



Andrew Drury

Unlike the rest of Europe, England lacks national minimum space standards for homes. Unsurprisingly, we build the smallest dwellings in Europe.

Space: the final frontier

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London mayor Boris Johnson disapproves. He has pledged to reintroduce the housing space standards recommended by Sir Parker Morris in his 1961 report, *Homes for today and tomorrow*.

That report said space standards should be set by how homes are used: what furniture people wanted in each room, how much space was needed to use it and to move around it.

It was the last policy paper for this topic that was firmly based on evidence of how people lived their lives.

House builders feel there is no need for standards because they can sell what they build.

But a HATC/Ipsos Mori poll recently commissioned by English Partnerships and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment shows that around half of all residents living in new housing in London and the south east are dissatisfied with the amount of space in their home. Purchasers are not getting what they want – they are putting up with what they get.

Another argument against space standards is that they reduce capacity, meaning fewer homes. This is a canard. Why not have more space in the home and a slightly reduced separation distance, for instance?

In some cases it might be a better solution. But unless space standards are a requirement, the question is never asked.

If the mayor does revert to Parker Morris standards it should be an interim measure. We need to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Parker Morris report in 2011 by publishing a Parker Morris report for the 21st century.

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