

Building (Planning) Regulations 20 & 21Projections in relation to site coverage and plot ratio

From the definition contained in Building (Planning) Regulation 2 it is clear that site coverage relates to the proportion of a site which is covered by a building or, in the case of a composite building (and/or one with a podium) by a different part of a building. In simple terms, the site coverage may thus be considered as the shadow cast on a site with the sun directly overhead. In many instances site coverage is also associated with plot ratio.

2. In development of the above principle it would seem that all components of a building, including all projections, should be accountable for site coverage, but it has been argued that this could not have been the basic intention behind this legislative provision, which most observers see mainly as a measure to limit general building bulk for environmental reasons.

3. In the case of plot ratio the definition of gross floor area uses the term 'external wall' and this has potential for argument. Clearly 'wall' does not just mean concrete or brick material, and windows and parapet railings should obviously also be included, but when there are extensive projections from a building should one take the projection plane or the recess plane as the 'wall', or measure in and out of the projections? For the present I will accept the position that if projections are not at a floor level, or potential floor level, and do not dominate the face of a building, I would not require measurement as accountable gross floor area.

4. In accordance with the above position I consider the following projections from the face of a building to have no significant impact on building bulk and therefore as not counting as part of its site coverage and plot ratio component :-

- (a) pitched roof eaves and flat roof overhangs (provided these are not contained within parapet walls as part of an accessible flat roof);
- (b) individual air-conditioner boxes;
- (c) individual canopies, window hoods and porches;
- (d) window cills and window surrounds projecting not more than 100 mm;
- (e) string courses, fins and architectural mouldings (but not structural beams and columns);
- (f) window flower boxes provided they are small, individual and non-continuous; and
- (g) external drainage pipes and gutters.

5. It is emphasised that, notwithstanding paragraph 4 above, if any of the listed features is so exaggerated, excessive in scale, or defeats the provisions of the Ordinance (for example, a structural beam doubling as a flower box) or is provided or designed in an unusual way, that feature will count for site coverage and, if appropriate, also for plot ratio.

6. It follows from the above that all other projections must be included in site coverage and plot ratio calculations. However, I will accept as not counting for plot ratio projecting windows which do not dominate the wall and satisfy all of the following criteria within the storey from which they project :-

- (i) the projecting window is from domestic accommodation only;
- (ii) only one such projection is situated in any one room;
- (iii) two adjacent projections do not form one continuous projection;
- (iv) the extent of the projection is not more than 500 mm from the face of the main external wall;
- (v) the base is not less than 500 mm above finished floor level;
- (vi) the top is not less than 500 mm from the underside of the finished ceiling.

7. No projections will normally be allowed over streets unless they can be justified in the public interest, but in this context I am prepared to allow the projection of individual air-conditioning boxes, provided they do not project over a street at a height of less than 2.5 m above the ground. (Please also see PNAP 1985.116)

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