Sunderland City Council

Internal Space Standards

July 2018

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. In 2015 the government set out in a Written Ministerial Statement information on the new "housing technical standards" in England, which included three optional standards in relation to access, water efficiency and Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). This new approach for the setting of technical standards was to rationalise the many differing existing standards into a simpler, streamlined system and reduce burdens and help bring forward much needed new homes.

1.2. From 1st October 2015, local authorities have the option to apply these additional technical requirements (which exceed the minimum standards required through Building Regulations through the statutory development plan, which will then be applied as a planning condition when granting planning permission. This report sets out the evidence that has been considered in deciding whether to implement the nationally described space standards through the Core Strategy and Development Plan.

1.3. When authorities adopt Nationally Described Space Standards they must demonstrate need and viability. This report provides an analysis of needs in Sunderland demonstrating that the average two and three bed properties within the city are being built below space standards and as such justifies the inclusion of a policy within the Core Strategy. The report also summaries the viability evidence to justify this approach.

1.4. As part of the Duty to Co-operate the council has looked at the approach across the North east Region and other authorities within the area are also proposing to applying nationally described space standards through incorporating policies into the relevant drafts of plans.

1.5. North Tyneside Council has a Development Management Housing Standards policy within their adopted plan, with the policy including 'all new homes, both market and affordable to meet the Government's Nationally Described Space Standard'. Newcastle City Council has a draft space standard Development Management Policy within their Development and Allocations Plan, Draft Plan, October 2017. This approach has also been taken by Gateshead who has included a policy within their 'Making Spaces for Growing Planes, Draft Plan, October 2017.

2. The standards

2.1. The Government's Nationally Described Space Standard[1] 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.

2.2. The standard requires that:

a. the dwelling provides at least the gross internal floor area and built-in storage area set out in the 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 7.5m^2 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 11.5m^2
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 1m^2 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 0.72m^2 in a double bedroom and 0.36m^2 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

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		
	4p	74	84	90	

[1] Technical housing Standards –nationally described space standard - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - 27 March 2015

3b	5p	86	93	99	2.5
	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	

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

2.3. In line with National Guidance when considering whether or not to adopt these space standards, local authorities should take account of the following areas:-

- Need – evidence should be provided on the size and type of dwellings currently being built in the area, to ensure the impacts of adopting space standards can be properly assessed;
- Viability – the impact of adopting the space standard should be considered as part of a plan's viability assessment with account taken of the impact of potentially larger dwellings on land supply. Local planning authorities will also need to consider impacts on affordability where a space standard is to be adopted;
- Timing – there may need to be a reasonable transitional period following adoption of a new policy on space standards to enable developers to factor the cost of space standards into future land acquisitions.

3. The need for space standards

3.1. The starting point for the justifying the need for space standards is to demonstrate that there is a need. New build homes are often judged to be too small for the needs of people who buy them and are often perceived as impractical for modern daily living. A lack of space in a home can compromise basic lifestyle needs such as spaces to store possessions, play, exercise and entertain. It can also have a pre-found effect on health, educational attainment, family relationships and even social cohesion. The size and quality of new homes is therefore an important influence on the health and wellbeing of the city's residents. Currently the council have no planning policies or planning guidance in place in relation to internal space standards and as such do not impose any standards on new dwellings.

3.2. To establish the need for the minimum internal space standards, a review of recently built and permitted housing within the city was undertaken to determine internal sizes and how they perform against the national standards. This review included:

- A sample size of 123[2] recently completed dwellings
- Examples from a range of housing developers;
- Housing sites within all 5 sub-areas of the city, Sunderland North, South, Washington, Coalfield and Urban Core;
- A variety of size sites, housing types and number of bedrooms.

3.3. Table 2 below sets out the average size of a 2,3 and 4 bed property set against the national standard range for that particular type of property and gives an indication whether they would meet the national space standards in terms of their gross internal area.

3.4. The full schedule of properties from which Table 2 is derived is set out at Appendix 1, which includes recently built and permitted houses within the city. The internal size measurements, along with the number of bedrooms and the intended number of occupants and number of storeys to undertake this exercise have been compiled from a range of sources, including planning applications, housing completion data, marketing material and Energy Performance Certificates.

3.5. The national standards is clear in stating that the requirements must all be met, in terms of gross internal area, bedroom sizes, storage areas and ceiling heights, but for the purposes of this research only a broad comparison of gross internal areas has been undertaken to provide a general overview.

[2] Due to the same house type being used on different schemes the actual dwelling numbers assessed was 370.

	Average Size in SQM	Average Percentage of the National Space Standard	National Standard Range (SQM)
Average 2 bedroom house	64	86.10%	70-79
Average 3 bedroom house	87.82	92.24%	84-108
Average 4 bedroom house	122.67	105.82%	97-130

Table 2 Comparison of the size of new housing with national space standards

Key findings

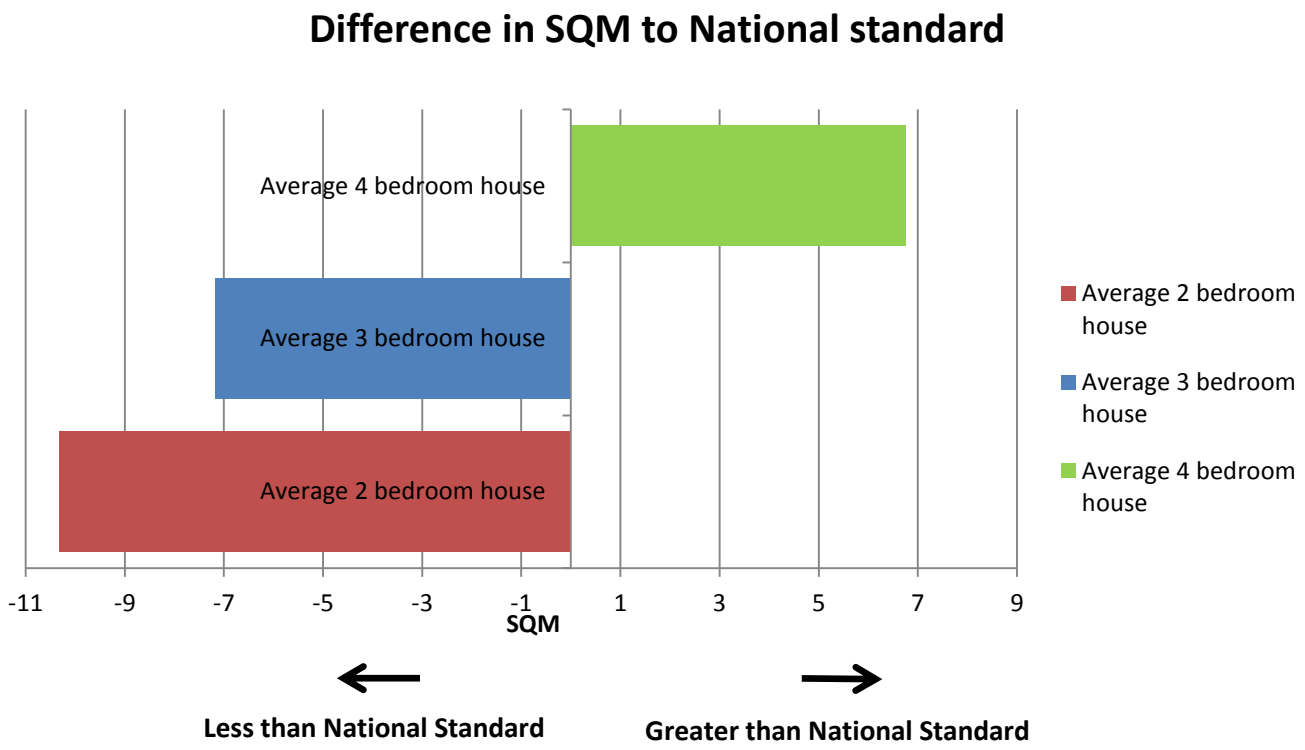
3.6. Overall, the results indicate that of the 123 dwellings sampled, 81 of these did not meet the nationally described space standards, 2 dwellings met the standard and 40 exceeded the standard.

3.7. In relation to specific house types the average new build two-bed properties built within the city fall below the national standards. The difference in the size varies with certain house types only being around 2m² less than the standard, but some being considerably smaller than the national standards, approximately 23m² smaller.

3.8. This is also the case with three-bed properties, with the majority of properties of this size falling short of the national standards. The shortfall ranges from 1m² up to 31m², which is a considerable difference when looking at national space standards.

3.9. This picture differs for four- bed properties being built within the city as the majority of four-bed house types are being built either in line with space standards, or above. Those properties that are below space standards range from being 1m²- 21m² below, and those which are above range from 2m² - 60m². However, those properties which are over the space standards by 60m² are few and far between and the average additional space ranges between 10m² to 40m².

3.10. The following chart sets out the average size difference a two, three and four bedroom property being built in Sunderland is to the national space standard.



3.11. In terms of the five sub-areas of the city, table 3 below indicates that there is no difference in areas with regards the size of two and three bed properties, with all areas failing to meet national space standards. However, on average four-bed properties in most areas are being built to standard or above. The exception being Sunderland South, where the average four bed property falls slightly below national space standards. Of all the sub-areas, on average the Washington area has larger four bed properties, with properties exceeding national standards by around 18m². (It should be noted that when considering sub-areas the sample size for each area is not equal, as the majority of house building is taking place within the Coalfield area).

Subarea	Bedrooms	Av Difference from national standard (m2)	Av % of Space Standard
Urban Core	2	-10.00	85.48
	3	N/A	N/A
	4	N/A	N/A
Sunderland South	2	-15.2	80.27
	3	-12.37	87.01
	4	-1.27	99.05
Sunderland North	2	-7.5	88.76
	3	-3.65	96.03
	4	2.9	101.79
Washington	2	-15.67	79.3
	3	-7.33	92.27
	4	18.73	115.67
Coalfield	2	-3.6	95.31
	3	-10.81	88.5
	4	7.25	106.43

Table 3 Area comparison of the size of new housing with national space standards

3.12. In addition to the review of dwelling sizes, as set out above, evidence set out within Sunderland's Strategic Housing Market Assessment update 2017 indicates a shortfall of larger family dwellings within the city and cites this as one of the reasons people are moving away from the city.

3.13. The evidence above does indicate that on average that 4/5 bedroomed detached properties are being built to national space standards, however in order to satisfy need for the high income households within the city and attract those from outside the area, there is a need not only to ensure houses are built to national standards, but to also provide larger family dwellings which exceed the national space standards, to ensure choice in the market and allow Sunderland to compete with other nearby areas which currently offer this housing choice.

4. The viability of space standards

4.1. The Council's whole Plan Viability Assessment (August 2017)[3] assess and tests the policies contained within the draft Local Plan. As part of the assessment the balance of contributions sought from developers, including affordable housing, other policy requirements and the cost of infrastructure and mitigation are considered. The modelling in the viability assessment has been based on building to the Nationally Described Space Standards and as such the financial implications and the impact on site viability has therefore been taken into consideration.

4.2. As such, it is considered that the inclusion of a policy within the Local Plan for development to meet national space standards would not impact upon the viability and deliverability of individual sites or on the overall plan.

4.3. Notwithstanding this, the council takes a flexible approach to the application of planning obligations where developers can demonstrate viability issues and this will be the case in respect of space standards. Where developers can show a development is not viable with the level of obligations then negotiations would be undertaken to reduce the level of obligations[4] to a point where the development would be viable provided it accorded with the principles of sustainable development.

[3] Update – Sunderland City Council Viability Note- June 2018
[4] This will be dependent upon the priority needs of the particular area.

5. Conclusion

5.1. The nationally described space standards are a minimum standard to ensure that new houses are at a size that is at least liveable. The amount of internal space in a home influences how people live and can impact on their health and wellbeing. The above evidence indicates that whilst on average four bedroom properties meet the national space standards, two and three bedroomed properties are being built below the standards and in some cases quite considerably below.

5.2. As such it is considered that the evidence supports the case to incorporate a policy requirement for homes to meet the nationally described space standards without viability being compromised. This policy requirement is set out within the Core Strategy and Development Plan, Publication Draft, June 2018 at Policy BH1 Design Quality.

Appendix 1 Comparison of size of new housing with national space standards

Sub-area	Size (m2)	Bed/People/Storey	National standard	Meet national standard	Difference from national standard	Av % of Space Standard
Urban Core	50	1B2P1s	50	Meet	0	100.00 %
Sunderland North	56	2B3P1S	61	No	-5.00	91.80%
Sunderland South	55	2B3P2S	70	No	-15.00	78.57%
Sunderland North	60	2B3P2S	70	No	-10.00	85.71%
Coalfield	66	2B3P2S	70	No	-4.00	94.29%
Urban Core	56	2B4P1S	70	No	-14.00	79.29%
Urban Core	67	2B4P1S	70	No	-3.00	95.71%
Urban Core	57	2B4P1S	70	No	-13.00	81.43%
Washington	54	2B4P1S	70	No	-16.00	77.14%
Sunderland South	56	2B4P2S	79	No	-23.00	70.89%
Sunderland South	60	2B4P2S	79	No	-19.00	75.95%
Coalfield	62	2B4P2S	79	No	-17.00	78.48%
Sunderland South	62	2B4P2S	79	No	-17.00	78.48%
Washington	62	2B4P2S	79	No	-17.00	78.48%
Washington	65	2B4P2S	79	No	-14.00	82.28%
Coalfield	77	2B4P2S	79	No	-2.00	97.47%
Coalfield	77	2B4P2S	79	No	-2.00	97.47%
Sunderland South	77	2B4P2S	79	No	-2.00	97.47%
Coalfield	86	2B4P2S	79	Yes	7.00	108.86 %
Sunderland South	76	3B4P2S	84	No	-8	89.95%
Sunderland South	81	3B4P2S	84	No	-3	96.89%
Coalfield	62	3B5P2S	93	No	-31	66.53%
Coalfield	71	3B5P2S	93	No	-22	76.01%
Sunderland South	71	3B5P2S	93	No	-22	76.01%
Sunderland South	71	3B5P2S	93	No	-22	76.13%
Coalfield	71	3B5P2S	93	No	-22	76.34%
Coalfield	72	3B5P2S	93	No	-21	77.42%
Coalfield	73	3B5P2S	93	No	-20	78.49%

Sunderland South	73	3B5P2S	93	No	-20	78.71%
Coalfield	76	3B5P2S	93	No	-17	81.72%
Coalfield	76	3B5P2S	93	No	-17	81.83%
Coalfield	77	3B5P2S	93	No	-16	82.80%
Washington	77	3B5P2S	93	No	-16	82.80%
Washington	78	3B5P2S	93	No	-15	83.87%
Coalfield	79	3B5P2S	93	No	-14	84.95%
Coalfield	79	3B5P2S	93	No	-14	85.11%
Coalfield	79	3B5P2S	93	No	-14	85.11%
Sunderland South	80	3B5P2S	93	No	-13	85.59%
Sunderland South	80	3B5P2S	93	No	-13	86.02%
Coalfield	81	3B5P2S	93	No	-12	86.90%
Sunderland South	81	3B5P2S	93	No	-12	87.10%
Sunderland North	85	3B5P2S	93	No	-8	91.08%
Coalfield	87	3B5P2S	93	No	-6	93.81%
Washington	88	3B5P2S	93	No	-5	94.62%
Coalfield	88	3B5P2S	93	No	-5	95.00%
Sunderland South	90	3B5P2S	93	No	-3	96.80%
Coalfield	92	3B5P2S	93	No	-1	98.71%
Sunderland South	92	3B5P2S	93	No	-1	98.71%
Coalfield	93	3B5P2S	93	No	0	99.59%
Washington	93	3B5P2S	93	Meet	0	100.00 %
Coalfield	93	3B5P2S	93	Yes	0	100.11 %
Coalfield	95	3B5P2S	93	Yes	2	102.15 %
Washington	95	3B5P2S	93	Yes	2	102.15 %
Coalfield	95	3B5P2S	93	Yes	2	102.48 %
Sunderland South	113	3B5P2S	93	Yes	20	121.51 %
Sunderland South	87	3B5P3S	99	No	-12	87.45%
Coalfield	98	3B5P3S	99	No	-1	98.80%
Sunderland North	103	3B5P3S	102	Yes	1	100.98 %
Coalfield	88	3B6P2S	102	No	-14	86.27%
Coalfield	90	3B6P2S	102	No	-12	87.98%
Coalfield	90	3B6P2S	102	No	-12	88.25%
Washington	92	3B6P2S	102	No	-10	90.20%
Coalfield	110	3B6P2S	102	Yes	8	107.56

						%
Coalfield	140	3B6P2S	102	Yes	38	137.71 %
Coalfield	171	3B6P2S	102	Yes	69	167.65 %
Sunderland South	86	3B6P3S	108	No	-22	79.92%
Sunderland South	99	3B6P3S	108	No	-9	91.87%
Coalfield	90	4B6P2S	106	No	-16	84.91%
Sunderland North	90	4B6P2S	106	No	-16	84.91%
Sunderland South	99	4B6P2S	106	No	-7	93.40%
Coalfield	100	4B6P2S	106	No	-6	94.34%
Coalfield	102	4B6P2S	106	No	-4	96.06%
Sunderland South	102	4B6P2S	106	No	-4	96.06%
Coalfield	104	4B6P2S	106	No	-2	98.11%
Sunderland North	104	4B6P2S	106	No	-2	98.11%
Sunderland North	108	4B6P2S	106	Yes	2	101.89 %
Sunderland South	114	4B6P2S	106	Yes	8	107.09 %
Sunderland North	114	4B6P2S	106	Yes	8	107.55 %
Coalfield	116	4B6P2S	106	Yes	10	109.43 %
Coalfield	118	4B6P2S	106	Yes	12	111.32 %
Coalfield	125	4B6P2S	106	Yes	19	117.92 %
Coalfield	127	4B6P2S	106	Yes	21	120.07 %
Coalfield	164	4B6P2S	106	Yes	58	154.72 %
Sunderland North	110	4B6P3S	112	No	-2	98.57%
Coalfield	111	4B6P3S	112	No	-1	98.92%
Sunderland South	125	4B6P3S	112	Yes	13	111.61 %
Sunderland South	100	4B7P2.5S	121	No	-21	82.64%
Washington	118	4B7P2.5S	121	No	-3	97.52%
Coalfield	100	4B7P2S	115	No	-15	86.96%
Coalfield	107	4B7P2S	115	No	-8	93.14%
Sunderland South	107	4B7P2S	115	No	-8	93.23%
Coalfield	110	4B7P2S	115	No	-5	95.40%
Sunderland South	115	4B7P2S	115	Yes	0	100.29 %

Sunderland South	115	4B7P2S	115	Yes	0	100.39 %
Washington	118	4B7P2S	115	Yes	3	102.61 %
Coalfield	118	4B7P2S	115	Yes	3	103.00 %
Coalfield	125	4B7P2S	115	Yes	10	108.70 %
Washington	129	4B7P2S	115	Yes	14	112.04 %
Washington	131	4B7P2S	115	Yes	16	113.91 %
Coalfield	133	4B7P2S	115	Yes	18	115.60 %
Coalfield	139	4B7P2S	115	Yes	24	120.87 %
Washington	154	4B7P2S	115	Yes	39	133.91 %
Coalfield	159	4B7P2S	115	Yes	44	138.43 %
Coalfield	164	4B7P2S	115	Yes	49	142.61 %
Coalfield	106	4B8P2S	124	No	-18	85.19%
Coalfield	107	4B8P2S	124	No	-17	86.29%
Coalfield	110	4B8P2S	124	No	-14	88.48%
Coalfield	110	4B8P2S	124	No	-14	88.48%
Coalfield	116	4B8P2S	124	No	-8	93.55%
Coalfield	116	4B8P2S	124	No	-8	93.55%
Coalfield	116	4B8P2S	124	No	-8	93.55%
Coalfield	116	4B8P2S	124	No	-8	93.55%
Coalfield	122	4B8P2S	124	No	-2	98.60%
Sunderland South	123	4B8P2S	124	No	-1	99.15%
Coalfield	126	4B8P2S	124	Yes	2	101.29 %
Coalfield	129	4B8P2S	124	Yes	5	103.69 %
Coalfield	131	4B8P2S	124	Yes	7	105.48 %
Coalfield	140	4B8P2S	124	Yes	16	113.27 %
Washington	141	4B8P2S	124	Yes	17	113.71 %
Washington	153	4B8P2S	124	Yes	29	123.39 %
Washington	159	4B8P2S	124	Yes	35	128.23 %
Coalfield	159	4B8P2S	124	Yes	35	128.39 %
Coalfield	184	4B8P2S	124	Yes	60	148.04 %
Sunderland	164	4B8P3S	137	Yes	27	119.71

North						%