

Space Standards Practice Note

March 2021



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1. Overview

The Space Standards Practice Note supports the provision of sufficient space within all new housing. Information is provided on the use of the [Nationally Described Space Standard](#) including when and how it is applied to different types of residential accommodation. The approach provides flexibility to enable delivery of new residential forms and temporary housing solutions where needed.

2. Purpose and Scope of Practice Note

The Space Standards Practice Note provides further information on the implementation of policy [BCS18: Housing Type](#) set out in the Core Strategy Local Plan. The policy expects residential developments to provide sufficient space for everyday activities and to enable flexibility and adaptability by meeting appropriate space standards.

The Council has applied the [Nationally Described Space Standard](#) as the appropriate space standard for particular forms of residential development since 1 October 2015. This practice note provides further clarification on the council's use of the standard. This includes the types of residential development that the standard is applied to, including new and emerging forms of housing, and an explanation of how the standard is applied. Information is also provided on the type and quantity of communal space sought in particular developments.

The practice note replaces Bristol City Council's Space Standards Practice Note published in July 2011.

3. National Policy Context

In March 2015 changes to national planning policy were introduced following the Government's Housing Standards Review. These changes explained the Government's approach to the setting of technical standards for new housing within local plans including arrangements for the future use of [new national technical standards](#). Local planning authorities were allowed to continue to apply technical standards for housing, including standards for internal space, within their existing local plan policies in line with the new approach.

Local planning authorities have been able to use the new national technical standards from 1 October 2015. These include a standard for internal space applied through a [Nationally Described Space Standard](#).

Further details on the Government's approach to the application of standards for new housing including internal space standards are set out in national planning practice guidance under [Housing: optional technical standards](#).

In December 2020 the Government legislated for all homes delivered through Permitted Development Rights to meet, at a minimum, the Nationally Described Space Standard. The requirement will come into force on 6 April 2021.

4. Approach to Space Standards

What are the policy requirements?

The application of space standards to residential development is covered by policy [BCS18: Housing Type](#) set out in the [Core Strategy Local Plan](#). The policy expects residential developments to provide sufficient space for everyday activities and to enable flexibility and adaptability by meeting appropriate space standards.

The internal space requirement is supported by policies [BCS15: Sustainable Design and Construction](#) and [BCS21: Quality Urban Design](#) set out in the [Core Strategy Local Plan](#) and the [Urban Living Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#). Policy **BCS15** sets out key issues to be addressed in the design and construction of new development including flexibility and adaptability, allowing future modification of use or layout and facilitating future refurbishment and retrofitting. Policy **BCS21** sets out expectations to deliver high quality urban design including the creation of a high-quality environment for future occupiers and the creation of buildings and spaces that are adaptable to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions. The **Urban Living SPD** provides broad guidance on design quality including recommendations for the internal layout of individual homes. These relate to the quantity, efficiency, adaptability and utility of internal space.

How is the policy implemented?

The Council applies the [Nationally Described Space Standard](#) as the appropriate space standard for residential developments. Further information on the Council's justification for the use of the Nationally Described Space Standard is set out in the Council's guidance note: [Government's Housing Standards Review: Operation of Bristol Local Plan Policies - Update March 2021](#).

How is the Nationally Described Space Standard applied?

The [Nationally Described Space Standard](#) is the appropriate standard for most permanent new homes and their occupiers. This includes most residential development falling within [Use Class C3](#)¹ and self-contained homes that may form part of developments that fall into other use classes or are [Sui Generis](#).

The national standard may not be necessary or fully applicable for certain forms of permanent residential development² or other types of residential development including accommodation that is designed and managed for short term occupancy and/or identified occupier groups. People occupying such accommodation may have less need for the total floor areas and other requirements identified in the Nationally Described Space Standard. They may also be able to use communal space that is shared with other occupiers. The accommodation should however provide suitable internal space to meet the requirements

¹ Includes Build to Rent development (purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out - see NPPF Annex 2) that provides self-contained residential accommodation.

² Includes Build to Rent development (purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out - see NPPF Annex 2) that provides residential accommodation in a shared living format e.g. Co-living and Inter-generational/Multigenerational shared housing.

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of the intended occupiers. The approach to these forms of accommodation is set out at Appendix A.

The maximum number of bed spaces for any approved scheme should be recorded as an Advice on the Notice of Decision.

Appendix A: Space standards applied to residential development not in Use Class C3

Table 1: Space standards applied to permanent accommodation

Accommodation type	Application of Nationally Described Space Standard	Further considerations
<p>Purpose-built building or conversion of a building to provide shared living accommodation¹.</p>	<p>Technical requirements of para. 10 b, c, d, e and i applied.</p>	<p>It is expected that a good range of quality communal facilities and services that are sufficient to meet the requirements of the intended number of residents will be included in developments of this type. These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • convenient access to a suitable communal kitchen; • outside communal amenity space (roof terrace and/or garden); • internal communal amenity space (dining rooms, lounges); • laundry and drying facilities; • space for a concierge/building manager; • space to enable bedding and linen changing and/or room cleaning services. <p>The total minimum internal floor area provided for communal facilities should be calculated using the method below.</p> <p>If developments do not include suitable communal facilities it will not be considered as shared living accommodation and living units will be expected to meet the Nationally Described Space Standard.</p> <p>Further guidance on shared living accommodation will be set out in a future supplementary planning document (SPD).</p>

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Accommodation type	Application of Nationally Described Space Standard	Further considerations
Older persons' housing comprising assisted living (non self-contained) units with higher levels of care provided ² .	Technical requirements of para. 10 b, c, d, e and i applied.	It is expected that communal facilities and services that are sufficient to meet the requirements of the intended number of residents will be included in developments of this type.
Older persons' housing comprising independent living (self-contained) units with limited or no care provided ² .	Applied in full.	N/A
Permanent supported accommodation ³ .	Technical requirements of para. 10 b, c, d, e and i applied.	It is expected that communal facilities that are sufficient to meet the requirements of the intended number of residents will be included in developments of this type.

Table 2: Space standards applied to temporary accommodation

Accommodation type	Application of Nationally Described Space Standard	Further considerations
Temporary supported accommodation ³ .	Not applied.	It is expected that communal facilities that are sufficient to meet the requirements of the intended number of residents will be included in developments of this type.

Table 3: Space standards applied to other accommodation

Accommodation type	Application of Nationally Described Space Standard	Further considerations
Purpose-built building or conversion of a building to provided student accommodation.	Not applied.	<p>It is expected that communal facilities and services that are sufficient to meet the requirements of the intended number of residents will be included in developments of this type.</p> <p>Further guidance on purpose-built student accommodation will be set out in a future supplementary planning document (SPD).</p>

Further detail on accommodation type

¹ Larger scale accommodation comprising private units, typically providing a bedroom and en-suite as a minimum, and other shared social spaces within the building such as kitchen and dining areas and residential lounges. This form of accommodation can include co-living and inter-generational/multigenerational shared housing. Certain forms of shared living accommodation may be defined as HMOs under the Housing Act 2004.

² Such accommodation can include retirement housing, sheltered housing, assisted living and extra care housing, close care housing and care homes.

³ Accommodation that has been designated as being available only to individuals within an identified group with specific support needs and is not within Use Class C2A of the Use Classes Order. Such accommodation can include domestic violence refuges, hostels for the homeless, housing for homeless persons transitioning to permanent accommodation, support for people with mental health problems, support for people with learning disabilities, support for people with disabilities, support for offenders and people at risk of offending, support for young people leaving care, support for teenage parents and support for refugees. Certain forms of supported accommodation may be defined as HMOs under the Housing Act 2004 or within Use Class C3 of the Use Classes Order.

Method for calculating total minimum internal floor area for communal facilities provided in shared-living proposals.

This will apply to all shared-living proposals that are not considered C3 development. Developments which are C3 should comply directly with the [Nationally Described Space Standard](#).

The method should not be applied to proposals where most living units comply with the Nationally Described Space Standard.

Step 1: Calculate (a) *total internal floor area of living units within proposal*

Add up the internal floor areas identified for each living unit within the proposal. Where any individual living unit exceeds the relevant Nationally Described Space Standard use the floor area of the relevant standard in the calculation. This will ensure that over provision of floor area in some living units does not result in reduced or nil provision of communal floor area.

Step 2: Calculate (b) *total internal floor area of living units using relevant [Nationally Described Space Standard](#)*

Add up the internal floor areas of each living unit within the proposal using the relevant Nationally Described Space Standard as the equivalent floor area for that unit. Plans should identify the intended number of occupiers or bed spaces for each living unit to ensure the correct equivalent Nationally Described Space Standard is applied.

Step 3: Subtract (a) from (b) to calculate (c) *total internal floor area required for communal facilities*

The difference will indicate the total internal floor area to be provided for communal facilities to compensate for under-provision of internal floor area within living units.

Step 4: Calculate (d) *total internal floor area of communal facilities within proposal*

Add up the internal floor areas identified for each communal facility within the proposal. These should include all types of facilities normally provided within a dwelling including kitchen, lounge and laundry/utility areas but excluding circulation space. Specialised facilities not normally provided within a dwelling including gymnasium, cinema, hairdresser, public cafe and restaurant should not be included in the calculation. Other communal facilities including refuse, recycling and cycle stores are subject to separate Local Plan standards/requirements and should not be included in the calculation.

Step 5: Subtract (d) from (c) to calculate (e) *additional internal floor area required for communal facilities*

Any difference will indicate the total minimum additional floor area that should be provided for communal facilities.