Unforeseen Consequences

Thoughts on Two Historic Housing Standards and the Housing Standards Review:
Who is this man anyhow?

Michael Howe Senior Lecture
First Year BA Coordinator at Brighton University
This study of room size relative to designed occupancy levels is the basis of the minimum space standards (GIA) of Standard 4.1.1. To develop the space standards, each type of room was planned around the furniture listed in Appendix 2 and activity and access requirements. The GIA is the cumulative total of room areas plus an allowance for circulation and partitions.

### Appendix 1 – Space Standards Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kitchen</th>
<th>Dining</th>
<th>Living</th>
<th>Double</th>
<th>Twin</th>
<th>Single</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-person</td>
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<td>2-persons</td>
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<td>3-persons</td>
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<td>4-persons</td>
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<td>5-persons</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Level Flat</th>
<th>2 Storey House</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1 Level Flat</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Net Internal Area:
- 1 Level Flat: 82.5 sq.m
- 2 Storey House: 81.5 sq.m

Storage Areas:
- 1 Level Flat: 3.5 sq.m
- 2 Storey House: 2.5 sq.m

Circulation Areas:
- First Floor: 106 sq.m
- Second Floor: 95 sq.m
- Third Floor: 74 sq.m

### Stair Configurations

- Stairs for 3m floor to floor height
- Stairs for 3.5m floor to floor height

### Entrance Level

- Option: Wheelchair WC with shower required on entrance level for multi-storey units
- Option: Wheelchair WC without shower required on entrance level for multi-storey units

### Amenities

- Option: Outdoor amenity space
- Option: Amenities space

### Partitions

- Option: Partition walls (5.5 sq.m)
- Option: Partition walls (5.0 sq.m)
- Option: Partition walls (2.5 sq.m)
- Option: Partition walls (1.5 sq.m)

### Net Areas

- 1 Level Flat: 82.5 sq.m
- 2 Storey House: 81.5 sq.m

### Storage

- 1 Level Flat: 3.5 sq.m
- 2 Storey House: 2.5 sq.m

### Washroom

- 1 Level Flat: 2.7 sq.m
- 2 Storey House: 3.5 sq.m

### Bathroom

- 1 Level Flat: 3.6 sq.m
- 2 Storey House: 4.4 sq.m

### Laundry Space

- 1 Level Flat: 2.5 sq.m
- 2 Storey House: 2.5 sq.m

### Entrance Hall

- 1 Level Flat: 9 sq.m
- 2 Storey House: 7 sq.m
Evolving Norms of British Housing

Exhibition held as part of The London Festival of Architecture: Gallery 2 on the second floor, 20th June to 20th July 2008
Curators: Matthew Lloyd of Matthew Lloyd Architects, Michael Howe and Alex Ely of mæ architects in association with Price and Myers

Housing Design Exhibitions and Book Publications RIBA
SETTING STANDARDS

Michael Howe of mæ architects, authors of the London Housing Design Guide, on the research behind the new design standards

On 8 July London-based Rogers Johnson unveiled the London Housing Design Guide. The requirement is set out, which are out for consultation until 30 September, will be mandatory for all publicly funded housing developments in Greater London. The production of the guide, in collaboration with the London Development Agency, has been an absorbing commission for our architecture practice, mæ, and the office anticipates lively debate about its proposals.

The guidance covers areas such as appropriate housing density, street proportion, dwelling space standards (see page 20–21 for space standards analysis from the guide) and circulation design. We arrived at its recommendations as a result of a synthesising approach to the plethora of existing guidance. If adopted, the guide will cut documents governing London housing design in a fifth of their current number, making 36 estates for everyone involved.

The appointment to develop the new guidance was an opportunity for us to refine its thoughts on the anatomy of good domestic architecture. Johnson talks about the development of a ‘new vocabulary for London housing’. If we understand him correctly, this can be assisted by guidance based on a sound understanding of how our London architectural precedent and a rational approach to social and economic forces at work in our city today.

London has a long history of meeting forward-thinking housing guidance. Arguably the most successful was the 1967 Rebuilding Act developed after the Great Fire of London and subsequent acts constituting to the middle of the 19th century. The act was the first housing act to be developed, with minor variations, throughout Britain. One of the strengths of the act resided in their ability to galvanise political will behind the revision of permissible building forms and techniques immediately after the fire, in the face of strong resistance from large sections of the capital’s business community, who saw the introduction of fireproof construction as a nuisance intrusion.

This role the acts played in the development of London’s reformed and refined Georgian architecture, perhaps the most profound legacy. Overhanging eaves, cornices and other projecting building elements were replaced with brick or stone piers and facades. The rearticulation of other timber components, such as windows and doors, added to a clean and ordered architectural effect. The consistency of plans exhibited by tenements of this period remained largely unchanged into the late 19th century.

While researching his book The English House (1904–5), Hermann Muthesius noted a similarity in domestic requirements across social class and income groups, give or take a few rooms. This unity added to a commitment to improve working-class housing during World War II, to the first generation housing space standards. Prior to the Taylor-Walton Report of 1918, by-laws had little to say on the subject of dwelling size, and standards developed by charitable bodies were largely ignored by housebuilders because the working classes could not generally afford to buy their products.

Space standards for the first local authority housing tended to be lower than their private equivalent. By the 1930s, however, the effects of the depression had caused this relationship to shift, and public housing space standards have remained largely ever since. It is a peculiarly British phenomenon: on the Continent, public housing is smaller. This disparity was at its lowest during the late 1940s and early 1950s, following the publication of the Parker Morris standards (1941). The standards became mandatory some six years later, allowing all sections of the construction industry to become familiar with their requirements, focusing agreement on what an acceptable house might be (at least in terms of size), and how to achieve it cheaply.

When the Parker Morris standards were reissued in 1981, there was talk of their lack of flexibility and inability to provide quality external design. But this is an area they had not been required to address in the first place. The real reason for reissuing them was then that ‘chaotic’ Michael Heseltine was having problems making government finances stack up, and a reduction in number and size of subsidised houses was seen as a good thing.

Which brings us to the present day, when, although we have offloaded responsibility for public housing to Regional Social landlords and they have mostly offloaded the risk (and profit) of social house building to private developers, we find ourselves a bit of a pickle. Some will argue that now legislation is the last thing we need when the property market is stagnant, prices have fallen and we still have problems with affordability. But new houses in London have some of the smallest rooms in Europe, with an average size of a newly built house of only 50m², compared with 50m² in Germany and 60m² in Ireland. House builders can’t shift surplus, unsellable stock onto housing associations because their design and build quality just isn’t good enough to meet government funding requirements. CABE recently reported that less than 20% of recent developments in London were rated good or very good.

Relaxing performance and environmental standards for housing now would only serve short-term interests. The business model of house builders needs to change. Land speculation and a quick return for shareholders, as opposed to home building and long-term tenancies, has only served to reduce the quality of housing for all sectors.

We suggest that the present crisis is the perfect time for the architect to develop proact improvements. Rather than damage commercial viability, the mayor’s London Housing Design Guide is an effective way of assisting the profession to produce housing that people genuinely want to live in, and landlords and individuals want to buy. Michael Howe is a partner at mæ.
mæ architects: Housing Design - Mobiles
Leisure accommodation vehicles — Caravan holiday homes — Habitation requirements relating to health and safety

Based on Leisure Accommodation Standards
Based on Design Code and Citizen’s Charter
Urban Scale Mixed Tenure Housing Design
Training for Housing Professionals and Local Communities
Two Housing Standards: in Historic Context
The Rebuilding Act 1667: Urban Expansion, Neoclassicism and Consensus
Great Fire of London 1666
Rebuilding Act 1667
Christopher Wren’s Plan For London
Construction Detailing Pulling Architecture South
Rebuilding Act: Urban Order
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sort of Building</th>
<th>Storey</th>
<th>Height of Storey</th>
<th>Thickness of Front &amp; Rear Walls</th>
<th>Thickness of Walls between Houses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Cellar</td>
<td>6ft 6ins</td>
<td>2 bricks</td>
<td>1 ½ bricks</td>
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<td>1st</td>
<td>9ft</td>
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<td>2nd</td>
<td>9ft</td>
<td>1 ½ bricks</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Garret</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 brick</td>
<td>1 brick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Cellar</td>
<td>6ft 6ins</td>
<td>2 ½ bricks</td>
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<td>1 brick</td>
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Rebuilding Act: Urban Order
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Social Consensus of Sorts
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Parker Morris Standard 1961: Homes for Heroes, an End to Consensus and Aesthetic Alienation
Homes for today & tomorrow

Ministry of Housing and Local Government
H. M. S. O. 45. od. 551

Parker Morris
Tudor Walters Report 1918 and Homes for Heroes
Homes for today & tomorrow

Ministry of Housing and Local Government
H. M. S. O. 4s. od. nett

Parker Morris
Parker Morris influence on Private Housing Development
Aesthetic Alienation and Social Breakdown
Aesthetic Alienation and Social Breakdown
Aesthetic Alienation and Social Breakdown
We Don’t Like Our Estate and We Don’t Like Our Neighbors
Housing Short Fall
The Housing Standards Review:
Oh My.............
The Housing Standards Review: Oh My…Oh My
The Housing Standards Review:

Oh My...Oh My

Oh My