



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government



Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities

Planning Guidelines





Contents

	Page
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Apartments and Statutory Development Plans	3
3.0 Apartment Design Standards	6
Apartment Floor Area	
Dual Aspect Ratios	
Floor to Ceiling Height	
Lift and Stair Cores	
Internal Storage	
Private Amenity Space	
Security Considerations	
4.0 Communal Facilities in Apartments	13
Access and Services	
Communal Rooms	
Refuse Storage	
Communal Amenity Space	
Children’s Play	
Car Parking	
Bicycle Parking	
5.0 Apartments and the Development Management Process	17
Appendix	19

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 These guidelines update the “Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments” guidelines, published by the Department in 2007. Where specific planning policy requirements are stated in this document, the Minister intends that such requirements must take precedence over policies and objectives of development plans, local area plans or strategic development zone planning schemes. Furthermore, these guidelines apply to all housing developments that include apartments, whether public or private.
- 1.2 Apartments¹ have become a common form of dwelling in urban areas. They comprise 11% of all occupied households in Ireland and almost one-third of occupied households in Dublin City (Census 2011). There are a number of reasons why this trend is likely to continue. These include on-going population growth, a move towards smaller average household size, an ageing population and a greater proportion of households in the rented sector. In 2011, three-quarters of all occupied apartments were rented.
- 1.3 These updated guidelines have two aims. Firstly to uphold proper standards for apartment design to meet the accommodation needs of a variety of household types and sizes – including households with a child or children², students, older people and an increasingly mobile workforce and secondly to ensure that, through the application of a nationally consistent approach, new apartment developments will be affordable to construct and that supply will be forthcoming to meet the housing needs of citizens.
- 1.4 Between 2002 and 2011, the number of occupied apartments more than doubled (55% increase), nationally. Almost all of these were built prior to the requirements of the 2007 guidelines. This is because it would have taken several years for significant numbers of consequent apartment schemes to have completed design, planning and construction processes. During that time, economic circumstances changed significantly. By 2012, new apartment building had decreased to 95% below peak (2006) levels and as a result, very few apartments were actually built using the 2007 standards.
- 1.5 Economic circumstances around residential construction today are much more challenging from those pertaining at the time the previous guidelines were prepared. New mortgage lending rules, amongst other factors, are exerting strong downward pressure on prices. The planning process, along with other sources of input costs, must play its full part in ensuring that while appropriate standards of accommodation and services are set from a long term planning and sustainable development perspective, that such standards are also economically viable in terms of the return on residential construction needed to enable supply in the first place, given what people can afford in terms of rents and/or mortgages.
- 1.6 Notwithstanding the economic challenges currently faced in ensuring appropriate levels of new housing construction, some planning authorities have specified standards in their statutory development plans that both significantly exceed

1 An apartment, for the purpose of these guidelines, may be defined as “a residential unit in a multi-unit building with grouped or common access”.

2 A “child” in this context refers to an individual under the age of 18.

those in the 2007 guidelines or cover topics not addressed in previous guidelines, such as the numbers of lifts and apartments with windows on opposing sides (dual aspect). Taking account of the circumstances now prevailing in the housing market, including a broadening of the gap between predicted demand and supply coming on stream, as well as an analysis of practical difficulties being experienced in the implementation of such local authority development plan standards, the Department has undertaken this review.

- 1.7 Apartment design parameters that the 2007 guidelines addressed only in general terms or not at all include studio apartments, dual aspect ratios and the number of apartments per stair/lift core. Accordingly, these guidelines specify planning policy requirements for:
- Internal space standards for different types of apartments, including studio apartments;
 - Dual aspect ratios;
 - Floor to ceiling height;
 - Apartments to stair/lift core ratios;
 - Storage spaces;
 - Amenity spaces including balconies/patios;
 - Room dimensions for certain rooms.
- 1.8 The focus of this guidance is on the apartment building itself and on the individual units within it. In this context, it is critically important that construction complies with all relevant requirements of the Building Regulations. Given the higher residential densities involved, particular attention must be paid to meeting requirements in relation to Fire Safety (Part B), Sound Insulation (Part E), Conservation of Fuel and Energy (Part L), and Access for People with Disabilities (Part M). The Building Regulations and associated Technical Guidance Documents can be downloaded from the Department's website www.environ.ie
- 1.9 Quality outcomes from a planning and community perspective is another other key objective in relation to housing. Complementary policy advice, which should be considered along with these guidelines in assisting planning authorities, designers and communities within the overall planning process published by the Department includes:
- Best practice guidelines "Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities" (2007);
 - "Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (2009), and
 - "Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets" or 'DMURS', (2013).
- 1.10 These guidelines have been issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála, are required to have regard to the guidelines and to apply any specific planning policy requirements of the guidelines, in carrying out their functions.

2.0 Apartments and Statutory Development Plans

- 2.1 It is a matter for City and County development plans, local area plans and/or SDZ planning schemes to identify areas where apartment schemes may be located and the general scale and extent of such developments. However, these guidelines state Government policy as regards minimum standards for apartment development and the specific planning policy requirements of the guidelines preclude planning authorities from specifying conflicting standards in their statutory development plans.
- 2.2 In general terms, apartments are most appropriately located within urban areas and the scale and extent of apartment development should increase in relation to proximity to urban centres and established higher density housing locations. Existing public transport nodes or locations where good public transport can be provided that are close to employment and a range of urban amenities including parks/waterfronts, shopping and other services, are also particularly suited to apartments.
- 2.3 Statutory development plans may also address different housing needs in different areas, as reflected in housing strategies, even within different parts of a large urban area. Subject to compliance with the parameters set out in these guidelines, each planning authority may specify in a development plan, local area plan or Strategic Development Zone planning scheme area, the mix of unit types and sizes that would be appropriate in a particular development area. In doing so, the planning authority should have regard to:
 - The development plan housing strategy;
 - The projected demand profile for housing in the area;
 - The desirability of providing for a range of dwelling types / sizes within the development area or within a large site;
 - The character of and existing mix of dwelling types in the area, and
 - The capacity of existing services and facilities in the area.
- 2.4 Demographic analysis of urban housing need points to the fact that into the future, 25% of households will be one person households, 30% will be two person households, 20% will be three person households and 25% more than three person households. To ensure an appropriate mix in meeting these needs, a statutory plan may place an upper limit on the proportion of studio or one-bedroom units to be included in apartment schemes, but this should be in the form of a range to allow for flexibility in response to market conditions.
- 2.5 A range of variation in the order of 20% is a generally an acceptable balance between certainty and flexibility. To illustrate this, in some locations a maximum of 25-30% of apartments may comprise one-bedroom units and/or a maximum of 10-12% units may comprise studio apartment (ranges specified are for illustrative purposes only).

- 2.6 Similarly, a statutory plan may place a minimum requirement on the proportion of two or three bedroom units and again expressed as a 20% range of variation; for example, in some locations a minimum of 50-60% of apartments may comprise two-bedroom units and/or a minimum of 15-18% units may comprise three bedroom apartments (ranges specified are for illustrative purposes only). Care should be taken to ensure that any specified minima and any specified maxima are compatible.
- 2.7 It is a planning policy requirement that mix ranges that generally apply to housing should not apply to purpose built and managed student housing or to certain social housing schemes, such as sheltered housing, or to managed 'built to let' housing for mobile workers. Development Plans may specify appropriate standards for student housing, such as those, for example, in the Dublin City Development Plan, with a provision that change of use to other forms of residential accommodation i.e. if no longer to be occupied as student housing, must meet the requirements of these guidelines.
- 2.8 Centrally managed and operated 'build to let' housing for mobile workers may be considered above a certain scale threshold, i.e. 50 or more units, in or adjacent to i.e. within walking distance of centres of employment or on or immediately adjoining major employment sites. Whilst mix ranges may differ to those generally applicable, for example, to include a higher proportion of studio or one bedroom apartments (subject to a maximum of 50% studio type units), all accommodation must meet the requirements of these guidelines.
- 2.9 Provision must also be made to ensure that change of use from 'build to let' housing for mobile workers to other forms of residential accommodation can meet the dwelling mix requirement of the relevant development plan, as well as the requirements of these guidelines. Where a higher proportion of studio or one bedroom apartments are provided in a scheme, this would generally necessitate the amalgamation of units in a change of use scenario. Planning authorities should also ensure that if provided, this form of housing does not become over-concentrated in any one area.



- 2.10 It is a specific planning policy requirement of these guidelines that statutory development plans do not set target minimum average floor areas or requirements for additional communal facilities (e.g. common rooms or gyms) or any other aspect of apartment design that do not accord with the requirements set out in these guidelines.
- 2.11 Planning authorities should apply the standards set out as planning policy requirements in these guidelines, notwithstanding local objectives and requirements of local area plans and SDZ planning schemes.



3.0 Apartment Design Standards

Apartment Floor Area

- 3.1 Expert architectural and planning research commissioned by the Department in respect of the 2007 apartment guidelines indicated a general need to increase the minimum floor areas from those specified by the Department prior to then, particularly with a view to meeting the space and amenity needs of families living in apartments. Circumstances surrounding these space requirements have not changed since the research referred to above and therefore it is a specific planning policy requirement of these guidelines that the floor areas that were specified in 2007 must continue to be applied and these areas are as follows:
- 1 bedroom apartment Minimum 45 sq.m
 - 2 bedroom apartment Minimum 73 sq.m
 - 3 bedroom apartment Minimum 90 sq.m
- 3.2 The 2007 standards did not make any reference to 'studio' type apartments (i.e. a small unit with a combined living/sleeping area, generally provided for a single person). This type of accommodation is now specified in these guidelines and it is a specific planning policy requirement that planning authorities facilitate the provision of studio apartment type developments in certain specific circumstances, such as part of new 'build-to-let' managed accommodation above a certain scale threshold, i.e. 50 or more units. Accordingly, the Appendix to these guidelines detailing minimum space standards and dimensions for apartments has been updated to include a minimum studio apartment floor area as follows:
- Studio apartment: Minimum 40 sq.m
- 3.3 It is also the case that it would not be in the interests of sustainable and good quality urban development if these guidelines were applied in a way that enabled developers to barely meet minimum internal standards, especially in larger developments. Accordingly, it is a specific planning policy requirement that the majority of all apartments in a proposed scheme of 100 or more apartments must exceed the minimum floor area standard for any combination of the relevant 1, 2 or 3 bedroom unit types, by a minimum of 10% (any studio apartments must be included in the total, but are not calculable as units that exceed the minimum by at least 10%).

3.4 An example of the above minimum requirement is shown for an illustrative 100 unit mixed apartment scheme below:

Unit Mix:	Number of Apartments	Cumulative Min Floor Area
10% Studio units	10	10 x 40m ² = 400m ²
20% 1 bed units	20	20 x 45m ² = 900m ²
50% 2 bed units	50	50 x 73m ² = 3,650m ²
20% 3 bed units	20	20 x 90m ² = 1,800m ²
Total 100%	Total 100 apartments	Total 6,750 m²
1 beds +10% min area	20	20 x 4.5m ² = +90m ²
2 beds +10% min area	31	31 x 7.3m ² = +226m ²
Total +10% of majority	Total 51 apartments	90m² + 226m² = 316m²
Total Required Minimum floor area		6,750 m² + 316 m² = 7,066 m²

Allocation of +10% of Majority by Unit Type

10% Studio units	10	10 x 40m ² = 400m ²
20% 1 bed units	20	20 x 49.5m ² = 990m ²
50% 2 bed units	50	19 x 73m ² = 1,387m ²
	31	31 x 80.3m ² = 2,489m ²
20% 3 bed units	20	20 x 90m ² = 1,800m ² 210%
Total 100%	Total 100 apartments	Total 7,066 m²

3.5 Subject to mix, the additional 10% of floor-space may apply to one or more unit type as in the illustrative example above, in which all of the 1 bedroom units and 62% of the 2 bedroom units are 10% larger. If the example were to include 20 larger 3 bedroom units at 99m² instead of the larger 1 bedroom units illustrated, the overall minimum floor area would increase by 90m².

3.6 Any apartment unit type may also exceed the minimum required floor area standards to a greater extent than the parameters set out above, as market factors may require and this is encouraged.

3.7 It is also a specific planning policy requirement that the requirement set out in 3.3 above shall also apply to schemes of 10 up to 99 units, but may be varied to allow for flexibility whilst ensuring that all apartments in such schemes are not built to minimum standard. In such schemes it is acceptable to redistribute part of the minimum 10% additional floorspace requirement throughout the scheme, i.e. to all proposed units.

3.8 An example of the application of this alternative minimum requirement is shown for an illustrative 50 unit mixed apartment scheme below:

Unit Mix:	Number of Apartments	Cumulative Min Floor Area
10% Studio units	5	5 x 40m ² = 200m ²
20% 1 bed units	10	10 x 45m ² = 450m ²
50% 2 bed units	25	25 x 73m ² = 1,825m ²
20% 3 bed units	10	10 x 90m ² = 900m ²
Total 100%	Total 50 apartments	Total 3,375 m²
1 beds +10% min area	10	10 x 4.5m ² = +45m ²
2 beds +10% min area	16	16 x 7.3m ² = +117m ²
Total +10% of majority	Total 26 apartments	45m² + 117m² = 162m²
Total Required Minimum floor area		3,375 m² + 162m² = 3,537 m²

Reallocation of +10% of Majority by Unit Type

10% Studio units	5	5 x 42.4 m ² = 212m ²
20% 1 bed units	10	10 x 47.5 m ² = 475m ²
50% 2 bed units	25	25 x 76 m ² = 1,900m ²
20% 3 bed units	10	10 x 95 m ² = 950m ²
Total 100%	Total 50 apartments	Total 3,537 m²

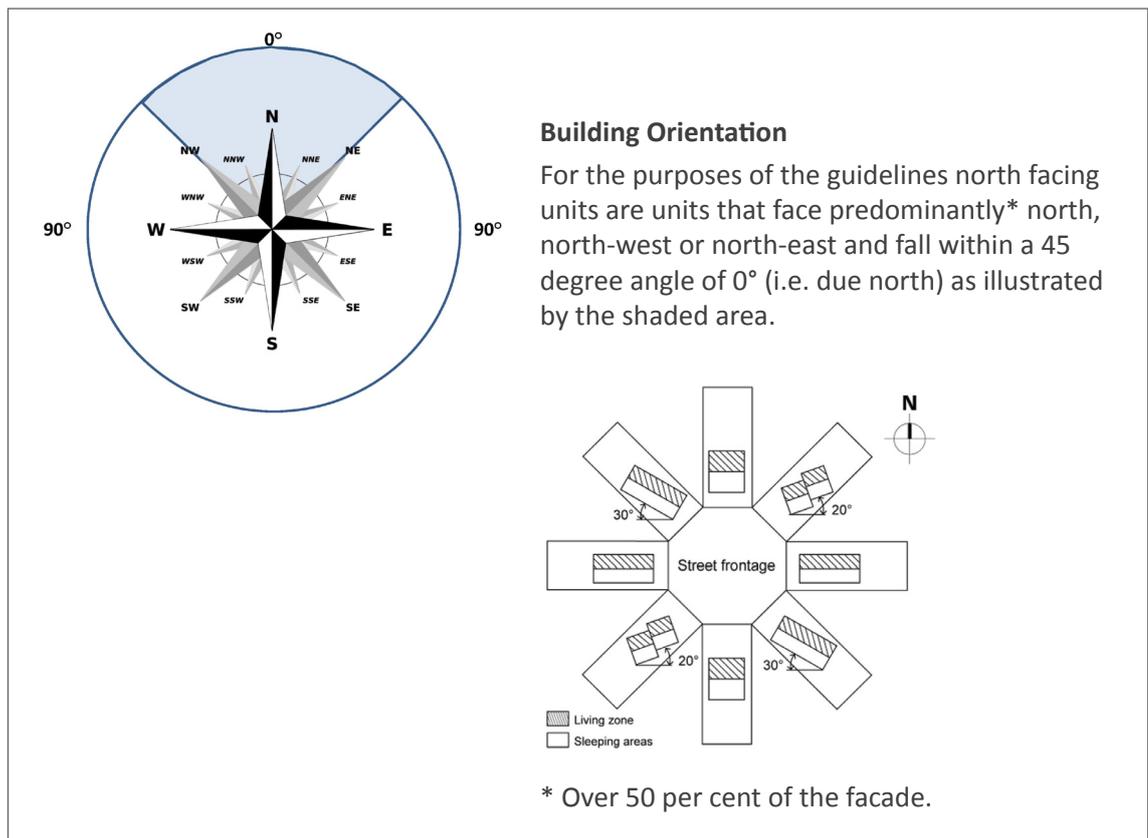
3.9 The 50 unit illustrative example above indicates how increased floor area may be applied to all proposed apartments. For the purposes of clarity, all apartment floor area measurements should be internal wall-to-wall dimensions. These standards apply to units on one floor. Duplex accommodation shall provide the additional floor area required to provide for stairways and landings in accordance with the Building Regulations.

Dual Aspect Ratios

3.10 The amount of sunlight reaching an apartment significantly affects the amenity of the occupants. Dual-aspect apartments maximise the availability of sunlight and should be provided where possible. In smaller pavilion type apartment blocks that form part of mixed housing schemes in suburban areas, dual aspect provision is generally achievable. In more urban schemes, where there may be a terraced or perimeter block pattern wholly or partly fronting a street, this may not be the case. Ultimately, the daylighting and orientation of living spaces is the most important objective.

3.11 In urban locations, it is a specific planning policy requirement that the minimum number of dual aspect apartments that may be provided in any single apartment scheme shall be 50%. In certain circumstances, usually on inner urban sites, near to city or town centres, including SDZ areas, where it is necessary to ensure good street frontage and subject to high quality design, this may be further reduced to an absolute minimum of 33%. Ideally, 3 bedroomed apartments should be dual aspect. These requirements may be relaxed where it is proposed to refurbish an older building in a constrained urban context. For clarity, dual aspect apartments can include corner units.

3.12 Where single aspect apartments are provided, the provision of south facing units should be maximised, with west or east facing single aspect units also being acceptable. Living spaces in apartments should provide for direct sunlight for some part of the day. North facing single aspect apartments may be considered, where overlooking a significant amenity such as a public park, garden or formal space, or a water body or some other amenity feature. Particular care is needed where windows are located on lower floors that may be overshadowed by adjoining buildings.



Floor to Ceiling Height

3.13 Floor-to-ceiling height affects the internal amenities of apartments, in terms of sunlight / daylight, storage space, and ventilation. This is most significant at ground level, where the potential for overshadowing is greatest. Ground level floor to ceiling height will also influence the future adaptability of individual apartments for potential alternative uses, which will vary depending on location.

- 3.14 Minimum floor to ceiling height must accord with the Building Regulations requirement of 2.4m, except in relation to ground floor apartments, where it should be greater. It is a specific planning policy requirement that ground level apartment floor to ceiling heights shall be a minimum of 2.7m. These are absolute minimum requirements and applicants and their designers should consider the potential for increasing the minimum apartment floor-to-ceiling height to 2.7 metres where height restrictions would not necessitate a reduction in the number of floors and should consider 3.0 metres on the ground floor of multi-storey buildings.
- 3.15 In certain main urban centre locations, where apartments front onto or adjoin busy commercial streets with significant pedestrian footfall, the need for future adaptability of ground floor areas from residential to potential commercial uses in the future should be considered. Planning authorities may require ground floor apartment floor to ceiling heights to be a minimum of 3.5 - 4m metres generally, in such specific cases.
- 3.16 When combined with aspect, floor-to ceiling height can significantly affect the amenities of the individual apartment unit. Whilst it is not generally possible to vary the floor-to-ceiling height of individual apartments, there are some circumstances where it is a specific planning policy requirement that the minimum floor to ceiling height of an apartment block or building (as opposed to the scheme as a whole), must be increased.
- 3.17 These circumstances are where any proposed new apartment block or building includes less than 50% dual aspect apartments or where any proposed new apartment block or building as part of an apartment or housing scheme includes any north facing single aspect units. In such cases, it is a specific planning policy requirement that a minimum of 2.7 metres generally, and 3.0 metres on the ground floor of multi-storey buildings shall apply to the relevant apartment block or building.

Lift and Stair Cores

- 3.18 Subject to compliance with the dual aspect ratios specified in these guidelines and building regulations particularly in relation to fire safety, it is a specific planning policy requirement that up to 8 apartments per floor per individual stair/lift core may be provided in apartment schemes.
- 3.19 Whilst 8 apartments per floor per core may not be possible or necessary in all blocks in all apartment schemes, subject to good design, maximising the number of apartments per floor per stair/lift core should assist in ensuring that service charges and maintenance costs faced by residents into the future are kept at reasonable levels.

Internal Storage

- 3.20 As part of required minimum apartment floor areas, provision should be made for general storage and utility. Specific planning policy requirements

for minimum storage areas are set out in the Appendix and are intended to accommodate household utility functions such as clothes washing and the storage of bulky personal or household items.

- 3.21 Storage should be additional to kitchen presses and bedroom furniture, but may be partly provided in these rooms. In such cases this must be in addition to minimum aggregate living/dining/kitchen or bedroom floor areas. A store off a hallway or landing will facilitate access, but hot presses or boiler space will not count as general storage. As a rule, no individual storage room within an apartment should exceed 3.5 square metres.
- 3.22 Apartment schemes may provide storage for bulky items outside individual units (i.e. at ground or basement level). Secure, ground floor storage space allocated to individual apartments and located close to the entrance to the apartment block or building is particularly useful and planning authorities should encourage the provision of such space in addition to minimum apartment storage requirements. This form of storage may be used for equipment such as, for example, bicycles or bicycle equipment, children's outdoor toys or buggies, however such storage does not satisfy bicycle parking requirements.
- 3.23 It is a specific planning policy requirement that where secure, allocated ground or basement level storage is provided, it may be used to satisfy up to half of the minimum storage requirement for individual apartment units, but shall not serve to reduce the minimum floor area required to be provided within each individual apartment unit, as set out in these guidelines. This is intended to enable greater flexibility in apartment design, whereby more living or bedroom space may be provided within the apartment unit in lieu of a portion of required internal storage space where such storage space has been provided elsewhere in the building.

Private Amenity Space

- 3.24 It is a specific planning policy requirement that private amenity space shall be provided in the form of gardens or patios/terraces for ground floor apartments and balconies at upper levels. Where provided a ground level, private amenity space level shall incorporate boundary treatment appropriate to ensure privacy and security. Private amenity space should be located to optimise solar orientation and designed to minimise overshadowing and overlooking.
- 3.25 Balconies shall adjoin and have a functional relationship with the main living areas of the apartment. In certain circumstances, glass-screened 'winter gardens' may be provided. The minimum required areas for private amenity space are set out in the Appendix. These spaces must be of a certain minimum depth of at least 1.5m, to be useful from an amenity viewpoint, e.g. to accommodate chairs and a small table.
- 3.26 A minimum depth of 1.5 metres is required for balconies, in one useable length to meet the minimum floor area requirement under these guidelines. While deeper balconies might be desirable in certain cases, this has to be balanced

against the need to avoid overshadowing. Balconies should be primarily accessed from living rooms, although larger apartments may include wrap around and/or secondary balconies, which should also include a screened clothes drying space. The balconies should have level access from the main living space, except where they are not accessible for wheelchair users.

- 3.27 Balustrading to balconies should be safe for children. Vertical privacy screens should be provided between adjoining balconies and the floors of balconies should be solid and self-draining.

Security Considerations

- 3.28 Apartment design should provide occupants and their visitors with a sense of safety and security, by maximising natural surveillance of streets, open spaces, play areas and any surface bicycle or car parking. Accordingly, blocks and buildings should overlook the public realm. Entrance points should be clearly indicated, well lit, and overlooked by adjoining dwellings. Particular attention should be given to the security of ground floor apartments and access to internal and external communal areas.

- 3.29 Where ground floor apartments are to be located adjoining the back of a public footpath or some other public area, consideration may be given to the provision of a 'privacy strip' of approximately 1.5m in depth. This should be influenced by the design, scale and orientation of the building and on the nature of the street or public area and if provided, subject to appropriate landscape design and boundary treatment. Privacy may also be achieved through partial elevation of the ground floor of the apartment building above the adjoining street or space, subject to compliance with Building Regulations regarding universal access.



4.0 Communal Facilities in Apartments

Access and Services

- 4.1 Apartment schemes must be capable of meeting the changing needs of occupants over their lifetimes. Part M of the Building Regulations sets out standards to ensure that buildings are accessible and usable by everyone, including children, people with disabilities and the elderly.
- 4.2 Within apartment buildings, hallways and shared circulation areas should be appropriate in scale and should not be unduly narrow. They should be well lit, where possible with some natural light and adequate ventilation. Movement about the apartment building should be easily understandable by all users by keeping internal corridors short with good visibility along their length.
- 4.3 Service ducts serving two or more apartments should as far as practicable be accessible from common circulation areas to facilitate easy maintenance. Running services overhead, particularly above the ceiling of a different unit, should be avoided.
- 4.4 To prevent demands for the installation of numerous individual satellite dishes on visible parts of the facades or roof of apartment buildings, provision should be made at design stage for locating communal or individual dishes on less visible parts of the building, such as at roof level.

Communal Rooms

- 4.5 Communal rooms may be provided in apartment schemes, particularly in some larger developments. For example, communal facilities for drying clothes may be provided in well-ventilated areas. Other communal facilities may include community or meeting rooms or a management/maintenance office on-site. The provision of facilities within an apartment development could also extend to childcare or gym uses that may be open to non-residents.
- 4.6 Communal or other facilities within apartment schemes should be subject to negotiation and agreement with the developer as part of the planning process. It is a specific planning policy requirement that they should not generally be imposed as requirements by the planning authority in the absence of proposals from and/or the agreement of an applicant. The provision of such facilities is likely to have implications for management and maintenance costs for future residents.
- 4.7 Notwithstanding the Department's Planning Guidelines for Childcare Facilities, which are currently subject to review and recommend the provision of one childcare facility (equivalent to a minimum of 20 child places) for every 75 dwelling units, the threshold for provision in apartment schemes should be established having regard to the scale and unit mix of the proposed development and the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of the area.

Refuse Storage

4.8 Provision shall be made for the storage and collection of waste materials in apartment schemes. Refuse facilities shall be accessible to each apartment stair/lift core and designed with regard to the projected level of waste generation and types and quantities of receptacles required. Within apartments, there should be adequate provision for the temporary storage of segregated materials prior to deposition in communal waste storage and in-sink macerators are discouraged as they place a burden on drainage systems.

4.9 The following general design considerations should be taken into account in the provision of refuse storage facilities:

- Sufficient communal storage area to satisfy the three-bin system for the collection of mixed dry recyclables, organic waste and residual waste;
- In larger apartment schemes, consideration should also be given to the provision of separate collection facilities for other recyclables such as glass and plastics;
- Waste storage areas must be adequately ventilated so as to minimise odours and potential nuisance from vermin/flies and taking account the avoidance of nuisance for habitable rooms nearby;
- Provision in the layout for sufficient access for waste collectors, proximity of, or ease of access to, waste storage areas from individual apartments, including access by disabled people;
- Waste storage areas should not present any safety risks to users and should be well-lit;
- Waste storage areas should not be on the public street, and should not be visible to or accessible by the general public. Appropriate visual screening should be provided, particularly in the vicinity of apartment buildings;
- Waste storage areas in basement car parks should be avoided where possible, but where provided, must ensure adequate manoeuvring space for collection vehicles;
- The capacity for washing down waste storage areas, with wastewater discharging to the sewer.

Communal Amenity Space

4.10 The provision and proper future maintenance of well-designed communal amenity space is critical in meeting the amenity needs of residents. In particular, accessible, secure and usable outdoor space is a high priority for families with young children and for less mobile older people. The minimum required areas for public communal amenity space are set out in the Appendix. Whilst private and communal amenity space may adjoin each other, there should generally be a clear distinction with an appropriate boundary treatment and/or a 'privacy strip' between the two.

4.11 Communal amenity space may be provided as a garden within the courtyard of a perimeter block or adjoining a linear apartment block. Designers must ensure that the heights and orientation of adjoining blocks permit adequate levels of

sunlight to reach communal amenity space throughout the year. Roof gardens may also be provided and can offer a satisfactory alternative where climatic and safety factors are fully considered, but children's play is not passively supervised as with courtyards. Applications for planning permission must also address the future maintenance of communal amenity areas.

Children's Play

4.12 The recreational needs of children must be considered as part of communal amenity space within apartment schemes. Experience in Ireland and elsewhere has shown that children will play everywhere. Therefore, as far as possible, their safety needs to be taken into consideration and protected throughout the entire site, particularly in terms of safe access to larger communal play spaces. Children's play needs around the apartment building should be catered for:

- within the private open space associated with individual apartments (see chapter 3);
- within small play spaces (about 85 – 100 sq. metres) for the specific needs of toddlers and children up to the age of six, with suitable play equipment, seating for parents/guardians, and within sight of the apartment building, in a scheme of 25 or more units; and
- within play areas (200–400 sq. metres) for older children and young teenagers, in a scheme of 100 or more apartments.

4.13 The perimeter block with a central communal open space is particularly appropriate for children's play, especially if access from the street is controlled. The landscape design and orientation of play areas can contribute significantly to their amenity value. However, the noise from courtyard play areas can diminish residential amenity, particularly in smaller schemes, and designers must find solutions which balance all the factors involved.

Car Parking

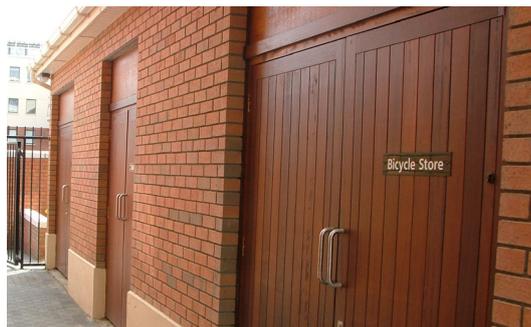
4.14 The quantum of car parking provision for residential developments generally is a matter for individual planning authorities having regard to local circumstances (notably location and access to public transport). As a benchmark guideline for apartments, one car parking space per unit should generally be required. However, car parking provision should be reduced or avoided in very accessible areas such as central business districts and a confluence of public transport systems, or should be increased within an overall maximum parameter in a more suburban context.

4.15 Where it is sought to reduce car parking provision, the onus will be on the applicant to demonstrate to the planning authority why car parking provision can be avoided and that the site is sufficiently well located in relation to employment, amenities and services that other non-car based modes of transport will meet the needs of residents, in full or in part. 'Car free' development may be permissible in highly accessible city centre locations and this must be fully communicated as part of subsequent apartment sales and marketing processes.

- 4.16 Car parking requirements for apartment schemes should generally be expressed as maximum car parking standards and should exceed 1 space per apartment only in more suburban contexts, to a maximum of 1.5 spaces per apartment dwelling.
- 4.17 Where underground car parking is provided, it must be well lit and adequately ventilated. Where possible, limited 'drop-off' spaces should be provided near apartment entrance points. Where surface parking is provided, it should be clearly accessible to the entrance to, and where appropriate, overlooked by, the units it serves. Designated parking spaces for disabled drivers should also be provided.

Bicycle Parking

- 4.18 Bicycle parking provision for residential developments generally is a matter for individual planning authorities. As a benchmark guideline for apartments, an absolute minimum of one secure, covered bicycle parking space per unit should be required. This must be increased in more urban contexts and inner urban areas to be in line with National Cycle Manual (NTA, 2011) requirements.
- 4.19 The design of apartment schemes should ensure that bicycle parking spaces are located to be conveniently accessible to residents, both in terms of proximity to access points i.e. stair/lift cores to apartments and routes to the external road/street network. Care should be taken to avoid conflict with car parking provision, with particular regard to access routes and obstructions such as ramps, pillars or acute turns, if provided underground.
- 4.20 Where it is sought to reduce car parking provision in apartment schemes, in demonstrating that other non-car based modes of transport can meet the needs of residents, whether in full or in part, additional secure, covered cycle parking provision will be necessary.



5.0 Apartments and the Development Management Process

- 5.1 It shall be a specific planning policy requirement that applications for planning permission for apartment schemes or mixed housing developments that include apartment buildings, shall submit a schedule that details the number and type of apartments and associated individual unit floor areas, as part of the planning application process.
- 5.2 A schedule of apartment accommodation should identify the proposed apartments that are at least 10% greater than the minimum floor area standard in schemes with 100 or more apartments and all those apartments that exceed the minimum floor area standard in schemes with 10-99 apartments.
- 5.3 Apartment unit schedules should detail proposed private amenity space and internal (and any external) storage space associated with each apartment. The schedule should also detail the aspect of each apartment, i.e. whether dual or single. In the case of single aspect apartments, the schedule should specify the orientation. It would also assist the planning assessment process if the schedule were to reference the primary staircore/lift access point to each apartment.
- 5.4 Floor areas should be in square metres and should be calculated from internal room dimensions. In addition to the above, planning application drawings must include the principal dimensions of each room as well as the aggregate floor area of each room.
- 5.5 Proposals to change current planning permissions, in full or in part, shall comply with the requirements of these guidelines. The requirement for the majority of apartments to exceed the minimum floor area standard by 10% may apply only to apartments for which planning permission is sought.
- 5.6 Where an applicant cannot fully meet all of the requirements of these guidelines, this must be clearly identified and a rationale for any alternative, compensatory design solutions set out. This may arise due to a design constraint associated with the site or location.
- 5.7 In such cases, the planning authority must consider whether the proposed scheme can demonstrate sufficient mitigating design features. For example, on a constrained inner urban sites it may not be possible to provide communal amenity space, but it might be acceptable to provide more private amenity space than would be required and/or more individual apartment living space.
- 5.8 These guidelines are intended to apply to new apartment developments. While it is an objective to achieve these standards in refurbishment schemes, this will not always be possible, particularly in relation to historic buildings, some urban townscapes and 'over the shop' type conversion projects. Planning authorities will need to weigh up compliance with "new build" intended standards in favour

of the strong desirability from a planning perspective of securing effective usage of underutilised accommodation, including upper floors.

- 5.9 The requirements of the guidelines can therefore be used as a benchmark for assessment in refurbishment schemes, but depending on individual circumstances, certain elements should be applied flexibly by the local authority or An Bord Pleanála in response to an acceptable design solution for which a case is made by an applicant, subject to appropriate application of the relevant Building Control standards.
- 5.10 The application should also include an assessment of long term running and maintenance costs as well as demonstrating what measures have been specifically considered to manage and reduce costs for the benefit of residents.
- 5.11 Implementation of these guidelines may lead to an increase in the number of developable apartments over previously approved but un-commenced projects and as long as the requirements of the guidelines are met, planning authorities should approve such schemes.



Appendix

Required Minimum Floor Areas and Standards

Minimum overall apartment floor areas

Studio	40 sq m
One bedroom	45 sq m (38 sq m)*
Two bedroom	73 sq m (55 sq m)*
Three bedrooms	90 sq m (70 sq m)*

* Figures in brackets refer to 1995 guidelines

Minimum aggregate floor areas for living/dining/kitchen rooms

Minimum widths for the main living/dining rooms Apartment type	Width of living/dining room	Aggregate floor area of living / dining / kitchen area*
Studio	5m**	30 sq m**
One bedroom	3.3 m	23 sq m
Two bedrooms	3.6 m	30 sq m
Three bedrooms	3.8 m	34 sq m

* Note: An enclosed (separate) kitchen should have a minimum floor area of 6.5 sq. metres. In most cases, the kitchen should have an external window.

** Note: Combined living/dining/bedspace

Minimum bedroom floor areas/widths

Minimum bedroom floor areas/widths Type	Minimum width	Minimum floor area
Studio	5m**	30 sq m**
Single bedroom	2.1 m	7.1 sq m
Double bedroom	2.8 m	11.4 sq m
Twin bedroom	2.8 m	13 sq m

* Note: Minimum floor areas exclude built-in storage presses.

** Note: Combined living/dining/bedspace

Minimum aggregate bedroom floor areas

One bedroom	11.4 sq m
Two bedroom	11.4 + 13 sq m = 24.4 sq m
Three bedrooms	11.4 + 13 + 7.1 sq m = 31.5 sq m

Minimum storage space requirements

Studio	3 sq m
One bedroom	3 sq m
Two bedrooms	6 sq m
Three or more bedrooms	9 sq m

Minimum floor areas for private amenity space

Studio	4 sq m
One bedroom	5 sq m
Two bedroom	7 sq m
Three bedroom	9 sq m

Minimum floor areas for communal amenity space

Studio	4 sq m
One bedroom	5 sq m
Two bedroom	7 sq m
Three bedroom	9 sq m

