

# Property Acquisitions Property Sourcing Guidelines

# Serco COMPASS

## Accommodation Property Standards

### **Introduction**

These guidelines are intended to act as a reference tool for property sourcing standards. They should be used in conjunction with the actual schedule of works provided after a preliminary inspection and only where applicable. It is the responsibility of the Landlord or Agent to ensure that all statutory obligations are met, **not** Serco.

The notes serve as a guide to how works should be achieved and what standards are required for placing a property onto Serco's portfolio. Landlords may refer to their Local Authority and the Landlord Model Accreditation Scheme Guidance Booklet if they need further clarification on property standards.

The standards are intended to act as a reference tool at the property sourcing stage to identify where new properties do not comply with the standards. They are a guide to enable the creation of a schedule of works required prior to first letting. The schedule of required work must be considered when finalising the negotiation of the terms of the lease. Whilst in some cases it may be the landlord's obligation it is the responsibility of Serco to ensure compliance to statutory obligations and contractual terms prior to occupation.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide a single, comprehensive and unambiguous description of the standard of accommodation that all properties must achieve:

- It is a guide for the Property Negotiators and the Landlord when dealing with the negotiation of new leases.

If clarity is needed on how to interpret these standards: please contact the Serco Property Negotiator

## General Points –

### Meters

- a. All properties must have fully functional mains gas and / or electrical supply & clear of all debt if prepayment meter
- b. All properties must have an independent metered electricity supply for the sole use of the dwelling.
- c. Properties heated through gas central heating or provided with gas fuelled cookers must have an independent metered gas supply for the sole use of the dwelling.
- d. Communal areas must be provided with a separate metered landlord supply unless the communal areas form part of the internal area within an HMO dwelling.

### Standards

- **Alarms & Detectors**

- e. 'Kitemarked' smoke and/or heat detectors must be fitted on each floor of a property and will be tested at final inspection. The Kitemark symbol is below:



- f. All bedrooms and communal rooms within HMOs are to be fitted with interlinked smoke detectors.
- g. It is expected that a Grade A panelled system will be fitted if the property is an HMO of 3 storeys or more. (The cellar is considered a storey if access is required or possible for any purpose including access to circuit boards or gas supply cut off.)
- h. 'Kitemarked' carbon monoxide detectors must be installed in every room where there is a gas burning appliance and will be tested at final inspection. For further details on detector positioning and installation refer to the Manufacturers instruction or the recommendations of the Property Negotiator

- **Electricals**

- a) All bedrooms require a minimum of one double switched socket
- b) The living room requires a minimum of two double switched sockets

- **Structure, Asbestos, Fire Protection, Electrical and Water**

- a. The property must be structurally stable.
- b. Unstable ceiling/wall fabric that may cause a potential risk or hazard must be rectified.
- c. Any suspected or identified asbestos must be recorded on Veco and removed if there is any sign that it is unstable, damaged or could be disturbed, prior to the Lease acceptance.
- d. Any penetrative holes or significant cracks in walls and ceilings that may fail to give sufficient fire protection must be rectified.
- e. Electrical defects or bare or exposed wire including potential damage to fixtures must be made safe.
- f. Any flooding, water penetration, free standing water or pooling within the accommodation must be rectified.

- **Roofs and chimneys**

- a. The roof must be wind and watertight.
- b. Any damaged or loose slates, tiles, bricks, copings etc. must be secured or any missing slates, tiles, bricks, coping must be replaced prior to occupation.
- c. Drainage valleys should be clear of debris. Any evidence of leakage must be rectified
- d. Missing or cracked mortar within the chimney must be rectified and any vegetation removed.
- e. Pay particular attention to the integrity of flat roofs ie flashings, pooling of water, blistering.

- **Drainage, Plumbing, and Guttering**

- f. All drainage must be free from debris or obstruction.
- g. Waste pipes are to flow into the drainage system.
- h. Drain & manhole covers are to be free of damage and securely fitted.
- i. Overflow pipes must be directly connected to the drainage system where there is any potential risk of slips due to icing and weather.
- j. The property must have a fully functional mains water supply.

- k. All accommodation must be free from leaks and defects including all pipework and appliances that pose a risk for potential flooding.
- l. Guttering and down pipes are to be fitted securely with no excessive wear and tear and be foliage and leak free.

- **Windows, External Doors and External Joinery**

- a. All glazing must be double glazed. Any failed units must be assessed and if required be replaced.
- b. All glazing must be free from cracks and breakages.
- c. All external windows and doors must be fitted correctly to form a water and wind resistant enclosure and be free from drafts.
- d. All bedrooms must contain an opening window for natural ventilation.
- e. Ground floor windows and other accessible windows and any entrance doors must be capable of being closed and locked.
- f. All window and door furniture (handle, stops, vents, hinges, locks, letterbox etc.) must be complete, securely fixed and in working order.
- g. All upper floor windows where the opening section is below 1500mm from the floor level must be fitted with a window restriction device that provides a 100mm limit on the opening. The restrictor must be able to be over-ridden to aid escape in an emergency.
- h. All glazed areas of windows below 800mm from floor level must either be fitted with safety glass (which must be in accordance with BS6206) or if this isn't present the glazing must be covered with safety film to achieve BS6206.
- i. All glazed doors up to 1500mm from floor level must either be fitted with safety glass (which must be in accordance with BS6206) or if this isn't present the glazing must be covered with safety film to achieve BS6206.
- j. Windows and doors to balconies must be fitted with locks to provide secured protection against falling for vulnerable occupants. Thumb turn locks are not permitted.
- k. All windows above ground floor where the window sill is below 800mm from floor level must either be fitted with safety glass (which must be in accordance with BS6206) or if this isn't present the glazing must be covered with safety film to achieve BS6206.

*N.B: Toughened safety glass can be identified in the following ways:*

- *By an identifiable Kitemark in the corner of the glazing*

- l. External doors must be fitted to ensure that they can be fully closed and secured.
- m. No bolts or chains are to be fitted on external doors unless health and safety is an issue e.g. to stop children from opening doors and exiting the property directly onto main roads. Maintenance Administration must be informed in these cases.
- n. All final exit doors on HMO properties must be fitted with thumb turn style locks. The thumb turn lock is to comply with insurance standards (BS3621). Existing deadlock style locks should be replaced by thumb turn locks.
- o. Door, doorframes and window frames are to be in a serviceable state of repair with no excessive damage.
- p. External soffits, fascias, window sills etc. must be sound and secure.
- q. Clear address numbering must be provided.
- r. Where there is a door entry system installed, it must be clean and in good working order.
- s. External meter cupboards are to be sound and secure.

## **Security**

- Landlords are to provide 1 front door key and 1 back door key for each occupant and 2 of each for Serco, (e.g. 5 occupants = 7 sets of keys). Where the property is for family occupation only then 3 sets of keys should be provided.
- Side and access rear gates are to be fitted with a slide bolt locking mechanism that does not require the use of a key.
- All ground floor, basement and vulnerable windows shall be fitted with locks. Such locks shall comply with Local Authority regulations. An appropriate quantity of keys shall be provided by the Landlord.
- **Internal Joinery and Doors**

- a. All internal joinery including windows, doors, skirting, frames, architraves etc. must be free from splinters, significant cracks, gaps and holes or damage and gloss painted
- b. If there is a loft hatch, it must be secured to prevent access to roof voids by the Service User – access must be limited to Serco employees or subcontractors. Note that securing the loft hatch by screws and sealant is acceptable.
- c. Any gap of greater than 5mm between the skirting and the wall are to be backfilled. All coving and skirting is to be complete.
- d. All internal doors must be secured on hinges and be secured into the frame.
- e. All doors must be accessible from both sides with sound working furniture.

- **Damp and Mould**

- a. The property must be free of damp.
- b. Any mould growth, fungus or mildew must be eradicated. It must be reported so that the cause of the problem can be investigated (e.g. moisture penetration or condensation).

- **Ventilation**

- a. All habitable rooms must be vented directly to the external air by an opening window.
- b. Internal ventilation must be sufficient to prevent dampness and condensation and be adequate for waste air, smoke, fumes and gas extraction as well as energy consumption.
- c. Where possible, all kitchens, WCs and bathrooms should be vented directly to the external air by an opening window. Where this is not possible, a suitably located mechanical ventilation system must be fitted, with a 20 min over run.
- d. Any mechanical ventilation systems must be clean and operational.
- e. All Habitable rooms require access to fresh air and natural daylight  
Natural light must be available through windows of a size not less than 10% of floor areas, or through rooflights (i.e. skylights) not less than 3% of the floor space of a given area.

- **Heating**
  - a. Space heating and water systems must be fully functioning and operational at the time of final inspection.
  - b. All gas fires and electric fires, such as radiant bar heaters, open fire grates, ornamental and decorative fire grates shall either be removed or capped. If fires are removed, the remaining flue requires boarding and finishes are to be made good to a professional standard giving sufficient ventilation.
  - c. Gas fires forming part of a back boiler system that cannot be removed must be capped and labelled as 'disconnected'.
  - d. Back boilers are not accepted on the new scheme
  
- **Floors and Floor Coverings**
  - a. All floors provided at lease commencement must be substantially level
  - b. All floors must be substantially free from trip hazards.
  - c. Trip signs to be installed where split level scenario.
  - d. All floors coverings must be new or nearly new.
  - e. Any flooring with, gaps, and holes must be made intact and free of defects and clean.
  - f. Floor coverings in kitchens and bathrooms must be easy to clean, hygienic and moisture resistant (e.g. lino/tiles).
  - g. All moisture resistance flooring must be sealed at the edges.
  - h. Laminated floors must be sealed and beaded at the edges
  
- **Internal Walls and Ceilings**
  - a. Wall and ceiling finishes must be checked to ensure they are free from any holes or cracks.
  - b. All polystyrene ceiling tiles and coving must be removed on escape routes, the kitchen and the living room.
  - c. Timber cladding must be removed on escape routes, the kitchen and the living room. Walls and ceilings to be made good.
  
- **Decoration**
  - a. All surfaces within the property to be freshly painted / decorated.
  - b. All surfaces within the property are to be free of ingrained dirt.



- c. Décor is to be free of extensive discolouration, stains, graffiti, peeling, flaking or blistering.
- d. Any loose or incomplete wall coverings must be completed, removed, re-fixed, patched as appropriate or replaced.
- e. Kitchen and bathroom décor is to be finished with an appropriate moisture resistant and easily cleanable surface.
- i. Any minor cracks or holes within the plasterwork must be made good.

- **Kitchen Area**

- a. Work surfaces are to be continuous, free from pitting, holes and excessive knife cuts. They are considered unhygienic once the laminate covering has been broken.
- b. A full width work surface (of 150mm) is to be located on either side of the cooker where reasonably possible.
- c. All work surfaces are to be sealed at the joints and fitted with edging strips. Edging strips adjacent to the cooker space must be metal.
- d. A washing machine outlet must be provided and be securely fitted (this can be anywhere appropriate).
- e. An attached plug and chain is required for the sink.
- f. Splash backs are to be fitted to the walls above the sink unit to a height of at least 300mm where possible.
- g. The cooker space wall shall be completely tiled to a height of 600mm above the level of the adjacent work surfaces.
- h. Kitchen unit door trims, handles and drawer runners must all be securely fixed and close without touching.
- i. Fridges must not be located next to cookers where at all possible.
- j. Cookers are not to be fitted beneath kitchen cupboards
- k. Back boards within kitchen units to be intact.
- l. The power outlet to the washing machine must be fitted below any work surface and away from hazards. It should preferably be fused and switched from a point above the work surface.
- m. At least 1 x power outlet is to be located within the space for the fridge/freezer. The fridge/freezer is not to be located adjacent to a radiator.
- n. Power outlet to be located within cooker space.

- o. At least 2 x double switched sockets are to be located above the work surfaces (in addition to those listed above).

- **Bathroom/WC Areas**

- a. The bathroom suite is to be thoroughly clean and free from cracks/chips/burns/damage/excessive pitting. All cistern furniture is to be sound.
- b. Any bath side panelling is to be fitted correctly and free from damage or loose fitting.
- c. All seals & grout to the bath, bath panel shower and basin surround are to be watertight.
- d. Sealant and grout must be intact to form a correct seal.
- e. Sealant and grout must be free from mould or mildew at the point of dispersal.
- f. A plug and chain must be fitted to the bath and basin at the point of dispersal.
- g. A shower rail and curtain is to be fitted to the bath surround (even where no shower fitted).
- h. If there is no existing towel radiator or clothing hooks, a towel rail must be fitted.
- i. The splash back to the bath area must be water tight to the height of 1800 mm above bath. The splash back above the wash hand basin is to be water tight to a height of 450mm. The splash back surrounding a shower must be water tight to top of cubicle height. This can be tiles or PVC wall boards.
- j. Damaged, cracked and missing tiles or mirrors are to be replaced. Grouting is to be clean and free from any mildew at point of dispersal.
- k. Obscure glass or obscure plastic coating must be fitted to windows.
- l. A locking mechanism or privacy bolt must be fitted to the rear of the bathroom door.
- m. Wash-hand basins fitted to bedrooms shall comply to the same standards as above. If the cold water is not connected directly to the mains supply it must be noted on Veco and a “not drinking water” sign must be provided.

- **General Cleanliness**

- a. The accommodation must be free from any pest infestation.
  - b. All surfaces including floors, floor coverings, walls, tiling, window sills, fireplace surrounds, worktops, interiors of cupboards and drawers are to be washed down, cleaned of grease and other deposits or coatings and disinfected if appropriate.
  - c. The property and external area within the curtilage of the property must be free from debris.
  - d. The property must be free from odour.
  - e. The property must be cleared of accumulated post, refuse and waste. Junk mail must be binned and other mail must be returned to the post office.
  - f. All windows and frames must be cleaned internally and externally.
- **Communal and Public Areas**
    - a. Lighting in all communal areas must be in working order and adequate to provide safe passage night or day, including escape lighting if required.
  - **External Areas**
    - a. Walkways, pavements, stairways and steps, walls, balustrades and hand rails must be free from defects or items that may pose a hazard to people. They must be free from litter, fly posters, accumulated debris, natural detritus, impacted soilage, drip marks, graffiti and other marks.
    - b. Door steps into the property are to be even in height, in good condition and free from-trip hazard.
    - c. Paved areas must be weed free to prevent slips, trips or falls.
    - d. Fences are to be upright, sound and provide an adequate enclosure to the rear of the property. Maintained hedges are also acceptable.
    - e. The rear and front garden are to be presentable, clean and tidy and free from all rubbish and items.
    - f. Waste bins are to be provided commensurate with the size of property and meet to Local Authority requirements.
    - g. All sheds/outbuildings/garages must to be free from rubbish and be in sound condition at lease commencement otherwise they must be demolished. All sheds/outbuildings/garages must be secure and locked off to prevent access by Service Users.

- h. A handrail must be provided where there are four or more external steps.
- i. The gates need to be in good condition and can open with ease. (with keys available if locked).
- j. Paving stones / patios / flags need to be level and trip free

- **Furnishings**

- If the property is accepted in a furnished state, all furnishings provided must be new and must comply with all relevant British Standards and fire regulations at the point of dispersal.

- See below for required list of inventory:

Kitchen

- Washing machine
- Fridge
- Oven & hob
- 1 Dining table per 5 service users
- 1 dining chair per Service User (SU)

Living room

- 1 armchair or sofa seat per Service user

Bedroom

- 1 bed with wipeable mattress per Service user
- 1 wardrobe per bedroom
- 1 chest of drawers per bedroom

General

- Curtains or blinds need to be provided for all windows in habitable rooms (either is sufficient).

- **Fit for Purpose Accommodation – Disabled Persons**

- a. Care will be taken to ensure that properties meeting the specific requirements of an individual disabled Service User are provided or an alternative property is identified that meets these requirements. Where

there is the need to consider adaptations it must be reported to the Special Property Negotiator.

- b. The property must be assessed by social services and/or healthcare professionals alongside the Special Property Negotiator.

- **Lighting**

- a. All stairs & landings to be well lit where no natural lighting is available.
- b. All light fittings must have standard bayonet fittings and be fitted with low energy bulbs
- c. Lighting in bathrooms must be of an enclosed light fitting type if the lights are not recessed into the ceiling.
- d. Outside lighting will be requested where Health & Safety risk maybe present.

- **Stairs & Landings**

- a. Carpets and floor coverings must be new or nearly new and fixed securely with no potential hazards for trips, slips or falls.
- b. Stair risers must not be left open.
- c. Handrails to be fitted at 900mm from the tread securely covering the length of the stairs.
- d. Handrail must be fitted securely and be able to form a full grip on the rail.
- e. Stair guarding – Any ranch style or spindles more than 100mm apart must be over-boarded.
- f. Stair guarding must be securely fitted to a minimum height of 800mm.
- g. The bannister / balustrade should be fitted to the height of 1100mm on the landing.

- **Cellar**

- a. Adequate lighting and enclosed light covers maybe required where the ceiling height is low.

- b. Stairs must be secure with a handrail at 900mm height from tread.
- c. Clear from rubbish and belongings that may cause a fire risk.
- d. Smoke detection, emergency lighting and sounders fitted as per Local Authority requirements.
- e. Cellars must be free from any combustible materials
- f. Cellar to be secure from entrance from external areas e.g. coal chute.

- **HMOs**

- a. General standards of repair and condition will follow the same guidance as a traditional dwelling outlined above.
- b. A property is deemed to be an HMO if 3 or more people who are not from one household share common facilities.
- c. A licence is required to rent out a property as a house in multiple occupancy if it has the capacity to be rented to 5 or more people who form more than 1 household and it is at least 3 storeys high. Local rules may also apply where 3 or more people from different households share a property.
- d. Strict adherence will be observed to all Local Authority requirements and regulations in terms of ensuring any leased or converted HMO is fully compliant prior to the signing of any lease. Alternatively, any improvement work carried out under Serco's control will ensure adherence prior to occupation.
- e. Mains powered with battery backup and inter-linked systems must be present.
- f. Adequate notices explaining action to be taken in the event of fire must be clearly visible, identifying fire emergency exits in the accommodation premises. Notices (which shall include diagrams showing emergency exits)
- g. In HMOs all bathrooms, shower rooms, toilets must have locks capable of being operated from the inside.
- h. All bedroom doors must be fitted with a lock that is capable of being unlocked from the inside by hand without a key (i.e. 'thumbturn' types)

- such as Euro thumbturn or Yale rollerbolts). The function of the lock should be such that if the door is closed it does NOT automatically lock.
- i. A gas isolation valve (ECV) to be fitted externally where practicable, when a meter is located in a service users bedroom.
  - j. All doors from rooms that lead to the internal protected escape route must be correctly fitted with 30-minute fire doors. They must be fitted with appropriate door furniture. Intumescent strips and cold smoke seals must be fitted and be paint free. Gaps around door must not exceed 4mm (sides) and 10mm (base).
  - k. Door closers must be fitted to fire doors and must be checked every month to ensure that they have not been disengaged or removed and that they are operational and can close within the frame.
  - l. Fire doors must be labelled on both sides as 'Fire door, keep closed'.
  - m. The integrity of the door and frame must not be compromised e.g. penetrating holes, damage or splintering.
  - n. Fire extinguisher(s) must be provided and fitted on each floor level where requested by Local Authority.
  - o. Wash-hand basins to be fitted in bed rooms as per the Local Authority requirements
  - p. All kitchens must be fitted with fire blankets (note that this is not a contractual requirement for family properties).
  - q. HMOs must be fitted with a 1 door bell and (a sounder in each bedroom )
  - r. Ratio of bathrooms to Service Users is 1 bathroom to 5 Service Users and where 5 Service Users or more occupy a property there must be a separate toilet.
  - s. Ratio of kitchens is 1 per 5 Service Users. Where the property has more than 5 occupants the kitchen facilities are required to be 2 cookers and 2 sinks, dependent on Local Authority regulations. In the exceptions where these regulations differ, senior management must be consulted (e.g. for approval of ANY new microwaves or dishwashers).
  - t. Additional ventilation is required in the kitchen and the bathroom on all HMO's.
  - u. Bedroom doors must be numbered.
  - v. Meters located internally on fire exit routes must be fire boarded in all HMOs.

- w. HMO cellars must be fire boarded in accordance with Local Authority Building Control requirements
- x. If escape windows are added as an alternative to a standard escape route these must comply with LACOR's and the Local Licencing requirements.

### Additional Links

HMO standards - **Caution regional variation**

[http://wwwF.nihe.gov.uk/hmo\\_standards](http://wwwF.nihe.gov.uk/hmo_standards)

LACORs' – Fire Safety

[https://www.rla.org.uk/landlord/guides/housing\\_act/lacors\\_fire\\_safety](https://www.rla.org.uk/landlord/guides/housing_act/lacors_fire_safety)

LACOR's – Overcrowding

[https://www.findeen.co.uk/lacors\\_overcrowding\\_guidance](https://www.findeen.co.uk/lacors_overcrowding_guidance)

Home Office COMPASS Contract – Schedule of requirements

<https://data.gov.uk/.../contracts>

Damp – Guide to identification

<http://www.which.co.uk/reviews/damp/article/dealing-with-damp>

External Roofs – Guide to visual inspection

[https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common\\_projects/47/roof](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/47/roof)

<https://www.nfrc.co.uk/docs/default-source/form-protected-documents/homeowners/householders-guide-to-flat-roofing-2015>

Loft Conversion / Attic rooms

[https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common\\_projects/36/loft\\_conversion](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/36/loft_conversion)

Floors – Guide to visual and physical inspection

Asbestos



<http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/dangerous>

Drains and Sewers

[https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common\\_projects/15/drains\\_and\\_sewers](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/15/drains_and_sewers)

# Front & Rear of House

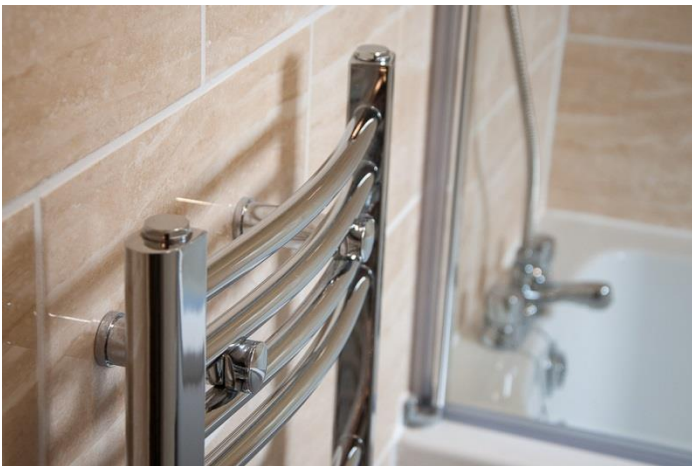


# Kitchen



# Bathroom







# Front Room



# Bedroom



# Landing, Hallway & Boiler



Complements of Kendall Investments Ltd

*Serco Property Acquisitions Department*

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