# Housing Standards Policy Statement

In respect of the consideration and assessment of housing standards as they apply to development proposals, the starting point for decision taking is the development plan. Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy requires that all development should be ‘fit for purpose’ and be ‘adaptable to allow changes to meet the need of users’ and that ‘the design and layout of new residential development, including conversions, will accord with the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines’.

At the same time, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings as one of its Core Principles.

On 25 March 2015 the Government issued a written ministerial statement1 which introduced new technical housing standards in England and set out how these would be applied through planning policy. The system consists of new additional ‘optional’ Building Regulations on water and access, and a nationally described space standard2 (referred to as “the new national technical standards”). These new standards will come into effect on 1 October 2015.

From 1 October 2015, existing Local Plan policies need to be interpreted with reference to the nearest equivalent national technical standard. Decision takers can only require compliance with the standards where there is a relevant Local Plan policy in place. Therefore, for Gravesham, Local Plan Core Strategy policies CS18 Climate Change and CS19 Development and Design Principles, Local Plan First Review saved policies H5 and AP10 and associated guidance in the Residential Layout Guidelines Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), should be interpreted by reference to the nearest equivalent new national technical standard. This is set out in Table 1 below.

It is difficult to draw direct comparisons between the existing Gravesham Residential Layout Guidelines SPG and the proposed National Space Standard because they are calculated on a slightly different basis. The existing Gravesham standards are based on guideline minimum spaces for each room whereas the National Space Standard relates to the minimum gross internal area (GIA) of the overall unit to the design level of occupancy based on bedroom size and the potential number of bed spaces that could be accommodated.

The Council will consider whether to adopt the new national technical standards, in their entirety, through the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.

## Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS18

| **Existing Standard** | **Standard from October based on nearest equivalent national technical standard** |
| --- | --- |
| Requires all new homes to be built to at least level 3/4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes in terms of water use (105 litres per person per day consumption). | All new homes to be built to ensure that the consumption of water does not exceed 105\* litres per person per day. |
| Seeks 5% of homes on Key Sites to act as exemplars by meeting level 5/6 of the Code for Sustainable Homes in terms of water use (80 litres per person per day consumption). | All new homes to be built to ensure that the consumption of water does not exceed 105\* litres per person per day. |
| Requires all non-residential development of 1,000 sq m and above to meet the BREEAM “excellent” standards of water efficiency and include provision for the collection of rainwater. | Core Strategy policy will continue to apply. |
| Supports proposals to retrofit existing residential properties in ways which reduce water consumption. | Core Strategy policy will continue to apply. |

## Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS19

| **Existing Standard** | **Standard from October based on nearest equivalent national technical standard** |
| --- | --- |
| The design and layout of new residential development, including conversions, will accord with the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines. | The design and layout of new residential development, including conversions, will accord with the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines where the Guidelines fall within the nationally described space standards. |
| The design and construction of new development will … be adaptable to reflect changing lifestyles. | Where required by a planning permission, the design and construction of new dwellings shall accord with requirement M4 (2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings) of Part M (access to and use of buildings) of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010 (2015 edition). |
| New development will be designed in an inclusive way to be accessible to all members of the community | Where required by a planning permission, the design of new dwellings shall accord with shall accord with requirement M4 (2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings) of Part M (access to and use of buildings) of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010 (2015 edition). |
| New development will be fit for purpose and adaptable to allow changes to be made to meet the needs of users. | Where required by a planning permission, new dwellings shall accord with requirement M4 (2)(accessible and adaptable dwellings) of Part M (access to and use of buildings) of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010 (2015 edition). |

## Local Plan First Review Saved Policy H5

| **Existing Standard** | **Standard from October based on nearest equivalent national technical standard** |
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| In considering proposals for the conversion of existing properties to provide flats, maisonettes, bedsitters and multiple occupancy, the proposal shall have regard to the Borough’s Residential Layout Guidelines, as set out in supplementary planning guidance. | In considering proposals for the conversion of existing properties to provide flats, maisonettes, bedsitters and multiple occupancy, the proposal shall have regard to the Borough’s Residential Layout Guidelines where the Guidelines fall within the nationally described space standards. |

## Local Plan First Review Saved Policy AP10

| **Existing Standard** | **Standard from October based on nearest equivalent national technical standard** |
| --- | --- |
| In the Harmer Street area shown on the Proposals Map, residential conversions, particularly of upper floors, will be welcomed provided they comply with the Borough Council’s Residential Layout Guidelines, details of which are available as supplementary planning guidance. | In the Harmer Street area shown on the Proposals Map, residential conversions, particularly of upper floors, will be welcomed provided they comply with the Borough Council’s Residential Layout Guidelines where the Guidelines fall within the nationally described space standards. |

## Residential Layout Guidelines Supplementary Planning Guidance

| **Existing Standard** | **Standard from October based on nearest equivalent national technical standard** |
| --- | --- |
| Tables 1 and 3 | The minimum floorspaces for double bedrooms and single bedrooms will no longer apply as at 11.2 sq m and 6.5 sq m respectively, these are less than the nationally described space standards of 11.5 sq m and 7.5 sq m. The minimum floorspaces for living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, kitchen/diners, lounge/diners, bathrooms and WCs, bathrooms only, WCs only, bedsits, and hallways & landings will no longer apply as there is not an equivalent national standard. |
| Remaining guidelines contained in the Supplementary Planning Guidance including:   * Privacy distances and overshadowing * Private garden areas | These will continue to apply. |

Excluding an allowance of 5 litres or fewer per person per day for external water use (as set out in the ‘optional’ requirement G2 of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010)

## Further Information

Written Ministerial Statement – The Rt Hon Eric Pickles March 2015 ‘Steps the government are taking to streamline the planning system, protect the environment, support economic growth and assist locally-led decision making’ – [GOV.UK Speeches](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/planning-update-march-2015)

DCLG Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard, DCLG 2015 – [GOV.UK Publications](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard)