

Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Space Standards

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1. Introduction

1.1 Status of Aberdeen Planning Guidance

This Aberdeen Planning Guidance (APG) supports the Development Plan and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

This APG expands upon the following Aberdeen Local Development Plan policies:

- Policy D2: Amenity
- Policy H4: Housing Mix and Need

1.2 Introduction to Topic / Background

Space standards have several positive effects, such as good placemaking, better health and wellbeing for residents and users and being climate change ready. Space allows flexibility within units to adapt an internal space to meet the needs of a home environment and circumstance and within outside space, allows for a number of differing uses, be it access to open space, the ability to grow food, or hang washing. Access to open space has proven benefits to improve the mental and physical health and wellbeing of individuals.

1.3 Climate Change

The document aligns the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals such as Goal 3 good health and wellbeing, Goal 11 Sustainable cities and communities. The provision of internal space enables adaptability and flexibility of the internal layout for the lifetime of the inhabitant and of the building.

Aberdeen Adapts Goal 1: Protecting buildings and historic assets notes the benefits of green space and permeable surfaces around buildings, to absorb rainfall and reduce flood risk. Providing green space in the immediate vicinity of a building within a development will ensure this goal.

2.Aberdeen Planning Guidance

2.1 Internal floor space

A housing mix is required to meet the diverse housing need in the area; this includes older people and disabled people. Where possible, housing units should demonstrate a design with accessibility and future adaptability in mind. A mix of unit sizes and housing types will have a positive impact on ensuring the delivery of varied and sustainable communities. This mix should respond to the differing needs of residents, immediate site conditions and citywide objectives. As a general principle an inclusive approach to design should be taken to ensure that buildings are accessible to as wide a range of people as possible. Solutions to make houses accessible should be integral to a design rather than an afterthought added in order to meet duties under building standards or other legislation.

The housing mix should reflect market and affordable housing contributions from developments over 50 units, and for developments of fewer than 50 units, a suitable mix of dwelling types and tenures will be provided in the interests of placemaking and local housing need and demand.

In order to ensure satisfactory amenity, dwellings should not fall below the following minimum internal floor areas:

52m² One bedroom dwelling;

66m² Two bedroom dwelling;

91m² Three bedroom dwelling;

100m² Four bedrooms dwelling

For affordable housing there are further defined space standards. These are required to be met.

2.2 Private Open Space

Provide well defined, functional, good quality private gardens to all houses and ground floor flats

There should be a clear distinction between public and private spaces, defined by appropriate boundaries such as walls, railings or hedges both to the street edge and between feus.

Private and communal gardens should be designed for use by residents for a range of functions, including space for play, seating, food growing, tree planting and drying laundry. Outdoor taps and/or rainwater harvesting may be needed. Wooden fencing can be used to separate private back gardens but should not be used in the public realm.

Consideration should be given to different heights of fencing to allow the communication between neighbours and to add some visual interest.

A key factor in ensuring space is usable is its capacity to receive sunlight. This will be affected by the position of existing and proposed buildings, as well as tree planting.

New development has to be adaptable. To help meet the changing needs of residents, it is beneficial for there to be sufficient space in gardens for houses to be extended while retaining reasonably sized gardens. Developers should demonstrate how this can be achieved.

Ground floor flats should generally be provided with private gardens of a minimum depth of 3m, which open directly on to communal gardens. Where this is not the case, patio doors and a defined threshold space should be provided.

Private front gardens have an important role in softening urban environments by providing planting on streets. They also provide an intermediate space between the public realm and the privacy of dwellings. The impact of driveways on the continuity of boundary treatments and street tree planting should be considered.

Where private gardens cannot be provided or where their depth is limited (for example less than 3m), there will be a greater need for street trees to be provided.

Private communal grounds should be well proportioned, well orientated and secluded from vehicles. Narrow peripheral spaces, subject to overshadowing will not be acceptable. Residents should not normally have to cross streets and car parking to access private communal greenspaces. The provision of private communal gardens for Houses of Multiple Occupation is encouraged.

Where it is difficult to achieve the areas normally required for private open space - for example, because of a need to adhere to a spatial pattern in an area, the inclusion of balconies or roof terraces may be seen as a mitigating measure. Where they are included, it should be demonstrated that they will benefit from adequate sunlight or have an outstanding view, preserve reasonable privacy and have an area that is not less than 5% of the net floor area of the dwelling.

The size of gardens can contribute to the character and attractiveness of an area. This is particularly the case in villa areas. Gardens of a similar size to neighbouring gardens are likely to be required in order to preserve the character of the area.

2.3 Private and shared gardens for flats.

This drawing is sliced through a courtyard development to show its interior and street side. It shows small private front gardens with private rear gardens opening on to a communal space. Additional space is also required in gardens where there is insufficient natural sunlight. North facing gardens should be longer to compensate for this (see Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Amenity for sunlight calculations). Private garden grounds need to be of an adequate width and shape to be attractive and useable for residents. More information can be found in the Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Landscape.



2.4 The length of private gardens

Gardens should be designed to allow them to be used for a range of activities and for houses to be adapted and extended over time. Rear gardens of houses up to 2 storey in height should be an average length of at least 9 metres and houses of more than 2 storey should have garden lengths of at least 11 metres. This also ensures that neighbouring amenity can be protected. Excessive changes in level should not be taken up across private back gardens. Where housing is set out across sloping ground, useable terraced space should be provided. High retaining walls should be avoided. More information can be found in the Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Landscape.



2.5 Residential Homes and Care Homes

Particular attention should be paid to the orientation of care homes and long term residential homes. Residents should be able to access a garden space that is attractive, welcoming, well lit by natural light throughout the year, and which allows a circuitous walking route to be created.

2.6 Conversion

Reusing and converting existing building stock is encouraged, particularly as it is a more sustainable approach than demolition and rebuild. Each proposal will be considered on an individual, case-by-case basis. Conversions can present a unique challenge due to the previous use, scale, design and surrounding context of the existing building. The space standards noted above should still be achieved wherever possible in conversions, but the Council acknowledges that due to various factors such as: historic interest, statutory designations and the location and floorplates of existing buildings, it may be necessary to compromise on the floor areas where there is no feasible alternative or where other benefits would be achieved (for example the retention of historic fabric and/or floor plan). Where minimum space standards cannot be achieved in conversions, the amenity for occupants should be mitigated and enhanced in other ways, for example by ensuring a good outlook, ample daylight receipt, access to private external amenity space etc). In all circumstances an appropriate quality of amenity must be achieved, on balance.

Given the often complex nature of conversions, applicants are strongly encouraged to utilise the Council's Pre-Application Enquiry service prior to the submission of a formal planning application. Further details of the pre-application service can be found on the Council's website: <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building/planning-applications/apply-planning-permission/pre-application-advice>