

CONVERSION TO FLATS

– GUIDELINES –

May 2006

CONTENTS

Section	Page
1 Introduction	2
• Issues Relating to Land Use	6
• Issues Relating to the Wider community	6
2 Providing an acceptable standard of conversion	8
• Size of dwelling	9
• Size of Rooms	9
• Bathrooms	10
• Kitchens	10
• Private Amenity Space	10
• Windows, Lighting and Ventilation	11
• Noise and Vibration	11
3 Avoiding negative external effects	13
• Parking	13
• Refuse Enclosures	14
• Amenity Space	14
• Landscaping Setting and Boundary Treatment	15
• Living Conditions	16
4 Information required	17
• A Design Statement	17
• Scaled Drawings	18
• Other Measures	18
• Listed Buildings	19
• Conservation Areas	19
5 Council Contacts	20
APPENDIX 1	21
APPENDIX 2	22
APPENDIX 3	23

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Guide identifies and addresses some of the planning, building control and other issues that arise from planning applications for sub-division or conversion works of any building to form flats¹. It does not cover Houses in Multiple Occupation. The Guide applies throughout the District and shows how planning considerations can be related to other legislation and statutory requirements. It has been recognised by the Council that the Guide contains 'material planning considerations' which are relevant in the assessment and determination of planning applications.
- 1.2 It is important that each planning application is prepared to take into account the minimum standards in the guidelines. Flat conversions however are governed by other legislation and statutory requirements such as the Housing Act and the Building Regulations and accompanying guidance. Appendix 1 to 3 provides more detailed guidance and sets out a checklist and some of the requirements of other legislation. The applicant is strongly advised to consider the requirements of other relevant legislation and to check current Housing Act and Building Regulations that are in force at the time of the planning application.
- 1.3 The Guide has been prepared to encourage a higher standard and more acceptable form of residential conversion and sub-division of properties, and to discourage the kind of proposals which have provided sub-standard accommodation for occupiers, harm to neighbours or a decline in the character and appearance of an area. The Council recognises that individually such harm may be small. However, cumulatively there may be a serious, damaging impact upon a local area, the wider area, and their residents. The Council wishes to avoid this cumulative effect.

¹ These Guidelines also apply to maisonettes

- 1.4 This type of proposal has become common in locations such as Folkestone Road, Dover where economic circumstances are changing. The Council is having to address the tension between the need to provide for smaller households as advocated in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 “Housing” (PPG3), Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3)¹ “Housing” and the Development Plan, and the need to protect the quality of the existing environment and the concerns expressed by our residents over crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour and community safety.
- 1.5 The Council has found that this tension can lead to other issues that, although falling outside the definition and control of ‘land use’ planning, have a bearing on a local community. Such issues affect a broader spectrum of the Council’s and the community’s services and objectives. These include public safety, health, prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour, housing standards and environmental protection.
- 1.6 The sub-division or conversion of houses and other properties can be an effective way of increasing housing supply. Such accommodation widens choice in the housing market for smaller households. It is often a more affordable alternative to purpose-built flats, especially for first-time buyers. It helps to provide more smaller dwelling units.
- 1.7 Many houses are too large for single occupation; conversion can extend their life by encouraging improvement and repair. This is also a more sustainable approach to providing smaller households – reusing an existing property to provide more dwelling units, and a more efficient occupation of the building. There is also the added benefit of retaining the established residential character and pattern of development of an area which can be harmed by demolition and redevelopment.

¹ PPG3 is due to be replaced by PPS3

1.8 The Council recognises these and other benefits of sub-dividing or converting an existing residential or non-residential property into smaller dwelling units. It is one of the Council's objectives to make sufficient housing provision to cater for the trend towards reduced household sizes. This approach is encouraged in PPG3/PPS3 which aims to maximise the re-use of previously developed land and empty properties and the conversion of non-residential buildings for housing, in order to promote regeneration and minimise the amount of Greenfield land being taken for development. However, the Council is strongly aware that PPG3/PPS3 also emphasises that this approach should not be to the detriment of the quality of a local environment.

1.9 Policy HS11 of the Dover District Local Plan (2002) seeks to ensure the needs of small households in the district are met. While the first part of this policy applies to all conversions to dwellings from any other uses, the second part of the policy relates only to the conversion of existing dwellings and sets out the Council's planning policy for controlling the impact in terms of both the size of property and the effect of the conversion on the character and appearance of the area and the amenities of occupiers of nearby properties. Policy HS11 states:

'In order to ensure that the needs of small households are catered for the Council will:-

- (i) seek to include an element of one and/or two bedroom housing in proposals for residential development; and**
- (ii) permit proposals for sub-division of residential properties into a number of dwellings provided the residential property has floor area greater than 110 square meters and 5 or more bedrooms, and the character of the area and amenities of adjacent residents would not be harmed.'**

1.10 Policy DD1 of the DDLP sets out design criteria for new development and states:

“Proposals for development will not be permitted unless, they are acceptable in terms of:-

- (i) layout and functional needs of the development;**
- (ii) siting, massing and scale of new buildings;**
- (iii) architectural style and materials;**
- (iv) spatial and visual character of the surrounding area;**
- (v) landform and landscaping;**
- (vi) privacy and amenity, including the avoidance of pollution;**
- (vii) crime prevention measures; and**
- (viii) energy efficiency.**

1.11 Policy H3 of the Kent Structure Plan 1996 and Policy HS2 of the DDLP seek to ensure that housing quantities across the County are met by making use of opportunities at urban areas, particularly for small households who will benefit from being close to urban amenities.

1.12 This Guide for Flat Conversions seeks to supplement Policies HS11 and DD1 of the DDLP by setting out planning guidance on what the Council considers an acceptable standard of conversion of a property, and how a conversion can be undertaken without harm to the character of an area or the living conditions of nearby residents. Finally, this Guide sets out what information the Council expects to be submitted in support of a planning application for a residential flat conversion.

Issues Relating to Land Use

- 1.13 For the purposes of clarification, planning permission normally runs with the land. In making a decision on a planning application, the Council does not consider the purpose or the personal circumstances of the occupier of a proposed dwelling. The Council's consideration relates only to how the use of the land will affect issues such as highway safety, the character and appearance of an area, and the living conditions of the proposed occupiers and those in adjacent properties. For example, a flat conversion may result in an increased demand for on-street parking, and an increase in traffic flows; the garden areas may be used entirely for parking and refuse storage and not for garden purposes, or the living accommodation may be inadequate in terms of proximity to sources of noise.

Issues Relating to the Wider Community

- 1.14 In cases where the cumulative impact of a number of similar proposals in a defined area could cause harm to the character and appearance of an area, or the living conditions of nearby residents, the wider issues relate to crime and disorder, community safety, environmental protection; and on the whole, a greater demand on local resources.
- 1.15 Section 17 of The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on the Council to exercise all its functions and do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area. The wider impact of locating a large number of inappropriate flat conversions in a defined area could create: a greater need for policing and CCTV coverage, better lighting of public areas, and may increase levels of noise and disturbance in the area.

1.16 “Planning Policy Statement 1 *“Delivering Sustainable Development”* sets out the Government’s over-arching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. Some of the key objectives stated in PPS 1 are to ensure that the design of development optimises the potential of a site, responds to the local context and creates safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. With this background, the Council is producing this Guide to supplement Policies DD1 and HS11, and its objective to improve the quality of life of its residents.

2. PROVIDING AN ACCEPTABLE STANDARD OF CONVERSION

- 2.1 The Council's objective towards increasing the number of smaller households in the District is tempered by its objective to ensure that the living environment for the potential occupiers of the accommodation and those living nearby is not harmed.
- 2.2 It is important for future occupiers of flat conversions that the size of the property and its physical characteristics, including layout and size of rooms, are of a suitable standard. House conversions which alter the internal and external fabric of the building the least tend to be the most suitable, as these tend to use existing windows, doors and rooms.
- 2.3 Guidelines for the provision of suitable standard of accommodation should take into account the following:
- (a) All dwellings should be self-contained with their own entrance. These should be laid out to afford economical use of space, adequate privacy and minimum disturbance to neighbours from noise.
 - (b) The larger or largest unit should be located on the ground floor, as these often have access to a garden area and could be attractive to families. Where flats for families are proposed, a safe and convenient access to a garden area will be required.

Size of dwelling

2.4 The Council considers that residential properties with a floor area of less than 110 sq m are too small to be converted. The size of the building to be converted is a key issue. It will affect the number of units of an acceptable standard that could be created in it. The self-contained flats should not have an overall floor area of less than 30 sq m for a studio flat, less than 40 sq m for a one bedroom flat, and less than 50 sq m for a two bedroom flat. Studio flats and smaller sized flats may only be acceptable if they constitute part of an overall mix of accommodation that as a whole would exceed the minimum requirements and provide a good standard of living accommodation.

Size of Rooms

2.5 For studio flats, each studio room should have a minimum net floor area of 16 sq m. If the kitchen is combined with this room, the area should be 6 sq m larger. A separate kitchen should have a net minimum size of 5.6 sq m. In addition to this accommodation there should be a bathroom/shower-room and W.C.

2.6 For one or two bedroom flats and maisonettes the following minimum net floor areas are set out below:

	Width	Total Size
Main or only bedroom (double)*	2.44m	11 sq m
Second bedroom	2.13m	8 sq m
Living Room/ Kitchen diner	3.05m	20 sq m
Kitchen diner	2.13m	13 sq m
Living Room	3.05m	14 sq m
Kitchen	2m	6 sq m

Source: Housing Quality Indicators 2000

* The main bedroom should be capable of accommodating a double bed and associated furniture and comply with these minimum standards. Where a bedroom includes an en-suite this will be excluded from the bedroom size.

2.7 Net floor area is defined as the area enclosed by the walls and includes cupboards which can be entered from within the room. It excludes balconies and any floor area below a sloping ceiling where the ceiling height is less than 1.52 metres.

2.8 Habitable rooms must be able to function for the purpose they are created. They must be of an adequate size, shape and height, and have both natural lighting and natural ventilation.

* Flat room sizes are provided in Appendix 1

Bathrooms

2.9 No bathroom should be capable of being overlooked; obscure glazing should be installed.

2.10 All bathrooms should be of adequate size to accommodate a bath or shower and a wash hand basin.

Kitchens

2.11 Windows must lead directly to the outside air.

2.12 Internal kitchens without windows are not generally acceptable since they are usually one of the most important rooms. They should be well ventilated and not dark.

Private Amenity Space

2.13 The Council expects conversions to retain and in most instances provide the private amenity space of a building. This space should be maintained and kept available to occupiers of at least the ground floor flat(s). For non-family dwellings (flats with less than 2 bedrooms) the provision of a new private garden area is preferable but not essential. The provision of private amenity space is also covered by Policy DD4 of the DDLP.

- 2.14 Where private amenity space is provided each scheme should indicate the definition of a garden area's ownership or use; and the purpose of all external spaces, including which areas are allocated to each flat or what areas are communal.

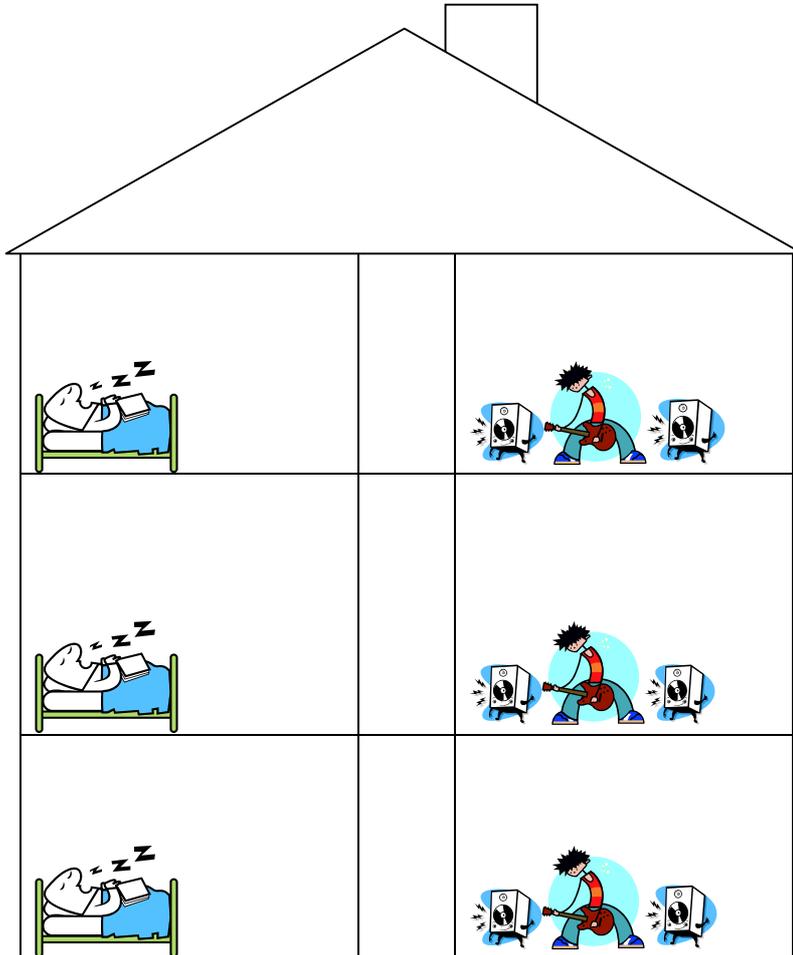
Windows, lighting and ventilation

- 2.15 Each habitable room should have a glazed, external window to be able to provide a reasonable amount of outlook, light and ventilation. This is covered by the Housing Act.
- 2.16 In certain circumstances, and where the property is on a busy road or close to an existing noise source, such as a railway or industrial site, windows with secondary glazing or other means of noise protection should be considered to prevent noise intrusion. In these instances, a noise assessment may be necessary to identify and address sources of noise and the harm they may cause.
- 2.17 Windows serving habitable rooms that are orientated towards the sunlight can also assist in providing a more energy efficient dwelling, by reducing the need for additional heating and artificial lighting.

Noise and Vibration

- 2.18 Each room should be suitably adapted to ensure the restriction of airborne noise levels and vibration. Noise reduction in walls, floors, ceilings and stairwells in new flat conversions should ensure that not only are adjoining dwellings protected from the occupation of the new dwellings, but also the new dwelling is protected to a suitable standard from sources adjoining the new flat. Quiet rooms should be located above and below other quiet rooms. Bedrooms, for example, should be above/below other bedrooms and should not be located adjacent to a potential noise source. Where they are, an acoustic report may be required to demonstrate how the privacy of the occupiers could be safeguarded.

2.19 Part E of the Building Regulations is currently in place to ensure against unfit standards of accommodation arising from noise and vibration transference.



3. **AVOIDING NEGATIVE EXTERNAL EFFECTS**

- 3.1 In promoting and recognising the benefits to the District's housing stock of flat conversions the Council's objective is to ensure that the character and appearance of an area and the living conditions of nearby residents are not harmed. This section sets out how a developer could avoid the negative external effects of a flat conversion.

Character and Appearance

Parking

- 3.2 Car parking and traffic generation are major considerations when a residential conversion is proposed. Parking within the curtilages of properties can help reduce the risk of vehicle crime, and reduce pressure for parking on the highway. For proposals that include on-site parking, consideration should be given to the design and layout of parking areas on the land.
- 3.3 Front gardens have an important role in the streetscape but also help to reduce the amount of surface water run off into the road. The loss of front gardens to car parking areas will only be a last resort. If it can be demonstrated that there are no suitable alternatives the Council will need to be satisfied how the car parking area can be successfully integrated into the street scene by the introduction of landscaping and the retention of original boundaries such as walls and soft landscaped.
- 3.4 The Council uses the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards for Dwellings. The application of the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards allows for a degree of flexibility in car parking standards that would enable developments to meet or exceed requirements where there is good accessibility to public transport and amenities whilst acknowledging a more realistic approach to less accessible areas.

- 3.5 Should the flat conversion not propose on-site parking, the impact of parking on the highway in the immediate locality would be assessed on whether this would prejudice highway safety and the free flow of traffic. Such proposals would be considered on their own merits; however, regard would be had to how other similar proposals in the area have affected the pressure for on-street parking and highway safety.

Refuse Enclosures

- 3.6 Storage facilities for household waste should always be incorporated into a proposal for a flat conversion. The location of refuse enclosures is an important component in ensuring that adequate and accessible facilities are provided for the proposed occupiers of flat conversions, whilst maintaining the character and appearance of an area. Prominently sited refuse enclosures are often not compatible with the objectives of seeking to protect or enhance the appearance of the area.
- 3.7 Refuse should be located within enclosed structures preferably to the side or rear of the property. Should this be impossible, they should be discreetly located, and screened and if possible covered in the front garden. The refuse area needs to be of a suitable height and designed to avoid them being too dominant.
- 3.8 The refuse areas should also be located within 25 metres of the public highway to ensure that on collection day they can be reasonably accessed. The walking distance between the refuse areas and the highway is governed by the Building Regulations.

Amenity Space

- 3.9 Where existing properties are supplemented by private gardens and/or amenity areas, the flat conversions should seek to ensure that these areas are retained for use by the proposed occupiers.

3.10 Amenity space is not only important for the occupiers of a flat, it also provides the setting around a building, and is important in its function and contribution to the character and appearance an area. Should a flat conversion result in the loss of amenity areas, or the use of them in a way that detracts from the building's setting, or the character and appearance of an area, the Council is likely to consider that this could lead to harm and may refuse planning permission for that reason.

Landscaping Setting and Boundary Treatment

3.11 Landscaping and boundary treatment is an important part of the setting of a building and the uses of and around it. An over intensive use of a property can often be detected by the appearance and use of its external areas. The introduction of a new use of a building through conversion or otherwise should be able to integrate successfully the landscaping and treatment of spaces around it as part of the overall design and layout of the site.

3.12 If the proposal for the conversion of a building is located in a Conservation Area additional considerations may apply. Information on trees in Conservation Areas is contained on the Council's website www.dover.gov.uk/conservation-areas.asp.

3.13 Consideration must also be given to the effect a development may have on existing trees, and also to the effect trees may have on the use of rooms.

3.14 Habitable rooms too close to the crown of an existing tree may have a harmful impact upon the future living conditions of the proposed occupiers. Furthermore, this could lead to pressure to remove the tree in the future. Room layout should take this into consideration.

3.15 In dense urban areas planting may not always be appropriate. Where introduced, the role of planting will be both visual and functional: to provide a foil to the built environment, to help filter and clean the air, to provide summer shade, and to assist in crime prevention. On those occasions where soft landscaping is not appropriate, the emphasis will be on hard landscape design and use of suitable materials to furnish the spaces between buildings.

Living Conditions

- 3.16 The protection of the living conditions of existing occupiers of adjacent properties is an important environmental consideration. Flat conversions need to consider the proximity and existing environment enjoyed by residents. Conversions should not result in an unacceptable increase in noise, disturbance or overlooking resulting in serious harm to the living conditions of nearby residents.
- 3.17 The location of refuse bins, parking spaces and accesses should be located away from existing windows to avoid undue noise and disturbance.
- 3.18 Windows that do not serve a habitable room in the existing house but are proposed to serve one in the proposed flat conversion should avoid overlooking windows or private amenity areas of the occupiers of adjacent properties. Equally, the insertion of new windows should avoid the potential for overlooking the private areas of adjacent properties.

4. **INFORMATION REQUIRED**

- 4.1 With all new development, information is often required to demonstrate that a new use of a building does not cause harm.
- 4.2 This is the case with flat conversions. A well-thought out proposal that clearly shows how the physical characteristics of a property, its design, layout and room size can make a positive contribution to an area as well as provide suitable living accommodation for the future occupiers. This is the aim of the Council. As such, the following information should help as a guide if not a checklist for developers, applicants, residents and agents to assist the processing of the application. There may also be a range of other issues related to the specific location of the site that would affect the consideration of a planning application for a proposed conversion, i.e. flooding, or protected species such as bats. A Checklist for the submission of all planning applications is provided on the Development Control website:

www.dover.gov.uk/planning/makingbetterplanningapplications.

A Design Statement

- 4.3 A design statement supplemented with drawings (preferably coloured to show new works) is necessary to help explain a proposed flat conversion and show how the key issues such as maintaining privacy, protecting the character and appearance of an area, and addressing crime and disorder have been designed into the scheme. In the case of crime and disorder, applications will be expected to show the anticipated effect the development will have on crime and disorder locally, and what will be done by the applicant to address any adverse effect. Additionally, the application should detail crime prevention measures incorporated into the development.
- 4.4 The Statement should also provide as much information as possible and not leave the Council or other interested parties guessing as to what is being proposed. A mis-interpretation of information or plans could lead to a refusal of planning permission.

Scaled Drawings

- 4.5 These should assist in understanding the layout and proximity of uses and rooms to others. The drawings should include 'as existing' plans to assist the case. Coloured plans would also assist in explaining the proposals.
- 4.6 The floor plans should be annotated with the room sizes and flat sizes. The 'as existing' plans should show the existing floor layout and size of the property.
- 4.7 The block plan should show the proposed garden layouts, including marked parking spaces, proposed drying and sitting areas, refuse storage areas, landscaping and boundary enclosures. The plans should be as detailed as possible with information on materials to be used and plants.

Other Measures

- 4.8 If the proposal does not meet the minimum requirements set out in this Guide it is likely to be unacceptable. However, the applicant should explain why a requirement could not be achieved and address any perceived harm this may cause.
- 4.9 The onus is on the applicant to indicate what arrangements are proposed to ensure the property; its garden(s) and other external areas, parking spaces, landscaping and enclosures would be maintained. All applications should indicate the proposed management/maintenance agreement for responsibility of amenity spaces, communal gardens, parking and drive way areas, and refuse enclosures.

Listed Buildings

4.10 If a property is listed then special care will be needed to ensure that the proposal does not detract from the character of the building. This includes internal as well as external alterations. For example, the original staircase should be retained and kept open, original doors should be retained and upgraded to meet fire regulations where required, and rooms should not be subdivided, except when this will not detract from the proportions of a room. Original features such as fireplaces, cornices and skirting boards should all be retained. Full details of how adequate fire resistance between floors should be submitted with the application. Finally, listed building consent (as well as planning permission) will be required for the works. Further information on making a listed building application is contained within a leaflet entitled *“Making Better Applications for Listed Building Consent”* produced by the English Historic Towns Forum (available on the website: www.ehtf.org.uk) and is available free from the Council.

Conservation Areas

4.11 There is a large number of conservation areas within the District, within which any development proposals must ‘preserve or enhance’ the special character or appearance of such areas. Consequently, even greater care will be required over any external alterations to properties in order to ensure that they do not detract from the character or appearance of the area.

4.12 Where applications are being made for flat conversions to a Listed Building or in a Conservation Area, more detailed drawings of the proposal are most likely to be required.

4.13 Applicants should also discuss their proposals for flat conversions with other officers in the Council who can advise on matters relating to Building Control, Environmental Health and Community Safety.

5. Council and other Contacts

5.1 The following sections of the Council can be contacted for advice:

Planning: developmentcontrol@dover.gov.uk

Building Control: buildingcontrol@dover.gov.uk

Conservation and Listed Buildings: conservation@dover.gov.uk

Environmental Health: privatesectorhousing@dover.gov.uk

Environmental Health Pollution: Pollutionwaste@dover.gov.uk

Community Safety: communitysafety@dover.gov.uk

Additional information on incorporating crime prevention measures into the design of a scheme, and crime and disorder can be obtained from www.securedbydesign.com or from www.kent.police.uk

The Kent Highways officer of the County Council who gives advice to the District Council on planning applications can be contacted at the following address: gill.hogbin@kent.gov.uk

Dover District Council's main contact telephone number is 01304 821199.

APPENDIX 1

Flat Conversion Standards

Studio Flat	30 sq m
1 Bed Flat	40 sq m
2 Bed Flat	50 sq m

Studio Flat Rooms: -

Each Studio Room	16 sq m
(including kitchen)	22 sq m
(additional kitchen)	5.6 sq m

Flat Room Sizes : -

Main Bed	11 sq m
Second Bed	8 sq m
Living and Kitchen Diner (L/K/D)	20 sq m
Living Room	14 sq m
Kitchen	6 sq m
Kitchen Diner	13 sq m

APPENDIX 2

	FURTHER INFORMATION	TICK BOX ✓
Property must have a floor area greater than 110 sq m and 5 or more bedrooms	Para 1.10	
All dwellings should be self contained with their own entrance	Para 2.3	
Larger or largest units should be located on the ground floor	Para 2.3	
Studio flats should have a floor area of not less than 30 sq m	Para 2.4 – 2.5/Appendix 1	
Room sizes must comply with appropriate room sizes in Appendix 1.	Para 2.4/Appendix 1	
One bedroom flats should have a floor area of not less than 40 sq m	Para 2.4/Appendix 1	
Room sizes must comply with appropriate room sizes in Appendix 1.	Para 2.4/Appendix 1	
Two bedroom flats should have a floor area of not less than 50 sq m	Para 2.4/Appendix 1	
Room sizes must comply with appropriate room sizes in Appendix 1.	Para 2.4/Appendix 1	
Each flat should have a bathroom/shower room and WC	Para 2.5	
No bathroom should be overlooked	Para 2.9	
All bathrooms should accommodate a bath/shower and wash hand basin	Para 2.10	
Kitchen windows must lead directly to the outside	Para 2.11	
Each habitable room should have an external window	Para 2.15	
Rooms should be adapted to ensure the restriction of airborne noise levels and vibration. Secondary glazing should be considered in areas that may suffer noise intrusion.	Para 2.16 and 2.18	
Quiet rooms should be located above and below other quiet rooms	Para 2.18	
On-site parking	Para 3.2 – 3.4	
Does the positioning of the refuse enclosure maintain the character and appearance of the area?	Para 3.6 – 3.7	
Refuse areas should be located within 25 metres of the public highway	Para 3.8	
Does the flat conversion result in the loss of an amenity area?	Para 2.13 & 3.9	
Landscape setting and boundary treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any existing trees close to the development? 	Paras 3.11-3.14	
Conversions should not result in an unacceptable increase in noise, disturbance or overlooking resulting in serious harm to the living conditions of nearby residents.	Para 3.16	
Locate refuse bins, parking spaces and accesses should be located away from existing windows	Para 3.17	
Windows in habitable rooms should avoid overlooking windows or private amenity areas of the occupiers of adjacent properties	Para 3.18	
Design statement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show the anticipated effect of the conversion on crime and disorder – Detail crime prevention measures 	Para 4.3	
Scaled drawings to include existing and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Room sizes Garden layout including siting of parking spaces, refuse storage, drying & sitting areas, landscaping and boundary enclosures 	Para 4.5 & 4.7	
What arrangements are in place for maintenance/management of common areas?	Para 4.9	
Is the property a Listed Building?	Para 4.10	
Is the property in a Conservation Area?	Para 4.11 – 4.13	

NB. If the proposal does not meet the minimum requirements set out in this Guide, the applicant should explain why a requirement could not be achieved and address any perceived harm this may cause.

In order to ensure that the application has met the Guidelines, applicants may find it useful to use the checklist and the 'tick box' column and include this with their planning application.

APPENDIX 3 – Detailed Standards for Conversions to Flats

In addition to planning requirements, applicants must ensure that all dwellings meet the current requirements of the Building Regulations and Housing Act. These require that the property is designed and constructed to be safe to live in and does not give cause to ill health to the occupiers.

This appendix contains a summary of some of the more important requirements of the relevant legislation. The following list is not exhaustive and each applicant should refer to the relevant legislation or requirements.

Habitable Rooms

- (i) In bedrooms there should be at least two electric double socket outlets.

In living rooms there should be at least three double socket outlets.

Bathrooms

- (ii) Bathrooms should have a minimum size of 2m x 2m, unless a shower is installed when the width of the room can be reduced to 1.52 metres.
- (iii) There must be a circulatory/drying space of at least 1 sq m.
- (iv) Access to bathrooms, shower-rooms, and W.C. compartments from bedrooms should not be through other rooms, particularly kitchens.
- (v) Internal bathrooms/shower-rooms/.W.C. compartments with mechanical ventilation to the minimum Building Regulation requirements are considered satisfactory.
- (vi) Bathrooms/shower-rooms/W.C.s should be on the same floor as, or only one flight of stairs from, the bedrooms.

Kitchens

- (vii) Each kitchen should contain work surfaces at least 0.5m in depth and with a total combined length of 1.5m, a sink and drainer (600mm x 1000mm).

- (viii) Each kitchen should have adequate space for a cooker (600mm x 600mm). This space should be at least 500mm from door openings. Adequate space for a refrigerator (600mm x 600mm), at least 500mm from door openings.
- (ix) Each kitchen should have an adequate number of power points suitably placed together with a cooker panel (minimum of 4 double-switch sockets).
- (x) Each kitchen should have a mechanical extraction via wall fan or cooker hood.
- xi) A washing machine space of 600mm x 630 mm shall be provided. Base units shall be 600mm x 1200 mm. Storage capacity in the kitchen shall be at least 1.5 cu m.
- (xii) Where proposals affect a listed building or are in a building within a Conservation area, kitchens and bathrooms are best located to the side or rear of the buildings, so that any new vents and pipes will not be on the front elevation.

Windows, lighting and ventilation

- (xii) There should be no continuous solid external obstruction within 3m of the window(s) of a habitable room.
- (xiii) Each habitable room should have a glazed external window area to enable normal domestic tasks to be carried out without eye strain. Cills in living areas should be low enough to allow a seated person a reasonable view. As a guide, each room should have a glazed area equivalent to at least 10% of the floor area of the room and some part of the window should be at least 1.75m above floor level. The sole use of 'Velux' windows may not be acceptable in habitable rooms.
- (xiv) Adequate artificial lighting in kitchens is particularly important especially over worktops, sinks and cookers.

- (xv) Artificial light emitted from premises can be considered a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act (as amended by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005). This could include all forms of exterior artificial and security lighting. External lighting should, therefore, be discreetly located should be used to deter burglary and to illuminate steps, paths and staircases and means of escape in case of fire. Lighting should not be placed to cause a nuisance, contrary to the Environmental Protection Act.
- (xvi) Safety locks or deadlocks should be provided to hinder burglary. A PAS24 enhanced security door with multi point locking should be fitted to each flat. Alternatively, as a minimum, a 44 mm timber door should be installed , with a BS3621 mortice lock at waist height and a key operated dead latch at shoulder height.
- (xvii) Each habitable room and naturally ventilated W.C. compartment should be ventilated to the external air by a window, the openable area of which is equivalent to at least 5% of the floor area of the room.
- (xviii) Each kitchen should be ventilated to the external air by a window (no minimum size) and by mechanical ventilation rated at not less than 60 litres/second or 30 litres/second if situated adjacent to a hob.
- (xix) Each bathroom should be ventilated to the external air by a window (no minimum size) and by mechanical ventilation rated at not less than 15 litres/second.
- (xx) Background ventilation provided by way of trickle ventilators, or similar, having a minimum area of 8,000 mm² should be provided to all habitable rooms and an area of 4,000 mm² to all other rooms.
- (xxi) Where the free circulation of air to a habitable room may be restricted, such as in an 'underground' room, the floor area of which is more than 0.9m below the surface of the adjacent street or ground, there should be an unobstructed space immediately outside the window which extends the entire width of the window or more and has a depth of not less than 0.6m measured from the external wall or not less than 0.3m in the case of a bay window with side lights.

- (xxii) Each room should have a minimum average ceiling height of 2.15m.
- (xxiii) All rooms should have a minimum ceiling height of 2.15m over 50% of the area of the room.
- (xxiv) All windows above ground level should be constructed and designed to reduce the risk of falls. This can be met by the provision of safety catches and restrictor, which reduce the opening to 100mm. All glazing must be in compliance with Building Regulations.
- (xxv) All buildings being converted into flats must incorporate an automatic smoke detection and alarm system. This must meet Building Regulations and Housing Act requirements.

Sound Insulation

- (xxvi) Sound insulation should meet the standards of accommodation set out in Part E of the Building Regulations.

Heating and Insulation

- (xxvii) Heating and insulation will need to be installed in accordance with current Building Regulation requirements. Where necessary, existing heating will need to be upgraded to meet such requirements.

Further copies of these Guidelines can be downloaded from the Council's website www.dover.gov.uk/planning/home.asp