

Guidance on Waste and Recycling for New Residential Flat Blocks

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1. Introduction & Overview

Stevenage Borough Council is committed to reducing waste generation through prevention, reuse, and recycling. In line with statutory targets to divert biodegradable waste from landfill, all new residential developments must incorporate effective waste management solutions. Historically, flat blocks have presented challenges for the Council, around tenants not recycling correctly. We want to work closely with developers to ensure communal bin stores are designed in a way that makes it as easy as possible for residents to recycle and dispose of their waste responsibly.

This guidance supports developers and landowners in planning efficient waste management infrastructure for new or refurbished residential schemes. It aligns with the following standards and policies:

- Building Regulations: Approved Document H – Drainage and Waste Disposal
- BS 5906:2005 – Waste Management in Buildings
- Waste Duty of Care: Code of Practice (GOV.UK)
- Stevenage Borough Council's Waste Management Policy
- Stevenage Borough Council's Waste and Recycling Guidance
- Manual Handling Regulations (1992)

2. Design and Storage of Bin Communal Stores

Flat blocks or schemes with shared waste facilities must be discussed with the Council to confirm:

- Adequate communal bin provision and capacity as outlined in Section 4 and 5
- Access for waste collection vehicles
- Design of refuse and recycling storage areas

2.1 Location

- Waste storage areas should be positioned away from the main building entrance.
- Containers should be manoeuvrable directly to the outside, without passing through occupied parts of the building (except via a service passage).
- External storage areas should:
 - » Be located away from windows and ventilators
 - » Be sited in shade or under shelter where possible
 - » Not obstruct pedestrian or vehicle access routes

2.2 Dimensions and Layout

- Storage area must be large enough for the number, size, and type of containers required
- Minimum 150 mm clear space should be provided between each container and surrounding walls
- Additional space may be needed for mechanical equipment and maintenance
- Layout should allow containers to be accessed, used and serviced without moving others
- The shape and clearance of chambers must enable safe manoeuvrability of containers and collection vehicles

2.3 Construction Standards

- Materials: Walls and roofs should be non-combustible, robust, impervious, and secure.
- Fire safety:
 - » Walls and roofs: minimum one-hour fire resistance (tested to BS 476-21)
 - » Doors: steel or 30-minute fire resistance (BS 476-22)
 - » Frames: metal, hardwood, or metal-clad softwood
- Doors:
 - » Self-closing and lockable to a Council-approved standard
 - » Robustly hung to prevent damage if swung open
 - » Openable from both sides for safety
- Internal finishes:
 - » Smooth, washable, impervious walls and floors
 - » Floors ≥ 100 mm thick, level, without steps or projections
 - » Coved junctions between walls and floors to prevent damage from containers

2.4 Security

- Waste storage areas should be external, or isolated from the main building to prevent unauthorised access.
- Where within a building, two access points are recommended:
 - » A secure internal access point for residents
 - » A separate external access for collection operatives

2.5 Ventilation

- Ventilators should be positioned near floor and ceiling level, away from residential windows.
- Ventilation openings should be vermin and fly-proof, and fire-resistant if required.

2.6 Lighting

- Waste storage areas should be fitted with sealed, water-resistant bulkhead light fittings, if there is no natural light source.
- Low-energy fittings or bulbs must be used.
- Lighting should be operated by either proximity sensors or timed switches to prevent unnecessary energy use.

2.7 Storage Guidance

- Internal storage: Developers are encouraged to provide space in each flat for a 5L kitchen caddy and additional recycling storage.
- External storage:
 - » Must be located within the property boundary
 - » Must provide level access (no steps) between bin store and collection point
 - » Bin stores must not require operatives to move bins through communal areas or up/down steps
- Bin stores must be:
 - » Separate from cycle stores or other communal facilities
 - » Secure, with robust doors and locks
 - » Clearly signed with collection days, bulky waste instructions, and recycling guidance (signage available from SBC at cost)

3. Waste Collection Services Summary

Residual waste:

- 90L general waste per flat collected weekly in 1100L wheeled bins

Dry Recycling:

- 143L recycling per flat collected fortnightly in 360L wheeled bins, separated as follows:
 - Paper and card
 - Plastic and cans
 - Glass

Food Waste:

- 23L food waste per flat collected weekly in 240L wheeled bins

Bin Provision for New Developments:

- Minimum 4 months' notice required for bin supply
- Move-in dates must be provided at least 2 months in advance
- Charges apply for bin provision
- Containers must be purchased from Stevenage Borough Council to ensure correct sizing

4. Waste Collection and Access Requirements

4.1 Collection Vehicles

- Standard vehicles: 26-tonne (most common) and 32-tonne (some operations).
- Typical dimensions for a standard 26 tonne waste collection vehicle:
 - » Width: 2.5 m
 - » Height: 3.4 m
 - » Length: 12.1 m
 - » Turning circle: 20.3 m
- Site design must accommodate safe access and turning.

4.2 Collection Distances

- Maximum walking distance for operatives: 10 m
- Maximum reversing distance for vehicles: 12 m

4.3 Roads and Access Routes

- Roads must withstand up to 32-tonne gross waste collection vehicle weight.
- Design standards:
 - » Minimum road width: 5 m
 - » Vehicles should travel forward wherever possible
 - » Reversing limited to 12 m (only if unavoidable)
 - » Maximum vehicle operating height: 5.64 m
 - » Turning circle: 20.3 m
- For more detail, refer to BS 5906:2005 – Waste Management in Buildings.

5. Bin Types & Sizes

Flats

Use	Container	Width	Depth	Height
General refuse	1100L	1220mm	950mm	1340mm
Recycling (glass, plastics, paper)	360L	610mm	880mm	1098mm
Food Waste bin	240L	580mm	740mm	1070mm

5.1 Waste volume calculation for flats

Table 3. Example guide based on 50 flats sharing a bin store.

Flats	50	Bin size
Bin type	#	
Recycling	20	360
Glass	4	
Cardboard	8	
Plastic	8	
Food Waste	5	240
General Waste	6	1,100

The formulas for the above calculations are as follows:

Recycling = 143L per flat x number of flats ÷ 360L

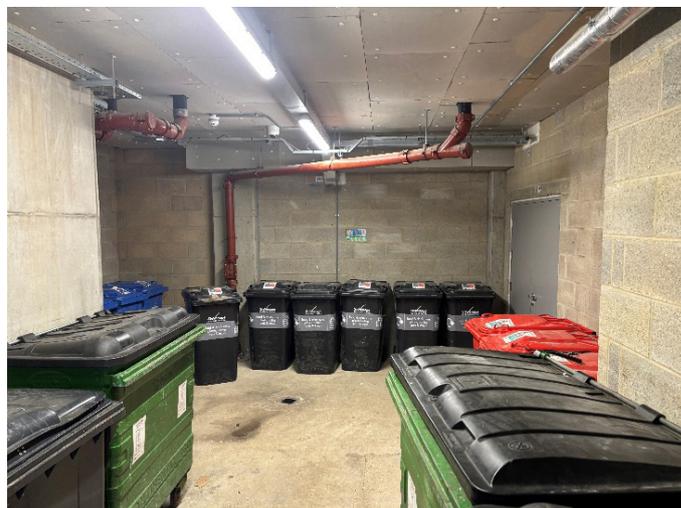
Food waste = 23L per flat x number of flats ÷ 240L

General waste = 90L per flat x number of flats ÷ 1100L

This calculator can be requested via Stevenage Borough Council Planning department.

6. Example photographs

Bin store within the fabric of the flat block, new build. Clear labelling, wide access, lockable, level access.



7. Bin Compound Maintenance

As the designated Waste Collection Authority (WCA), the Council is responsible for collecting non-chargeable household waste from bins.

However, the following remain the responsibility of occupiers or managing agents:

- Cleaning of bin compounds
- Removal of waste not contained within the bins (e.g. litter, fly-tipping, animal disturbance)
- Disposal of chargeable waste (e.g. bulky items, furniture, DIY waste, oil, estate agent boards)

8. Effective Resident Communication

Clear and consistent communication with residents is vital to ensure proper use of waste and recycling containers, helping to reduce overall waste and improve recycling rates.

Copies of the “Waste Management at Flats” leaflet are available upon request. These can be provided to developers at an additional cost.

9. Signage

Clear signage is essential to help residents place waste and recycling into the correct bins and reduce contamination. Stevenage Borough Council can supply A1 waste and recycling posters to display in the bin stores and are available at an additional cost. Alternatively, a digital version of the poster can be provided free of charge, allowing developers to produce their own signage.

Waste Management at Flats



A guide to refuse and recycling at your flats

In the paper and card recycling bin you can recycle:

- ✓ Newspaper and paper
- ✓ Magazines and catalogues
- ✓ Junk mail and envelopes
- ✓ Cardboard and card
- ✓ Cartons e.g. Tetra Pak

- ✗ Plastic bags and wrapping
- ✗ General waste



In the plastics and cans recycling bin you can recycle:

- ✓ Plastic bottles
- ✓ Plastic pots, tubs and trays
- ✓ Food and drink cans
- ✓ Foil and foil trays

- ✗ Black sacks and plastic bags
- ✗ Polystyrene and crisp packets
- ✗ Soft plastics e.g. plastic wrapping, bags and cling film
- ✗ Rigid plastics e.g. toys and furniture



Remember to recycle right!

- ✓ Keep in clean – a quick rinse will do
- ✓ Recycling must be loose, do not put items in bags
- ✓ Flatten cardboard
- ✓ If in doubt, leave it out of your recycling

In the glass recycling bin you can recycle:

- ✓ Glass bottles
- ✓ Glass Jars

- ✗ Drinking glasses and pyrex dishes
- ✗ Sheet glass and light bulbs



Refuse Collections

Your refuse bin should be used for anything that cannot be recycled.

- ✓ Nappies and pet waste
- ✓ Plastic bags, crisp packets and film
- ✓ Wood and polystyrene

- ✗ Electrical items and batteries
- ✗ Hazardous waste
- ✗ DIY waste



We cannot empty bins that contain incorrect items.

For a full list of items you can recycle please check our A-Z:

www.stevenage.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/your-a-z-recycling-guide