



Council
18 July 2023

WORTHING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ward(s) Affected: All

Motion on Notice

Report by the Director for Sustainability & Resources

Officer Contact Details:-

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The report before Council sets out a motion received from Councillor Heather Mercer which has been seconded by Councillor Kevin Jenkins.
- 1.1. Council is asked to consider and debate the motion prior to it being referred to the Joint Strategic Committee for determination under provisions set out in paragraph 14 of the Council Procedure Rules (part 4 of the Council Constitution - Rules of Procedure).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Council is asked to debate the motion, as set out in Annex A to this report, prior to its referral to the Joint Strategic Committee for consideration and determination.

3. Context

- 3.1 A motion on notice has been received from Councillor Heather Mercer, (attached as Annex A).
- 3.2 The content of the motion is relevant to a matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties and which specifically affects the Borough.

4. Issues for consideration

- 4.1 Motions considered by Full Council are done so under part 14 of the Council's Procedure Rules and are debated under rules set out under part 16 of the Council Procedure Rules.
- 4.2 The Council is asked to debate the motion under these rules accordingly.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 A review of the provision of HMO's is built into the current work programme and can be accommodated from within existing budgets. The Joint Strategic Committee will consider whether there are any further financial impacts arising from the motion as appropriate.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Rules concerning motions are set out in the Council's Constitution under section 14 of the Council's Procedure Rules.

Background Papers

None.

Motion on Notice to Worthing Borough Council

Article 4 direction - Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's)

In 2023 there is persistent and growing pressure for more housing in our town and this has seen many older and larger properties redesigned under permitted development rights or through a direct planning application, into Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) .

In Worthing our town has grown over a long period of time and the built housing stock, in terms of size and quantum reflects its period of construction. This means in many parts of East and Central parts of Worthing the Edwardian and Victorina era large houses are looked on favourably by developers as being ripe for conversion to Houses of Multiple Occupation.

It is recognised that HMOs can make a valuable contribution to the private rented housing stock. They provide an affordable type of accommodation and contribute to the mix of housing types and tenures available in Worthing. They are often suited as homes to young people and single people and those on low incomes or as a source of emergency or temporary accommodation to statutory authorities.

However, HMOs of all sizes can have a detrimental impact on residential character and community cohesion and high concentrations within neighbourhoods can result in imbalanced and unsustainable communities creating harmful impacts including:

- Divisions between social groups;
- Lack of interaction;
- Turnover of occupants;
- Poor upkeep of houses and gardens;
- Adverse impact on the affordability of rents;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Issues with parking provision and traffic congestion;
- Difficulties for the owners of remaining C3 dwellings selling their properties.

There is little sign of this demand abating and with that it brings pressures into our local communities when faced with the creation of significant numbers of HMOs in a close proximity to each other.

In the adopted Worthing Local Plan (2023) development management policies it states that :

DM1 Housing Mix (part extract)

f) When considering proposals for the conversion of dwellings into smaller units of self-contained accommodation, the proposal must provide a high standard of accommodation that complies with internal space standards

and requirements for private outdoor space. In addition, the Council will consider:

- i) the impact on the mix of dwellings locally*
- ii) the impact on the character of the area*

DM2 - Density (part extract)

c) The optimum density of a development should result from a design led approach to determine the capacity of the site. Particular consideration must be given to:

- i) the site context and character of the surrounding area in which it is located, and including consideration of any nearby heritage assets or important landscapes;*
- iv) the need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers*

In 2016 when the first stage consultation work was commenced that delivered the Local Plan 2023, the pressures on Council were not as acute and today's situation was not foreseen.

It is absolutely recognised that there is a need for accommodation of this type in our town, that is not in question. But often the question that is asked by residents is simply, is it the right place or has consideration been given to the impact of a concentration of HMOs in a road or neighbourhood.

Therefore with a demand landscape that has changed so dramatically this Council is called on to:

- Map the location and density of HMO's in our town
- Determine acceptable density or proximity issues
- Look at best practice across England to authorities who have introduced an Article 4 Direction in a preemptive manner to protect communities, so that development can be managed rather than responded to
- To consider the introduction of an evidence led article 4 direction under the 1995 Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order.

Recognising that the purpose of any Article 4 Direction is to continue to provide HMO accommodation to meet Worthing's housing needs, but in doing so manages the supply of new HMOs to avoid high concentrations in a particular area.

That this work should be prioritised and completed within 6 months.

Proposer - Cllr Heather Mercer
Seconder - Cllr Kevin Jenkins