

The case for requiring adopting Nationally Described Space Standards through the Harborough Local Plan

Introduction

Harborough District covers an area of 238 square miles of rural south and east Leicestershire. It is within the East Midlands Region, bordering Warwickshire to the west, Northamptonshire to the south and Rutland to the east. The District's population of 85,282 (Census 2011) is split between the two market towns of Market Harborough and Lutterworth (37%), large villages of Broughton Astley, Great Glen, The Kibworths and Fleckney (27%) and Bushby, Thurnby and Scraftoft part of Leicester's Principal Urban Area (6%). The remaining 30% of the District's population live in the smaller rural settlements, 71 of which have a population of less than 500.

The district has comparatively high prices for accommodation. Statistics from ONS, suggest that house prices are in £207,501 to £400,000 bracket for Harborough District (House Prices Statistics for small areas in England and Wales 1195 to March 2017

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housepricestatisticsforsmallareas/yearendingdecember1995toyearendingmarch2017>). In addition, the ratio of median house prices to workplace based earnings is 8.0, with median house prices of £215,000 compared to median wages of £26,741 in 2014 (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/adhocs/006557ratioofhousepricetoearningslowerquartileandmedianbylocalauthoritydistrictenglandandwales1997to2015>)

Current Building Sizes

Harborough Proposed Submission Local Plan Policy H5 requires all new housing development to achieve the nationally described space standards. Minimum construction standards for new buildings are set by Building Regulations. Nationally described space standards can be applied through the Building Regulations provided there is a policy to do so in the Local Plan. These set minimum gross internal space standards for dwellings in relation to the type of dwelling, numbers of bedrooms and intended occupants, size of bedrooms and ceiling heights.

The Local Plan Viability Assessment, 2017 assumed minimum space standards based on the Nationally Described Space Standards and so provides evidence of the general viability of meeting these standards.

Table 1 below sets out the Nationally Described Space Standards.

Table 1 - 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) ²			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	

Source: Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standards, DCLG , March 2015

(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524531/160519_Nationally_Described_Space_Standard_Final_Web_version.pdf)

A sample of housing developments of sizes 28 to 187, approved during the period 2012 to 2017, was analysed to provide a clearer picture of the size of new build properties currently being achieved. All the schemes analysed were larger schemes, providing a minimum of 20 houses. Table 2 below summarises the results of the sample. The data shows 2 and 3 bedroom homes, as the 4 bedroom homes within the sample were all found to be larger than the nationally described space standards.

Settlement	Planning Permission	Number of bedrooms/ Occupancy	Housing Size (external) m ²	National Space Standard (internal) m ²
Market Harborough	14/00623/FUL	3 / 4	88.3	84
		1 / 2 ¹	64.3	50
	12/00044/FUL	3 / 4	103.1	84
		3 / 4	103.1	84
		2 / 3	68.0	72
		2 / 3 ²	89.4	51.5
Scraptoft,	13/01201/REM	2 / 3	73.1	72

¹ Bungalow

² Bungalow

Thurnby and Bushby				
		2 / 3	71.2	72
		3 / 4	86.3	84
	16/01372/REM	3 / 4	84.2	72
		2 / 3 ³	72.9	51.5
		3 / 4	99.7	84
		3 / 4	85.6	84
Lutterworth	15/00091/REM	3 / 4	110.5	84
	14/01628/FUL	3 / 4	89.4	84
		2 / 3	84.5	72
Broughton Astley	17/00997/REM	3 / 4	109.7	84
		3 / 4	88.9	84
	16/00370/FUL	2 / 3	83.1	72
		3 / 4	99.6	84
		3 / 4	92.1	84
Kibworth	15/00787/FUL	3 / 4	98.9	84
		2 / 3	71.1	72
		2 / 3	71.9	72

Table 2: Size comparison for a selection of housing developments across the district

It should be noted that the area in m² for each of the actual developments is based on external building sizes, whereas the nationally described space standards relate to internal sizes of rooms and storage. External sizes can be up to 15%⁴ higher than the internal floor space, so the actual developments need to exceed the floor space requirement. In some cases, the developments that meet the overall floor space requirements may still have individual bedrooms that would fail the nationally described space standards. In addition, no account has been taken of room heights. Also, the occupancy rate has been taken at the lowest level identified in table 1. Higher occupancies require more space, in the standards.

There are a number of house types on developments that are below the floor spaces suggested in the nationally described space standards. These are highlighted in red. In addition some house types on some developments that are borderline, that is within 15% of the nationally described space standard, these are highlighted in amber, since the internal floor space may not be great enough.

Analysis of the sample shows that two bedroom developments are generally smaller than the nationally described space standards. All but one of the two bedroom 2 storey dwellings are below or within 15% of the standard. The single storey

³ Bungalow

⁴ This is based on developer information on internal floor space on the plans of some house types. It is not available on all planning applications.

properties generally exceed the standards. There is a low number of two bedroom homes for the market on these developments and some developments have no two bedroom properties.

Three bedroom homes vary, depending upon the development, with 5 out of the 14 sampled being within 15% of the nationally described standard. Four or more bedroom homes comfortably exceed the nationally described standard.

Housing need and population distribution in Harborough District

Harborough District has an aging population. The numbers of older people aged 65 plus (Census 2011) are higher than national averages. In Harborough District, according to the 2011 Census, there were 8,418 people aged 65 to 74 (9.9%) and 6,746 people aged over 75 (7.9%). In all, some 17.8% of the population are over 65. This compares to an England average of 15.7% for all people over 65.

Population data from the Census 2011 also indicates that Harborough District has a lower than the national average numbers of people in the 16 to 24 and 25 to 34 age group. However, it is clear from the population data that the district is popular with families with younger children, with a larger proportion than the England average for those aged 35 to 54.

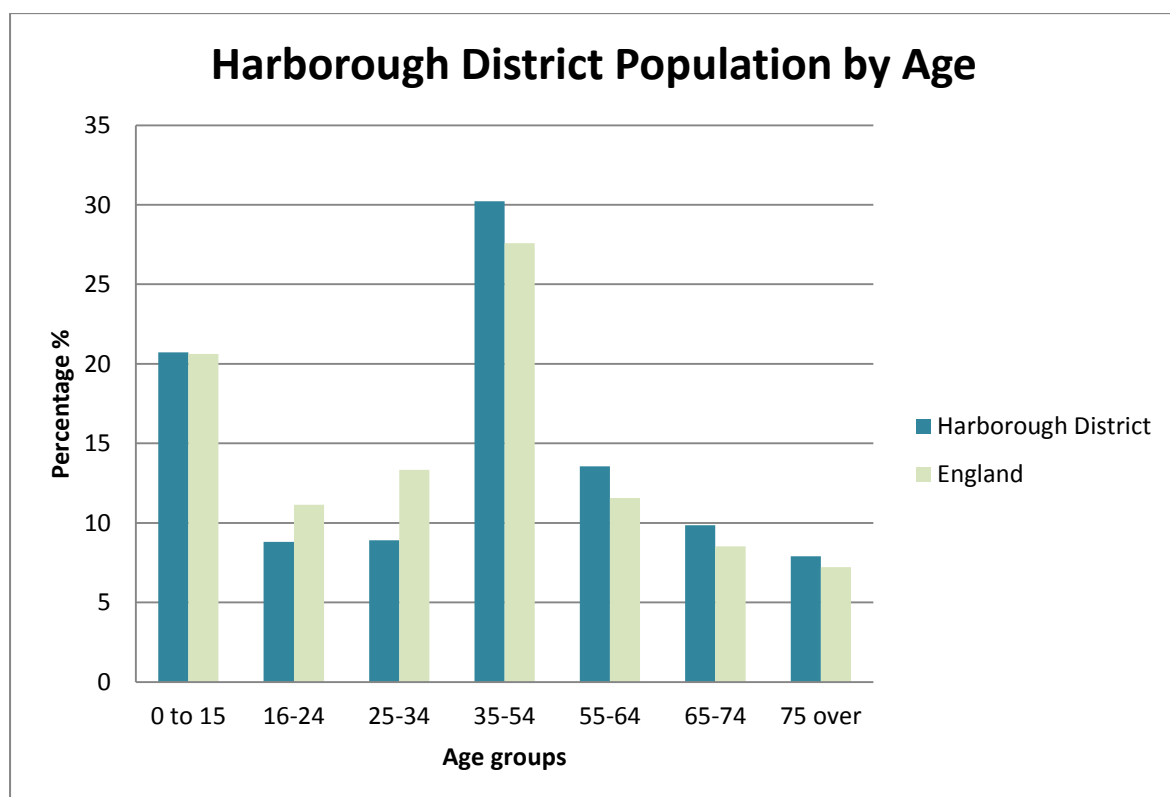


Figure 1 Age profile of Harborough District from Census 2011

More recent estimates from the Housing and Economic Development Need Assessment (HEDNA, 2017) for Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA) indicate that in 2015, 17% of the population of Leicester and Leicestershire was over 65, which is less than the 2015 estimated England average of 17.7%. However, in Harborough District there were 18,550 people aged 65 and over, or 20.8% of the population of Harborough District. The number of older people has grown significantly since the Census 2011.

The HEDNA projected significant growth in the proportion of the population aged 65 and over across the HMA of 75% to 2031. However, Harborough District is forecast a much higher rate of increase in older people and in fact has the highest rates indicated across the HMA. Table 1 below summarises the expected increases.

Age Range	2011-2036 increase	2011- 2031 increase
65 – 74	65.9%	53.3%
75 – 84	99.6%	91.9%
85+	199.9%	131.5%
Total 65+	94.8%	76.2%

Table 3: Percentage increase expected for each age range over 65 in Harborough District (HEDNA 2017)

In some of the villages in the district the numbers of people aged over 65 are well over 20%, in some cases reaching almost 25%. Market Harborough itself is popular for older people, with a number of retirement properties near the centre.

Settlement	Population aged 65 to 74 (%)	Population aged 75+ (%)	Population aged 65+ (%)
Market Harborough	9.5	8.7	18.2
Lutterworth	10.3	8.7	19.0
Kibworth	9.7	9.2	18.9
Great Glen	11.1	10.1	21.2
Ullesthorpe	14.1	6.4	20.5
Billesdon	13.0	12.5	25.5
Bitteswell	10.7	7.4	18.1
Foxton	13.0	7.1	20.1
Great Bowden	13.1	9.4	22.5
Great Easton	11.5	13.6	25.1
Houghton-on-the-Hill	14.2	10.5	24.7
Tilton-on-the-Hill	14.3	5.3	19.6
Tugby	17.6	5.5	23.1
Thurnby and Bushby	11.9	12.0	23.9
Scraptoft	8.3	10.6	18.9
Harborough District	9.9	7.9	17.8
England Average	8.5	7.2	15.7

Table 4: Percentage of people over 65 in specific settlements in Harborough District (HEDNA 2017)

Five of the 6 Made Neighbourhood Plans in the district have identified the need for smaller homes for people to downsize to as they age, through local surveys and settlement based housing needs assessments and have included a requirement for homes suitable for older people in their plan policies

(http://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/470/neighbourhood_plans_-_made_plans) .

Conclusions

There is clear evidence of recent developments including housing types that are smaller than the sizes suggested in the National Described Space Standards. This is particularly the case for homes of 2 or 3 bedrooms, which are often marketed as starter homes. Harborough District has an aging population and the evidence points to this being a key concern for the future. There is evidence of a requirement for smaller homes, from housing needs surveys and Neighbourhood Plan surveys for people to downsize to as they age.

Housing for older people needs to be flexible to allow for adaptation as needs change. Homes that are smaller than the national standards are generally quite difficult to adapt for the use of grab rails and mobility devices. In addition they do not lend themselves to downstairs only living, which can be an issue for people as they age. This requires ample room for both a separate bedroom and downstairs bathroom facilities. As such, it is important that new properties are built to the nationally described space standards to better allow for such adaptation in the future, to meet the needs of the aging population.