

Guide to Amenity Standards applicable to dwellings subject to selective licensing

CONSULTATION DRAFT

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Further related guides can be obtained from: www.reading.gov.uk/hmo

Private Sector Housing Team
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

Introduction

This document provides guidance on the type and number of amenities the Council will be looking for when making licensing decisions relating to selective licensing within the borough. It is intended to help potential licence holders and their managers to identify what is likely to be required in dwellings that are subject to selective licensing. It does not include guidance on amenities in properties that may fall within the scope of mandatory or additional HMO licensing, as this is covered in a separate document.

Application of these guidelines

Properties covered by selective licensing do not have prescribed standards set in law. However, we will have regard to the guidance in this document when assessing the suitability of a property that needs a selective licence. The purposes of this guidance are:

- To promote consistency in approach to dwellings covered by selective licensing.
- To ensure occupiers have safe and convenient access to facilities within their home.

This guidance will be amended if there are changes in legislation, national guidance, or relevant case law.

We will normally expect amenities in the property to meet the guidance set out in this document. This is because we believe the guidelines ensure a reasonable provision of amenities for occupiers. There may be occasions when we set licence conditions requiring existing amenities to be improved. Any improvements required will be in line with these guidelines.

As part of the licence application process, we will consider representations from applicants to deviate from this guidance. Please note, however, that it is the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate that alternative proposals will be satisfactory. These guidelines will also be applied to applications for licences to be varied.

Prospective licence holders should also be aware of the following:-

- The Council is required to ensure category 1 hazards identified following an assessment using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System are removed from licensable premises.
- Where the installation of additional amenities is required as a condition of the licence (for example the creation of an additional bathroom), licence holders must be aware of any minimum room sizes set out in this document. Care must be taken to ensure the installation of the new amenity does not result in another room becoming too small for its intended use.

- Planning permission may be required for some works needed to meet these guidelines. For example, an extension to create more space for amenities that is not covered by permitted development rights will require planning permission. Building regulation approval will also be required for many types of construction works. As well as ensuring the basic soundness of the structure, areas that could be affected may include fire safety, installation of new plumbing or drainage and installation of new electrical circuits and switch gear. Landlords must seek advice if they are in any doubt.
- Planning Control and Building Control are separate regulatory regimes. The granting of a licence or compliance with the standards in this guide does not mean that planning permission or building regulations approval has been granted.

Miscellaneous recommended facilities

While not forming part of our guidelines, we recommend the following facilities be made available for the use of occupiers:-

- External cycle storage on site. This will help reduce damage to internal décor from bicycles being wheeled through.
- Where feasible, access for people with disabilities.

Heating

Adverse health effects are known to begin once the internal temperature falls below 19 °C. It is important that occupiers have control of temperature in their individual rooms.

Locally agreed guidance

Each bedroom and living room shall be equipped with an adequate means of space heating. The Council believes this can be achieved by complying with the following:

- The heating appliance can maintain an internal temperature of 19 °C when the outside temperature is -1 °C.
- The heating appliance is controllable by the occupier, either directly or using features such as thermostatic radiator valves.

Heating appliances should be permanently fixed (not portable) to reduce the risk of fire.

The Council's locally agreed standard requires that each shower room or bathroom requires a suitable fixed heating appliance capable of maintaining the room at a temperature of 19 °C when the outside temperature is -1 °C, unless deemed unnecessary upon inspection. As a guide, bathrooms with external walls should have heating. The reason for the above is to reduce the likelihood of localised spots

of excessively cold conditions in the building. This guideline will also serve to reduce damage caused by condensation.

When selecting heating arrangements, applicants should factor in any existing insulation arrangements.

Hot water supply

Ideally hot water in the property will be produced 'on demand' by a suitable appliance. If the supply is provided by a cylinder that normally produces hot water using off-peak electricity, the cylinder should also be fitted with a secondary heating element connected to the on-peak supply to allow additional hot water to be produced if the stored supply runs out during the day.

Kitchen amenities

Food preparation areas should be in good repair and contain the following:

- A sink on base unit supplied with an integral drainer, constant hot and cold running water, trapped drainage and tiled splashback.
- A cooker with four rings or burners and an oven (or built in equivalents). In smaller dwellings with only one occupier, a two-ring hob and oven will be sufficient. It is not acceptable to provide a microwave or an air fryer as the only appliance for cooking. If the property is let unfurnished, there must be a space available in which a suitable sized cooker can be installed. This must have a properly installed gas or electrical connection point.
- Hobs must be securely fixed and located so it is next to a work surface and so the rings or burners match the height of the adjacent work surfaces.
- A fixed worktop of impervious material for food preparation.
- Cupboards and drawers for the storage of cutlery, utensils, crockery, pans, food and other items.
- A fridge freezer. For smaller dwellings occupied by one person, a fridge with integral ice box is acceptable. If the property is let unfurnished, there must be space in which this appliance can be placed along with a suitable plug socket.
- A window opening directly to outside air is the minimum requirement for ventilation. If a window is not available, a suitable extractor fan or extract hood should be installed.
- Space for a washer-dryer to be installed that allows drainage or ventilation to the outside.
- A bin (or space for a bin) for storing refuse.

Bathrooms and toilet amenities

- There must be at least one toilet, wash hand basin and either shower or bath available in the dwelling. The toilet does not have to be in the same room as the shower or bath, but any room containing a toilet must also have a wash hand basin.
- All baths and wash hand basins must be connected to a source of running hot and cold water. Similarly, any shower head must be connected to a source of running hot and cold water.
- Baths, showers and toilets shall not be provided in rooms containing facilities for the storage, preparation and cooking of food.
- Bathrooms and toilet compartments must have a window that opens to the outside or a suitable extractor fan.
- Bath or shower rooms should provide enough space for the facilities and for safe changing and drying. The flooring around the shower/bath must be both slip- and water-resistant.
- Any shower cubicle should have fully tiled walls or be self-standing cubicles.
- The walls and floor of any bathroom or shower room should be reasonably smooth and non-absorbent and capable of being readily cleaned.

Sleeping accommodation

The number of occupiers for which a property is suitable will depend on the number of bedrooms. As a guideline:

- A dwelling containing one bedroom is suitable for up to two people.
- A dwelling containing two bedrooms is suitable for up to four people.
- A dwelling containing three bedrooms is suitable for up to six people.
- A dwelling containing four bedrooms is suitable for up to seven people.

It is important to note these are guidelines. An exact determination on suitability will depend on size of the bedrooms and the ages, sexes, and relationships of the occupiers. To prevent undue homelessness, the Council does not propose to impose occupancy limits through licensing but rather to deal with overcrowding on a case-by-case basis following inspection using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and its powers under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004.