

Interim Policy on the Conversion and Sub-Division of Buildings for Residential Uses

Interim Policy Conversion and Sub-Division of Buildings for Residential Use

The sub-division of dwelling houses and commercial buildings into smaller residential units will be allowed in the following circumstances:

- a. the building is capable of providing the number of units or use proposed to an acceptable standard of accommodation providing adequate levels of privacy and amenity for existing and future residents, and meeting the Government's Technical Housing Standards² ;
- b. the building is located in an area with a mix of dwelling types, and the proposal would not lead to an unacceptable change in character;
- c. the proposed development would not exacerbate any shortage or oversupply of particular sizes and types of dwellings in the local housing stock;
- d. the amenity of nearby properties will not be unduly affected as a result of the development;
- e. the proposed development will provide adequate provisions of, and access to, parking (cycle and/or vehicle, as appropriate), refuse storage and collection, and amenity space where deemed necessary; and
- f. the proposal would not give rise to conditions prejudicial to highway safety.

Conversion of properties to provide student or communal living space will be considered against these criteria taking into account the nature of the proposal and its location relative to the demand which it would be serving.

The sub-division of existing houses and some commercial buildings can help contribute to the provision of additional, smaller residential dwellings to meet local needs. However, it also often results in the loss of much needed family housing. Where multiple properties in close proximity are changed through conversion, the character of an area has the potential to fundamentally change. Proposals for such development will, therefore, be considered within the context of the impact they would have on the character on the area and whether it would result in the oversupply or unacceptable loss of particular dwelling types.

Whilst much of our existing dwelling stock is appropriate for conversion, there are many types of building that do not lend themselves to sub-division due to their original size and design. As such, development needs to be carefully managed to ensure it results in good quality living accommodation for future occupiers, and does not lead to unacceptable impacts for other residents living nearby. Planning applications will need to demonstrate that the buildings are capable of being sub-divided in such a way that results in an acceptable standard of accommodation. The Council will consider the size of the proposed units against nationally-described space standards¹ (extract shown in Figure 4 below) and the impact that the proposal would have on the amenity of nearby properties. Layouts should be designed to retain / achieve a reasonable standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers (e.g. avoiding ground floor bedrooms located directly onto pavements), achieve vertical 'stacking' wherever possible (i.e. similar room types above/below each other) as well as horizontal alignment of similar rooms to reflect the nature of such rooms and any associated noise/impact transference.

¹ Technical housing standards – described spaced standard (CLG, 2015)

Space for waste and recycling receptacles must be incorporated into the scheme so that they are located close enough to serve the new dwellings and, at the same time, suitably distanced away from windows and away from public views from the street. Provision should also be made for secure cycle storage.

Sub-dividing houses into numerous dwellings can lead to an increased demand for vehicle parking. Provision should be made for off-street parking wherever possible, in line with the standards set out in the Tees Valley Design Guide and Specification. In circumstances where this is not possible, proposals will only be acceptable if there is sufficient opportunity for on-street parking and/or the location of the scheme means a reduced level of parking provision would be appropriate. In all circumstances, development must not result in a situation that would compromise the safety of highway users.

Matters such as noise transference and fire safety are controlled separately by Building Control legislation, although these matters may need to be considered at the planning application/design stage to ensure acceptable standards of accommodation for existing and future occupiers.

Conversion of properties where there is shared communal space can often raise issues of where bins, cycles and communal outdoor space is located relative to windows within the property which can in turn lead to direct, long term privacy and amenity issues for residents, particularly those at ground floor. Any ground floor windows onto communal space should be carefully considered to ensure the scheme does not prevent future residents achieving a reasonable level of privacy and amenity.

It is recognised that individual units for student and communal accommodation may fall below the nationally prescribed space standards. However, proposals for such accommodation will also be expected to provide a high standard in terms of the space, usability, privacy and amenity which is suitable for long term accommodation and may also provide an element of communal space.

Figure 4: Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m²)

Number of bedrooms(b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

* Notes (added 19 May 2016):

1. Built-in storage areas are included within the overall GIAs and include an allowance of 0.5m² for fixed services or equipment such as a hot water cylinder, boiler or heat exchanger.
2. GIAs for one storey dwellings include enough space for one bedroom and one additional WC (or shower room) in dwellings with 5 or more bedspaces. GIAs for two and three storey dwellings include enough space for one bathroom and one additional WC (or shower room). Additional sanitary facilities may be included without increasing the GIA provided that all aspects of the space standards have been met.
3. Where a 1bed 1person has a shower room instead of a bathroom, the floor area may be reduced from 39m² to 37m², as shown bracketed.
4. Furnished layouts are not required to demonstrate compliance.

Source: Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard – DCLG, March 2015.

