

Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS)

Introduction

This report has been produced to support 'Policy Ho07. Internal Space Standards' in the new Leicester City Local Plan. Policy Ho07 seeks to introduce Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) to new developments in the city.

In October 2015, the government introduced a new nationally described space standard, which set out detailed guidance on the minimum size of new homes.

Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) must determine whether there is the need to establish the NDSS requirements before adopting the standards as part of their Local Plans.

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that local planning authorities must provide justification for requiring internal space standard policies and should take account of the following areas:

- need – *'evidence should be provided on the size and type of dwellings currently being built in the area, to ensure the impacts of adopting space standards can be properly assessed, for example, to consider any potential impact on meeting demand for starter homes.'*
- viability – *'the impact of adopting the space standard should be considered as part of a plan's viability assessment with account taken of the impact of potentially larger dwellings on land supply. Local planning authorities will also need to consider impacts on affordability where a space standard is to be adopted.'*
- timing – *'there may need to be a reasonable transitional period following adoption of a new policy on space standards to enable developers to factor the cost of space standards into future land acquisitions.'*

This report, therefore, acts as an evidenced based paper to support the need to include the NDSS to apply to all new developments in Leicester.

Planning Policy Context

National

The governments standard deals with internal space within new dwellings that sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings.

The requirement of the standard is to determine whether new developments comply with requirements for bedrooms, storage and internal areas.

The standard requires that:

- a. the dwelling provides at least the gross internal floor area and built-in storage area set out below
- b. a dwelling with two or more bedspaces has at least one double (or twin) bedroom
- c. in order to provide one bedspace, a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5m² and is at least 2.15m wide
- d. in order to provide two bedspaces, a double (or twin bedroom) has a floor area of at least 11.5m²
- e. one double (or twin bedroom) is at least 2.75m wide and every other double (or twin) bedroom is at least 2.55m wide
- f. any area with a headroom of less than 1.5m is not counted within the Gross Internal Area unless used solely for storage (if the area under the stairs is to be used for storage, assume a general floor area of 1m² within the Gross Internal Area)
- g. any other area that is used solely for storage and has a headroom of 900-1500mm (such as under eaves) is counted at 50% of its floor area, and any area lower than 900mm is not counted at all
- h. a built-in wardrobe counts towards the Gross Internal Area and bedroom floor area requirements, but should not reduce the effective width of the room below the minimum widths set out above. The built-in area in excess of 0.72m² in a double bedroom and 0.36m² in a single bedroom counts towards the built-in storage requirement
- i. the minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area

The National Planning Policy Framework says that local planning authorities should identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand.

Where a local planning authority wishes to require an internal space standard, they should only do so by reference in their Local Plan to the nationally described space standard.

Local

The Leicester City Local Plan is expected to be formally adopted in 2023, replacing both the saved policies from the City of Leicester Local Plan 1996 – 2016 and the Core Strategy adopted in 2014.

Policy Ho07 - Internal Space Standards, within Chapter 5 Housing requires that :-
'All proposals for new dwellings must meet the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS) as a minimum'.

Policy Ho07 will ensure that residents have appropriate living conditions and to enable homes to be fully fit for purpose.

NDSS evidence Leicester

Need

The council recognises the importance of decent space standards, to enable homes to be fully fit for purpose. For many years, the council informally adopted its own minimum floor areas for new build affordable housing and these were successfully achieved.

Following on from 2015 when the government introduced the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS), which deals with internal space within new dwellings, regardless of tenure. Emerging evidence has demonstrated a growing concern about the quality of new homes.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 below, shows information regarding Major (Largescale & Smallscale) and Minor applications received and completed between July 2019 – January 2022. The evidenced provided, examines a range of size and type of dwellings being built in Leicester ensuring the space standards can be properly assessed.

The floor space schedule template was adopted as part of Leicester City Council Corporate Guidance in October 2019 and was added as a requirement to the already approved Local Validation List. Prior to official approval the council were advising applicants and agents to start completing the floor space schedule template in mid 2019.


Each table reviews the Gross Internal Area (GIA) from the floorplans / template submitted as part of the application. The information is compared with the government set space standards to understand whether the developments are compliant with the NDSS.


The tables take into account any rooms/ units within the development that would be exempt from having to meet the standards. These include studio flats, any form of student accommodation and hotel / hostel rooms.


The final column in the tables demonstrates how compliant the development is with NDSS by giving a green, orange or red rating.


Key

% of compliant rooms in the development

 75 – 100 % of compliant rooms

 50 – 75 % of compliant rooms

 0 – 50 % of compliant rooms

 Development exempt from meeting NDSS

Largescale major developments

From July 2019 to May 2022, 7 largescale major residential developments were completed in Leicester City. Figure 1 shows a pie chart that displays whether they had submitted a completed floorspace schedule template as required with the validation process.

Only 3 developments (43%) had a submitted a floorspace schedule in their applications.

Figure 1

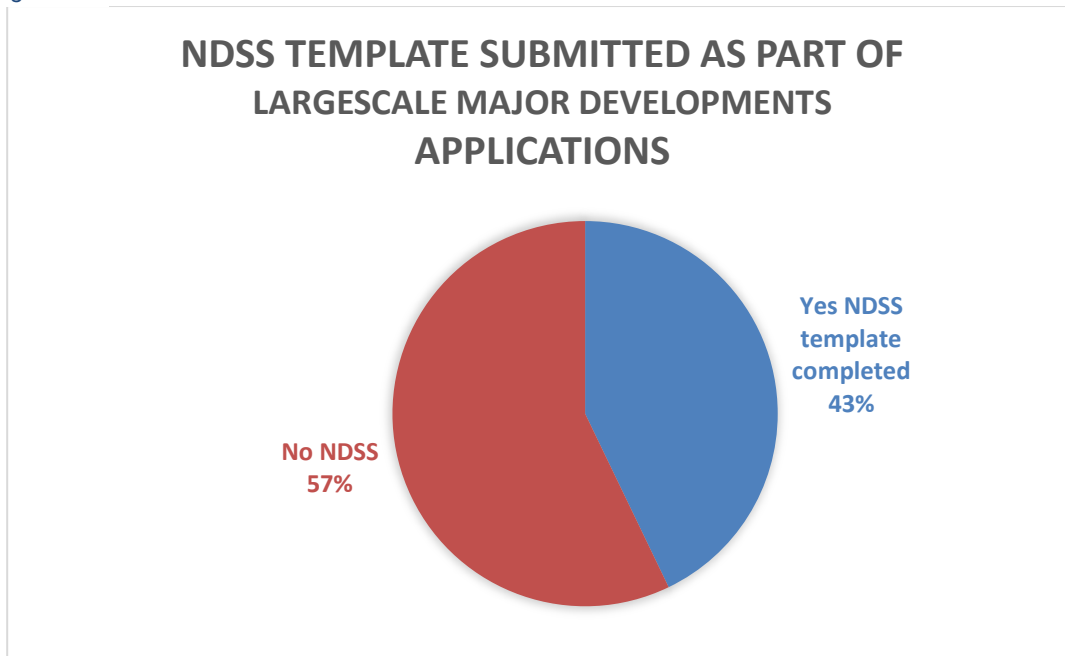


Table 1

Table 1 below reviews how many rooms in each development were required to meet the NDSS standards, with the final column giving a score rating based of compliance.

Application ref No.	Development type	Area	Total No. of Bedrooms	Total No. of rooms required to meet NDSS	No. of rooms that meet NDSS	%
20210461	Residential (Class C3)	Castle	332	322	38	11.8
20200942	Residential (Class C3)	Castle	351	231	172	74.5

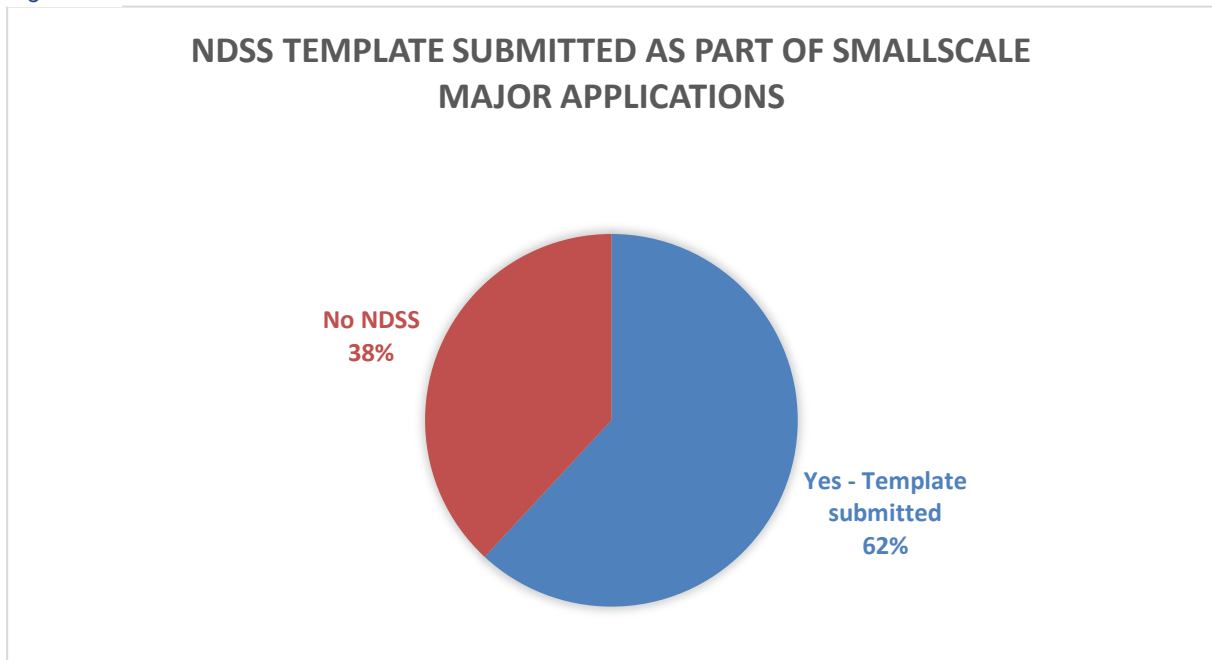
20200644	Student accommodation	Castle	475	Exempt – student accommodation	n/a	Exempt
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Smallscale major developments

From July 2019 to May 2022, 21 smallscale major residential developments were completed in Leicester City. Figure 2 shows a pie chart that displays whether the 21 developments had submitted a completed floorspace schedule template as required with the validation process.

13 developments (62%) had a submitted a floorspace schedule in their applications.

Figure 2



The 13 smallscale major developments that submitted the floorspace schedule as part of the application are examined below to see if the developments meet the NDSS.

Table 2 below reviews each development through displaying the number of rooms in the development and how many rooms are expected to meet the NDSS. The final column gives an overall score rating based of the percentage of rooms that comply with the space standards.

Table 2

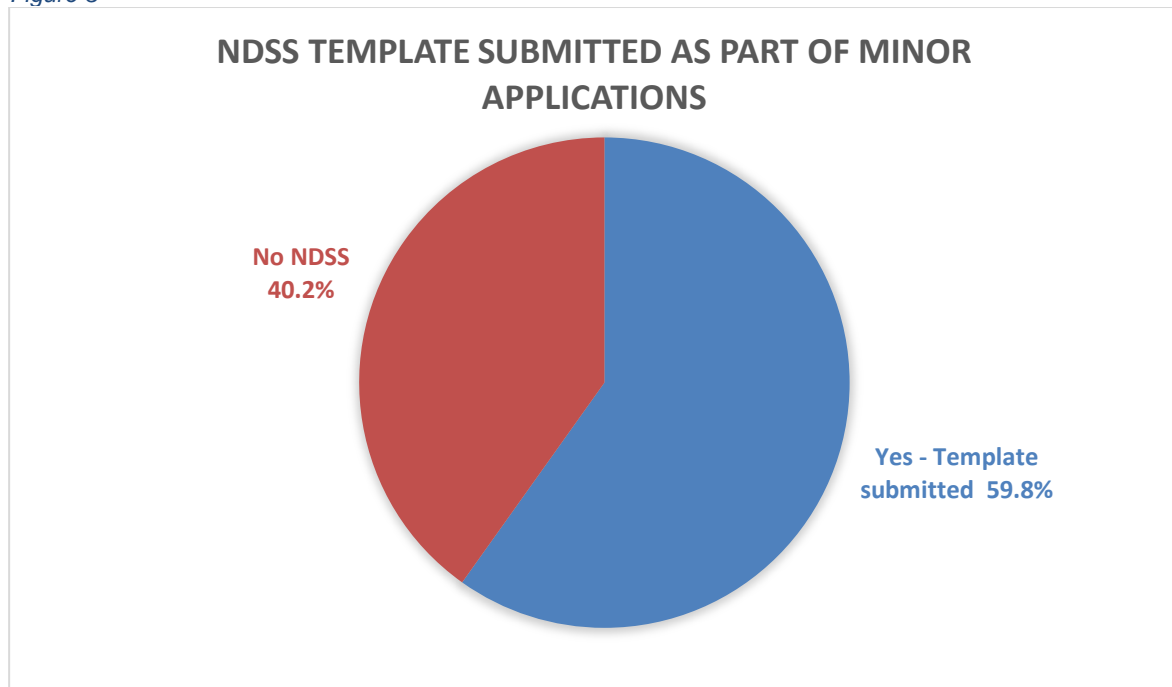
Application ref No.	Development type	Area	Total No. of Bedrooms	Total No. of rooms required to meet NDSS	No. of rooms that meet NDSS	%
20210536	Residential (Class C3)	Castle	10	10	9	90
20201470	Student accommodation	Castle	31	Exempt - student accommodation	n/a	Exempt
20201190	Residential (Class C3)	Knighton	15	15	15	100
20201133	Student accommodation	Castle	61	Exempt - student accommodation	n/a	Exempt
20201009	Student accommodation	Castle	267	Exempt - student accommodation	n/a	Exempt
20200801	Residential (Class C3)	Abbey	21	21	0	0
20200791	Residential (Class C3)	Abbey	42	42	40	95.2
20192131	Residential (Class C3)	Castle	11	11	8	72.7
20192102	Residential (Class C3)	Abbey	72	72	10	13.9
20200287	Residential (Class C3)	Saffron	11	11	11	100
20210371	Residential (Class C3)	Abbey	11	11	11	100
20191548	Hotel (Class C1)	Abbey	252	Exempt - temporary accommodation	n/a	Exempt
20192082	Student accommodation	Castle	43	Exempt - student accommodation	n/a	Exempt

Minor developments

From July 2019 to May 2022, 132 minor residential developments were completed in Leicester City. Figure 1 shows a pie chart that displays whether the 132 developments had submitted a completed floorspace schedule template as required with the validation process

79 developments (59.8%) had a submitted a floorspace schedule in their applications and 53 (40.2%) did not.

Figure 3



30 minor applications were randomly selected across July 2019 – May 2022 to act as the representative data regarding minor applications and housing standards in Leicester city.

Table 3 below examines the 30 minor developments, in the same style as the major applications. The final column gives an overall score rating based of the percentage of rooms that comply with the space standards.

Table 3

Application ref No.	Development type	Area	Total No. of Bedrooms	Total No. of rooms required to meet NDSS	No. of rooms that meet NDSS	%
20220039	Residential (Class C3)	Abbey	4	4	4	100
20220014	Residential (Class C3)	Fosse	2	2	2	100

20210382	Residential (Class C3)	Knighton	4	4	4	100
20210038	Residential (Class C3)	Aylestone	2	2	2	100
20210709	Residential (Class C3)	Thurncourt	2	2	2	100
20210616	Residential (Class C3)	Belgrave	4	4	4	100
20211560	Residential (Class C3)	Westcotes	22	22	0	0
20211440	Residential (Class C3)	Humberstone & Hamilton	3	3	3	100
20210308	Residential (Class C3)	Thurncourt	4	4	4	100
20210609	Residential (Class C3)	North Evington	3	3	3	100
20210614	Residential (Class C3)	Castle	6	4	4	100
20213073	Residential (Class C3)	Westcotes	2	2	2	100
20212911	Residential (Class C3)	Belgrave	3	3	3	100
20212509	Residential (Class C3)	Abbey	2	2	2	100
20201451	Residential (Class C3)	Evington	3	3	3	100
20210575	Residential (Class C3)	Belgrave	2	2	2	100
20212116	Residential (Class C3)	Knighton	3	3	3	100
20211802	Residential (Class C3)	Stoneygate	8	7	7	100
20200145	Residential (Class C3)	Knighton	2	2	0	0
20211803	Residential (Class C3)	Castle	3	3	3	100
20211809	Residential (Class C3)	Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields	6	6	6	100
20212064	Residential (Class C3)	Western	6	6	6	100
20200415	Residential (Class C3)	Fosse	2	2	0	0
20202554	Residential (Class C3)	Rushey Mead	3	3	3	100

20201451	Residential (Class C3)	Evington	3	3	3	100
20201298	Residential (Class C3)	Stoneygate	5	5	5	100
20200741	Residential (Class C3)	Castle	4	4	3	100
20201308	Residential (Class C3)	Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields	2	2	2	100
20202598	Residential (Class C3)	Knighton	5	5	5	100
20192230	Residential (Class C3)	Stoneygate	6	6	6	100

Viability

The impacts of adopting space standards policy have been considered as part of a viability assessment for the emerging local plan. The assessment only looks at impacts on market and affordable housing (new build) 1+ bedroom or more. It doesn't look at the impacts of studios, student housing, extra and intermediate care or other nonstandard types of residential developments due to the requirements of the NPPF/G.

If the council was to require space standards on nonstandard dwellings, additional evidence would be required to justify this. Even then it is extremely unlikely that a case could be made at an examination.

The viability takes into account the impact of potentially larger dwellings on land supply and considers the impacts on affordability.

Timing

The council had the intention to introduce a space standard policy when NDSS was first introduced in 2015. As mentioned above a floorspace template was implemented 2019 as part of the Local Validation List.

The new Leicester Local Plan is timetabled to be adopted in 2023, therefore, the space new space standards Policy Ho07. Internal Space Standards' would come into effect then.

Conclusions

The evidence in this paper suggests that the optional space standards could be justified in Leicester due to:

- A review of recent permissions. The key findings are:
 - Across the 160 residential applications completed (7 Largescale Major, 21 Smallscale major, 132 Minor) between July 2019 – May 2022. 94 applications (58.8%) submitted a complete floorspace schedule as part of their application.
 - Compliance: Only 3 Major applications were 100% compliant to the NDSS. Minor applications showed a higher rate at being 100% compliant to the NDSS with 27 out of the 30 applications reviewed being 100% compliant.
 - A revised space standards policy would provide consistency and support to the floorspace template as part of the Local Validation List for new developments.
- Viability – The Leicester City Council Viability Assessment (2022) demonstrates that the introduction of the space standards policy should not have any significant impact on delivering housing in the city.
- Timing – The council is in the process of adopting the new Leicester Local Plan which sets out a vision and a framework for the future development of Leicester for the next 15 years. The new local plan provides an opportunity to support the Local Validation List process by including a space standards policy to ensure new developments in the city meet the NDSS requirements.