

Consultation Report October 2019 - Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Consultation July and September 2019.

Document:	Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) - Ensuring mixed and balanced communities
Question:	<i>Do you agree with the proposed amendments to the SPD? Please provide your comments.</i>
Author & Date:	Portsmouth City Council, September 2019
Overview:	The changes aim to consider the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties and provide a clearer description of how the Council will address planning applications for the expansion of existing HMOs in areas which are already imbalanced.
Number of responses:	76

Introduction

This report summarises the findings of the consultation on the proposed amendments to the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD considers the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties and provides a clearer description of how the Council will address planning applications for the expansion of existing HMOs in areas which are already imbalanced while promoting mixed, balanced and sustainable communities.

Following a period of consultation over the summer of 2019, the Council adopted the proposed amendments to the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document on 4 December 2019.

Consultation process

Consultation on the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document was carried out from 31 July 2019 to 9 September 2019. The draft document was published on the city council's website and printed copies were dispersed to all libraries in the City. Comments were accepted by post and email.

Outreach was undertaken through the Council's website and local mailing lists. This included a letter/e-mail sent to known local residents groups and professional associations, statutory consultees as well as others who had registered their interest in participating in consultation on any planning related documents and those who had submitted consultation responses to previous consultations on the HMO SPD.

Responses to the proposed amendments

The council received 76 responses; four on behalf of organisations (Milton Neighbourhood Forum, Highways England, Winchester City Council and Natural England), and 72 from individuals--of which 65 were sent from members of the East St. Thomas Residents' Forum.

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Summary

Of the 76 responses received, 65 were generic responses submitted on behalf of members of the East St. Thomas Residents' Forum agreeing with the statement:

"I fully support the proposed amendments to SPD20 to try and limit the development of sui generis 'super HMOs'. The East St Thomas area is significantly impacted by the conversion of small C4 HMOs into large HMOs for 6 or more people, which is making the community even further imbalanced and unsustainable."

11 individuals submitted their own respective comments - all in overall agreement with the amended SPD.

No one was opposed to the proposed amendments.

Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services felt that up-to-date guidance regarding the storage and management of household refuse and recycling should be included in the document.

A member of **Milton Neighbourhood Forum** argued that there is a need for better articulation of the enforcement processes governing HMO-related complaints and sought to clarify whether notifications are sent out to all properties within the 50m radius of an HMO property.

Representatives from **Highways England, Winchester City Council** and **Natural England** all declined to comment on this SPD.

General comments included the following:

- The Council needs to exert more oversight in areas unbalanced by HMOs where the enforcement of policies is perceived to be lacking: "How are young families going to buy family homes if they are all converted to bedsits? This needs greater control".
- "Permitted development is being exploited and the impact on hard working, council tax paying residents is huge".
- The general deterioration of imbalanced areas was repeatedly noted with: "...no end of issues with antisocial behaviour and piles of uncollected rubbish".
- The lack of available parking spaces amid the increase in the number of residents was commonly raised: "...parking issues are not fully taken into account".
- Fears over antisocial behaviour including crime, and the belief that such incidents are increasing with the spread of large HMOs.
- Concerns over the loss of single family dwellings and the long-term impacts of such a trend on community cohesion and affordability.
- Need to address the issue of property 'sandwiching' and the potential losses in property values stemming from it.
- The conclusion that there is a need for additional services to accommodate population growth.
- Perceptions that parts of the city have become unacceptably densely populated.

Conclusions

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) - Ensuring mixed and balanced communities - Council Response:

The findings of this consultation were presented to the Cabinet Member for Culture and City Development before adoption by the committee.

The consultation responses show strong support for the proposed amendments to the document. Various concerns were raised from the respondents who generally expressed concern over the deterioration of communities unbalanced by elevated concentrations of HMOs.

Of particular concern to respondents were issues relating to refuse disposal, a lack of parking spaces, incidents of antisocial behaviour and perceptions of generally poor responsiveness and oversight on behalf of the Council when dealing with HMO complaints and regulations.

The comments received from all parties raised helpful points which will be reflected upon and in many cases incorporated into the evidence of future planning documents such as the Local Plan.