car Parking

Car and cycle parking requirements are available from the Environment section of the Medway Council website.
(http://www.medway.gov.uk/environment/parking.htm).

These set out:

- The minimum number of car parking spaces per dwelling by dwelling size;
- The minimum cycle spaces per dwelling by dwelling size;
- The minimum internal dimension for a garage to be counted as a car parking space.

Designers should seek to meet these standards whilst minimizing the surface area dedicated to parking. The spaces should be safe, secure and conveniently located whilst also being sited within an overall design for open space so that car parking does not negatively affect the use and appearance of open spaces.

'Active' frontages, whether provided by residential or commercial uses, will always be required on principal building frontages. Where parking is provided within the building footprint (i.e. as undercroft parking or garaging) it should be located to the rear of buildings to avoid its negative impact on the streetscene.

Cycle Storage

All new housing developments should offer secure, convenient, sheltered cycle parking to encourage people to use their bicycles. It should be located in a convenient storeroom, private garden or secure common space close to the street.

Refuse and Recycling Storage

Requirements for waste and recycling are available under the Environment section of the Medway Council website in the guidance document, '*Waste and recycling requirements for new residential developments in Medway*'
(http://www.medway.gov.uk/environment/waste.htm).

This covers a full range of considerations including detailed guidance on the location and quantity of space required for external domestic refuse and recycling storage. It recognizes that the way in which waste and recycling is stored, separated and collected may change in the coming years and advises that designers should consider:

- anticipated volume of refuse;
- convenience to residents;
- access for refuse collectors and vehicles;
- fire risk;
- health and hygiene;
- appearance.

Any storage area must be made of a hard impervious surface, which can be washed down to remove any residue within the boundary of the property, and must not reduce the effective width of the footpath.

Further questions should be directed to the Waste Minimisation team via Customer First on 01634 333333.

1.4 Outdoor Amenity Space

Communal outdoor amenity space provides space for informal play and social interaction, helping to foster a sense of community. It can be provided in a variety of ways – urban square, village green, or riverside walk. Landscaped decks over under-croft car parking are an acceptable means of providing communal outdoor amenity space to apartment buildings. In all cases it should be a carefully considered part of the overall design concept such that it contributes to the developments attractiveness and sense of place.

As the value of communal open space lies in its visual amenity as much as its use value, standards relate to site area rather than the projected population of a development. It is recognised that the provision of communal open space on very small sites could render their development unviable. The 5% standard therefore applies only to sites of more than 0.8ha.

Fewer, larger areas of open space are preferred to more numerous, smaller spaces as they have more impact in providing a focal point to a development. Each site of more than 0.8ha should therefore have at least one car free dedicated open space that is a minimum of 20m in width. On large suburban sites containing family housing a larger than 5% portion of site area dedicated to communal open space is encouraged.

- For sites with a gross area of 0.8 hectares or greater, a minimum of 5% of the gross area is required for outdoor amenity.
- At least one outdoor amenity area should be a minimum of 20m in width.
- Communal outdoor amenity space can be used to meet the requirements for Informal Open Play Space (subject to other considerations).

Exception:
A reduction in the standard may be appropriate if the development site is immediately adjacent to public open space and if every dwelling is within 5 minutes walk (400m by footpath or road) of that space.

1.5 Outdoor Playing Space

In many urban neighbourhoods within Medway there are acute shortages of open space and equipped playgrounds. Fields in Trust (FIT) is the national organisation dedicated to protecting and improving outdoor sports and play spaces and facilities. Medway Council applies the FIT guidance publication *Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play* on all issues relating to the provision of outdoor sport and play.

Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play offers helpful advice and information on topics including:

- LAPS, LEAPS and NEAPS;
- Ensuring open spaces meet the sustainability agenda;
- The design principles of successful play areas;
- Benchmark standards of provision of open spaces for sport and play.

The Medway Developer Contributions Guide sets out the Council's requirements for the provision of outdoor playing space. This covers Equipped Play Facilities, Informal Open Play Space and Formal Open Space for Sport. The provision for outdoor playing space requirement should always be met on site where possible, in accordance with FIT standards.

The requirement for the provision of outdoor playing space is related to development population estimates. This differs from the standards outlined in the preceding section for communal outdoor amenity which are based on site area, However, subject to other considerations such a privacy, the provision for informal open play can also be used to meet the standard for communal outdoor amenity. Where an open space performs both functions, the greater space requirement of the two standards should be satisfied.

Where the existing formal sports and equipped play space provision in the vicinity of the proposal site exceeds the minimum requirement, an informal open space element will be sought on site in lieu, applying the same standard.

Further questions should be directed to the Greenspace Services team via Customer First on 01634 333333.

2. Dwelling Space Standards

This section focuses on quality of life within the home including private external spaces. As well as setting out minimum internal space standards it covers privacy, and the relationship between floor-to-ceiling heights, daylight and sunlight and cross-ventilation.

The minimum space requirements for the individual rooms within the home allow for the furniture, circulation and activities that each must accommodate. They allow the designer some flexibility in how they achieve the standards. If rooms of smaller dimensions than the set minima are proposed, the onus will be on the designer to demonstrate, via clearly illustrated and dimensioned plans, that the dwelling accommodates all the furniture, access and activity space requirements for the intended number of occupants. In assessing any proposed exception, the Council will assume full occupancy of the dwelling.

2.1 Internal Floor Area

Minimum gross internal floor areas (GIFA) relate to the design occupancy level of a home rather than a number of bedrooms, and the developer will be required to declare the number of occupants each dwelling has been designed to accommodate.

These GIFA have been selected to be in conformity with the Interim Edition of the London Housing Design Guide. Full details of the definition of GIFA is contained in Appendix 1 at the back of this document.

The required GIFA may be adjusted for the conversion of existing buildings. The lower minima recognise the desirability of retaining existing building stock and reflect the degree of flexibility required in order to find viable new uses for existing buildings. The GIFA of proposed new dwellings in existing buildings must not fall more than 5% below the GIFAs set out in the table opposite. The area of each individual habitable room but must fall no more than 10% below the standards specified in sections 2.2 and 2.4 of this document.

The following GIFA must be met as a minimum in new developments:

Dwelling Size (bedrooms/persons)	**Essential GIFA** (sq.m)
Flats	
Ib2p	50
2b3p	61
2b4p	70
3b4p	74
3b5p	86
2 storey houses	
2b4p	83
3b4p	87
3b5p	96
4b5p	100
4b6p	107
3 storey houses	
3b4p	82
3b5p	102
4b5p	106
4b6p	113

- The GIFA of proposed new dwellings in existing buildings must not fall more than 5% below the GIFAs set out above.

2.2 Living/Dining/Kitchen

The minimum floor areas for living room, kitchen and dining areas are combined here as a set of aggregate living areas for different occupancy levels. These should allow the designer some freedom in how these spaces are organized.

Open-plan designs often disguise a lack of space and an entirely open-plan layout is likely to be less satisfactory than one that achieves a degree of separation between kitchen and living space. In larger family homes, two separate rooms should generally be provided.

Flexibility in the way that space can be used is also a key consideration. This is determined by space and room layout, and also by the number of rooms in a home. Homes where the living areas and circulation spaces are entirely open-plan will not necessarily create the greatest degree of flexibility when the home is in use.

Aggregate floor areas for living/kitchen/dining areas in new development:

Floor area for living/dining/kitchen (persons)	(sq.m)
2	23
3	25
4	27
5	29
6	31

- The aggregate floor areas for living/kitchen/dining areas in proposed new dwellings in existing buildings must be no more than 10% below the essential aggregate floor areas for new development set out above.
- With the exception of the kitchen area, the minimum width of a living area should be 3.2m at the narrowest point in new development and 3m in flat conversions within existing buildings.

2.3 Circulation, Storage and Utility

A well planned home will have a minimum of space solely used for circulation. The aim should be to plan layouts efficiently and consider how circulation areas can accommodate other functions including storage, study or utility uses where fire escape requirements allow.

All dwellings should aim to allow space near the entrance to off-load outdoor items without the need to pass through habitable rooms and in larger dwellings this should be easily achieved. The storage cupboard requirement may be located in any room or circulation area, except for bedrooms.

Generous internal hallways and straight stair runs with generous landings are encouraged both to allow for ease of moving furniture and for ease of access for all potential residents and visitors. Lifetime Home standards for internal circulation are encouraged where possible in all housing as they allow flexibility of use by anticipating the changing needs of occupants.

Layouts should make provision for waste and recycling bins, washing machines and drying clothes. In larger flats and houses, a separate utility room for washing and drying clothes may be more desirable.

- A storage cupboard with a minimum floor area of 0.8sq.m. should be provided for 2 person dwellings (in addition to that provided in bedrooms). For each additional occupant a minimum of 0.15sq.m. storage area should be provided.

2.4 Bedroom

The bedroom space standards are 8sqm for single bedrooms and 12sqm for double and twin bedrooms. Double and twin bedrooms have the same minimum floor areas to encourage room designs flexible enough to accommodate adults or children.

Children and young people need space in a bedroom for study, play and spending time alone. The minimum space standards are selected to accommodate this. The minimum widths allow sufficient space for a wheelchair user to pass by a bed placed against a side wall.

The principal bedroom of any flat will be expected to be of sufficient size to form a double bedroom. Single bed-space flats will not be encouraged unless developers can demonstrate that they meet a specific identified housing need such as student housing and some forms of sheltered housing. In these cases the developer must be able to guarantee future nomination rights for the specific housing need type.

Bedroom floor areas in new development:

- The minimum area of a single bedroom should be 8 sq.m.
- The minimum area of a double or twin bedroom should be 12sq.m.
- In proposed new dwellings within existing buildings, the benchmark for **one** bedroom within each dwelling may fall up to 10% below the standards for new development set out above.

In both new development and flat conversions within existing buildings:

- The minimum width of a single bedroom should be 2m.
- The minimum width of a double or twin bedroom should be 2.75m.

2.5 Private Open Space

Flats

Private open space is highly valued and all flats should have access to a terrace or balcony. The space requirement for balconies has been established by considering the minimum area to provide for clothes drying, a meal around a small table, and for a family and visitors to sit outside.

When it is not suitable to provide balconies or gardens these needs should be met with an enclosed winter garden or internal living space of the same size provided that it is adjacent to full height opening windows.

Balconies should preferably be located next to a dining or living space and receive direct sunlight. They should be designed to provide some shelter and as great a degree of privacy as possible from neighbours. This could be achieved by using screens or by setting the balcony back within the façade.

Houses

Houses should have a private garden with a minimum length of 7m to provide space for play and recreation. The requirements for communal open space and outdoor play space can not be met in any part by the provision of private gardens in new housing development.

Private gardens also allow for extension and adaptation of the home to meet the changing needs of its occupants. A higher minimum garden length of 10m will be encouraged, and will normally be expected to allow for a degree of flexibility in adapting the ground floor layout of the home to future needs.

- A minimum of 5 sq.m of private outdoor space should be provided for 1-2 person dwellings and an extra 1 sq.m should be provided for each additional occupant.
- Houses should have a private garden with a minimum length of 7m and 10m will normally be expected.

2.6 Visual Privacy

Planning guidance for visual separation has traditionally specified a minimum distance of approximately 20m between the private rear facades of homes of more than one storey.

In urban areas a distance of less than 20m between facing homes may be acceptable provided the design demonstrates that adequate visual privacy to every home is achieved. For example, the careful placement of windows to avoid overlooking and restrictions on the field of vision of windows can be used to provide an adequate level of privacy.

At ground floor level, where habitable rooms face onto streets, parking courts or communal space, a buffer strip will be required to provide a transition zone between the public realm and private dwelling. This will mitigate the problem of noise and fumes from car parking spaces located adjacent to dwellings as well as allowing for a degree of privacy. Alternatively, privacy may be achieved by raising the floor of the dwelling above adjacent external spaces.

- A minimum distance of 20m is required between the rear facades of homes in new development and between new and existing dwellings.
- Ground floor habitable rooms should be separated from adjacent public or communal space by a 1.2m buffer strip or have a floor level raised a minimum of 1m above the level of the adjacent external space.

2.7 Floor to Ceiling Heights

Generous ceiling heights make a home feel spacious. They can also improve the quality of natural light and ventilation, when matched with generous window sizes. In habitable rooms, ceiling heights will be expected to be at least 2.5m, with a preference for 2.6m or more.

In ground floor dwellings higher ceilings can provide a better urban scale to the base of larger buildings and make buildings more suitable for future conversion to non-residential uses. To allow for this, the ground floor of apartment buildings should ideally have a 3.0m floor to ceiling height.

- A minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.5 m is required in all habitable rooms in new development (finished floor level to finished ceiling level).

2.8 Sunlight and Daylight

Good natural light makes dwellings more attractive and energy efficient. All dwellings should achieve adequate levels of daylight. As a general rule of thumb this can be achieved by providing an area of glazing equivalent to 20% of the internal floor area of a room.

Ideally all dwellings should have sunlit living rooms and kitchen dining spaces as these are the rooms most likely to be used for long periods in the daytime. Sunlight can have a significant impact on thermal comfort and the energy consumed for winter heating.

A sunlit room is defined as having windows facing within 90degrees of due south. Dual aspect design will always be encouraged over single aspect flats as it provides for better daylight and ventilation, a choice of views, access to quieter rooms for all and greater flexibility in use.

In order to mitigate the disadvantages of single aspect dwellings a larger minimum window area is encouraged. Where provided, single aspect dwellings should form only a small portion of the overall number of dwellings within a development.

- An area of glazing equivalent to 20% of internal floor area is required for all habitable rooms.
- Living areas and kitchen dining spaces must receive direct sunlight for at least part of the day.

Appendix 1

The definition of Gross Internal Floor Area of a dwelling includes:

- Floor area measured between the inside faces of the finished enclosing walls of each unit, including the space taken up by the following:
    - Private staircases
    - Partitions
    - Internal walls
    - Heating appliances
    - Internal chimney breast projections
- Internal porches forming an integral part of the habitable space.
- Internal storage space greater than 1.5m in height.
- Conservatories forming an integral part of the habitable space.

The definition of Gross Internal Floor Area of a dwelling excludes:

- Perimeter wall thicknesses and external projections.
- Central lobby areas, passageways, and other communal areas shared with other units.
- Any space where the height to the ceiling is less than 1.5m (e.g. elements of rooms with sloping ceilings, external dustbin enclosures, etc,).
- Porches, covered ways, etc.
- Balconies (private, escape and access) and decks.
- Voids and air wells.
- Non-habitable basements, attics, thermal buffer zones or sheds.
- External storage space.
- All space for purposes other than housing (e.g. garages, commercial premises etc).
- Conservatories not forming an integral part of the habitable space.