Gravesham Borough Council

Guidance for HMO Amenity Standards

A Guide to the Standards for Amenities and Space Expected in a House in Multiple Occupation within Gravesham.

1. Introduction

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) play an important role in local housing markets across Kent. HMOs are increasingly becoming more diverse as housing pressures, costs rise, and a wider range of residents seek some form of shared accommodation. Gravesham Borough Council wants to ensure that this existing and growing sector has clear guidance on how to develop suitable accommodation with some flexible options based on an understanding of the housing stock and the need for good quality HMOs across the borough.

This guidance is intended to assist in the provision of accommodation of all HMOs with the borough, which contributes to safe and healthy environments for the occupants and their visitors.

On inspection, a risk assessment may determine that it is necessary to take measures to ensure the housing standards are satisfactory for each individual unit of living accommodation, or that variation from these standards is appropriate.

Requirements stated, these are the minimum requirements expected within all Gravesham HMOs, whilst also considering the individual property itself. Non-compliance with such a requirement may not constitute an offence, but a local authority is likely to require it as a condition of the licence which can then be enforced.

The lists and works items noted are not exhaustive and further measures may be required, property specific.

Where landlords and managers have any question or require clarity, please contact the Private Sector Housing Team by phone 01474 337960 or email hmo@gravesham.gov.uk.

2. Minimum bedroom size requirements

Accommodation with facilities shared by occupiers: These standards apply where there is sharing of some or all facilities i.e., HMOs where:

- occupiers live independently of others e.g., single room lettings or bedsit accommodation (kitchen facilities within own room)

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- occupiers forming a group e.g., students, professional persons and others who interact socially.

Room Description	1 Person Unit	2 Person Unit
Bedroom (minimum)	6.51m^2	10.22m^2
Combined bedroom and living space *(minimum)*	10m^2	14m^2
Combined bedroom, living and kitchen *(minimum)*	13m^2	20.5m^2

Notes:

i) 6.51sqm and 10.22sqm are the proposed national minimum size for one and two person HMO rooms. No rooms below 6.51m^2 will be considered as suitable for sleeping.

ii) Bedrooms, living rooms and dining rooms are all classed as habitable rooms and require adequate natural lighting (suitable window) and suitable ventilation (normally by means of an openable window). Dimensions are based on useable room sizes with standard room heights (2.2m-2.3m) and will not consider any floor area where the floor to ceiling height less than 1.5m

iii) The room sizes do not include space for bathroom/shower room or WC. Where ensuite facilities are provided this must be in addition to the space indicated above. Ensuites are not classed as habitable space.

iv) In HMOs without a shared living space, additional shared dining space is required close to a shared kitchen that is no more than 1 floor distance from any letting room it serves.

2.1 Space Standards for Sleeping Accommodation

A bedsit or studio is defined as a room, or rooms, used for sleeping within a building, where some of the basic facilities or amenities for food preparation and hygiene are provided within the accommodation, or in a separate room and for the exclusive use of the occupiers of the bedsit or studio.

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A bedroom is a room within a building used for sleeping, and which does not contain any of the basic facilities. The facilities are either provided in separate rooms and are shared with other people living in the HMO or are provided in separate rooms but for the exclusive use by the occupiers of the bedroom.

A self-contained bedsit/studio or flat is one that contains all the facilities and amenities for food preparation and hygiene within the accommodation.

A maximum of two people are permitted to share a room for sleeping irrespective of age. If there are two occupiers, they must be living together as partners, family members or consenting friends. A room shared by more than two people is overcrowded and may be subject to enforcement action by the local authority.

A room used for sleeping must not be shared by people of the opposite sex who are 10 years old and over, unless they are married or cohabiting/living together in a relationship as husband and wife or in an equivalent relationship in the case of persons of the same sex.

When measuring the size of the room and assessing usable space, the shape of the room should be considered as well as the total floor area. Space taken up by fitted units are counted in the floor area calculation, but chimney breasts, lobbies and en-suite bathroom or shower rooms or other significant obstructions that can reduce the floor area are not.

Rooms must have a minimum floor to ceiling height of at least 2.14m over 75% of the floor area. Any floor area where the ceiling height is less than 1.53m is disregarded as habitable but may be considered as possible storage space.

2.2 Communal Living and Dining Rooms

The property arrangement is to provide communal living space in addition to any space that is required for shared kitchen and dining facilities.

As a guide, a communal living room, should be at least 13m^2 for 3 people, plus 1m^2 for every additional person.

For example: a communal living space for 5 occupants should achieve 15m^2.

If dining facilities are combined with the living room, the room should be at least 14m^2 for 3 people, plus 1m^2 for every additional person.

For example: a combined living & dining room for 5 occupants should achieve 16m^2.

Where there are no communal living space provision bedrooms are to achieve at least 10m^2 for single occupancy.

2.3 Communal Outdoor Space

Where the proposed property benefits from a rear garden, all occupants must have direct, unrestricted access to it from within the internal communal area, therefore, access routes must not infringe upon the privacy of individual letting rooms.

The Local Authority **prohibits** the use of any front curtilage of the premises by any occupants and visitors for use other than entering and exiting the premises (excluding maintenance activities). This action is reasonable and practicable in steps to prevent or reduce anti-social behaviour by persons occupying or visiting the house.

3. Communal Kitchen Facilities

Kitchen facilities should be no more than one floor away from the letting. Where this is not practicable, a dining area of a size suitable for the number of occupants should be provided on the same floor as, and close to the kitchen.

Kitchens must be of an adequate size and shape to enable safe use of food preparation by the number of occupants and the following guidelines for shared kitchens apply.

3.1 Kitchen Size Requirements

Number of Occupants	Number of Kitchens	Each Kitchen (minimum)	Dining Area
1 to 3	1	5m^2	2m^2 per Person
4	1	6m^2	
5	1	7m^2	
6	1	9m^2	
7 to10	1	11m^2	
11 to 15	1	12m^2	
16 to 20	2	11m^2	
21 to 25	2	12m^2	
26 to 30	2	12m^2	
31 to 35	3	12m^2	
36+	Discuss with case officer		

Where all or some of the lettings within the HMO do not contain cooking facilities, such facilities must be provided for sharing with other households. There should be one full set of facilities per 5 persons, irrespective of occupant age.

Some flexibility may be considered in well-managed properties where there are 6 or 7 persons, subject to a risk assessment carried out by the local authority.

Where there are up to 10 occupants, either an additional full set of cooking facilities must be provided, or additional facilities must be provided in an appropriate number of individual lettings where the room is large enough. If two sets of facilities are in the same room, each set must be separated and in distinct areas of the room.

The kitchen size and layout must enable the practical, safe and hygienic use of the kitchen for storage, preparation and cooking of food.

The wall, floor and ceiling surfaces shall be smooth, impervious, and capable of being cleaned.

3.2 Kitchen Facilities

A set of cooking facilities is comprised as follows:

Cooking

Number of Occupants	Number of Kitchens	Cooking Requirement in Each Kitchen
1	Bedsit	A cooker with a 2-ring hob, oven, and grill. Must be permanently and safely installed within a fixed worktop.
2 to 5	1	4-ring hob, oven, and grill facility
6	1	4-ring hob, oven and grill and an additional combined microwave oven and grill.
7 to 10	1	Two 4-ring hobs, Two ovens and grill facility
11 to 15	1	Two 4-ring hob, Two oven and grill and two additional combined microwave oven and grill.

16 to 20	2	Two 4-ring hobs, Two ovens and grill facility
21 to 25	2	Two 4-ring hob, Two oven and grill and an additional combined microwave oven and grill.
26 to 30	2	Two 4-ring hob, Two oven and grill and two additional combined microwave oven and grill.
31 to 35	3	Two 4-ring hob, Two oven and grill and two additional combined microwave oven and grill.
36+	Discuss with case officer	

Sink/drainer

Number of Occupants	Number of Kitchens	Sink/drainer requirement
Up to 5	1	1000mm sink/drainer set on base unit, provided with a constant supply of hot and cold water and properly connected to the drainage system.
6 to 10	1	A double sink/drainer installed as above (2 x sink & drainers) or a single sink & drainer plus a dishwasher.
11 to 15	1	Two double sink/drainer installed (2 x sink & drainers) or a single sink & drainer plus two dishwashers.
16 to 20	2	A double sink/drainer installed as above (2 x sink & drainers) or a single sink & drainer plus a dishwasher.
21 to 25	2	Two double sink/drainer installed (2 x sink & drainers) or a single sink & drainer plus two dishwashers.

26 to 30	2	A double sink/drainer installed (2 x sink & drainers) or a single sink & drainer plus two dishwashers.
31 to 35	3	A double sink/drainer installed (2 x sink & drainers) or a single sink & drainer plus two dishwashers.
36+	Discuss with case officer	

Worktops and splash back

Number of Occupants	Requirements of worktops
All	300mm tiled splash back or its equivalent to be provided to the sink/drainer, worktop and any cooker without an integral splash
One household	1000 mm x 600mm. Worktop must be fixed and made of suitable impervious material.
Up to 5	2000mm x 600mm worktop must be fixed and made of suitable impervious material.
6	2000mm x 600mm worktop must be fixed and made of suitable impervious material, plus additional space for extra appliances.
7 to 10	3000mm x 600mm worktop must be fixed and made of suitable impervious material, plus additional space for extra appliances.
10 +	To be discussed with the case officer

Electrical sockets

Number of Occupants	Requirements of sockets

Up to 5	One suitably located electrical socket for each dedicated appliance such as a cooker, refrigerator and washing machine. 3 double sockets to be provided above worktop level.
6 to 10	One suitably located electrical socket for each dedicated appliance such as a cooker, refrigerator and washing machine. 4 double sockets to be provided above worktop level.
11 to 15	One suitably located electrical socket for each dedicated appliance such as a cooker, refrigerator and washing machine. 5 double sockets to be provided above worktop level.
16 +	One suitably located electrical socket for each dedicated appliance such as a cooker, refrigerator and washing machine. Additional sockets to be discussed with the case officer

Floor covering

A sealed, smooth, impervious, and suitable washable floor covering to cover the complete floor area of the kitchen.

Storage cupboards

1 double wall cupboard or 1 single base cupboard may be provided within individual lets.

The base unit below the sink/ drainer is not acceptable for food storage.

Refrigeration

Number of	Requirements of worktops

Occupants	
Bedsits	Where provided in individual lettings, a small fridge freezer.
Up to 5	Where provided in a shared kitchen, equivalent of 2 worktop height (undercounter) refrigerators both with freezer compartments, or 1 worktop height fridge and 1 worktop height freezer.
6 to 10	Where provided in a shared kitchen, the equivalent of an additional full height refrigerator with freezer compartment.
11+	To be discussed with the case officer

Notes:

i) Kitchen facilities provided in a bedsit should be sited away from the entrance door.

ii) Cookers and hobs are not to be sited below a window.

iii) A kitchen must not be the sole access to a room used for sleeping.

iv) Kitchen facilities must not be installed in a hallway.

v) A humidistat-controlled mechanical extractor must be provided where there is inadequate ventilation by means of a window. Newly converted kitchens must have a mechanical extractor regardless of whether there is an openable window.

vi) Apart from an extractor hood, fixtures and fittings are not to be directly above cooking appliances.

vii) Sufficient refuse receptacles and storage area to be provided, to adequately house the volume of refuse generated from the HMO.

4. Personal Washing and WC Facilities

Amenity Standards refer to “wash facilities” rather than WC’s and full bathrooms

Number of Occupants	Facilities
1 to 4	1 bath or shower “wash facility”, 1 Wash Hand Basin, 1 WC. The WC can be located within the main bathroom
5	1 bath or shower “wash facility”, 1 Wash Hand Basin, 1 WC. 1 additional WC with Wash Hand Basin
6 to 10	2 bath or shower “wash facility”, 2 Wash Hand Basin, 2 WC. NOTE: *where WCs are both contained within full bathrooms, a separate WC and wash hand basin will be required*
11 to 15	3 bath or shower “wash facility”, 3 Wash Hand Basin, 3 WC. NOTE: *where WCs are contained within full bathrooms, a separate WC and wash hand basin will be required*
16 to 20	4 bath or shower “wash facility”, 4 Wash Hand Basin, 4 WC. NOTE: *where WCs are contained within full bathrooms, a separate WC and wash hand basin will be required*
21+	To be discussed with the case officer

Every bath, shower and wash hand basin must be provided with an adequate and continuous supply of hot and cold water and be connected to the drainage system in compliance with current Building Regulations.

Bathrooms and WCs should be within one floor of lettings, and where shared, must be accessible from a common area. WCs and bath/shower rooms must be fitted with a suitable and functioning lock and the surfaces must be impervious and readily cleansable.

Bath/shower rooms and WCs must be adequately ventilated, and bath and shower rooms must be adequately heated, such as by radiator, wall-mounted convection or fan heater, or underfloor heating. Electric bar heaters are not permitted. In new conversions, a mechanical extractor must be installed in addition to any openable window.

The facilities must be adequate for the number of occupiers, and the following is a guide. Fully functioning external WCs are included.

Where a shower cubicle is provided, it must be of a sufficient size that the user can bathe and dress without injury.

All rooms containing baths/showers, WCs and wash hand basins must be adequately

lit, ventilated, and heated.

All shower cubicles to be fully tiled (or similar impervious material) or be complete self-standing cubicle.

The minimum acceptable bath size is 1700 mm x 70 mm and shower cubicle 800mm x 800mm.

5. Fire Safety

HMOs are known to pose a greater risk to the occupants in terms of fire safety than those in single family occupation and are required to satisfy the relevant Housing Act legislation. Most HMOs will require a mains wired, interlinked fire detection system and some will also need an emergency lighting system. For further guidance please consult the final edition of the LACORS fire safety guidance; there are useful worked examples towards the end of the document.

Under the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, some HMOs will also need to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, (often referred to as the RRO or just Fire Safety Order).

Fire Safety Instructions

The fire safety instructions are to be provided to the occupants and must include –

- The evacuation strategy for the building (e.g. stay put or simultaneous evacuation)
- Instructions on how to report a fire (e.g. call 999 or 112, the correct address to give the fire and rescue service)
- Any other instruction that tells residents what they must do when a fire has occurred.

Fire Risk Assessment

You must have a current suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment completed by a competent person. You must also ensure that any significant findings are recorded, and deficiencies found during the assessment are remedied as soon as reasonably practicable.

Fire detection and warning system

All properties should have a suitable fire detection and warning system for the property type and use. All means of escape should be protected against smoke, flames, and obstructions.

Property Size	Fire & Smoke Automatic Detection System (AFD)	Fire Extinguishers	Fire Alarm Test Logbook	Fire Blankets	Carbon Monoxide Alarm	Emergency Lighting
1-3 Floors	Grade D, Category LD2 system Interlinked mains wired smoke alarms and heat detector with integral battery back-up located throughout the escape routes and extended into high risk rooms, including bedrooms. Category LD2: A system	Not currently a requirement within Gravesham	To be supplied and kept at the property. AFD tests are to be recorded.	To be supplied and fit within all kitchens	Yes, ensure a carbon monoxide alarm is equipped in any room used as living accommodation which contains a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers)	Dependent on complexity of the escape & natural lighting levels available

Property Size	Fire & Smoke Automatic Detection System (AFD)	Fire Extinguishers	Fire Alarm Test Logbook	Fire Blankets	Carbon Monoxide Alarm	Emergency Lighting
	incorporating detectors in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all specified rooms or areas that present a high fire risk to occupants, including any kitchen bedrooms and the principal habitable room **Often referred to as Grade D1, LD2[D]**					
4+ Floors	Grade A, LD2 system Panel system with call points. Category LD2: A	Not currently a requirement within Gravesham	To be supplied and kept at the property	To be supplied and fit to all communal kitchens	Yes, ensure a carbon monoxide alarm is equipped in any room used as living accommodation which contains a fixed	Likely yes. Dependent on complexity of the escape & natural lighting levels available

Property Size	Fire & Smoke Automatic Detection System (AFD)	Fire Extinguishers	Fire Alarm Test Logbook	Fire Blankets	Carbon Monoxide Alarm	Emergency Lighting
	system incorporating detectors in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all specified rooms or areas that present a high fire risk to occupants, including any kitchen bedrooms and the principal habitable room		AFD tests are to be recorded.		combustion appliance (excluding gas cooker)	

A completed fire risk assessment for all property sizes is required under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

5.1 Fire Separation

All separating structures (walls, floors, ceilings etc.) between separate lettings, common parts, and kitchens etc., should be constructed to meet an appropriate fire resisting standard to the approval of the local Housing Authority in consultation with the fire

rescue service.

	All Accommodation
Fire Separation	A minimum of 30-minute fire resistance and in some circumstances may be required to provide 60-minute fire resistance.
Loft Hatches	Loft hatches are to achieve at least 30-minute fire resistance, have a lock facility and be kept locked.
Utility Cupboards	Where utility meters are housed under stairs the area will require a minimum of 30-minute fire resistance, protecting the main means of escape.
Cellars	Cellar ceilings are to be fire rated to achieve at least 30-minute fire resistance between the two levels. Often protecting the amin means of escape located above.
Holes & Voids	All visible holes and voids compromising the fire separation are to be filled. Either using intumescent foam, intumescent putty of suitable fire collar.

5.2 Fire Doors

To supply and fit 30-minute fire-resisting (FD30s) door set to all high-risk rooms, kitchen, bedrooms, communal rooms, cellars, understairs etc. Where lighting levels are low or borrowed light is not an option, fire rated viewing/vision panes need to be incorporated into the FD30s.

Fire door specification

Entrance doors opening onto the escape routes are to meet the following specification:

- Each door shall be fitted into a new frameset properly fitted and sealed into the existing/newly created opening with all new architraves
- Each door is to open into the room and not onto the escape route
- Cold smoke seals (to comply with BS EN 1634-1:2014+A1:2018 & BS 476: Part 22) to both jambs and head of door
- Intumescent strips (to comply with BS EN 1634-1:2014+A1:2018 & BS 476: Part 22) to both jambs and head of door
- A controlled self-closing device capable of closing the door securely into its frame from any position and overcome the resistance of the door latch and edge seals. Self-closing devices shall be such that they cannot easily be removed or tampered with
- The doors shall comply with the current British Standard and shall be hung on three non-combustible 100mm steel butt hinges having a melting point of not less than 800oC, and meet British Standard BS EN 1935:2002 with intumescent hinge plates are behind the hinges
- Door stops to be 12.5mm (to both jambs and head of door). To be glued and screwed at 300mm centres.
- Ensure the latch or lock engages the door leaf securely to the frame when the door is in the closed position
- Ensure the door fits plumb and square in the frame
- All fire doors are to comply with the requirements of BS EN 1634-1:2014+A1:2018 & BS 476: Part 22
- All door furniture to be of high melting point (i.e. not Aluminum)
- Where letter boxes are within fire doors, they must be Intumescent letterbox systems to provide at least 30-minute fire separation. Ensure that they meet BS EN 1634-1:2014+A1:2018 & BS 476: Part 22
- The door shall fit properly into the door reveal, the maximum permitted gap between the frames and door is to be 3mm

- Fire doors fitted with key operable locks must be capable of being operated from the inside in the direction of escape without the use of a key. Where a degree of security is required the use of escape mortice deadlocks can be considered. (Any locking device provided for use with a fire door should comply with the mechanical performance of BS EN 12209)

- Any vision panel fitted into the door must not reduce the fire resistance standard of the door. All glazing shall be fitted using a proprietary brand of intumescent putty or similar

- The above works must adhere to all the current Building Regulations, manufacturer's instructions, British Standards including BS 476: Part 22: 1987 or BS EN 1634-1: 2000, and good practice guides. All fire doors should be installed and maintained in accordance with BS 8214-2016

  To Note: No fittings, modifications or other works to the fire door shall be carried out that would interfere with the integrity of the fire door. Modifications are to be in accordance with the fire door manufacturers specification or guidance. Design liability may come into force where alterations or modifications do not comply with the manufacturer's specification or guidance.

Fire Door Instructions

Fire safety instructions must state –

- Fire doors should be shut when not in use

- Residents or their guests should not temper with self-closing devices on fire doors

- Residents should report any fault with, or damage to, fire doors immediately to the managing agent or licence holder

Where to display the information

The instruction information is to be provided in a clear, easy to understand format to all occupants as soon as reasonably practical after they occupy or whenever the above information changes. Any language barriers are to be taken into consideration.

A copy of the instruction information must also be displayed in a conspicuous part of the building. A good place to put this would on the notice board alongside your required contact details and HMO licence (where required).

6. Heating

Dwellings must have both effective insulation and efficient heating with reference to current energy efficiency requirements.

A sufficient and efficient fixed heating system must be provided to all habitable rooms. Radiators are to be fitted with thermostatic valves. Fixed storage heaters are preferred where there is no gas supply. *Convector, fan, or panel heaters are not acceptable forms of heating provisions.*

7. Energy efficiency

- An EPC is not required for an individual room when rented out, as it is not a building, or a building unit designed or altered for separate use. The whole building will require an EPC if sold or rented out.
- Where the property has a valid energy performance certificate (EPC), a minimum rating of band D should be achieved.
- Where practicable, properties with an EPC rating of band E, should be upgraded with one or more of the following insulation measures, having regard to the minimum energy efficiency values set out in the Building Regulations Approved Document L1B:
- Loft insulation to achieve a depth of at least 270mm
- Cavity wall insulation
- Insulated dry lining to sloping eaves ceilings and the interior surfaces of dormer windows.
- Insulation to floors, where they extend over cellars, basements, or other unheated voids.
- Insulated drylining to external solid brick walls (i.e., non cavity construction).

- Replacement double glazing or secondary glazing. Loft hatches should be insulated, draught proofed, and fire rated.
- Hot water storage cylinders should be adequately insulated and pipes carrying hot water, where they pass through unheated areas, should be lagged.
- Suspended timber floors over cellars, should be insulated to the underside, wherever practicable, using a minimum of 150mm of mineral fibre insulation (or equivalent rigid foam insulation) between the floor joists.

8. Services

Each room being used as a sleeping room is to have at least 3 double electrical socket outlets for the occupiers use.

Boilers, consumer units and utility meters are not permitted in rooms designed for sleeping and will require relocation to an accessible communal area. Utility meters, boiler and consumer units are to be readily accessible 24/7.

9. Additional Considerations

Compliance with these standards does not negate the need for compliance with other statutory provisions, including the Housing Act 2004 and supporting Regulations and guidance.

Works items and amenity standards are not exhaustive and further works may be required where legislation changes or updates.

Private Sector Housing will inspect a property/HMO on its own merit, and we fully understand each HMO is unique.

Private Sector Housing will be prepared to consider any reasonable action to reduce hazards to an acceptable level. If you have alternative remedy(s) please present them for Private Sector Housing to consider the proposed solution(s).

Gravesham Borough Council work in partnership with Kent Fire Rescue Services and South Thames Gateway Building Control.