

Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 03 December 2025
Subject:	Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document – consultation draft	
Report of	Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth	

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to carry out consultation on the Draft Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for a period of six weeks.
- 1.2 The draft Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD provides guidelines and key considerations for the determination of planning applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are properties that provide accommodation for at least three individuals who are not from one household (such as a family) but share facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom.
- 1.3 The aim of the SPD is to ensure that HMOs provide suitable living standards for future occupants and reduce potential for detrimental impacts on local communities.
- 1.4 On adoption, the SPD will be a material consideration in planning decisions. If development proposals do not comply, the SPD and the policy it supplements may be used as a reason for the refusal of planning permission.
- 1.5 It is proposed that following consultation, a final version of the Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD will be brought back to Cabinet for formal approval. On adoption, the updated SPD will replace the current SPD13: Conversion of buildings to houses in multiple occupation.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Cabinet:
 - i) Approves the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD attached at Appendix 1 as the basis for a six-week public consultation commencing December 2025.
 - ii) Delegates approval to the Executive Director of Place to undertake the public consultation and make minor non-material modifications to the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document before

consultation commences.

3. Reasons for recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To ensure that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to have their say on the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document.

4. Alternative options considered and rejected

- 4.1 To not approve the SPD for consultation. This would prevent stakeholders from commenting on the SPD and would prevent the Council from being able to proceed to adopt the SPD because it is a statutory requirement that such documents must be consulted on before adoption.

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5. Background

- 5.1 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are properties that provide accommodation for at least three individuals who are not from one household (such as a family) but share facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom. HMOs form part of the Borough's housing supply and contribute to meeting housing needs. They can provide a cost-effective form of accommodation for younger people and those on low incomes. They also provide flexible accommodation for people with short-term housing requirements, and a social environment for those seeking to live with other people.
- 5.2 Most HMOs in Bury are well managed and provide decent homes, but poorly managed or located properties and over concentrations of such properties have the potential to lead to issues for both occupants and neighbours. Some of the most common concerns in relation to HMOs relate to:
- negative changes to the character of the area;
 - negative impacts on the physical environment and streetscape;
 - increased noise and disturbance;
 - pressure on parking provision;
 - waste storage and litter;
 - imbalanced and unsustainable communities, with higher levels of transience and less sustainable local services;

- the loss of family housing; and
- the provision of inadequate living accommodation for occupiers.

5.3 The current SPD13 – Conversion of buildings to houses in multiple occupation was adopted in May 2007 and presents risks of negative outcomes. It is in need of updating to enable the Council to better manage the provision of HMOs throughout the Borough, improve the standards of accommodation provided and reduce potential for detrimental impacts on local communities.

5.4 The Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD provides additional detail and guidance on the implementation of existing Development Plan policies that are used to determine proposals for Houses in Multiple Occupation. It provides guidance on some of the key issues to be considered in determining planning applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation, setting out comprehensive guidance on location requirements and design considerations for new HMOs.

6. Scope of the SPD

6.1 Whilst not a statutory development plan document, on adoption the SPD will be a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications for HMOs. On adoption the SPD will not, however, be able to address issues in relation to existing HMOs.

6.2 Currently, existing residential dwellings (Use Class C3) can be converted through permitted development rights to HMOs for three to six people (Use Class C4) without the need for planning permission. This means that such changes of use are outside of planning control, and therefore planning policies for HMOs cannot be applied to these developments.

6.3 Alongside the revised SPD, the Council is exploring the introduction of an Article 4 Direction to require planning applications where there is a material change of use. If an Article 4 Direction is approved by Planning Control Committee (as the committee with delegated authority for Article 4 Directions), this SPD will apply to all planning applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation, including those small HMOs that are currently allowed through permitted development rights, although it would not impact on any HMO in operation before the Article 4 Direction was in place.

6.4 If an Article 4 Direction is not brought into effect, the SPD can only be applied to proposals for HMOs that currently require planning permission (i.e. HMOs for 7 or more people, those created through the conversion from non-dwelling uses or new-build HMOs).

7. Content of the SPD

- 7.1 The SPD sets out locational requirements for HMOs, to ensure HMOs are in sustainable locations and to avoid an over concentration of HMOs. The SPD includes three specific measures:
- **A concentration threshold** – proposals which would result in more than 10% of properties or more than four properties (whichever is the fewer) being classed as HMOs within a 100m buffer will not normally be granted.
 - **Restricting the sandwiching of properties** – proposals that would result in a C3 dwellinghouse being immediately adjacent to more than one HMO will not normally be considered acceptable.
 - **Restricting three adjacent HMOs** – planning permission will not normally be granted for proposals that would result in a block of three or more adjacent HMOs.
- 7.2 The SPD also sets design considerations to seek to ensure that HMOs provide a good standard of accommodation for their occupants, as well as seeking to ensure that the development or extension of HMOs does not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbours or the character of the area. Key considerations include:
- Internal space standards;
 - Outlook and natural light;
 - Outdoor amenity space;
 - Means of escape;
 - Management plans;
 - Waste and recycling storage;
 - Car parking and cycle storage;
 - Entrance and approach; and
 - External alterations.

8. Consultation and Adoption

- 8.1 The SPD is being prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 which are reflected in our Statement of Community Involvement. The Regulations set out that a draft SPD must be:
- i) Screened to determine whether Strategic Environmental Assessment or Habitat Regulation Assessment is required. The outcomes of the screening opinion will be published alongside the draft SPD;

- ii) Made available for public consultation for a 4-week minimum period; and
- iii) Be made available as an online copy and have hard copies available at the Council's main reception and all libraries across the Borough.

8.2 The SPD will be prepared in accordance with these regulations and relevant material available for inspection on the Council's web site; the Town Hall reception; Bury, Prestwich, Radcliffe or Ramsbottom Libraries and at the Tottington Centre. Letters/emails will also be sent to all contacts on the Council's development plan database. The consultation period will be 6-weeks, rather than the statutory minimum period of 4-weeks, to allow for consultation taking place over the Christmas period.

8.3 Following consultation, the draft SPD will, if necessary, be amended before being brought back to Members seeking formal approval for the adoption of the document.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Members are asked to consider the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document and approve the document for consultation purposes.

10. Links with the Corporate Priorities:

The Let's Do It Strategy sets out the Council's corporate priorities. This Draft Supplementary Planning Document will support the Local element of the strategy: Ensuring future proposals for HMOs provide suitable living standards for future occupants and the potential for detrimental impacts on local communities is reduced will help to ensure sustainable communities and support community cohesion. Consultation on the Draft SPD will give people the opportunity to have their say on the SPD.

11. Equality Impact and Considerations:

11.1 A full Equality Impact Analysis has been completed. This identified different characteristics and circumstances which could be affected and impacted by this SPD. All impacts are identified as either neutral or positive with no outstanding equalities concerns or additional actions required at this stage.

12. Environmental Impact and Considerations:

12.1 The revised SPD is not expected to give rise to any significant environmental effects. The SPD seeks to ensure the effective and consistent implementation of existing adopted policies relating to planning applications for HMOs.

13. Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Stakeholders do not engage in the consultation on the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document	The SPD is being prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 which are reflected in our Statement of Community Involvement. However, the consultation process will be kept under review and will be adjusted if additional stakeholder engagement is required.

14. Legal Implications:

- 14.1 The recommendation within the report is in accordance with The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and are therefore within the legal powers of the Council.

15. Financial Implications:

- 15.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Consultation Draft Supplementary Planning Document 13: Houses in Multiple Occupation

Background papers:

None.

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
PfE	Places for Everyone
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
UDP	Unitary Development Plan