

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).**