

Matter 2: Housing need and requirement

Issue: Whether the approach to calculating local housing need and the Plan's housing requirement is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Inspector's Qs, relevant to my representation:

2) Is the housing requirement of 11,369 dwellings, as set out in Policy PLP16, soundly based? In particular:

d. Is the windfall allowance specified in Table 6.1 justified?

6) Is Policy PLP16 otherwise positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

Unexpectedly, and unbeknown to me, Strategic Policy PLP16 was completely re-written after the 2024 consultation had taken place, mostly in response to the IROPI/Tipner West issue. Within KD03, the HMO and Windfall site allocations are now fully combined into just one figure of 79 per annum. Once again, full transparency appears to be lacking regarding the number of HMOs projected to contribute to the Housing Target/5yHLS/etc. Because PLP16 has been totally re-written, yet still highly opaque, I include below some relevant texts/information from KD01 and KD03 to compare and contrast -

LINDA VICKERMAN 60834 2 REDACTED: Representation relates to Chapter 6, page 126, Strategic Policy PLP16: Housing Target, Supporting Text, Paragraph 6.16 (With reference to Chapter 6, Page 125, Strategic Policy PLP16: Housing Target, Point 1g - Equivalent contribution from HMOs; Glossary, Page 303) of KD01

KD01 (published 07/2024), states:

"Strategic Policy PLP16: Housing Target, Supporting Text, Paragraph 6.16, page 126:

HMOs play a key part in housing delivery within the City meeting the needs of those that require a more affordable housing option. The Council includes HMOs in its land supply data given the large amount being permitted/delivered over the years and the role they play in helping to meet the City's housing need. Through an analysis of historic HMO permissions data, it is concluded that the equivalent of 37 dwellings per annum can be expected to be delivered during the Plan period."

KD03 (composite version with amendments, published 11/2025), states:

“Table 6.1: Sources of new homes in Portsmouth, page 189:

Windfall allowance - 1,185 (79 dwellings per annum).”

“Strategy Policy PLP16: Housing Target, page 190:

1. e) Windfall allowance of 79 homes each year.

2. A further contribution to unmet need (3,916 dwellings) will also be sought from neighbouring authorities through the Duty to Cooperate. This includes 800 homes allocated in the Fareham Local Plan.”

“Supporting Text, page 191:

A197 - Windfall sites are defined in the NPPF as sites not specifically identified in the development plan. In Portsmouth, they normally comprise previously developed sites that have unexpectedly become available. Portsmouth has relatively few opportunities for larger scale development, therefore, smaller scale infilling and change of use development have historically formed a significant and consistent part of the overall supply of housing land in Portsmouth. From an analysis of past completion rates over the past five years (2020/21-2024/25) for sites that yielded between 1 and 4 dwellings, it has been established that an average of 79 dwellings per annum have delivered through windfall sites. The Council, therefore, considers there to be compelling evidence that windfalls will provide a reliable source of supply, which supports the windfall allowance of 79 dwellings per annum.

A198 - HMOs, student accommodation and other institutional developments play a key part in housing delivery within the City. The Council includes HMOs and student accommodation, and other institutional development in its land supply data for this reason. These are included in completions data, have been included as part of the HELAA, and have been factored into windfall allowance calculations. Ratios are applied to these types of development to produce an equivalent figure to standard housing (C3 equivalent).

A199 - The Council has been in discussions with neighbouring authorities through the Duty to Cooperate, both bilaterally and through the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH). The Council is unable to meet its own housing needs, so cannot meet the unmet needs of others, but has communicated with neighbouring authorities about the extent to which they may be able to accommodate any unmet need from Portsmouth. At this time, a contribution of 800 homes from Fareham Borough Council has been agreed, which is accounted for in the adopted Fareham Local Plan 2037. This is set out in Chapter 3 of this Plan. This leaves a shortfall of 3,116 dwellings still to be met.”

Unlike within KD01, where it is stated that 37 HMO 'dwellings' per annum are expected to be delivered (although even this number was open to interpretation and therefore exploitation, due to the lack of definitions within the glossary), KD03 does not mention HMOs at all within the new Strategic Policy PLP16 itself, and only very vaguely within Supporting Text A198, where it says they have been factored into the windfall allowance calculations, but still offers no explicit number for projected HMO developments. Given the rapid proliferation of highly contentious HMOs in Portsmouth over the last ten years, which continues today, it is this which raises some very large red flags.

I would like to draw your attention to the PCC Annual Monitoring Report 2024-2025, published 04/2026 (<https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/PCC01-Annual-Monitoring-Report-2024-2025-accessible-aa.pdf>). Within this report, as a footnote on page 23 of 89, it states:

"Note: From 2024/25 onwards, HMO figures (C4/Sui Generis) will be presented in the AMR as a C3 dwelling equivalent figure on a 1: 1.9 bedspaces ratio. The figures provided in previous AMRs were presented on a 1:1 basis."

Given the above newly adopted ratio of 1:1.9, it would appear:

7 bed spaces (the size of an average HMO in Portsmouth) divided by 1.9 equals 3 C3 equivalents.

Therefore, for the benefit of calculating Housing Targets, 5YHLS etc., 1 average HMO is equivalent to 3 C3 dwellinghouses.

79 average HMOs times 3 equivalent C3s equals 236 C3 equivalents/annum.

236 C3 equivalents times 15 years equals 3450 C3 equivalents during the period of the plan.

Whereas the ratio used to calculate HMOs as C3 equivalents was previously 1:1, the new ratio of 1:1.9 has effectively halved the number of C3 equivalents for the purposes of calculating Portsmouth's Housing Target/5YHLS/etc. In order to compensate for this, it seems that the original PLP16 figure for HMO developments of 37/annum has been surreptitiously doubled to 79/annum, and that HMOs are now simply defined as windfall sites in the new, re-written Strategic Policy PLP16. Given that Fareham has already taken on board 800 of Portsmouth's unmet housing need of 3916, the remaining balance of 3116, is now miraculously covered by the 3450 C3 equivalents demonstrated in the final calculation above.

Unfortunately, all of Portsmouth's neighbouring councils, i.e. Fareham, Gosport and Havant, are also struggling to meet Labour's wholly unrealistic Housing Targets/5YHLS, calculated using the new standard method, and as such would not be able to further cover our unmet need, hence PCC's very heavy reliance on HMOs to fill that gap. For further proof of PCC's reliance on HMOs, please see page 42, Section 27 of: https://media.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Soundness-Quality-Assessment-of-the-Reg-19-Pre-Submission-Portsmouth-Local-Plan-and-the-Reg-19-PLP-Addendum_FINAL-VERSION_PDF.pdf. As a direct result of PCC's heavy reliance on HMOs, the concept of mixed and balanced communities is fast becoming a thing of the past, and Portsmouth is becoming nothing more than a city full of single, transient people with no real roots or feelings of personal investment here. This is already bringing its own set of problems – drugs/county lines, alcohol dependency, ASB, local crime, etc. – all of which are costing the city dearly, and not just financially.

If Portsmouth cannot meet its 5YHLS, and at the present time it is just 2.4 years, this heavily exposes us to the rule of "Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development", as detailed in the NPPF, whereby almost all planning applications will be automatically waived through by default – even more so under the National Scheme of Delegation, by an LPA (Portsmouth) that was nearly designated in 2023 for poor performance. It seems there are far too many agendas operating here, including Labour's pie-in-the-sky 1.5 million 'homes' build-fest, none of which have the City of Portsmouth's residents' best interests at heart, and I certainly question the term 'Sustainable Development'.

Portsmouth's services and infrastructure are already broken, so there is nothing sustainable about development here. There is currently one dentist to 2265 residents (even UoP's Dental School cannot fully address this deficit, and new training places will not start until 09/2027); 1 GP to 2821 residents (genuinely putting residents' lives at risk); Southern Water is repeatedly discharging raw sewage into the Solent (putting residents' health at risk); on-street residential parking is seriously oversubscribed (overcrowded roads give rise to more accidents), etc. Densifying Portsmouth's population via the use of HMOs, simply because there is little spare land to build upon here, will only exacerbate this appalling situation further still and will not lead to the kind of 'growth' local and central government ultimately wish to achieve.

Many local families are being placed in expensive temporary accommodation by PCC, yet C3 to HMO developments are continually being allowed to destroy, forever, the very family homes so badly needed by these families. According to the plan, at least 1,185 C3s will be lost to HMO developments (aka 'Windfall Sites' – let us no longer pretend we

don't know what they are, the figures in the ratio calculations speak for themselves) over the next 15 years. This can only serve to further increase competition, and therefore rents, for existing C3 properties.

Other alternatives to C3 to HMO conversions must now be considered, such as converting old commercial properties into larger co-living apartments, offering much better facilities for single people, and even couples, with larger and more self-contained living areas, gyms, laundry rooms, communal spaces for socialising, etc. They will also, by default, be near shops and transport links.

There are a lot of derelict commercial properties across Portsmouth that could be converted, e.g. the old Kwik Save site (closed for around 20 years +, current planning application still live from 01/2026); United Footwear shop in Fratton (closed for around 10 years, planning permission granted in 2018 but not fulfilled), the old Sorting Office in Slindon Street (closed for around 11 years, various planning apps granted but yet to be fulfilled), Connect Centre in Kingston Crescent (closed in 2019, various planning apps granted but yet to be fulfilled), etc. Why have these buildings been allowed to sit and decay for so long?

Whilst I feel that the proposed changes in the glossary, regarding the terms 'Dwelling' and 'Density', within PCC03 are both welcome and wholly necessary, I do not feel that PCC has gone far enough. Even within the KD03 there are still inconsistencies regarding the terms 'home' and 'dwelling' in relation to 'Windfall Site' – see Table 6.1, page 189 of KD03, and PLP16, 1e, page 190 of KD03.

In KD34, on page 179, it states: *"The Council deems 'New Home' too much of a subjective term to be defined in the Glossary. Therefore, the addition of 'New Home' has not been proposed to the Glossary"*. I disagree with this decision and feel that this needs to be revisited; a clear definition for 'home'/'new home' must be added. Should a 10m² room (at best), and the only private space available to a tenant, be considered a 'permanent home'? I do not think that it ever should be, hence another reason for a much clearer definition for the term 'home'. For the record, the LPA in Portsmouth DOES consider a 10m² room a permanent home – please speak to Ian Maguire for confirmation of this.

Whilst Strategic Policy PLP16 may have been re-written, my original concerns are still valid:

This part of the local plan cannot be considered legally compliant, sound, or compliant with the Duty to Cooperate on the most fundamental level, due to:

1. The lack of clarity regarding the definition of terms.

2. The fact that the lack of clear definitions may lead to the exploitation of Policy PLP16;
3. The lack of transparency surrounding the fact that a large proportion of the housing target will be met by HMOs - the number of HMOs projected to be developed over the course of the plan needs to be explicit and fully transparent, not buried within the umbrella term of 'Windfall Sites';
4. The fact that the above information has been buried in an extremely long and technical document (The Pre-submission PLP) and, therefore, not easily accessible for public scrutiny.

In order to make the Plan legally compliant, sound and compliant with Duty to Cooperate, Portsmouth City Council need to:

1. Provide absolute definitions and descriptions for, and differences between, HMOs, 'windfall sites', 'dwellings', 'new homes', 'habitable rooms' and any other such terms they choose to use in the future, within the glossary, and use those terms consistently within the text of the PLP;
2. Explain, when using any of those terms, exactly how they will be utilised in calculating housing targets, how those housing targets will be met and, of course, the density of various areas within the city;
3. Be fully transparent and make information, that will significantly impact existing residents, crystal clear and easily accessible to those residents - e.g. for the 15-year duration of this PLP, a large proportion of the housing target will be met via the development of HMOs. This will enable them to formally object, if they wish to do so during a public consultation, should major modifications to the PLP16 be made;
4. No longer permit Class C3 dwellinghouses to be converted to HMOs for the entire duration of the PLP, allowing much needed family homes to remain as such. Permit the conversion of much larger empty commercial properties/offices to HMOs which, by their nature, will have easy access to public transport links - thereby allowing viable alternatives to be considered and utilised;
5. Portsmouth is unique, in terms of its history, geography, size and high population density. For this reason, PCC, by negotiation with the Planning Inspectorate, should endeavour to significantly reduced its housing target for the duration of the PLP. The lowest density area (currently suggested to a minimum of 40dph) could potentially shoulder the burden of genuine house/flat building projects, proposed within the newly revised-down housing target with, of course, an appropriate increase in infrastructure, services, utilities, parking, etc.

With regard to paragraph 36 of the NPPF 2024, in light of the above, and to clarify further still, I do not feel that this part of the plan is sound on the grounds that:

- a) It is not positively prepared – lack of clarity and transparency regarding HMOs and Windfall Sites, and the lack of a definition for the term ‘home’, do not afford honest dialogue with neighbouring authorities regarding unmet needs, in either direction. It is also not consistent with sustainable development - services and infrastructure in Portsmouth are already broken, and further densifying already highly dense areas will turn Portsmouth into what resembles a modern-day slum;
- b) It is not justified – reasonable alternatives have not been considered, i.e. conversion of commercial properties into more spacious and appropriate co-living arrangements;
- c) It is not effective – it is not deliverable over the plan period, i.e. no more family homes can be lost to HMO conversions, nor is it based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters (see point a).
- d) It is not consistent with national policy – it cannot possibly enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant (see point a).

With specific regard to the Inspector’s questions:

2) d. Is the windfall allowance specified in Table 6.1 justified? No – see reasoning above.

6) Is Policy PLP16 otherwise positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy? No – see reasoning above.