

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017-2018

**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY,
COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

22nd MARCH 2018

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7

**DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY
PLANNING GUIDANCE- *HOUSES
IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION
(HMO's)***

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The report (attached as Appendix 1) sought Cabinet's approval to undertake public consultation on Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) on the 19th December 2017. The Cabinet agreed the way forward for an 8 week public consultation so that the Supplementary Planning Guidance could be adopted by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1** Scrutinise the proposed Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance Houses in Multiple Occupation currently under consultation.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1** The Non-Technical Summary at Appendix 2 provides Scrutiny with information on how the Supplementary Planning Guidance is one tool that can be used to assist to address the impact of the over-concentration of HMO's in a residential area.
- 3.2** For Members' information, the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance Houses in Multiple Occupation is attached at Appendix 3 and sets out the issues behind the need for such guidance in Rhondda Cynon Taf, its connections with other LDP policy and existing SPG, before proposing more specific policy guidance in relation to the permitting of suitable HMO planning applications.
- 3.3** Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity are invited to provide its views on the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance as part of the public consultation. The Service Director, Planning will be in attendance at the meeting to answer any questions.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

19th DECEMBER 2017

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR R BEVAN

Author: Simon Gale, Service Director Planning: Tel 01443 494716

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval to undertake public consultation on Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance, *Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)*, for the purposes of consultation.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Evidence collected by officers has indicated that there is an over concentration of HMOs in some parts of Treforest which in turn leads to a range of issues that can undermine the social cohesion of the community in that area. Evidence also shows that landlords are continuing to propose the creation of new HMOs in the area and at present the Council has been unsuccessful in resisting these proposals through the planning process and has lost a number of recent appeals to the Planning Inspectorate. Supplementary Planning Guidance is one tool that can be used to assist in the consideration of planning applications both in terms of resisting applications for inappropriate HMOs or HMOs in areas that have already got high concentrations and also assist in raising the standard of new HMOs and guiding any future HMOs to the most appropriate locations. This report seeks Cabinet approval to undertake public consultation on Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Treforest has seen significant demographic changes in the past 25 years and in particular a significant increase in the number of HMOs in the community, much of which has been in response to the expansion of the University of South Wales (previously University of Glamorgan) and the demand for accommodation to meet the needs of an increasing number of students. The University has relatively limited accommodation of its own (mainly for first year students), which has led to the demand for student accommodation in close proximity to the Treforest campus. There were 20,350 undergraduate and post graduate students at the University in Treforest in 2012/13, a 16% increase from the 2000/01 figure of 17,535. However, it should also be acknowledged that the University is a very important asset for Rhondda Cynon Taf. Indeed, many of these students that have been attracted to the University are from the UK and overseas, bringing considerable investment into the area and the wider County Borough. Furthermore, the University of South Wales helps promote the pivotal status of the wider Pontypridd area in the Cardiff Capital Region, whilst it is also a significant local and regional employer.
- 4.2 It is accepted that HMOs can serve a useful purpose in providing accommodation for certain groups such as students temporarily resident in a locality and generally for people who are unable to afford self-contained accommodation. However, concerns can arise with the existence of HMOs because of the transient nature of many tenancies, many residents on low incomes and/or from vulnerable groups, the intensive use of shared facilities and lack of interaction between residents who may be complete strangers to each other. HMO use of a house will generally be more intensive than single household use.
- 4.3 Evidence collected by officers both in RCT and at an all Wales level shows that where areas experience high concentrations of HMOs such as Treforest, issues then arise which include:
- Access to the area for owner occupiers and first time buyers becoming much more difficult because of increased house prices and competition from landlords, with a reduction in the number of family homes;
 - Increases in anti-social behaviour, noise, burglary and other crime;
 - Reduction in the quality of the local environment and street scene as a consequence of increased litter, refuse and fly tipping, increased levels of disrepair and prevalent letting signs.
 - A change of character in an area through tendency for increased numbers of takeaways, discount food stores, letting agencies and so on;
 - Increased pressure on parking
- 4.4 To put this into context Treforest accounts for 94% of the HMOs within RCT and **32%** of all households within the ward are HMO. Cardiff's University area has a concentration of 28% HMOs, Swansea's is 15%, Aberystwyth is 12% and Bangor is 16%. Treforest has the highest concentration of HMOs of all the university areas in Wales without the level of infrastructure that these much larger urban areas have. It is inevitable therefore that concerns are being raised in the community of Treforest about the types of issues set out above.

- 4.5 The Council regularly receives complaints from residents in Treforest about anti-social behaviour, proliferation of lettings boards, refuse issues (such as black bags being left out for long periods) and concerns are raised about the increasing number of students who own cars which then leads to parking issues in the area. Enforcement records show that there are a high number of refuse related investigations in Treforest (62% were related to HMOs) and town centre surveys show that Treforest has a high percentage (35%) of A3 uses (takeaways and other food and drink establishments) compared to an RCT average of 18%.
- 4.6 Preventing new HMOs being created is not in itself going to address the existing issues related to HMOs in Treforest and it should be noted that the Council already employs a range of initiatives in the area such as the discretionary HMO Licensing (in addition to the mandatory Licensing under the 2004 Housing Act) and the Property Accreditation scheme.
- 4.7 Nevertheless, for the reasons highlighted above it is still felt appropriate to consider ways for the Council to exert more control over the demand for new HMOs in areas where there is already a significant concentration.
- 4.8 The recent introduction of new planning legislation means that new proposals for HMOs now need planning permission where previously traditional family homes could be converted to a HMO under permitted development rights.
- 4.9 Since the introduction of this new control the Council has received a number of planning applications to convert traditional homes in to HMOs. Since February 2016 when the new C4 (HMO) Class was introduced in Wales, Rhondda Cynon Taf has received nineteen applications for HMOs in the Treforest ward. Of those nineteen, 11 applications were refused permission but were subsequently overturned and allowed on appeal. A further four applications were refused and four others allowed
- 4.10 One of the reasons cited by Planning Inspectors when determining these appeals is that the Council does not have a policy in its Local Development Plan (LDP) that specifically deals with HMOs, as the LDP was prepared and adopted prior to the new legalisation that brought HMOs under planning control. One of the ways in which this policy 'vacuum' can be filled is through the introduction of Supplementary Planning Guidance on the subject of HMOs.
- 4.11 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is non-statutory supporting information and advice that supplements the policies and proposals within the LDP. Supplementary Planning Guidance will be a significant material consideration in determining planning applications and appeals and can relate to specific topics and sites.
- 4.12 SPG that deals with the subject of HMOs has been prepared by officers and is attached at Appendix A and it is recommended that this SPG is approved for public consultation.

5. CONTENT OF THE SPG

- 5.1 Whilst it has been established that the current concentration levels of HMO in Treforest is high compared to other university areas, recent appeal decisions show that the absence of a specific policy basis makes it difficult to manage HMOs through the planning application process. With the development of a robust SPG which includes a HMO threshold policy, it is anticipated that the Council will be better positioned to manage the proliferation of HMOs in the Treforest area and where appropriate, across the County Borough. It will also give the ability to ensure that where appropriate proposals for such HMO's come forward they can be required to meet standards set out in the SPG.
- 5.2 The Draft SPG identifies the Treforest Ward, (excluding the area to the east of the A470), as an area where a threshold of 20% of HMO dwellings within a 50 metre radius of the planning application address, should be applied. If the application would result in this threshold being breached, it would be considered unacceptable and permission refused. It would often be the case that percentages are already well above this threshold. Indeed, recent analysis undertaken shows that for 10 of the recent applications for HMO's in Treforest, (that had a very broad spread across the ward), there was an average of 39% licensed HMO's in existence within a 50 metres radius of them.
- 5.3 To allow for appropriate levels of opportunity for HMOs in all other parts of the County Borough, also in line with Welsh Government best practice recommendations, a lower thresholds of 10% of HMO's within a 50 metres radius of the application property is proposed.
- 5.4 Consideration has been given in the guidance to prevent the issue of 'sandwiching' of non HMO properties by HMOs and also the prevention of further clustering, i.e. 2 or more adjacent properties. In exceptional scenarios where certain streets or sub-areas have reached such a point that further concentration would not have any further detrimental effect, if proposals come forward for HMOs where the concentration of such uses within a 50 metres radius were already at 80% or above, then permission would be considered acceptable in principle.
- 5.5 The SPG also considers a range of associated matters, which for the most part are included within the Council's Licensing arrangements, but are appropriately referenced in the SPG for the sake of completeness. This SPG will play a significant role in assessing applications for planning permission in relation to HMOs and informing the decisions on them. The SPG will also provide valuable clarity for applicants, objectors and occupiers associated with HMO planning applications.
- 5.6 Consideration has been given to the implications of preventing larger numbers of new HMOs coming forward, particularly in the Treforest area where HMOs play a role in housing students, which in turn has a role in supporting the operation of the University. Discussions with the University and wider evidence gathered suggest that students are increasingly looking to rent a higher

standard of accommodation, are willing to pay a premium and are moving away from the relatively cramped and often lower quality converted HMOs.

- 5.7 Evidence suggests that there has been a contraction in the number of students seeking accommodation in Treforest, with many students now living in purpose built student accommodation in Cardiff and commuting by rail. More recently, the purposely developed student accommodation at Llwynycastan in Pontypridd has opened and became fully rented within a very short time. Examples of the high standard of finish bedrooms and kitchen at this development are shown below. Further proposals for bespoke student accommodation are also currently being developed in Treforest and Pontypridd. It is therefore considered that these forms of development are likely to assist in meeting any future demand for student accommodation although the situation will be kept under review and the SPG can be amended or withdrawn if deemed necessary in the future.





6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. An Equalities Impact Assessment scoping exercise has been undertaken that indicates that there would be no such implications.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1. Broad consultation has taken place in the preparation of the Draft SPG. This has included discussions with and research of other Local Planning Authorities and with internal departments within Rhondda Cynon Taf, including Highways Building Control and Housing Strategy. In order for this SPG to be adopted by the Council it is necessary that this Draft SPG goes out to further comprehensive, formal consultation.
- 7.2. Consultees for the formal consultation will include the University of South Wales; the Students Union; Groups representing landlords and local residents; the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee and the Local Member for the area.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Costs will be met from existing budgets.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The SPG will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES / FUTURE GENERATIONS - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 10.1 The HMO SPG will support the Corporate Plan across People, Place and Economy by ensuring that established communities are not displaced and cohesion undermined by concentrations emerging of housing for short-term residents. The HMO SPG will also help the Council to ensure that communities can sustain their facilities and amenities and can retain their vibrancy by preventing the emergence of concentrations of HMO, in accordance with the Single Integrated Plan. As the SPG is designed to avoid the negative effects on neighbourhoods of concentrations of HMO, it will contribute to achieving well-being objectives.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Evidence suggests there is an over concentration of HMOs in some parts of Treforest which in turn leads to a range of issues that can undermine the social cohesion of the community in that area. The Council has been unsuccessful in resisting these proposals through the planning process and has lost a number of recent appeals to the Planning Inspectorate. Supplementary Planning Guidance is one tool that can be used to assist in the consideration of planning applications both in terms of resisting applications for inappropriate HMOs or HMOs in areas that have already got high concentrations and also assist in raising the standard of new HMOs and guiding any future HMOs to the most appropriate locations
- 11.2 It is therefore recommended that Cabinet agree the Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance *Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation* for formal consultation.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity

Contact Officer

Simon Gale, Service Director of Planning. 01443 494716

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

19 DECEMBER 2017

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENTERPRISE
DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING COUNCILLOR R BEVAN**

Item:

Background Papers

None.

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APPENDIX A

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance

November 2017

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4. Managing HMO Concentrations

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Appendix1. Summary of Research

1. Introduction

Recent changes in legislation have given Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) the opportunity to formally control proposals for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) within their communities. It is recognised by Welsh Government and at a local authority level that an over concentration of HMOs in an area can have negative impacts on a community.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, HMOs are heavily clustered around the University of South Wales campus in Treforest. There has been increasing concerns raised by the local community that the concentration of HMOs has reached a level that is having a significant detrimental effect on community cohesion.

The clustering and high concentration of HMOs across this community is the result of demand over many years from students wanting to live as close as possible to the campus, which is typical of university towns. Evidence suggests that there has been a contraction in the number of students seeking accommodation in Treforest, with many students now living in purpose built student accommodation in Cardiff and commuting by rail. More recently, the purposely developed student accommodation at Llwynycastan in Pontypridd has opened and became fully rented within a very short time.

Further proposals for bespoke student accommodation are also currently being developed in Treforest and Pontypridd. Therefore, further demand for HMO accommodation in Rhondda Cynon Taf is likely to come from other low-income households that do not need be clustered in any one area such as Treforest.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is non-statutory supporting information and advice that supplements the policies and proposals within the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan (LDP). SPG will factor as a material consideration in determining planning applications and appeals and can relate to specific topics and sites.

This SPG has the twin purpose of firstly identifying when it is deemed that the concentration of HMOs in an area has reached a level considered to adversely impact upon the community; and secondly, provide guidance on standards of HMOs and how they should be developed. Although it will primarily be applicable to Treforest it will also provide guidance for all of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. Background

A house is said to be in multiple occupation when it is occupied by more than one private household. Typically, a house in multiple occupation is rented by a landlord room by room, for the most part to individuals or couples. These tenants would then have shared use of the bathroom, kitchen, utilities and common areas including any garden or yard. The number of rooms and associated occupants within a house would clearly depend on the size of the properties, but would often have converted ground floors in use as individual rentable rooms.

It is recognised that HMOs have a key role to play in meeting housing need within the Social Rented sector. HMOs are needed to provide accommodation for low-income individuals or small households who would otherwise be in hostels, overly large households or even homeless. They are popular with students, young, single employed or unemployed persons, small households unable to afford self-contained accommodation and small households who need flexibility to move home. Accordingly, such residents are often transient, with a high turnover of population within these communities.

To convert a house from single-household occupation to multiple occupation need not involve any building alterations either inside or outside. However, it may be that the conversion is accompanied by construction of additional bedrooms, possibly by a rear extension of the house, or by internal rearrangement to provide additional kitchen, bathroom and utility facilities.

Multiple occupation of a house usually involves an intensification of its residential use. For example, the new use of a three-bedroom house formerly occupied by a family of four as an HMO with four bedsitting rooms, occupied by couples, would increase both the number of people in the house and the proportion of adults. This intensification of occupation would result in increased levels of activity in and around the house, which can have negative impacts on occupants, their neighbours and the local community.

Intensification of residential use can result in additional demand for car parking spaces and increased noise levels (through the playing of music for example). Other impacts result from the displacement of owner-occupied houses by rented houses and the displacement of the settled population by short-term residents. Impacts can include the increased appearance of estate agents advertising boards, deterioration in the general standard of property maintenance and inadequate handling of refuse. The displacement can also result in reduced use of facilities that serve the settled population, such as schools and local shops, which can lead to their closure. Conversely, this displacement can lead to an increase in food and drink premises and estate agents.

It is normally difficult to demonstrate the degree of impact that an individual HMO would have on the character and amenity of its surroundings. However, areas where many houses are HMO have a distinct character based on their cumulative impact, resulting in negative perceptions of the area among the long-term residents.

The internal aspects of HMO are dealt with by local authorities under Housing legislation, through licensing systems that ensure a minimum standard of facilities and living conditions. The allowance for the use and external aspects are dealt with under the Town and Country Planning legislation, which can control the conversion of houses to multiple occupation in cases where planning permission is required.

Legislative Changes

Until 2016, the use of a building as a dwellinghouse was defined by Class C3 of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order 1987, as follows:

Class C3. Dwellinghouses

Use as a dwellinghouse (whether or not as a sole or main residence) —

(a) by a single person or by people living together as a family, or

(b) by not more than 6 residents living together as a single household (including a household where care is provided for residents).

The effect of this was that planning permission was not required to use a family house as a HMO as long as there were no more than 6 residents. Therefore since most houses

in Treforest are terraced houses of modest size, few needed planning permission for multiple occupation.

New legislation was introduced in Wales in February 2016 which included the division of Class C3 into new use classes C3 and C4:

Class C3. Dwellinghouses

Use as a dwellinghouse (whether or not as a sole or main residence) by—

(a) a single person or by people to be regarded as forming a single household;

(b) not more than 6 residents living together as a single household where care is provided for residents; or

(c) not more than 6 residents living together as a single household where no care is provided to residents (other than a use within class C4).

Class C4. Houses in multiple occupation

Use of a dwellinghouse by not more than 6 residents as a house in multiple occupation.

The change means that planning permission is now required to change from a house in single occupation to a HMO for up to 6 residents. These are now referred to as either 'small HMO' or 'Class C4 HMO'.

Planning permission is needed now, as before February 2016, to change from a house in single occupation to a HMO for more than 6 residents. These are now referred to as either 'large HMO' or 'sui generis HMO' (sui generis use: a use of its own kind, i.e. not in a use class).

Since the licensing and planning systems operate on different criteria under separate legislation, it is possible to gain a licence and not planning permission for the same property, or planning permission and not a licence. The granting of one is no indication that the other will be granted.

3. HMOs in Rhondda Cynon Taf

It is recognised at both national and community level that even the best managed areas of HMOs, with significant transient populations, still have a substantially different character compared to residential areas with settled populations.

Within Rhondda Cynon Taf, the concerns relating to high numbers and high concentrations of HMOs are almost solely associated with the Treforest ward. Treforest accounts for 94% of the HMOs within the County Borough and for 32% of all households within the ward. When compared to the average of 1.3% of HMO's in wards across Rhondda Cynon Taf and the national average of 2.8%, there is clearly an issue with overconcentration within Treforest.

The evidence gathered indicates that this ward and the community of Treforest has seen significant demographic changes in the past 25 years that is directly attributable to the growth of HMOs here, which themselves have come about in association with the expansion of the University of South Wales (previously University of Glamorgan).

Although demographic changes occur irrespective of the level of HMO concentration and whilst it cannot be used as an indicator of negative or positive change, it is useful in identifying the notable characteristics of areas with a significant number of HMOs. The following statistics have been obtained from the 2011 Census:

- Household compositions containing 2 or more adults with no children account for 52% in Treforest whilst the average across all of Rhondda Cynon Taf is 26%.
- The private rented sector accounts for 44% of households in Treforest compared to 12% for the County Borough.
- Only 8% of people in Treforest are aged 0-15. The County Borough average is 19%.
- 60% of people residing in Treforest are aged 16-29 whereas the County Borough average is 18%.
- It has one of the lowest proportions of home ownership in the County Borough, with 44% of households either owning their property outright or with a mortgage. This compares to a Rhondda Cynon Taf average of 71%. 25 years ago, 77% of households living in Treforest owned their homes.
- 12 units of a total of 53 retail premises, (21%), in the retail centre of Treforest are either takeaways or have elements of takeaways within them. This is again higher than other centres in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

It is therefore clear that the number of HMOs within Treforest is significantly disproportionate to the rest of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It is recognised that there is a justifiable concern of how these demographic changes have changed and are continuing to change, the community of Treforest.

Transient occupation can lead to a lack of community integration and cohesion and less commitment to maintain the quality of the local environment. This can have the effect of re-enforcing the area as a 'student' community and making it less popular for families.

4. Managing HMO Concentrations

Policy HMO 1 - 20% Threshold Area in Treforest

Within the Treforest Ward, excluding the area to the east of the A470, (as identified in Figure 2 below), a threshold of 20% of HMO dwellings, (as a percentage of all residential properties) within a 50 metre radius of the planning application address, will be applied. If the proposed HMO would result in this threshold percentage being exceeded, it would be considered unacceptable in principle, and permission refused.

All planning applications for C4 HMO's and Large, Sui Generis HMO's in Rhondda Cynon Taf will be considered against this policy.

The low radius incorporated in this policy threshold approach seeks to prevent tight clustering of HMOs within a small neighbourhood area. However, it would often be the case that percentages are already well above this threshold across many parts of the Treforest Ward. Recent analysis undertaken of 10 example sites, with a broad spread across Treforest, showed there was an average of 39% licensed HMOs in existence within a 50 metres radius of them. Accordingly, it is accepted that there will be a number of areas within Treforest where no further HMOs should be allowed. However, it should also be noted that the 20% threshold is still considered a high level of concentration, and therefore the policy is not an overly prescriptive one even in such a location close to a University Campus.

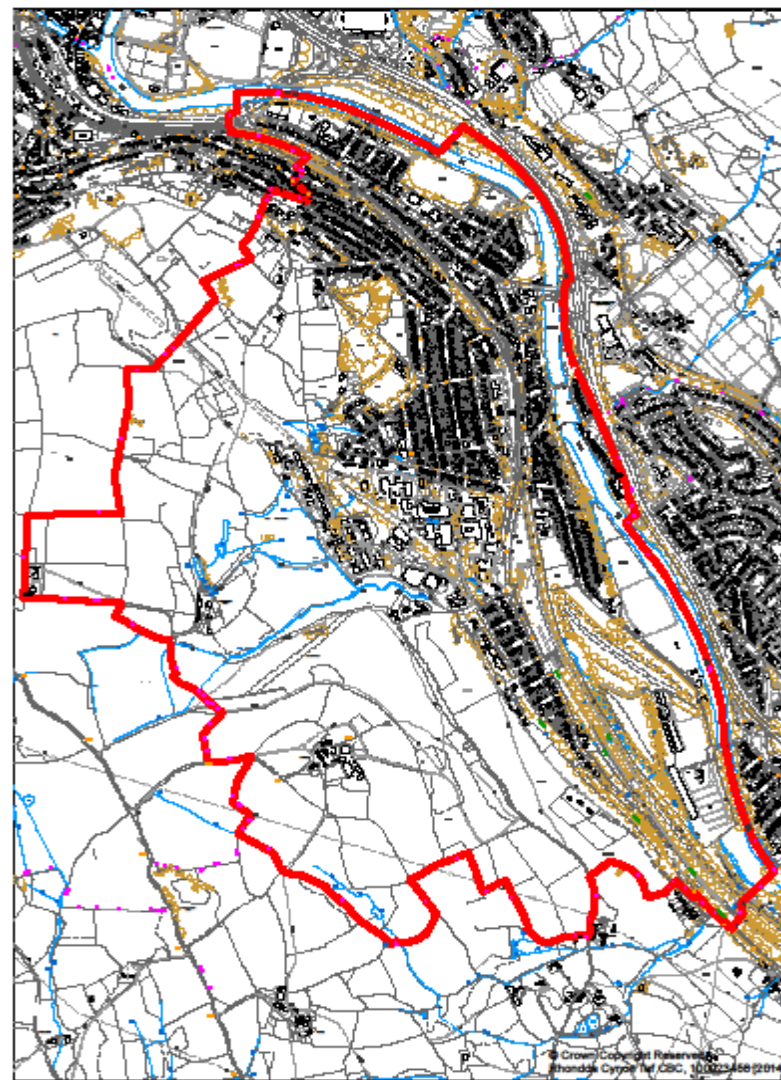
Concentrations of HMOs above 20% in any neighbourhood would create such an over concentration that would not be in accordance with national policy of creating mixed tenure communities. Such concentrations would also be contrary to sections 3.1.7 and 9.3.3 of PPW, as set out above, in relation to wider public interests and damage to an areas character. Similarly, Welsh Government research and associated report recommends as best practice a thresholds of 10% of HMO properties as a general appropriate level of such properties within an area. Accordingly, Policy HMO 2 below sets out a further threshold for HMO property across all of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Figure 1 below shows an example of an application site for a change of use to an HMO in the 20% thresholds area. The larger red dot is the application site, around which is drawn the blue 50 metre radius buffer circle. Within this buffer are 50 residential properties, of which 24 are currently HMO (smaller red dots). This equates to 46%, which would clearly be well above the prescribed threshold, and permission would not be given for this proposal.

Figure 1 – Example of unsuitable HMO application in 20% Threshold Area;



Figure 2 – 20% Threshold Area in Treforest



Policy HMO 2 – 10% Threshold Across Rhondda Cynon Taf

To allow for appropriate levels of opportunity for HMOs in all other parts of the County Borough, a lower threshold of 10% of HMOs (as a percentage of all residential properties) within a 50 metres radius of the planning application address, will be applied. If the proposed HMO would result in this threshold percentage being exceeded, it would be considered unacceptable in principle, and permission refused.

As discussed throughout this SPG, HMOs can play a significant role in the rental housing market, giving significant numbers of low income individuals and small households housing options. Accordingly, this policy seeks to allow for further, appropriate HMO to come forward in other parts of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Average percentages of HMOs across other wards in the County Borough are as low as 1.3% and therefore market demand in other areas is generally low. It is considered that for the most part, concentrations of HMOs would very unlikely increase near the 10% thresholds. However, if demand does arise in certain locations, such as town centres, or in areas bordering the Treforest ward, then this lower threshold would prevent overconcentration occurring.

Figure 3 - Example of suitable HMO application in the 20% Threshold Area, but unsuitable in 10% Threshold Area;



Figure 3 above shows an application site for an HMO, again with 50 dwellings within the 50 metres radius buffer of it. In this instance, there are 8 HMOs within the radius area, or 16% of the properties. Accordingly, an application with this scenario would be acceptable in Treforest in principle, although not acceptable elsewhere in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Figure 4 - Example of a suitable HMO application in the 10% Threshold Area;



Figure 4 the same application site as previous, although in this scenario, there are just 2 HMO of the 50 residential dwellings in the radius area. This would equate to just 4% of all the properties. This would therefore be acceptable in principle in all parts of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Policy HMO 3 – Sandwiching and Adjacent HMOs

Proposal for HMOs that would result in the ‘sandwiching’ of non HMO properties will not be permitted i.e no property should be located between 2 HMO. Further to this, no more than two HMOs should be allowed adjacent to each other to prevent more localised clustering of such properties.

This policy seeks to reduce effects of HMOs at the most local level. A non sandwiching approach is adopted by many authorities who consider that C3 dwellings should not be enclosed and affected by recognised HMO impacts. Similarly, preventing a very small cluster of HMOs will reduce the local impacts on neighbouring properties and will also prevent an over concentration at the very localised level. It should be acknowledged that such scenarios already exist in many parts of Treforest, although it is intended that there is prevention of the practice in the future.

Policy HMO 4 – Exceptional Circumstances

In certain circumstances, concentrations of HMOs have reached such a point in a localised area that further permissions for HMOs are considered to not have any further detrimental effect. Where the concentration of existing HMOs within a 50 metres radius is already at 80% or above, then permission would be considered acceptable in principle.

This recognised approach would allow for increased HMOs in areas that have become almost solely HMO properties. In these areas, the increased impacts on the localised

neighbourhood or wider community from an additional HMO would be relatively insignificant and this exceptional allowance will prevent owner occupiers in these areas from becoming 'locked-in'.

5. Planning Policies Relevant to HMO Proposals

All planning applications for new, or the change of use to, C4 Houses of Multiple Ownership or Large, Sui Generis HMOs will be considered in accordance with the following policies and existing SPG.

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

In contributing to the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals, planning policies, decisions and proposals should:

- Ensure that all local communities – both urban and rural – have sufficient good quality housing for their needs, including affordable housing for local needs and for special needs where appropriate, in safe neighbourhoods.

National Planning Policies

PPW 9 November 2016

3.1.7 The planning system does not exist to protect the private interests of one person against the activities of another. Proposals should be considered in terms of their effect on amenity and existing use of land and buildings in the public interest

Housing

9.1.2 Local planning authorities should promote sustainable residential environments, avoid large housing areas of monotonous character and make appropriate provision for

affordable housing. Local planning authorities should promote mixed tenure communities.

9.2.2 - authorities need a clear understanding of factors influencing housing requirements

9.3.3 Insensitive infilling, or the cumulative effects of development or redevelopment, including conversion and adaptation, should not be allowed to damage an area's character or amenity.

9.3.4 ...where high densities are proposed, the amenity of the scheme and surrounding property should be carefully considered.

Infrastructure & Services

12.7.3 Adequate facilities and space for the collection, composting and recycling of waste materials should be incorporated into the design of any development ...

Local Planning Policies

2.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan March 2011

Policy CS 1 - Development in the North

In the Northern Strategy Area the emphasis will be on building strong, sustainable communities. This will be achieved by:-

1. Promoting residential and commercial development in locations which will support and reinforce the roles of Principal Towns and Key Settlements;

2. Providing high quality, affordable accommodation that promotes diversity in the residential market

Policy CS 2 – Development in the South

In the Southern Strategy Area the emphasis will be on sustainable growth that benefits Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole. This will be achieved by:

1. Promoting residential development with a sense of place which respects the character and context of the Principal Towns and Key Settlements of the Southern Strategy Area;

2. Protecting the culture and identity of communities by focusing development within defined settlement boundaries and promoting the reuse of under used and previously developed land and buildings

Policy AW 5 – New Development

Development proposals will be supported where:

1. Amenity

- a) The scale, form and design of the development would have no unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area;
- b) Where appropriate, existing site features of built and natural environment value would be retained;
- c) There would be no significant impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers;
- d) The development would be compatible with other uses in the locality;
- e) The development would include the use of multi-functional buildings where appropriate;
- f) The development designs out the opportunity for crime and anti social behaviour.

2. Accessibility

- a) The development would be accessible to the local and wider community by a range of sustainable modes of transport;
- b) The site layout and mix of uses maximises opportunities to reduce dependence on cars;
- c) The development would have safe access to the highway network and would not cause traffic congestion or exacerbate existing traffic congestion;

- d) Car parking would be provided in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Delivering Design and Placemaking: Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements.

2.2 Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan: Supplementary Planning Guidance

Design & Placemaking March 2011

3.6.2 To ensure mixed communities are accommodated and that the local population have a choice of appropriate housing, different housing needs such as family, student, retirement, elderly and sheltered accommodation need to be considered.

4.3.14 Parking on street should be kept small in scale, provided within defined bays and be designed to add to the character of the street scene.

4.3.17 Where there are no garages, cycle storage could be provided in rear gardens where there is a safe and secure means of access.

Delivering Design & Placemaking: Access, Circulation & Parking Requirements March 2011

Car Parking Space Requirements:

House conversions to bedsits, or self-contained apartments:
Zone 1 (Principal town centres) Maximum Requirement: 1 space per unit (for residents); nil (for visitors);

Zones 2-4 (elsewhere) Maximum Requirement: 1 space per bedroom, maximum of 3 (for residents); 1 space per 5 units (for visitors)

For developments *where clear evidence has been supplied that car ownership levels will be lower than normal*, a more flexible approach to numbers of parking spaces may be taken. Acceptable evidence of this would be a contractual arrangement with tenants to secure low car ownership levels.

Development of Flats – Conversions & New Build, June 2015

Subdivision of existing houses

The subdivision of existing houses is likely to be acceptable where a high quality of accommodation and amenity can be provided for residents.

However many smaller properties, and particularly in traditional terraced streets, will not be appropriate for subdivision. Consideration will be given to the nature of the resulting flats, and it is likely that permission will be refused where:

- A high standard of internal layout cannot be achieved.
- Habitable rooms would lack natural light, ventilation or a reasonable outlook.
- The occupants of the first floor flat would not have access to the rear garden or other external space for amenity, clothes drying, bin storage and / or cycle storage.

- It would exacerbate existing on street parking problems.
- Living rooms or kitchens would be located directly adjacent to upstairs bedrooms of neighbouring houses, unless mitigating measures can be provided.

Cycle Provision

Cycle storage facilities should be provided for residents in convenient locations, either inside flats or in communal areas close to each flat.

Bin Storage and Refuse Collection

Sufficient space must be provided for the storage of bins, recycling and food waste in between collections, either within individual flats or in a communal area within 30m walking distance of each flat.

Appendix 6 - Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

HMOs and planning (this reference pre-dates the new legislation associated with HMO's).

Other SPG that may be relevant depending on the location and detail of the proposal would be;

- The Historic Built Environment
- Design in Town Centres
- A Design Guide for Householder Development
- Nature Conservation

6. Standards of HMOs

Further to the compliance with the above policies and relevant SPG, this SPG seeks to outline, guide and inform stakeholders of the standards expected in the development of new and changes of use to HMO.

For clarification, all applications for new and changes of use to HMO are required to comply with the standards set out in the bullet points in relation to flats in the Flats Conversions & New Build SPG as outlined in above. As with the Flats SPG, permission is unlikely to be granted if these standards cannot be met.

Similarly, cycle storage facilities should be provided for residents in convenient locations in suitable communal areas.

Sufficient space must be provided for the storage of bins, recycling and food waste in between collections, in suitable communal areas.

Licensing

All applications for HMO should also be made in accordance with the standards set out under the Council's Licensing process. The details of which are included in the two main documents being;

- **Licensing of HMO – A Landlord's Guide to standards in HMO's 2014, and ;**

- **Licensing of HMO – Landlord Handbook 2014 (updated 2017).**

These firstly set out the detail of the licensing process and also what is required from landlords. It then goes on to include details on standards required within HMOs in order for the landlord to gain a license. These include reference to a range of necessary internal amenity standards, relating, for example, to bathrooms and washing facilities, kitchens, ventilation and lighting. Further standards are set out in relation to the appropriate scale of rooms.

These documents are available to view on the Rhondda Cynon Taf website, at the following location;

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Business/LandlordGuidance/Housesinmultipleoccupation.aspx>

Any applications for HMOs should ensure that they include sufficient information within them that would enable the Council to determine if they accord with all relevant planning policy, SPG and licensing standards.

Appendix 1- Summary of Research

In preparing this SPG, comprehensive research was undertaken to identify the most appropriate methods that are in place across the UK and Wales to manage the growth of HMOs.

SPG's that have been prepared for the management of HMOs are often within university towns and cities, although not always the case. The associated negative effects of high concentrations of HMOs on the character of the area and the community were often the reason that permanent residents were objecting to further applications for HMOs. HMO occupants are generally perceived as being younger and more transient than other residents within a community. This can lead to wider effects on the character of an area and can give rise to a lack of community integration and cohesion, and less commitment to maintain the quality of the local environment.

Broader objections and analysis of evidence by the Local Authorities indicated that the preparation of SPG was appropriate. One of the major findings from the research of these SPG was that there was a threshold approach introduced to contain further concentrations of HMO's within small neighbourhoods and wider communities.

What also came apparent was that there was often a two tier system of approach. One level sought to ensure a cap on further HMO's in those areas which were considered as reaching, or had already reached a saturation point in the concentration of such houses. These were the areas that

were already witnessing the much documented negative impacts associated with such overconcentrations of HMOs and which themselves initiated the need for an SPG.

Secondly, many authorities saw that although over-concentrations of HMO's came with negative impacts upon their communities, the use itself nevertheless plays an important role in the private rental housing sector. The benefits that HMO's offer in terms of housing options for students and low income individuals is well documented. Accordingly, the SPG's often give a second threshold approach to allow for more limited HMO's to come forward across wider parts of the authorities.

This SPG therefore seeks to adopt the most appropriate best practice approach of identifying a threshold of HMO's. However, this has been considered against the unique circumstances in Treforest and Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole. The SPG seeks to put into place a threshold, beyond which the concentration of HMO's is considered to have an unacceptable impact upon the community in which they sit.

The demographical statistics outlined above, along with the additional measures put in place by the Council relating to parking restrictions and refuse storage would indicate that such levels of concentration have already been reached in most parts of Treforest.

Non- Technical Summary

Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance - Houses in Multiple Occupation

Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is consulting the public on draft supplementary planning guidance (SPG) for houses in multiple occupation (HMO). Recent changes in legislation have determined that planning permission is now required to change the use of a house in single occupation to an HMO. This draft SPG supplements the Council's adopted Local Development Plan (LDP), by providing more specific policies and guidance for the suitable location of HMO in Rhondda Cynon Taf. One of the primary reasons for the preparation of the SPG was to identify solutions to address adverse impacts of over-concentrations of HMO in residential communities. Whilst the SPG cannot and will not affect the status of any existing lawful HMO, it seeks to limit the scope for additional inappropriate HMO in certain parts of Rhondda Cynon Taf, namely Treforest. Conversely, the SPG seeks to raise awareness that HMO may be appropriate in other sustainable locations in the County Borough, although preventing the creation of any over-concentrations elsewhere

Background

HMO are houses occupied by more than one household (a household is either a single person or more than one person who live together). HMO residents rent individual bedrooms and then share the facilities of the house e.g. bathrooms, kitchens or living areas. HMO are a cheap and flexible form of accommodation that suits small households. Students, low-income households and people who prefer or need the flexibility to move between areas often live in HMO.

The village of Treforest is characterised by a concentration of HMO, associated with the University of South Wales. The concentration of HMO in an established residential area can damage its character through a range of impacts. These may include: lower levels of property maintenance; additional parking pressures; household waste accumulations; clutter of 'to let' signs; neighbourhood shops replaced by hot food takeaway shops that are shut during the daytime; declining use of community facilities. Whilst an individual HMO is unlikely to have significant impacts on its own, their cumulative impact causes concern.

Planning and HMO

The adequacy of the internal arrangements of HMO is ensured through a system of licensing under Housing law. External issues are dealt with under Planning law, which requires that permission is needed to change a house to a HMO for 3 or more persons who are not part of the same household. Decisions to grant or refuse permission are made with reference to the adopted LDP, relevant SPG and any

evidence of adverse impacts on the area that the proposal might have. Planning permission for a scheme can be refused if its impacts (including cumulative impacts) would be harmful and significant.

Policies of Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP relevant to HMO are: CS 1 (development in the North); CS 2 (development in the South); and AW 5 (amenity and design in new development). Relevant SPG already adopted includes: Design & Placemaking; Access, Circulation & Parking; and Development of Flats. Further LDP policies and SPG would be relevant if the proposal is in a conservation area or a town centre.

Draft Planning Guidance for HMO

In order to address the issue of existing or future over-concentrations of HMO, this draft SPG proposes a limit, a 'threshold' not to be crossed, on the number of HMO to be allowed within a 50-metre radius of any planning application for a HMO.

In Treforest (excluding Glyntaff), where existing HMO are concentrated, the threshold will be 20% of houses in a 50-metre radius of a proposed HMO. This threshold will not be applied where existing HMO exceed 80% of houses. In practice, this means that few new HMO in Treforest will be allowed. **(See policies HMO 1 and 4.)**

Elsewhere in Rhondda Cynon Taf, where few HMO currently exist, the threshold will be 10%. In practice, this threshold will allow some new HMO, while preventing any new concentrations emerging that would have significant cumulative impacts. **(See policy HMO 2.)**

In addition, the SPG will protect single-occupancy houses from being sandwiched between HMO. Also, it will prevent adjacent houses from both becoming HMO to avoid local clusters of HMO emerging. **(See policy HMO 3).**



rhondda cynon taf
local development plan
cynllun datblygu lleol

Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance:

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

January 2018



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Recent changes in legislation have given Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) the opportunity to formally control proposals for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) within their communities. It is recognised by Welsh Government and at a local authority level that an over concentration of HMOs in an area can have negative impacts on a community.
- 1.2 In Rhondda Cynon Taf, HMOs are heavily clustered around the University of South Wales campus in Treforest. There has been increasing concerns raised by the local community that the concentration of HMOs has reached a level that is having a significant detrimental effect on community cohesion.
- 1.3 The clustering and high concentration of HMOs across this community is the result of demand over many years from students wanting to live as close as possible to the campus, which is typical of university towns. Evidence suggests that there has been a contraction in the number of students seeking accommodation in Treforest, with many students now living in purpose built student accommodation in Cardiff and commuting by rail. More recently, the purposely developed student accommodation at Llwynycastan in Pontypridd has opened and became fully rented within a very short time.
- 1.4 Further proposals for bespoke student accommodation are also currently being developed in Treforest and Pontypridd. Therefore, further demand for HMO accommodation in Rhondda Cynon Taf is likely to come

from other low-income households that do not need be clustered in any one area such as Treforest.

- 1.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is non-statutory supporting information and advice that supplements the policies and proposals within the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan (LDP). SPG will factor as a material consideration in determining planning applications and appeals and can relate to specific topics and sites.
- 1.6 This SPG has the twin purpose of firstly identifying when it is deemed that the concentration of HMOs in an area has reached a level considered to adversely impact upon the community; and secondly, provide guidance on standards of HMOs and how they should be developed. Although it will primarily be applicable to Treforest it will also provide guidance for all of Rhondda Cynon Taf.



Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

2. Background

2.1 Background to HMO's

2.1.1. A house is said to be in multiple occupation when it is occupied by more than one private household. Typically, a house in multiple occupation is rented by a landlord room by room, for the most part to individuals or couples. These tenants would then have shared use of the bathroom, kitchen, utilities and common areas including any garden or yard. The number of rooms and associated occupants within a house would clearly depend on the size of the properties, but would often have converted ground floors in use as individual rentable rooms.

2.1.2. It is recognised that HMOs have a key role to play in meeting housing need within the Social Rented sector. HMOs are needed to provide accommodation for low-income individuals or small households who would otherwise be in hostels, overly large households or even homeless. They are popular with students, young, single employed or unemployed persons, small households unable to afford self-contained accommodation and small households who need flexibility to move home. Accordingly, such residents are often transient, with a high turnover of population within these communities.

2.1.3. To convert a house from single-household occupation to multiple occupation need not involve any building alterations either inside or outside. However, it may be that the conversion is accompanied by construction of

additional bedrooms, possibly by a rear extension of the house, or by internal rearrangement to provide additional kitchen, bathroom and utility facilities.

2.1.4. Multiple occupation of a house usually involves an intensification of its residential use. For example, the new use of a three-bedroom house formerly occupied by a family of four as an HMO with four bedsitting rooms, occupied by couples, would increase both the number of people in the house and the proportion of adults. This intensification of occupation would result in increased levels of activity in and around the house, which can have negative impacts on occupants, their neighbours and the local community.

2.1.5. Intensification of residential use can result in additional demand for car parking spaces and increased noise levels (through the playing of music for example). Other impacts result from the displacement of owner-occupied houses by rented houses and the displacement of the settled population by short-term residents. Impacts can include the increased appearance of estate agents advertising boards, deterioration in the general standard of property maintenance and inadequate handling of refuse. The displacement can also result in reduced use of facilities that serve the settled population, such as schools and local shops, which can lead to their closure. Conversely, this displacement can lead to an increase in food and drink premises and estate agents.

2.1.6. It is normally difficult to demonstrate the degree of impact that an individual HMO would have on the



character and amenity of its surroundings. However, areas where many houses are HMO have a distinct character based on their cumulative impact, resulting in negative perceptions of the area among the long-term residents.

2.1.7. The internal aspects of HMO are dealt with by local authorities under Housing legislation, through licensing systems that ensure a minimum standard of facilities and living conditions. The allowance for the use and external aspects are dealt with under the Town and Country Planning legislation, which can control the conversion of houses to multiple occupation in cases where planning permission is required.

2.2. Legislative Changes

2.2.1. Until 2016, the use of a building as a dwellinghouse was defined by Class C3 of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order 1987, as follows:

Class C3. Dwellinghouses

Use as a dwellinghouse (whether or not as a sole or main residence) —

(a) by a single person or by people living together as a family, or

(b) by not more than 6 residents living together as a single household (including a household where care is provided for residents).

2.2.2. The effect of this was that planning permission was not required to use a family house as a HMO as long as there were no more than 6 residents. Therefore since most houses in Treforest are terraced houses of modest size, few needed planning permission for multiple occupation.

2.2.3. New legislation was introduced in Wales in February 2016 which included the division of Class C3 into new use classes C3 and C4:

Class C3. Dwellinghouses

Use as a dwellinghouse (whether or not as a sole or main residence) by—

(a) a single person or by people to be regarded as forming a single household;

(b) not more than 6 residents living together as a single household where care is provided for residents; or

(c) not more than 6 residents living together as a single household where no care is provided to residents (other than a use within class C4).

Class C4. Houses in multiple occupation

Use of a dwellinghouse by not more than 6 residents as a house in multiple occupation.



Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

- 2.2.4. The change means that planning permission is now required to change from a house in single occupation to a HMO for up to 6 residents. These are now referred to as either 'small HMO' or 'Class C4 HMO'.
- 2.2.5. Planning permission is needed now, as before February 2016, to change from a house in single occupation to a HMO for more than 6 residents. These are now referred to as either 'large HMO' or 'sui generis HMO' (sui generis use: a use of its own kind, i.e. not in a use class).
- 2.2.6. Since the licensing and planning systems operate on different criteria under separate legislation, it is possible to gain a licence and not planning permission for the same property, or planning permission and not a licence. The granting of one is no indication that the other will be granted.

3. HMOs in Rhondda Cynon Taf

- 3.1. It is recognised at both national and community level that even the best managed areas of HMOs, with significant transient populations, still have a substantially different character compared to residential areas with settled populations.
- 3.2. Within Rhondda Cynon Taf, the concerns relating to high numbers and high concentrations of HMOs are almost solely associated with the Treforest ward. Treforest accounts for 94% of the HMOs within the County Borough and for 32% of all households within the ward. When compared to the average of 1.3% of HMO's in wards across Rhondda Cynon Taf and the national average of 2.8%, there is clearly an issue with overconcentration within Treforest.
- 3.3. The evidence gathered indicates that this ward and the community of Treforest has seen significant demographic changes in the past 25 years that is directly attributable to the growth of HMOs here, which themselves have come about in association with the expansion of the University of South Wales (previously University of Glamorgan).
- 3.4. Although demographic changes occur irrespective of the level of HMO concentration and whilst it cannot be used as an indicator of negative or positive change, it is useful in identifying the notable characteristics of areas with a significant number of HMOs. The following statistics have been obtained from the 2011 Census:



- Household compositions containing 2 or more adults with no children account for 52% in Treforest whilst the average across all of Rhondda Cynon Taf is 26%.
- The private rented sector accounts for 44% of households in Treforest compared to 12% for the County Borough.
- Only 8% of people in Treforest are aged 0-15. The County Borough average is 19%.
- 60% of people residing in Treforest are aged 16-29 whereas the County Borough average is 18%.
- It has one of the lowest proportions of home ownership in the County Borough, with 44% of households either owning their property outright or with a mortgage. This compares to a Rhondda Cynon Taf average of 71%. 25 years ago, 77% of households living in Treforest owned their homes.
- 12 units of a total of 53 retail premises, (21%), in the retail centre of Treforest are either takeaways or have elements of takeaways within them. This is again higher than other centres in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

3.5. It is therefore clear that the number of HMOs within Treforest is significantly disproportionate to the rest of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It is recognised that there is a justifiable concern of how these demographic changes have changed and are continuing to change, the community of Treforest.

3.6. Transient occupation can lead to a lack of community integration and cohesion and less commitment to maintain the quality of the local environment. This can have the effect of re-enforcing the area as a 'student' community and making it less popular for families.



Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

4. Managing HMO Concentrations

Policy HMO 1 - 20% Threshold Area in Treforest

Within the Treforest Ward, excluding the area to the east of the A470, (as identified in Figure 2 below), a threshold of 20% of HMO dwellings, (as a percentage of all residential properties) within a 50 metre radius of the planning application address, will be applied. If the proposed HMO would result in this threshold percentage being exceeded, it would be considered unacceptable in principle, and permission refused.

All planning applications for C4 HMO's and Large, Sui Generis HMO's in Rhondda Cynon Taf will be considered against this policy.

4.1. The low radius incorporated in this policy threshold approach seeks to prevent tight clustering of HMOs within a small neighbourhood area. However, it would often be the case that percentages are already well above this threshold across many parts of the Treforest Ward. Recent analysis undertaken of 10 example sites, with a broad spread across Treforest, showed there was an average of 39% licensed HMOs in existence within a 50 metres radius of them. Accordingly, it is accepted that there will be a number of areas within Treforest where no further HMOs should be allowed. However, it should also be noted that the 20% threshold is still considered a high level of concentration, and therefore the policy is not an overly prescriptive one even in such a location close to a University Campus.

4.2. Concentrations of HMOs above 20% in any neighbourhood would create such an over concentration that would not be in accordance with national policy of creating mixed tenure communities. Such concentrations would also be contrary to sections 3.1.7 and 9.3.3 of PPW, as set out above, in relation to wider public interests and damage to an areas character. Similarly, Welsh Government research and associated report recommends as best practice a thresholds of 10% of HMO properties as a general appropriate level of such properties within an area. Accordingly, Policy HMO 2 below sets out a further threshold for HMO property across all of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

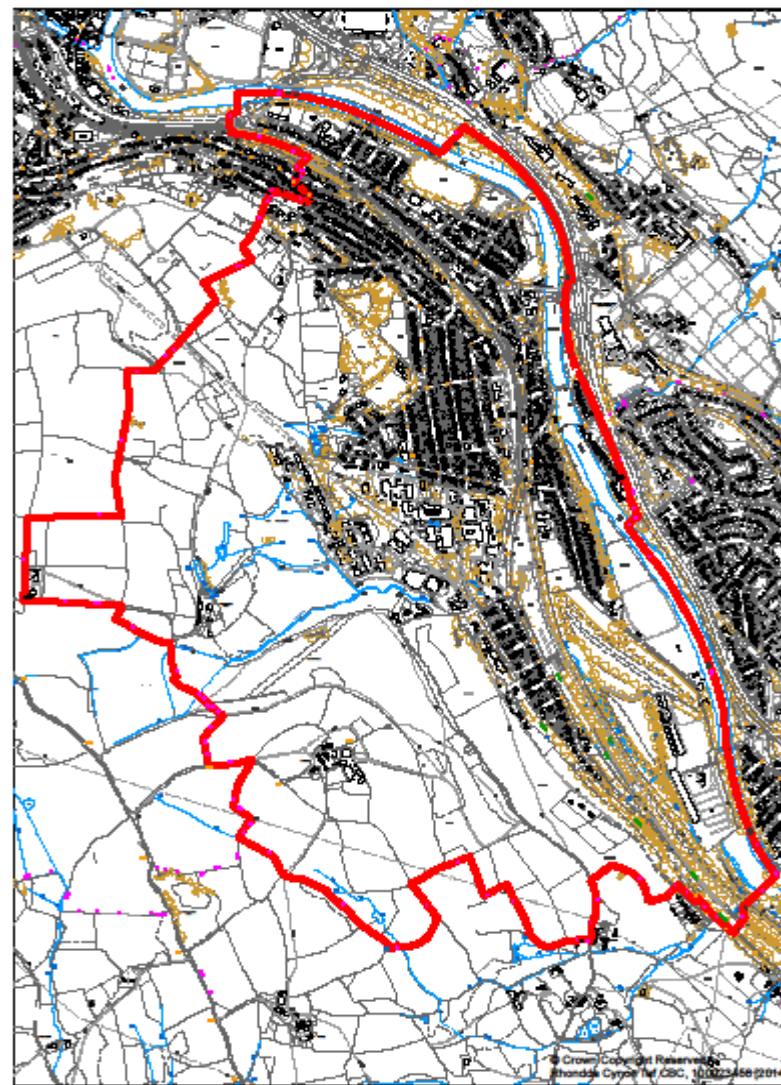
4.3. Figure 1 below shows an example of an application site for a change of use to an HMO in the 20% thresholds area. The larger red dot is the application site, around which is drawn the blue 50 metre radius buffer circle. Within this buffer are 50 residential properties, of which 24 are currently HMO (smaller red dots). This equates to 46%, which would clearly be well above the prescribed threshold, and permission would not be given for this proposal.



Figure 1 – Example of unsuitable HMO application in 20% Threshold Area;



Figure 2 – 20% Threshold Area in Treforest





Policy HMO 2 – 10% Threshold Across Rhondda Cynon Taf

To allow for appropriate levels of opportunity for HMOs in all other parts of the County Borough, a lower threshold of 10% of HMOs (as a percentage of all residential properties) within a 50 metres radius of the planning application address, will be applied. If the proposed HMO would result in this threshold percentage being exceeded, it would be considered unacceptable in principle, and permission refused.

4.4. As discussed throughout this SPG, HMOs can play a significant role in the rental housing market, giving significant numbers of low income individuals and small households housing options. Accordingly, this policy seeks to allow for further, appropriate HMO to come forward in other parts of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Average percentages of HMOs across other wards in the County Borough are as low as 1.3% and therefore market demand in other areas is generally low. It is considered that for the most part, concentrations of HMOs would very unlikely increase near the 10% thresholds. However, if demand does arise in certain locations, such as town centres, or in areas bordering the Treforest ward, then this lower threshold would prevent overconcentration occurring.

Figure 3 - Example of suitable HMO application in the 20% Threshold Area, but unsuitable in 10% Threshold Area;



4.5. Figure 3 above shows an application site for an HMO, again with 50 dwellings within the 50 metres radius buffer of it. In this instance, there are 8 HMOs within the radius area, or 16% of the properties. Accordingly, an application with this scenario would be acceptable in Treforest in principle, although not acceptable elsewhere in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Figure 4 - Example of a suitable HMO application in the 10% Threshold Area;



4.6. Figure 4 the same application site as previous, although in this scenario, there are just 2 HMO of the 50 residential dwellings in the radius area. This would equate to just 4% of all the properties. This would therefore be acceptable in principle in all parts of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Policy HMO 3 – Sandwiching and Adjacent HMOs

Proposal for HMOs that would result in the ‘sandwiching’ of non HMO properties will not be permitted i.e no property should be located between 2 HMO. Further to this, no more than two HMOs should be allowed adjacent to each other to prevent more localised clustering of such properties.

4.7. This policy seeks to reduce effects of HMOs at the most local level. A non sandwiching approach is adopted by many authorities who consider that C3 dwellings should not be enclosed and affected by recognised HMO impacts. Similarly, preventing a very small cluster of HMOs will reduce the local impacts on neighbouring properties and will also prevent an over concentration at the very localised level. It should be acknowledged that such scenarios already exist in many parts of Treforest, although it is intended that there is prevention of the practice in the future.

Policy HMO 4 – Exceptional Circumstances

In certain circumstances, concentrations of HMOs have reached such a point in a localised area that further permissions for HMOs are considered to not have any further detrimental effect. Where the concentration of existing HMOs within a 50 metres radius is already at 80% or above, then permission would be considered acceptable in principle.



4.8. This recognised approach would allow for increased HMOs in areas that have become almost solely HMO properties. In these areas, the increased impacts on the localised neighbourhood or wider community from an additional HMO would be relatively insignificant and this exceptional allowance will prevent owner occupiers in these areas from becoming 'locked-in'.

5. Planning Policy Relevant to HMOs

5.1 All planning applications for new, or the change of use to, C4 Houses of Multiple Ownership or Large, Sui Generis HMOs will be considered in accordance with the following policies and existing SPG.

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

In contributing to the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals, planning policies, decisions and proposals should:

- Ensure that all local communities – both urban and rural – have sufficient good quality housing for their needs, including affordable housing for local needs and for special needs where appropriate, in safe neighbourhoods.

National Planning Policies

PPW 9 November 2016

3.1.7 The planning system does not exist to protect the private interests of one person against the activities of another. Proposals should be considered in terms of their effect on amenity and existing use of land and buildings in the public interest

Housing

9.1.2 Local planning authorities should promote sustainable residential environments, avoid large housing areas of monotonous character and make appropriate provision for



affordable housing. Local planning authorities should promote mixed tenure communities.

9.2.2 - authorities need a clear understanding of factors influencing housing requirements

9.3.3 Insensitive infilling, or the cumulative effects of development or redevelopment, including conversion and adaptation, should not be allowed to damage an area's character or amenity.

9.3.4 ...where high densities are proposed, the amenity of the scheme and surrounding property should be carefully considered.

Infrastructure & Services

12.7.3 Adequate facilities and space for the collection, composting and recycling of waste materials should be incorporated into the design of any development ...

Local Planning Policies

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan March 2011 - 2021

Policy CS 1 - Development in the North

In the Northern Strategy Area the emphasis will be on building strong, sustainable communities. This will be achieved by:-

1. Promoting residential and commercial development in locations which will support and reinforce the roles of Principal Towns and Key Settlements;

2. Providing high quality, affordable accommodation that promotes diversity in the residential market

Policy CS 2 – Development in the South

In the Southern Strategy Area the emphasis will be on sustainable growth that benefits Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole. This will be achieved by:

1. Promoting residential development with a sense of place which respects the character and context of the Principal Towns and Key Settlements of the Southern Strategy Area;

2. Protecting the culture and identity of communities by focusing development within defined settlement boundaries and promoting the reuse of under used and previously developed land and buildings

Policy AW 5 – New Development

Development proposals will be supported where:

1. Amenity



Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

- a) The scale, form and design of the development would have no unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area;
- b) Where appropriate, existing site features of built and natural environment value would be retained;
- c) There would be no significant impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers;
- d) The development would be compatible with other uses in the locality;
- e) The development would include the use of multi-functional buildings where appropriate;
- f) The development designs out the opportunity for crime and anti social behaviour.

2. Accessibility

- a) The development would be accessible to the local and wider community by a range of sustainable modes of transport;
- b) The site layout and mix of uses maximises opportunities to reduce dependence on cars;
- c) The development would have safe access to the highway network and would not cause traffic congestion or exacerbate existing traffic congestion;

- d) Car parking would be provided in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Delivering Design and Placemaking: Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan: Supplementary Planning Guidance

Design & Placemaking March 2011

3.6.2 To ensure mixed communities are accommodated and that the local population have a choice of appropriate housing, different housing needs such as family, student, retirement, elderly and sheltered accommodation need to be considered.

4.3.14 Parking on street should be kept small in scale, provided within defined bays and be designed to add to the character of the street scene.

4.3.17 Where there are no garages, cycle storage could be provided in rear gardens where there is a safe and secure means of access.

Delivering Design & Placemaking: Access, Circulation & Parking Requirements March 2011

Car Parking Space Requirements:

House conversions to bedsits, or self-contained apartments:
Zone 1 (Principal town centres) Maximum Requirement: 1 space per unit (for residents); nil (for visitors);



Zones 2-4 (elsewhere) Maximum Requirement: 1 space per bedroom, maximum of 3 (for residents); 1 space per 5 units (for visitors)

For developments *where clear evidence has been supplied that car ownership levels will be lower than normal*, a more flexible approach to numbers of parking spaces may be taken. Acceptable evidence of this would be a contractual arrangement with tenants to secure low car ownership levels.

Development of Flats – Conversions & New Build, June 2015

Subdivision of existing houses

The subdivision of existing houses is likely to be acceptable where a high quality of accommodation and amenity can be provided for residents.

However many smaller properties, and particularly in traditional terraced streets, will not be appropriate for subdivision. Consideration will be given to the nature of the resulting flats, and it is likely that permission will be refused where:

- A high standard of internal layout cannot be achieved.
- Habitable rooms would lack natural light, ventilation or a reasonable outlook.
- The occupants of the first floor flat would not have access to the rear garden or other external space for amenity, clothes drying, bin storage and / or cycle storage.

- It would exacerbate existing on street parking problems.
- Living rooms or kitchens would be located directly adjacent to upstairs bedrooms of neighbouring houses, unless mitigating measures can be provided.

Cycle Provision

Cycle storage facilities should be provided for residents in convenient locations, either inside flats or in communal areas close to each flat.

Bin Storage and Refuse Collection

Sufficient space must be provided for the storage of bins, recycling and food waste in between collections, either within individual flats or in a communal area within 30m walking distance of each flat.

Appendix 6 - Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

HMOs and planning (this reference pre-dates the new legislation associated with HMO's).

5.2 Other SPG that may be relevant depending on the location and detail of the proposal would be;

- The Historic Built Environment
- Design in Town Centres
- A Design Guide for Householder Development
- Nature Conservation



Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

6. Standards of HMOs

6.1. Required Standards

- 6.1.1. Further to the compliance with the above policies and relevant SPG, this SPG seeks to outline, guide and inform stakeholders of the standards expected in the development of new and changes of use to HMO.
- 6.1.2. For clarification, all applications for new and changes of use to HMO are required to comply with the standards set out in the bullet points in relation to flats in the Flats Conversions & New Build SPG as outlined above. As with the Flats SPG, permission is unlikely to be granted if these standards cannot be met.
- 6.1.3. Similarly, cycle storage facilities should be provided for residents in convenient locations in suitable communal areas.
- 6.1.4. Sufficient space must be provided for the storage of bins, recycling and food waste in between collections, in suitable communal areas.

6.2. Licensing

- 6.2.1. All applications for HMO should also be made in accordance with the standards set out under the Council's Licensing process. The details of which are included in the two main documents being;

- **Licensing of HMO – A Landlord's Guide to Standards in HMO's 2014, and;**

- **Licensing of HMO – Landlord Handbook 2014 (updated 2017).**

- 6.2.2. These firstly set out the detail of the licensing process and also what is required from landlords. It then goes on to include details on standards required within HMOs in order for the landlord to gain a license. These include reference to a range of necessary internal amenity standards, relating, for example, to bathrooms and washing facilities, kitchens, ventilation and lighting. Further standards are set out in relation to the appropriate scale of rooms.

These documents are available to view on the Rhondda Cynon Taf website, at the following location;

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Business/LandlordGuidance/Housesinmultipleoccupation.aspx>

- 6.2.3. Any applications for HMOs should ensure that they include sufficient information within them that would enable the Council to determine if they accord with all relevant planning policy, SPG and licensing standards.



Appendix 1 – Summary of Research

In preparing this SPG, comprehensive research was undertaken to identify the most appropriate methods that are in place across the UK and Wales to manage the growth of HMOs.

SPG's that have been prepared for the management of HMOs are often within university towns and cities, although not always the case. The associated negative effects of high concentrations of HMOs on the character of the area and the community were often the reason that permanent residents were objecting to further applications for HMOs. HMO occupants are generally perceived as being younger and more transient than other residents within a community. This can lead to wider effects on the character of an area and can give rise to a lack of community integration and cohesion, and less commitment to maintain the quality of the local environment.

Broader objections and analysis of evidence by the Local Authorities indicated that the preparation of SPG was appropriate. One of the major findings from the research of these SPG was that there was a threshold approach introduced to contain further concentrations of HMO's within small neighbourhoods and wider communities.

What also came apparent was that there was often a two tier system of approach. One level sought to ensure a cap on further HMO's in those areas which were considered as reaching, or had already reached a saturation point in the concentration of such houses. These were the areas that were already witnessing the much documented negative




impacts associated with such overconcentrations of HMOs and which themselves initiated the need for an SPG.

Secondly, many authorities saw that although over-concentrations of HMO's came with negative impacts upon their communities, the use itself nevertheless plays an important role in the private rental housing sector. The benefits that HMO's offer in terms of housing options for students and low income individuals is well documented. Accordingly, the SPG's often give a second threshold approach to allow for more limited HMO's to come forward across wider parts of the authorities.

This SPG therefore seeks to adopt the most appropriate best practice approach of identifying a threshold of HMO's. However, this has been considered against the unique circumstances in Treforest and Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole. The SPG seeks to put into place a threshold, beyond which the concentration of HMO's is considered to have an unacceptable impact upon the community in which they sit.

The demographical statistics outlined above, along with the additional measures put in place by the Council relating to parking restrictions and refuse storage would indicate that such levels of concentration have already been reached in most parts of Treforest.

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