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Royal Institute of British Architects

Piotr Gadowski, Architekt IARP
Vice-President
National Board of the Chamber of Polish Architects
00-193 Warszawa
ul. Stawki 2A
Poland

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Dear Piotr

Spatial relationship between residential buildings

Thank you for your letter of 24 November 2014 requesting information on regulation of the spatial relationships between residential buildings in the United Kingdom. We are happy to help you with this matter.

In the UK planning system regulation of space around residential buildings is a matter of local discretion. Local planning authorities are required to prepare a local plan which sets planning policies in a local authority area. Supplementary guidance is used to support the local plan and provides further detail on particular policies. In general, minimum space distances are outlined in Supplementary Planning Guidance (see attached appendix).

We believe that the minimum space distances between buildings and site boundaries in residential areas is an issue for each local planning authority to determine based on their local circumstances. As you'll know, political debate on EU issues in the UK is highly charged at the moment. Our view is that it is highly unlikely that a UK government would support expanding EU competencies onto issues around housing standards, preferring instead to see this as an issue best dealt with by EU member states. Due to this it will be challenging for us to support an EU Directive that regulates minimum distances between buildings and the boundaries of adjacent plots.

We are happy to provide further information and work with you in the development of this regulation in your country.

Yours sincerely

Stephen R Hodder

Stephen R Hodder MBE
President

Royal Institute of
British Architects

66 Portland Place,
London, W1B 1AD, UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 7307 3665
president@riba.org
www.architecture.com

Appendix 1

Extract from the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Supplementary Planning Document 2014

http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/4164/residential_design_guide_spd_2014

- (i) Separation distance of 21 metres (minimum) between building rear faces from two storey dwellings, rising to 27.5 metres for three storeys and above and/or where main living room and kitchen windows are located above ground floor, the potential for overlooking existing neighbouring dwellings exists or where levels exacerbate the problem.
- (ii) Separation distance between front facing elevations should respect building height to width relationships. The following heights to width ratios provide a rule of thumb for street widths.
- (iii) Minimum separation distance of 14 metres between opposing one and two storey gables and rear facing windowed elevations, increasing to a minimum of 15.5 metres where three storey house designs are proposed. Where a flank wall will be situated at a higher level than a windowed rear elevation the separation distances should be increased by 1 metre for every 1 metre rise in building height and/or change in levels.
- (iv) Minimum set backs of 1 metre from rear of pavement should be provided where 2 storey development is proposed; increasing respectively to correspond with increased building heights, unless established building lines dictate otherwise.
- (v) A minimum separation width of 1 metre must be maintained between opposing gable designs in both new housing layouts and where new abuts existing.
- (vi) Family housing plot structures must be designed with private amenity space of no less than 70 sq.m. in area or 10.5 metres in length. In cases where the topography is problematic or where small accommodation is proposed there may be some flexibility so long as the overall design solution for private amenity is of a high quality and usable. Permitted development rights will however be removed.
- (vii) Where apartments are proposed there will be a minimum requirement for private amenity space of 10 sq.m. per unit. Amenity space should be designed and located so that it is usable and will not be accepted where calculations are based on left over spaces that are incidental to the layout of car parking areas and around built form. In certain locations where the provision of external amenity is impractical because of the characteristics of the site i.e. in town centre locations, full useable balcony designs may be acceptable as an alternative.
- (viii) The 45-degree code will be used as a guide to determine the impact of ground floor extensions on neighbouring properties, where planning consent is required. Increased storey heights will be judged on their individual merits but the 25-degree rule of thumb will be applied as a minimum to determine the impact of proposals on neighbouring properties.
- (vix) Public and private space should be clearly defined in residential layouts. Open plan designs around housing frontages will be avoided where defensible space has the potential to be eroded and unless the context of the area dictates otherwise.
- (x) The erection of screen walling or fencing of at least 1.8 metres in height on the defining boundaries of rear private amenity space will be required unless adequate mature screening or good quality fencing already exists.
- (xi) Driveways and hardstanding areas for vehicles must not be designed or extended to more than 70% of front garden areas.
- (xii) Left over spaces must be avoided where ownership is unclear or where management is likely to be problematic over time.