

Nationally Described Space Standards Review 2015

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In 2015, the UK Government published the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS). The nationally described technical housing standards provide the nationally recognised standards for bedrooms, storage and internal areas in new dwellings across all tenures.
- 1.2 In order to use the NDSS at the local level, a Local Planning Authority (LPA) must have a local plan policy requiring it. To adopt such a policy (and to apply it via planning conditions), the LPA has to demonstrate there is a clear evidenced need for the NDSS to be applied locally and consider the impact upon viability within a Local Plan viability assessment.
- 1.3 This report reviews the Government's technical standards against 38 completed dwellings within 21 schemes across Welwyn Hatfield between 2010 and 2015. Developments were assessed against the standards for gross internal area, bedroom floorspace, and bedroom widths.
- 1.4 This review demonstrates that whilst some schemes within Welwyn Hatfield are 'voluntarily' meeting all or part of the nationally described space standards, a significant proportion are not.
- 1.5 Of the 38 dwellings reviewed within the 21 schemes, only four (11%) fully complied with all three of the national space standards. In total, 15 dwellings complied with the gross internal floorspace (39%) and 12 of these also met the requirements for bedroom width for all bedrooms. So, 32% of dwellings met the two standards. The review indicates that bedroom floorspace appears to be the target that many developments fail to address for all bedrooms.
- 1.6 To understand the performance of the developments against the specific requirements of the NDSS it is useful to address each standard in turn.

Gross Internal Area

- 1.7 In total, 61% of dwellings in the sample fell below the national housing standard for gross internal floorspace (GIA). Half of these were more than 10% lower than the national standard.
- 1.8 The size of the dwellings varied depending on the number of bedrooms, tenure and type of development. Key trends identified include:

- 50% of 1 bed properties were below the NDSS, with 25% more than 10% below the NDSS.
- Nearly 70% of 2 bed properties were below the NDSS, with over 50% more than 10% below the NDSS. Generally, market housing had smaller internal areas than affordable housing.
- 62% of 3 bed properties were below the NDSS, with 54% more than 10% below the NDSS. For 3 bed dwellings in the sample, affordable housing tends to be smaller.
- 43% of the market 4 bed properties were below the NDSS, with 29% more than 10% below the NDSS.
- 68% of the new build development reviewed was below the NDSS, with 54% more than 10% below.
- Change of use dwellings performed slightly better than new builds, but were fairly similar.
- Conversions exceeded the national space standards, whilst the change of use to HMOs were below the NDSS.

Bedroom floorspace

- 1.9 Of the 103 bedrooms measured in the review, 55% fell below the national standards for bedroom floorspace and 37% of these were over 10% below the target. In general the 'primary' double bedrooms tend to comply, but it is the 'secondary' bedrooms that fall below the standard, particularly the single rooms.

Bedroom width

- 1.10 In terms of bedroom width, Welwyn Hatfield's completed developments performed better but there were still a proportion of bedrooms below the NDSS target. 69% of bedrooms were on or above the national target for bedroom width. 31% were below the target, with 20% over 10% below the target.

Conclusion

- 1.11 It is considered that in accordance with national policy, this demonstrates a need for the introduction of standards in Welwyn Hatfield to ensure future developments are appropriately designed.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 In March 2015, the UK Government published the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS) as a supporting document to the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for Local Planning Authorities to use where it is deemed necessary and viable. The purpose of this study is to examine whether it is necessary for the NDSS to be applied in Welwyn Hatfield.

3 Background

- 3.1 In 2014, the Government undertook the Housing Standards Review¹ to appraise how local and national standards were being applied to new dwellings within England within the planning system. The review looked at practices relating to accessibility, internal space, security, water efficiency, energy efficiency, the indoor environment (primarily overheating) and materials and consulted on streamlining the use of standards via a single set of national standards, importing new standards into Building Regulations or a hybrid approach.
- 3.2 Subsequent to the review, the Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State (Eric Pickles) in March 2015² (WMS March 2015) set out the resultant changes to the planning policy and building regulations regimes, consisting of new Technical Standards incorporated into the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and change to the Building Regulations Approved Documents. These set out the new national approach to standards for accessibility, water, internal space, security and energy and precluded to the use of local standards following a transitional phase. No changes were made in regards to materials or indoor environments.
- 3.3 Standards for internal space were set out within the 'Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard' document which was published in March 2015, and is referred to in this report as the NDSS. Paragraphs 002 of the PPG provides guidance on how local authorities should assess the need to set these optional standards.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-standards-review-consultation>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/planning-update-march-2015>

Figure 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 standard, 2015

3.4 The NDSS sets out minimum requirements for:

- Gross Internal Area (GIA) for each dwelling type (combination of bedspaces and number of storeys);
- Bedroom types in dwellings with two or more bed spaces;
- Floor space of each bedroom type;
- Widths of each bedroom type;
- Floor to ceiling height;
- Headroom; and
- Storage

3.5 Figure 1 outlines the minimum gross internal floor areas. Built-in storage is included within the overall GIAs. Other requirements relating to bedroom width and bedroom size are set out within the text of the NDSS.

3.6 At the time of the Housing Standards Review, Welwyn Hatfield did not have local standards in place on the internal space of new dwellings. The exception to this was for Houses in Multiple Occupation (both C4 dwellings and sui generis large HMOs) and Housing Quality Indicators that are required as part of affordable housing schemes delivered under the Homes and Community Agencies' funding program.

3.7 In order to use the NDSS at the local level, a Local Planning Authority (LPA) must have a local plan policy requiring it. To adopt such a policy (and to apply it via planning conditions), the LPA has to demonstrate there is a clear

evidenced need for the NDSS to be applied locally and consider the impact upon viability within a Local Plan viability assessment.

- 3.8 The Council considers that the quality of housing recently delivered in the borough provides a strong indicator of whether there is a need for the NDSS to be applied locally, since the delivery of new homes indicates the market trends and how the house building industry are shaping it. Therefore the Council has examined a number of developments completed within the borough in the last five years (2010-2015) to measure how they comply with the main criteria within the NDSS, assessed by Gross Internal Area, bedroom floorspace, and bedroom widths.

4. Review of schemes in Welwyn Hatfield

Methodology

4.1 Using dwelling completions data for sites with planning permission, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council has reviewed 38 dwellings from 21 schemes. To evaluate the schemes, the following criteria is measured:

- Gross Internal Floor Area (GIA);
- Bedroom floorspace; and
- Bedroom width.

4.2 The number and range of dwellings assessed provide a good overview into the internal space measurements of recent developments. This sample constitutes 10% of the total dwelling completions over a five year period (2010-2015) and includes a proportional mix³ of dwelling type, size, tenure and the type of development. The sample mix is set out in Table 1 below.

Table 2: Sample structure

Sample size structure	Mix of dwellings	Number of dwellings
By type of development	New build	28
	Conversion	3
	Change of use	5
	Change of use to HMO	2
	Total	38
By type of dwelling	House	26
	Flat	9
	Bungalow	3
	Total	38
By size of dwelling	1 bedrooms	4
	2 bedrooms	13
	3 bedrooms	13
	4 bedrooms	7
	6 bedrooms	1
	Total	38
By tenure	Market	31
	Intermediate	2
	Social Rented	4
	Affordable Rented	1
	Total	38

³ Proportional with the completions data between 2010 and 2015.

- 4.3 Floor plans submitted with the planning applications were used to measure the gross internal area (GIA), bedroom floor space and bedroom widths. To help understand how housing layout can affect quality of life, it is important bedroom size is considered. On a practical note bedrooms need to be large and wide enough to accommodate appropriate furniture. If a bedroom is too narrow it is unfit for purpose. The NDSS does not set criteria for interpreting bedroom 'width'. As such, for consistency this study used the smallest bedroom dimension. On larger sites a number of dwellings were measured, so that different types of dwelling on a single scheme could be compared.
- 4.4 The difference between the floor plan dimensions for each dwelling and the relevant NDSS requirements is expressed as a percentage in appendix 1. For example, if the measured Gross Internal Area for a 3 bed, 4 person dwelling was 65m², this would be expressed as -12% below the required 74m² set out in the NDSS (and shown in table 1 of this document) for that type of dwelling. Differences to the NDSS were broken down into four categories:
- More than 10% below the requirement
 - Within 10% below the requirement
 - On or within 10% above the requirement; and
 - More than 10% above the requirement
- 4.5 Dwellings below the NDSS requirement, and particularly below the 10% threshold are considered to be materially out of step with the national policy objective of delivering high quality development that supports a high quality of life. This scenario would provide clear evidence of need to improve internal space with dwellings and would therefore support adoption of the NDSS in the Local Plan.

Analysis

- 4.6 As outlined in table 3, of the 38 dwellings within the 21 schemes, only four fully complied with all three of the national space standards. However, in total, 15 dwellings comply with the gross internal floorspace (39%) and 12 of these also meet the requirements for bedroom width for all bedrooms. The bedroom floorspace seems to be the target that many developments fail to *fully* address. Often some of the bedrooms meet the size threshold, but one or two rooms fall below the standard. So in only 16% of the dwellings do all the bedrooms meet the NDSS floorspace requirements. Detailed analysis is set out in appendix 1. To understand the performance of the developments against the specific requirements of the NDSS it is useful to address each standard in turn.

Table 3: Summary of dwelling dimensions' compliance with National Space Standards

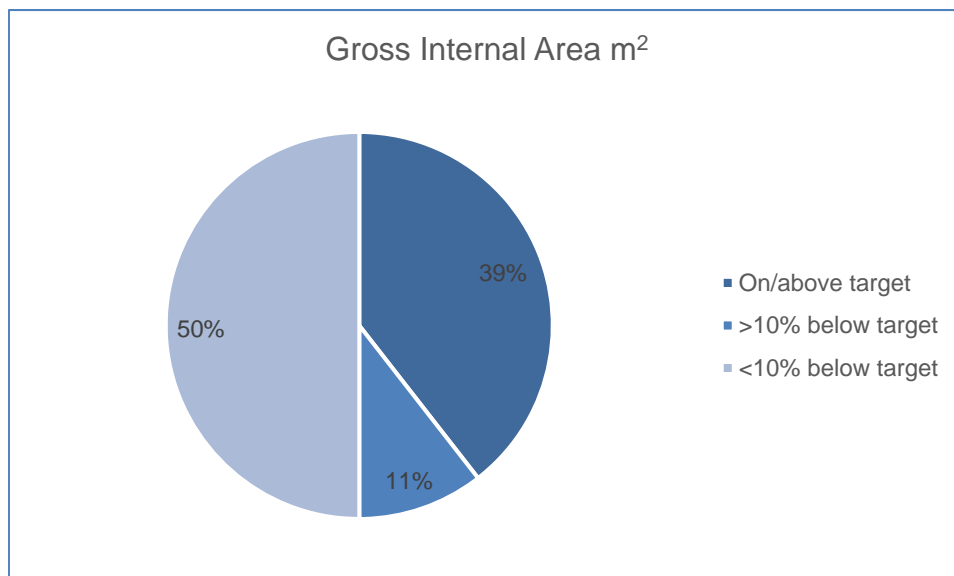
Dwelling	Number of bedrooms	Compliance with GIA	Compliance with bedroom width	Compliance with bedroom floorspace
1 House	3	No	Partially	Partially
2 House	2	No	No	No
3 Flat	2	No	Yes	No
4 Bungalow	3	Yes	Yes	Yes
5 Flat	1	No	No	Yes
6 Flat	2	Yes	Yes	Partially
7 Flat	2	No	Partially	No
8 House	3	No	Partially	Partially
9 House	4	No	Partially	Partially
10 House	3	Yes	Partially	Partially
11 House	3	Yes	Partially	Partially
12 House	4	No	Partially	Partially
13 House	2	No	Yes	Partially
14 House	3	No	No	No
15 House	2	Yes	Yes	Partially
16 House	1	No	Yes	Yes
17 House	4	Yes	Yes	Yes
18 House	4	No	Partially	Partially
19 Flat	1	No	No	No
20 Flat	2	No	No	No
21 House	3	Yes	Yes	Partially
22 House	2	No	Yes	Partially
23 House	6	Yes	Yes	Yes
24 House	2	No	No	No
25 House	3	No	Partially	Partially
26 House	3	No	Yes	Partially
27 House	4	Yes	Partially	Partially
28 Bungalow	2	Yes	Yes	Partially
29 Bungalow	2	Yes	Yes	Partially
30 Flat	1	Yes	Yes	Yes

Dwelling	Number of bedrooms	Compliance with GIA	Compliance with bedroom width	Compliance with bedroom floorspace
31 Flat	2	No	Yes	Partially
32 House	4	Yes	Yes	Partially
33 House	3	Yes	Yes	Partially
34 House	3	No	Partially	No
35 Flat	2	No	Partially	No
36 House	3	No	Partially	No
37 House	4	Yes	Yes	Partially
38 House	3	No	Partially	No

Gross Internal Area

4.7 In total, 61% of dwellings in the sample fell below the national housing standard for gross internal floorspace (GIA). Figure 2 illustrates that half of these were more than 10% lower than the national standard.

Figure 2: Percentage of the dwellings complying with GIA standard



4.8 The size of the dwellings varied depending on the number of bedrooms, tenure and type of development. Key trends include:

- 50% of 1 bed properties were below the NDSS, with 25% more than 10% below the NDSS.
- Nearly 70% of 2 bed properties were below the NDSS, with over 50% more than 10% below the NDSS. Generally market housing had smaller internal areas than affordable housing. 80% of the 2-bed market housing had a gross internal floor area below the NDSS, with 70% were more than 10% below. By comparison only 33% of affordable dwellings were more than 10% below the NDSS.

- 62% of 3 bed properties were below the NDSS, with 54% more than 10% below the NDSS. 56% of 3-bed market housing is below the national standard and 44% are more than 10% below. For 3 bed dwellings in the sample, affordable housing tends to be smaller, with 75% of the affordable properties more than 10% below the NDSS.
- 43% of the market 4 bed properties were below the NDSS, with 29% more than 10% below the NDSS.
- 68% of new build development is below the NDSS, with 54% more than 10% below. Change of use dwellings performed slightly better than new builds but were fairly similar, with 40% more than 10% below the NDSS. Conversions exceeded the national space standards whilst the change of use to HMOs were below the NDSS.

Bedroom floorspace

- 4.9 Of the 103 bedrooms measured, 55% fell below the national standards for bedroom floorspace and 37% of these were over 10% below the target, with 3 single rooms (different schemes) identified as over 40% below the target. However, a considerable proportion of bedrooms (45%) did comply with the standard. In general the 'primary' double bedrooms tend to comply, but it is the 'secondary' bedrooms that fall below the standard, particularly the single rooms.

Bedroom width

- 4.10 In terms of bedroom width, Welwyn Hatfield's completed developments performed better but there were still a proportion of bedrooms below the NDSS target. 69% of bedrooms were on or above the national target for bedroom width. 31% were below the target, but only 20% were over 10% below the target. The four worst bedrooms in terms of bedroom width were 16% below the standard in 4 different new build houses at two different schemes (both market and social rented houses).

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 This review demonstrates that whilst some schemes within Welwyn Hatfield are 'voluntarily' meeting all or part of the nationally described space standards, a significant proportion are not. Only four of the 38 dwellings reviewed in 21 schemes complied fully with all 3 of the national standards assessed.
- 5.2 It is considered that in accordance with national policy, this demonstrates a need for the introduction of standards in Welwyn Hatfield to ensure future developments are appropriately designed.
- 5.3 The viability implications of introducing this standard will be separately tested as part of the wider consideration of proposed policies and standards in the Local Plan.

APPENDIX 1: Analysis of completed developments in Welwyn Hatfield against National Space Standards

Scheme no.	Planning Reference	Site Address	Type of dwelling (storey height)	No. of bedrooms	No. of persons	Tenure	Gross Internal floor area		Bedroom type	Bedroom width		Bedroom floorspace						
							Gross Internal Area (sqm)	Difference against target (%)		Bedroom Width	Difference against target (%)	Bedroom floorspace (sqm)	Difference against target (%)					
1	S6/2012/179 0/S73B	Three valleys Water, Bishops Rise, Hatfield	House (2 storey) New Build	3	5	Shared ownership	81	-13%	Largest Double	2.8	2%	12.6	10%					
									Other Double	2.2	-14%		9.02	-22%				
									Single	1.9	-12%		4.18	-44%				
			House (2 storey) New Build	2	4	Market			62.32	-21%	Largest Double		2.7	-2%	10.38	-10%		
											Other Double		2.5	-2%	9.5	-17%		
			Flat (1 storey) New Build	2	3	Market					54.12		-11%	Largest Double	2.8	2%	9.6	-17%
				Single	2.2	2%	7.04	-6%										
Bungalow (1 storey) Conversion	3	4	Market	104.88	42%	Largest Double	3.65	33%				16.79		46%				
						Single	2.55	19%				9.18		22%				
						Single	2.55	19%	9.18	22%								
3	N6/2013/128 8/OR	Unit 1 Sterling Court (Bellmont Lodge) Welwyn Garden City	Flat (1 storey) Change of use			1	2	Market	42.3	-15%		Largest Double		2.7	-2%	12.15	6%	
			Flat (1 storey) Change of use			2	4	Market			82.72	18%	Largest Double	3	9%		16.8	46%
													Other Double	2.6	2%		10.92	-5%
							Largest Double	2.7					-2%	11.34	-1%			
4	S6/2009/089 1/MA	Phase 4 Former Hatfield Aerodrome, Mosquito Way, Hatfield AL10 9DY	Flat (1 storey) New Build	2	4	Market	51.7	-26%	Other Double	2.7			6%	8.37	-27%			
			House (2 storey) New Build	3	5	Market			69.3	-25%	Largest Double	3	9%		13.5	17%		
											Other Double	2.5	-2%		9.75	-15%		
											Single	2.4	12%		5.76	-23%		
			House (2 storey) New Build	4	7	Market					88.2	-23%	Other Double		2.8	2%	13.72	19%
													Largest Double		2.8	10%	13.72	19%
													Other Double		2.4	-6%	8.69	-24%
													Single		2.1	-2%	7.35	-2%
5	N6/2010/177 6/MA	Former Roche Building, Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City	House (3 storey) New Build	3	5	Social Rented	100	1%					Largest Double	2.9	5%	13.3	16%	
									Other Double	3.8			49%	14.8	29%			
									Single	1.8			-16%	4.5	-40%			
			House (3 storey) New Build	3	5	Market			100	1%			Largest Double	2.9	5%		13.4	17%
											Other Double	3.8	49%	14.8	29%			
											Single	1.8	-16%	4.5	-40%			
			House (3 storey) New Build	4	7	Market					110	-9%	Largest Double	3.8	38%		15.2	32%
													Other Double	3.2	25%		12.8	11%
													Other Double	3	18%		10	-13%
				Single	1.8	-16%	4.5	-40%										
6	N6/2012/028 2/DE	Sir Frederic Osborn School, Herns Lane, Welwyn Garden City	House (2 storey) New Build	2	4	Market	68.02	-14%					Largest Double	2.95	7%	12.7	10%	
													Other Double	2.6	2%		10.2	-11%
			House (2 storey) New Build	3	5	Market			73.4	-21%			Largest Double	2.5	-9%		8.1	-30%
													Other Double	2.5	-2%		7.9	-31%
													Single	2	-7%		4.9	-35%
			House (2 storey) Change of use	2	4	Market					94.87	20%	Largest Double	4.1	49%		20.09	75%
				Other Double	2.9	14%	10.73	-7%										
House (2 storey) Change of use	1	2	Market	43.24	-25%	Largest Double	2.8	2%					12.88	12%				
8	N6/2008/135 8/FP	46 Hill Rise, Cuffley	House (2 storey) conversion			4	8	Market	309	141%			Largest Double	3.8	38%	25.99	126%	
													Other Double	3.9	53%		21.06	83%
											Other Double	3.5	37%	14.5	26%			
											Other Double	3.3	29%	14.2	23%			
9	S6/2012/097 0/FP	50 Audreus Close, Hatfield	House (2 storey) Change of Use to HMO	4	5	Market	80	-18%	Largest Double	2.45	-11%	10.4	-10%					
									Single	2.5	16%		10.5	40%				
									Single	2.55	19%		7.1	-5%				
									Single	2.45	14%		7.5	0%				
10	S6/2012/134 5/MA	22 Dellsome Lane, Welham Green	Flat New build	1	2	Market	46.4	-7%	Largest Double	2.4	-13%	10.56	-8%					
			Flat New build	2	4	Market			56.5	-19%	Largest Double		2.4	-13%	9	-22%		
											Other Double		2.4	-6%	8.4	-27%		

11	S6/2012/199 1/FP	121 Dixons Hill Road, Welham Green	House (3 storey) New build	3	6	Market	108.36	0%	Largest Double	3.2	16%	13.5	17%			
										Other Double	2.9	14%	9.28	-19%		
										Other Double	3	18%	6.6	-43%		
12	S6/2012/165 8/FP	23 Dellsome Lane Welwyn Green	House (2 storey) New Build	2	4	Market	65.5	-17%	Largest Double	3	9%	14	22%			
										Other Double	3	18%	11.1	-3%		
13	S6/2012/261 0/FP	13 - 15 Northaw Road East, Cuffley,	House (2 storey) Conversion	6	8	Market	229.48	74%	Largest Double	3.8	38%	14.2	23%			
										Other Double	3.2	25%	13.96	21%		
										Other Double	3.1	22%	14.1	23%		
										Other Double	3.1	22%	14.1	23%		
										Other Double	2.6	2%	11.7	2%		
										Single	2.5	16%	11.3	51%		
14	S6/2013/032 3/DE	Former Mount Pleasant Depot, Mount Pleasant Lane, Hatfield	House (2 storey) New build	2	4	Social Rented	57.33	-27%	Largest Double	2.7	-2%	10.53	-8%			
										Other Double	2.5	-2%	9.63	-16%		
			House (2.5 storey) New build	3	5	Social Rented	77.77	-21%	Largest Double	3.2	16%	13.7	19%			
										Other Double	2.5	-2%	9.05	-21%		
			House (2 storey) New build	3	5	Market	85.8	-8%	Single	1.8	-16%	4.86	-35%			
										Largest Double	3.05	11%	12.5	9%		
15	S6/2014/100 8/OR	1A Green Close, Brookmans Park, Hatfield	House (2 storey) Change of use	4	5	Market	97.81	1%	Other Double	2.7	6%	8.14	-29%			
										Single	2.2	2%	5.44	-27%		
										Largest Double	3.35	22%	17.96	56%		
										Single	1.9	-12%	10.47	40%		
16	S6/2013/035 5/FP	The Bungalows, Essendon Hill, Essendon, Hatfield	Bungalow (1 storey) New Build	2	4	Affordable Rented	71	1%	Single	2.05	-5%	10.05	34%			
										Single	1.9	-12%	6.08	-19%		
			Bungalow (1 storey) New build	2	4	Intermediate (shared equity)	71	1%	Largest Double	3.1	13%	11.625	1%			
										Other Double	3	18%	11.25	-2%		
			17	S6/2011/156 0/MA	The Bill Salmon Centre, 88 Town Centre, Hatfield	Flat New build	1	2	Market	61.49	23%	Other Double	3	18%	11.25	-2%
													Largest Double	3.4	24%	18.22
Flat New build	2	4				Market	62.46	-11%	Largest Double	3.2	16%	10.88	-5%			
										Other Double	3.4	33%	11.9	3%		
18	N6/2009/150 6/MA	Land At 55 Mardley Hill, Oaklands & Mardley Heath	House (2 storey) New build	4	8	Market	141.5	14%	Largest Double	3.1	13%	11.56	1%			
										Other Double	3.1	22%	10.85	-6%		
										Other Double	3	18%	10.77	-6%		
										Other Double	2.9	14%	10.63	-8%		
			House (2 storey) New build	3	5	Market	104.55	12%	Largest Double	3.1	13%	13.84	20%			
										Other Double	3.1	22%	10.85	-6%		
19	N6/2009/176 5/MA	Godfrey Davis Garage, London Road, Welwyn	House (2 storey) New build	3	5	Social Rented	71.52	-23%	Single	2.4	12%	6	-20%			
										Largest Double	2.75	0%	9.625	-16%		
										Other Double	2.45	-4%	9.31	-19%		
20	N6/2007/055 6/MA	Hornbeams Centre, Ridgeway, Welwyn Garden City	Flat	2	4	Market	66.55	-5%	Single	2.2	2%	4.84	-35%			
										Largest Double	3	9%	11.5	0%		
			House (2 storey) New build	3	5	Market	82	-12%	Other Double	2.5	-2%	9.5	-17%			
										Largest Double	2.7	-2%	9.585	-17%		
										Other Double	2.8	10%	7.98	-31%		
			House (2 storey) New build	4	7	Market	137.6	20%	Single	2.1	-2%	5.88	-22%			
										Largest Double	3.2	16%	13.5	17%		
										Other Double	2.6	2%	9.9	-14%		
			21	S6/2013/111 5/LUE	11 Foxhollows, Hatfield	House (2 storey) Change to HMO	3	5	Market	72.57	-22%	Other Double	2.8	10%	8.7	-24%
									Single	2.8		30%	8.3	11%		
									Largest Double	2.5		-9%	10.9	-5%		
								Other Double	2.5	-2%	6.9	-40%				
								Single	2.55	19%	6.7	-11%				