

Question: PQ09.01&02

Cabinet – 3 November 2020

Re: Agenda item 9 – Managing the development of houses in multiple occupation - Supplementary Planning Document

Questions submitted by: Andrew Waller

Question 1

I would like to ask about possible next steps if, as I hope, the SPD gains approval.

I am concerned about the damaging impacts of high concentrations of HMOs that already exist in some areas, particularly those with high student populations. These impacts are acknowledged in the SPD, which is a good start, but the SPD can deal only with future HMO applications, not the legacy issues we already experience.

So I would like to know whether there is any plan to complete the mission of the SPD by seeking ways to mitigate those existing problems by, for example, systematically targeting the council's enforcement functions—whether in relation to planning, noise, waste disposal or other issues—on those areas that already have “harmful concentrations” of HMOs and if there is currently no such plan, would Cllr Beech be prepared to take that idea forward for discussion with colleagues?

Answers:

- **As the question acknowledges, this supplementary planning document deals with new proposals for HMOs and seeks to ensure harmful impacts are avoided.**
- **The Council will use the relevant powers wherever there are specific matters or breaches that require action.**

Question 2

On a point of detail, I would like to ask Cllr Beech if the Planning Department might be urged to actively encourage HMO developers to adopt noise-mitigation measures. In my SPD submissions, I provided a list of such measures—for example, installing soft-closers to prevent the slamming of both internal and exterior doors. While I'm delighted to see that the SPD now advises developers to adopt such measures voluntarily, I'm disappointed the document does not give specific examples. Might Planning be asked to maintain a list of such measures and to make sure when evaluating applications that developers have given appropriate consideration to whether any might apply?

Answers:

- **By avoiding harmful concentrations and sandwiching, HMOs will be less likely to have impacts that might be disturbing to other types of housing.**
- **The SPD includes a section on sound reduction measures and the role of the building regulations. It also explains that in some circumstances a condition seeking sound reduction may be attached to a planning permission for new HMO development exclusive of any building regulations requirement.**
- **Some information on the voluntary noise reductions measures the SPD mentions can be provided when it is published.**