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Y Grŵp Addysg a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus
Education and Public Services Group

Beautiful Homes and Spaces

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QUALITY REQUIREMENTS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING¹

“Beautiful Homes and Spaces” (BHS) sets out minimum functional quality standards for new and rehabilitated general needs affordable homes. The Welsh Government also encourages housing providers and their consultants to look at other sources of best practice and guidance.

Homes and their environs should be visually attractive as a result of good space planning and architectural design, be of high quality and meet family and individual needs.

Housing quality is as much about the value of the external spaces created as it is about the design of the homes. It is important that use is made of “best practice” guidance available to designers to ensure a high quality environment is created.

The responsibility for producing well designed homes is in hands of housing providers and the consultants they employ. Guidance can only provide the basic building blocks and therefore client organisations and members of the design team should exercise their responsibility and take a critical interest.

Where homes are being refurbished, providers should (if practicable and cost effective to do so), take all opportunities to meet the standard but where this is not possible have adequate space and facilities for everyday living.

¹ “Affordable Housing” is defined in Technical Advice Note 12
<https://gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-12-design>

REQUIREMENTS

1. Homes should be of high quality, innovative and sustainable

This means;

- a) Homes should demonstrate that they represent value for money and “whole life cost” analysis should be a material consideration when assessing future maintenance costs against initial capital cost.
- b) Opportunities should be taken to embrace Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). This includes various construction methods and technologies that can either replace traditional methods (e.g. using innovative technological or digital advancements), or complement them (e.g. producing components for hybrid construction that reduce resource required on-site and/or speed up assembly). Further advice on MMC definitions can be found [here](#). Delivery of homes via MMC should be viewed as a technological “step change” and not merely the inclusion of elements of the construction that are already traditionally produced off-site.
- c) Considering best practice in utilising a “circular economy” process, for example by;
 - Choosing materials that are capable of being recycled and maximising the use of timber in construction to help Wales meet its carbon reduction targets.
 - Ensuring there is sufficient provision for the collection of key recyclables and storage of food waste in homes.
 - Reducing embodied carbon by utilising carbon sink and low carbon materials, processes and products in buildings.

2. Homes should be flexible, responsive to the changing needs of the occupants, meet the changing needs of a variety of households who will occupy the building over its life and be of sufficient size.

This means;

- a) Rooms are large enough to take all the furniture occupants can reasonably be expected to need.
- b) The approach to each home, including the point of access, stairs, lifts and circulation is designed to enable easy movement of furniture and belongings to rooms within the home.
- c) Homes have adequate and convenient internal and external storage.
- d) Homes meet the minimum space standards in Appendix A and Appendix B.
- e) All houses have a shower (in addition to a bath) and are provided with adequate space on the ground floor with plumbing, electrical and mechanical ventilation connections to allow for the future installation of a barrier free shower facility suitable for use by a person in a wheelchair. Homes with occupancy of 6 or more have the barrier free shower facility installed.

- f) All flats and bungalows have a shower in addition to a bath and bungalows, ground floor flats and flats served by a lift have a bathroom designed so it is capable of adaptation for use by a person in a wheelchair.
- g) Considering how technology (such as mechanical ventilation with heat recovery and hybrid heating systems) might impact on space requirements.
- h) Homes should be designed to maintain the dignity of occupants and visitors by ensuring bathrooms and shower rooms (excluding en suite) do not open directly off habitable rooms or kitchens.
- i) Providing sufficient space for occupants to set up a home office in a suitable room to allow home working.
- j) Where practicable make internal walls non load bearing to enable future flexibility / adaptability and consider providing space in “one bedroom” homes for potential “sleep over”.
- k) Consideration should be given to MMC techniques and innovation that can maximise flexibility for adaptations and allow homes to respond to occupants’ needs over a building / occupant’s lifetime.

3. Homes should be safe and secure.

This means;

- a) Developments are designed to comply fully with the “Secured by Design” (SBD) Gold standard. <https://www.securedbydesign.com/>
- b) Mixed tenure developments, not fully under the control of the housing provider must meet (as a minimum) the Security Standard elements of SBD.
- c) Kitchens and bathrooms are functional and help reduce the risk of accidents.
- d) Stairs are designed to minimise accidents and not create unnecessary inconvenience by allowing sufficient space for a future stair lift and to facilitate the movement of furniture between floors.
- e) Homes are provided with sufficient, well located and convenient electrical socket outlets.
- f) Rear gardens are safe for small children to play in, are convenient to use and are easy to maintain.
- g) Car parking provision is conveniently situated and reflects the location and anticipated levels of car ownership.
- h) Homes should be fitted with carbon monoxide detectors.

Appendix A

Homes should be of sufficient size to meet the needs of occupants, have a convenient layout for everyday living and have adequate circulation space.

Space requirements will be met where:

- The dwelling provides at least the Gross Internal (floor) Area (GIA) and built-in storage area set out in Appendix B.
- Accessibility requirements will be satisfied if dwellings are designed to meet the Lifetime Homes Standards as published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/pages/revised-design-criteria.html>
- Homes are provided with adequate facilities for clothes washing, drying and a dedicated airing cupboard containing an appropriate source of heat.
- A dwelling with two or more bed spaces has at least one double (or twin) bedroom.
- Critical room dimensions meet intended purposes, in particular;
 - A single bedroom must have a floor area of at least 6.5m² and must be at least 2.1m wide.
 - A double or twin bedroom must have a floor area of at least 11.5m².
 - One double (or twin bedroom) must be at least 2.75m wide and every other double (or twin) bedroom must be at least 2.55m wide.
- The minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the GIA.
- Gross Internal (floor) Area (GIA) is measured to the internal finished surfaces of main containing walls on each floor, including private staircases, internal partitions, flues and ducts; it excludes external dustbin enclosures or stores, any porch open to the air or enclosed.
- The measurement of floor area of common access flats excludes the area of the communal stairs and circulation space.
- The measurement of floor areas of individual ground floor external access flats includes the area occupied by the staircase and entrance hall necessary to gain access to the first floor flat. The areas of the ground floor and upper floor flats (walk-up) shall be averaged in order to make comparisons against the minimum floor areas shown above.
- Space for mechanical and electrical installations should be provided in addition to the above general storage areas.
- The areas in the table are based on single or two storey homes and it is recognised that larger homes and homes over two storeys will have a proportionate increase in area.

Appendix B

Minimum Floor Areas

Home Designation	Home Type	Floor Area (GIA) m2	General Storage m2 (included in GIA)
7P4B	2 Storey House	114	3
6P4B	2 Storey House	110	3
5P3B	2 Storey House	93	2.5
4P3B	2 Storey House	88	2.5
4P2B	2 Storey House	83	2.5
3P2B	2 Storey House	74	2
3P2B	Bungalow	58	2
3P2B	Flat – Walk up	65	2
3P2B	Flat – Common access	58	2
2P1B	Flat – Walk up	53	1.5
2P1B	Flat – Common access	50	1.5