

Meeting of:	COUNCIL
Date of Meeting:	4 FEBRUARY 2026
Report Title:	HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE
Report Owner: Cabinet Member / Responsible Chief Officer	CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES
Responsible Officer:	JACK DANGERFIELD SENIOR STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the public consultation exercise on the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) document. It also seeks Council approval to adopt the final form of the Houses in Multiple Occupation SPG together with the supporting 2-page guidance note. Adoption of this SPG will enable effective implementation of the Houses in Multiple Occupation policy within the adopted Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP), the Council's statutory land-use planning document.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the outcome of the public consultation exercise on the draft 'Houses in Multiple Occupation (**HMO**) Supplementary Planning Guidance' (**SPG**) document.
- 1.2 The report also seeks Council approval to adopt the final form HMO SPG (**Appendix 1**), in order to support the implementation of Policy *COM7: Houses in Multiple Occupation* of the adopted Replacement Local Development Plan (**RLDP**, March 2024), subject to any necessary minor changes necessary prior to its publication.

Lastly, the report seeks Council approval of the two-page guidance note attached as **Appendix 3**.

2. Background

- 2.1 The adopted RLDP plays a key role in enabling sustainable, mixed and balanced communities, including the development of HMOs. The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) (**Use Classes Order 1987**) distinguishes between two types of HMO:
- **‘Small HMOs’ (Use Class C4):** properties occupied by **3 to 6 unrelated people** sharing basic amenities; and
 - **‘Large HMOs’ (Unique Use or ‘Sui Generis’):** properties with **more than 6 unrelated people** sharing basic amenities.
- 2.2 Prior to February 2016, planning permission was only required for large HMOs. Since that date, all HMOs require planning permission whether they accommodate 3-6 people (C4) or 7+ people (Sui Generis), as long as the occupants do not form a single household.
- 2.3 The definition of a ‘*Small HMO*’ under Use Class ‘C4’ aligns with the definition of an HMO in Section 254 of the Housing Act 2004 (**HA 2004**). Likewise, the definition of a single household in Use Class C3(a) (dwellinghouses) of the Use Classes Order 1987 aligns with Section 258 of the HA 2004, which explains when people are or are not considered to be part of the same household or family.
- 2.4 Section 258 also applies when determining whether a property meets the definition of an HMO under Section 254 – this includes both ‘Small HMOs’ (C4) and ‘Large HMOs’ (Sui Generis). These legislative changes have increased awareness of HMOs within the planning system.
- 2.5 HMOs can play an important role in the County Borough’s housing mix by providing a broader range of accommodation options, particularly for students, young professionals and those on lower incomes. However, they also raise specific planning challenges. HMOs are often characterised by shorter than average tenancies leading to higher population turnover, and their occupation by multiple independent adults can increase the intensity of residential use. This, in turn, can lead to increased activity in and around a property, more noise, greater demand for parking and additional pressures on waste management.
- 2.6 Whilst not every HMO will result in adverse impacts, and in some cases the level of activity may be comparable to that of a large family household, the cumulative effect of high concentrations of HMOs can be significant. These cumulative impacts can include harm to residential amenity, erosion of local character and loss of community cohesion. There is a need to strike a careful balance between supporting housing choice and preventing the over-concentration of HMOs in any given locality. RLDP Policy COM7 specifies criteria to assess the appropriateness of proposals to convert

dwelling into HMOs, aiming to avoid over-intensification of the use as an HMO within any given locality.

2.7 The draft SPG relating to HMOs (**Appendix 1**) aims to provide additional detail and guidance on how adopted Policy COM7 should be interpreted and applied in practice. It is intended to assist planning applicants, officers and Members by clarifying the requirements of Policy COM7 and how proposals will be assessed. The draft HMO SPG also explains the relationship between Planning and other regulatory regimes relevant to HMOs, such as Licensing and Building Regulations, highlighting how these other statutory regimes operate alongside, but separately from, the planning system. In doing so, the draft SPG aims to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to managing HMO development, supporting the creation of sustainable, balanced communities throughout the County Borough. This draft HMO SPG provides specific guidance on:

- How HMOs are defined in planning terms and when planning permission is required for HMOs;
- The roles of Planning, Licensing and Building Regulations in respect of HMOs;
- Application of the radius test (ensuring that no more than 10% of properties are HMOs within a 50m radius in any given area);
- How the character and appearance of the locality is considered when major extensions or alterations are proposed;
- How the scale and intensity of HMOs will be considered in relation to HMO applications;
- How local parking provision will be considered in relation to HMO applications;
- Amenity considerations (for both future HMO occupants and neighbours); and
- Submission requirements for applicants.

2.8 At their meeting on 8th August 2024, the Development Control Committee requested development of a specific SPG on HMOs to provide additional planning guidance to support adopted Policy COM7. Councillor Simon Griffiths volunteered to champion the production of the HMO SPG on behalf of the Development Control Committee and work alongside the Senior Strategic Planning Policy Officer to progress it.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 On 23rd September 2025, Cabinet provided approval for a six-week public consultation on the draft HMO SPG to take place. Cabinet also authorised officers to make appropriate arrangements for that public consultation before reporting the outcome of the consultation back to Cabinet to seek their approval to send this report to Council to seek adoption of the final form SPG.

3.2 The public consultation was launched on 6th October 2025 and closed on 16th November 2025, and was promoted through a variety of channels to ensure wide engagement. The consultation was hosted on the Council's consultation portal,

supported by a social media campaign and standalone message to Citizen Panel subscribers. It was also included twice in the Council's residents' bulletin and in the regular news bulletin for Councillors to maximise public awareness. In addition, targeted emails were issued to well over 100 stakeholders, including all elected Members, town and community Councils, planning consultants/agents, neighbouring local authorities, estate agents, landlord representative groups, local community/non-profit groups, local further education (**FE**) providers and Registered Social Landlords (**RSLs**). This ensured that a broad range of community and development sector representatives were directly invited to comment, providing a robust and inclusive approach to the public consultation. The social media campaign, in particular, generated meaningful engagement, with several comments received in response to consultation posts. This indicates that the consultation was effectively publicised and prompted discussion.

- 3.3 A total of four representations were received on the draft HMO SPG during the consultation period. This low number reflects the fact that there were no fundamental objections to the draft SPG. All representations, together with the Local Planning Authority's response to each one, and the reasoning for not incorporating some suggestions, are set out in the 'Consultation Report' attached as **Appendix 2** to this Council report. The comments submitted related to relatively minor points, resulting in three changes being made to the draft SPG document:

1. Insert a bullet point under paragraph 5.5 clarifying that hotel premises used for temporary accommodation are generally not considered as HMOs, unless in specific circumstances. This paragraph sits underneath a sub-heading titled '*Exclusions*' and specifically sets out which types of residential arrangements are not typically considered HMOs for planning purposes. Such proposals will not be considered against Policy COM7. The inserted wording (amendment) will read as follows:

'Hotel premises used for short-term temporary accommodation – A hotel building used to provide temporary accommodation for non-holiday residents, such as homeless households, which does not operate as a hotel in the conventional sense, is typically regarded as a 'sui generis' use.'

2. Alter the wording of the fourth sentence of paragraph 5.6, an insertion to require the consultation of Shared Regulatory Services (who manage HMO Licensing) on all HMO planning applications. This will now read as follows (newly inserted words are shown in bold):

*'However, Shared Regulatory Services (SRS), who oversee the licensing and management of HMOs in Bridgend County Borough, ~~should~~ **will** be consulted on **all** planning applications for HMOs to ensure alignment between planning and housing enforcement considerations.'*

3. Insert a new headed section under the heading, 'Policy COM7: Criterion 6' of the SPG, titled '*HMOs and Security*' after paragraph 6.46, as paragraph 6.47, to read as follows:

'HMOs and Security

Applicants are encouraged to design HMOs in accordance with Secured by Design (SBD) principles and are advised to aim to achieve the SBD 'Gold' award (an award that acknowledges crime and anti-social behaviour reduction measures relating to layout, environmental design and the use of Police Preferred Specification products), where practicable.'

- 3.4 Furthermore, some of the comments received in response to the public consultation indicated the need for clearer guidance on the differences between each of the three regulatory regimes relating to the management of HMOs: Planning, Licensing and Building Regulations. Each of these regimes play a distinct role in the management of HMOs' potential impacts, so it is important to be aware of the issues that each regime covers. Therefore, a two-page guidance note '*A Guide to Planning, Licensing and Building Regulations for Houses in Multiple Occupation*' has been produced to accompany the SPG. This is attached at **Appendix 3** to this report.
- 3.5 There were no other changes considered necessary to the draft SPG following the public consultation. If adopted, the new SPG will add weight to the interpretation and application of RLDP Policy COM7, provide more detailed advice and guidance to planning applicants, and will become a '*material consideration*' in the determination of planning applications.
- 4. Equality implications (including socio-economic duty and Welsh language)**
 - 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (**EIA**) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.
- 5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**
 - 5.1 The Houses in Multiple Occupation SPG, once adopted, will provide additional guidance and material weight to support adopted RLDP Policy COM7. The HMO SPG aims to enable the development of HMOs while safeguarding residential amenity, community cohesion and the character of existing neighbourhoods. This is a key contributory factor to delivering Local Well-being Objective One - '*A prosperous place with thriving communities*'.
 - 5.2 The HMO SPG will also contribute to the following goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- *A Wales of cohesive communities* - Seeks to prevent the over-concentration of HMOs and promote balanced communities.
- *A more equal Wales* - Supports access to affordable and flexible accommodation for individuals and enables housing options that meet diverse needs.

6. Climate change and nature implications

- 6.1 There are no direct climate change or nature implications from this report, although the HMO SPG will provide additional guidance to enable the development of sustainable HMOs that promote active travel opportunities.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent implications

- 7.1 There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent implications from this report.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that Council:
- (a) Note the contents of this report and approve the officer's consultation responses to the representations received in response to the public consultation on the draft HMO SPG, together with the resultant proposed amendments set out in attached **Appendix 2**.
 - (b) Approve the final form HMO SPG (**Appendix 1**) and agree its adoption for immediate application as a *material consideration* in making development management decisions and in the determination of planning applications along with the adopted RLDP, subject to the provisions of recommendation 'c'.
 - (c) Authorise the Corporate Director - Communities and Group Manager - Planning and Development Services to make minor presentational changes, typographical or factual corrections as necessary prior to publication of the adopted HMO SPG.
 - (d) Note and approve the contents of the two-page guidance note titled '*A Guide to Planning, Licensing and Building Regulations for Houses in Multiple Occupation*' attached as **Appendix 3**.

Background documents

None.