



SURVEYOR-GENERAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

GUIDELINE No. 11 (30/09/2013)

Areas on Class A Unit Plans

In the event of an inconsistency between these guidelines and any Act or Regulation, the Act or Regulation take precedence to the extent of the inconsistency.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Division 10 of the Survey Practice Directions describes procedures to be adopted when undertaking surveys for preparation of a units plan. This Division has been amended in August 2013 to change the procedure for determining unit areas.

In the past surveyors have usually shown 'floor' areas on Class A Unit Plans. This 'floor' area is determined to the inside face of the surrounding¹ walls. Planning requirements use a different area (Gross Floor Area² (GFA)) however the true title area is different again because the unit title includes half the surrounding wall area (unless otherwise defined).

A number of complaints have been received from Surveyors, developers, real estate agents etc about confusion and difficulties arising from the use of different criteria used to determine areas.

2.0 UNDERSTANDING AREAS

The area of a unit may be determined using a wide variety of criteria providing significantly different results. Different criteria are used for different purposes.

Development applications involving Class A units must meet certain 'Plot Ratio' restrictions. The Plot Ratio is the sum of the GFA of the units divided by the area of the land parcel. The Plot Ratio restriction has been the subject of significant debate and related court proceedings and therefore GFA needs to be maintained for consistency and certainty within the building industry.

Class A Unit Plans have usually shown approximate floor areas however this will no longer be the case. A major disadvantage with showing approximate floor areas on Unit Plans is the often large difference between this area and GFA. Most unit areas are usually only approximate as there are varying criteria such as whether or not to include ducts, columns, benches etc.

Under the ACT Unit Titles Act 2001, the title of a unit, and subsidiaries, extends to include half of the surrounding walls unless otherwise defined. This area must now be shown on Class A unit plan. While the surveyor should attempt to accurately determine the area, it is

¹ Surrounding walls are defined in this guideline as the walls limiting the extent of the unit and are not internal walls.

² Gross Floor Area is defined in this guideline as the area defined by the Property Council of Australia for Residential Units and includes half the area of walls of adjoining units and all of the area of walls facing common property.

recognised that, in practice, areas will be approximate. Showing the title area also has the advantage of being closer to the GFA than the floor area and therefore less likely to cause confusion or dispute.

Unit Plans will now include a Legend and Specification Sheet which will include information about areas shown.

As mentioned, areas can be determined using a wide variety of criteria and therefore should only be considered to be approximate. If an exact area is required, a surveyor should be employed specifically for this purpose and with clear instructions regarding the area required and the purpose for this determination.

3.0 AREA TO BE SHOWN ON CLASS A UNIT PLANS

After considerable consultation with the various industries, in particular the surveying industry, it has been agreed that the areas shown on Unit Plans shall be the title area including half the surrounding wall areas unless specified otherwise. The Survey Practice Directions 2013 have been modified accordingly.

Areas should be identified as being approximate only. This shall be done by addition of a Legend and Specification Sheet (see 4.0 below).

4.0 LEGEND AND SPECIFICATION SHEET

The Survey Practice Directions relevant to Class A Unit Plans now require the addition of a 'Legend and Specification Sheet' as part of the Units Plan. An example of a Legend and Specification Sheet is shown in Attachment A.

5.0 ESTIMATING THE LOCATION OF WALL CENTRELINES

As described in the Survey Practice Directions, the location of the centreline of the wall may be estimated or deduced. This does not mean that the wall thickness is a guess. Instead the surveyor should determine the wall thickness by:

1. Accepting wall thickness shown on building design plans;
2. Measuring typical wall thicknesses within the building;
3. Measurement of wall thickness during construction; or
4. A combination of the above techniques.

Regardless of the method used the surveyor should compare the total internal dimensions against the measured external dimensions of the building. Where there is doubt, individual wall thicknesses should be measured.

6.0 PERMISSABLE EXCEPTIONS

Where there is a staged unit development and the first stage has been completed using floor areas (face of walls), this same practice should be continued for the remainder of the development. However, where this is the case, the surveyor should obtain the Surveyor-

General's approval for an exemption from the Survey Practice Directions. The fact that the areas are to the face of the walls and not the centreline shall also be identified on the Legend and Specification Sheet on the Units Plan.

The above procedure also applies to amendments to existing plans which have been based on floor areas.

These provisions are to ensure consistency within each units plan.

7.0 SUBSIDIARIES - RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

Sections 14 & 15 of the Units Titles Act 2001 define the boundaries of units and unit subsidiaries as being along the wall centrelines unless otherwise specified.

The area of a subsidiary, such as a balcony, therefore should include half the surrounding walls.

However in some cases, particularly in basements, determining the thickness of an external wall may not be possible or practical. In such cases the surveyor should consider specifying the boundary as being the face of the wall. By doing this the areas of similar car parks will be the same regardless of their location.

8.0 DUCTS, COLUMNS AND OTHER INTERNAL COMMON PROPERTY

Common property, such as ducts and columns may be included in the floor areas unless their area exceeds one square metre.

References:

Property Council of Australia. *Method of Measurement: For Residential Property*, Property Council of Australia (undated)

Australian Capital Territory Government: *Unit Titles Act 2001*, Authorised by the ACT Parliamentary Council, 29 May 2012

Record of Document Issues

Version No	Issue Date	Nature of Amendment
0.1	25/3/2013	Initial version for internal distribution
0.2	8/4/2013	Various amendments after initial consultation
0.3	23/04/2013	Addition of 'understanding Areas' and minor improvements
0.4	30/8/2013	Final edit and review prior to public release

Form 3

Sheet No.of

Form 091 - FP

LAND TITLES
 OFFICE OF REGULATORY SERVICES
 Department of Justice and Community Safety

FLOOR PLAN

Division	Section	Block	UNITS PLAN No.

FLOOR NUMBER

LEGEND and SPECIFICATION SHEET

B - DENOTES BALCONY
C - DENOTES COLUMN
CP - DENOTES COMMON PROPERTY
CS - DENOTES CAR SPACE
SC - DENOTES STORAGE CAGE

UNIT AREAS HAVE BEEN DETERMINED WITH REFERENCE TO THE CENTRELINES OF WALLS, UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE

THE POSITION OF THE WALL CENTRELINES HAVE BEEN ESTIMATED (DEDUCED) TO DETERMINE UNIT AREA

ALL AREAS ARE APPROXIMATE AND MAY CONTAIN COLUMNS AND SERVICE DUCTS, WHICH ARE COMMON PROPERTY

AREAS ARE SHOWN FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE UNITS PLAN ONLY AND MUST NOT BE USED FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE

UNITS & SUBSIDIARIES ARE SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 34 OF THE UNIT TITLES ACT 2001, WHERE APPLICABLE

Graphic bar scale - SCALE 1:

Registered Proprietor Delegate of the ACT Planning and Land Authority
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Approved form AF 2012-92 approved by Brett Phillips, Registrar-General on 23/01/2012 under section 140 of the Land Titles Act 1925(approved forms) - This form revokes AF2010-180
 Authorised by the ACT Parliamentary Counsel - also accessible at www.legislation.act.gov.au