

PLANNING POLICY EXECUTIVE ADVISORY PANEL

Monday 24 October 2022

Report Title	Houses in Multiple Occupation
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Relevant Executive Member	Councillor David Brackenbury – Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration

List of Appendices

None.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To summarise the results of the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) consultation survey and provide initial analysis of the feedback received. The Panel is asked to review and note the consultation findings and next steps in the investigation process.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Significant work has been undertaken to date to gain a greater understanding of the HMO position within North Northamptonshire; including detailed evidence gathering, which involved data collection from multiple sources and GIS mapping of HMOs.
- 2.2. To supplement this an online consultation survey was launched on the online platform Citizen Space for a period of 8 weeks between July and September 2022 to understand the views of HMO tenants, landlords and members of the public living near to or businesses operating near to HMO.
- 2.3. A total of 531 responses to the consultation have been received providing valuable local evidence to inform the ongoing investigation. Of these, 210 were completed online survey responses, 315 were partially complete online survey responses, and 6 were email responses.

- 2.4. Respondents include interested members of the public, HMO landlords and tenants, local businesses along with statutory consultees including town and parish councillors, the Environment Agency, Northamptonshire Police Fire and Rescue, Western Power, and Historic England.
- 2.5. The report provides an initial summary and analysis of the survey responses, which, along with member discussion, will help to inform the next stage of the investigation.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Planning Policy Executive Advisory Panel is asked to note the consultation responses and initial officer analysis; and provide comments and reflections where necessary.

Reason for Recommendations:

- 3.2. The consultation survey has been undertaken as an information gathering exercise to address existing data gaps. The consultation findings will supplement the information already gathered and ensure that any possible options or mechanisms available to the Council to manage and regulate HMO are underpinned by robust and credible evidence.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. A report was presented to this Panel in May 2022 updating Members of progress with the HMO investigation and outlining intentions to undertake an online consultation survey to understand the views of tenants, landlords and those living or working near HMO. The draft survey was further refined following discussion with Members and subsequently through the HMO officer working group meeting.
- 4.2. The online consultation survey was published via the Council's [consultation hub](#) for a period of 8 weeks between 15 July and 9 September 2022. Publishing on the Council's consultation hub involves notifying members of the North Northamptonshire Consultation Register and the North Northamptonshire Residents' Panel, which includes all individuals and organisations that have requested to be notified of new Council consultation and engagement activities. This is carried out by the Council's consultation and engagement team.
- 4.3. Officers contacted 482¹ HMO landlords, tenants and agents known to the Council to notify them of the online survey, as well as contacting 489 individuals and representatives on the North Northamptonshire Planning Policy consultation database, which includes specific consultation bodies; parish and town councils; community groups; developers, agents, landowners and

¹ Within the Corby area there are landlords or agents that manage a high number of properties; therefore, only one notification letter was sent to the responsible party in these cases.

individuals that have expressed an interest to be notified of all planning policy related matters for North Northamptonshire.

- 4.4. Posters and leaflets, which included a QR code with a direct link to the consultation survey, were placed in the main Council Offices and Libraries, along with the community centres for the six previously identified 'hot spot' wards, key employment locations and the job centres within each town.
- 4.5. The consultation survey was also promoted by the Council's communications team, including items within internal staff briefings, the Lead Members' monthly update and promotion through the Council's social media. As a result of the consultation activities, there were 1,455 visits to the consultation webpage from 1,125 users during the consultation period.
- 4.6. A total of 525 individual responses were received to the online survey with a further 6 received separately via email. Responses to the online survey included 315 partial responses. Partial responses include surveys that people had saved their responses to but not returned to complete and submit their form, and surveys that people had partially completed then navigated away from the webpage. The summary of responses set out in more detail within the following section of the report only relates to the completed returns and emails, although initial analysis of the partial responses showed similar responses and issues.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. The first survey question asked in what capacity individuals were responding, with the feedback showing an overwhelming majority of respondents were interested members of the public at 59%, followed by other at 26%, owner or landlord of HMO at 12% and those living in HMO at 3%. Other includes town and parish councillors; residents associations; neighbours or residents living near to HMO, family members responding on behalf of neighbours or residents living near to HMO and statutory consultees including the Environment Agency and Western Power. The proportion of those responding as an owner or landlord or those living in HMO is considered low given the methods used to target these groups as part of the consultation.
- 5.2. Of the 3% that responded as living in HMO, which included six respondents, further feedback showed the reasons for living in this type of accommodation, for which four individuals stated affordability (low cost), three stated convenience of location, two stated lack of other options, and one respondent indicated both personal development and social interaction.
- 5.3. When asked how satisfied they are with aspects of their accommodation three of the six respondents were very dissatisfied with the safe and well management of the accommodation, the attitude of the landlord/agent and the speed of repairs. Two respondents were very dissatisfied and a further two respondents were fairly dissatisfied with the condition of the property, but in comparison one respondent was very satisfied with all aspects of the accommodation that were highlighted as part of the survey. The following graph shows the full responses received:



5.4. Excluding the six respondents living in HMO, those responding to the online survey comprise the following:

Type of respondent	Number	Percentage
Homeowner living in the local area	135	59%
A social housing tenant (not HMO)	20	9%
Private tenant (not living in HMO)	18	8%
Other*	15	7%
A local business	11	5%
A landlord (not HMO)	11	5%
Homeowner living outside of the local area	8	3%
Living with parents/family	7	3%
Letting/Managing agent responsible for properties in the local area	7	3%
Total	230	100%

* Those responding as other described themselves in the following ways: Chair of Residents Association; Council tenants in area; Electricity Distribution Network Operator; Living in almshouse in Stamford run by a charity; Relative of someone who has HMO next door; Daughter of elderly resident; Landlord with HMO; Homeowner living next door to an HMO; Landlord with multiple properties including high end HMO; Statutory consultee - Environment Agency; Member of a local church; Local Government; and Councillor.

5.5. The survey listed the most common issues and complaints that are associated with HMO and asked to what extent individuals have been affected by these issues, with the following responses provided:

5.12. A ward level breakdown of the survey results shows the wards where the highest number of responses were received. The previously identified 'hotspot' wards are highlighted:

North Northamptonshire Ward	Number of responses
<i>Kingswood Ward</i>	48
Lloyds Ward	31
<i>Corby West Ward</i>	27
Oakley Ward	14
<i>Clover Hill Ward</i>	11
Corby Rural Ward	7
<i>Croyland and Swanspool Ward</i>	6
<i>Finedon Ward</i>	6
Wicksteed Ward	6
<i>Northall Ward</i>	5
Irthlingborough Ward	4
Rushden Pemberton West Ward	4
Windmill Ward	4
Brickhill and Queensway Ward	2
Hatton Park Ward	2
Ise Ward	2
Raunds Ward	2
Burton and Broughton Ward	1
Rothwell and Mawsley Ward	1
Rushden South Ward	1
Desborough Ward	0
Earls Barton Ward	0
Higham Ferrers Ward	0
Irchester Ward	0
Oundle Ward	0
Thrapston Ward	0
Ward level data unavailable:	
<i>Outside North Northamptonshire</i>	10
<i>Corby</i>	6
<i>Unknown</i>	4
<i>Wellingborough</i>	2
<i>Kettering</i>	1
<i>North Northamptonshire</i>	1
<i>Northamptonshire</i>	1

5.13. Responses have also been received from statutory consultees. The Environment Agency highlighted the increased risk to life from flooding where multi-occupancy accommodation introduces ground floor sleeping; therefore, recommends that any options to manage HMO include appropriate mitigation requirements. Northamptonshire Police Fire and Rescue have identified the greatest hazards they face with HMO, including parked vehicles preventing emergency vehicles accessing incidents, the location of bins impeding access

in the event of a fire, and an inability to contact landlords in the event of anti-social behaviour where HMO are unregistered. Wester Power Distribution have responded stating that they may have to clear rubbish that has accumulated in front of their substations, which can include household waste or larger items such as sofas but note that this cannot only be linked to HMO. Historic England have not made any specific comments within their response but have indicated they would like to be reconsulted should any measures be proposed. Wellingborough Town Council highlighted concerns with high numbers of HMO and the issues associated with these, particularly in left behind areas.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. The response to this consultation has provided valuable feedback and analysis, including ward level data on car parking and anti-social behaviour, that builds on the existing evidence and helps to further develop our understanding of the market and demand for HMO along with the issues associated with this type of development. Several common issues were raised that will need to be carefully considered as part of the investigation.
- 6.2. Officers will progress work to identify options to regulate HMO development and ensure the highest standards of licensing and governance, including the possible use of Article 4 Directions. Note that the next steps in the investigation will involve:
 - Further detailed analysis of representations, including partial responses
 - Publish redacted comments on the council's website
 - Investigate any possible HMO that have been reported
 - Develop detailed ward level profiles for the previously identified 'hot spot' wards with the highest number and concentration of HMO
 - A series of field visits will be undertaken to supplement the results of the public consultation and reinforce the information and intelligence on the effects of HMO concentrations
 - Explore and develop options followed by in-depth appraisal
- 6.3. Governance will continue to be provided by the HMO officer working group to ensure a corporate and joined up approach. Reporting and progress updates will be provided to this Panel who will continue to oversee the work alongside development of potential options to regulate HMO development and ensure the highest standards of licensing and governance. That process will take place over the remainder of the financial year.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1. The investigation is currently being led by the planning policy team through existing budgets; however, ongoing input will be required from a range of officers given the cross-departmental nature of the investigation.

7.1.2. The investigation offers opportunities to identify transformation activities as part of the process; however, progress will continue to be constrained unless GIS resource is augmented, and IT systems are harmonised across North Northamptonshire.

7.2. Legal and Governance

7.2.1. Legislation relevant to HMO includes: The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (mandatory Conditions of Licences) (England) Regulations 2018; The Housing Act (2004); The Local Government Finance Act 1992; Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). This Panel is currently providing the governance necessary for the project.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1. The outcomes of the investigation are expected to contribute to meeting the Council's corporate objectives as outlined within the Corporate Plan 2021-25, particularly objectives 1: Active, fulfilled lives; 2: Better, brighter futures; and 3: Safe and thriving places.

7.4. Risk

7.4.1. The availability of information will influence the outcomes of the investigation as any measures proposed to regulate HMO must be based on robust and credible evidence. Prematurely opting for Discretionary Licensing or Article 4 Direction, where sufficient evidence is not available could be open to legal challenge by affected parties. As described within the report, a thorough and detailed analysis of data from multiple sources has been completed over several months aiming to ensure decision making is supported by data.

7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. This report outlines feedback received during the valuable consultation undertaken with local people and interested parties relating to HMO to ensure any options considered as part of the investigation are informed by robust and credible evidence.

7.6. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.6.1. Discussion at the Levelling Up Scrutiny Review Working Group on 3 May 2022 considered the impacts of high numbers of HMO in left-behind areas and the effects on the environment. Further discussion may be needed in the future to update the wider Scrutiny Commission of progress with this investigation.

7.7. Equality Implications

7.7.1. Improving the standards in and management of HMO within the area will benefit all members of North Northamptonshire's diverse communities. An Equality Screening Assessment was completed and endorsed with the Council's

Equalities team ahead of the consultation going live, demonstrating the survey would not disproportionately impact any protected equality groups.

7.8. Climate Impact

- 7.8.1. The Council, having declared a climate change and environment emergency in June 2021, is committed to reducing its climate impact both within its own Council buildings and in working with businesses and the wider community to achieve net zero energy emissions. Any climate or environmental impacts that may arise from this investigation will be considered fully through any measures proposed by the Council.

7.9. Community Impact

- 7.9.1. The community impact of HMO is a key consideration for this investigation.

7.10. Crime and Disorder Impact

- 7.10.1. The impact of HMO on crime and disorder has been raised as part of the consultation survey and is a key consideration for this investigation. The development of robust evidence will allow the Council to have a greater understanding, which in turn should be helpful in addressing concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1. Council on 28 July 2022 [Response to Council Motion of 23 June 2022 on Houses in Multiple Occupation](#) (Agenda item 11)
- 8.2. Planning Policy EAP on 16 May 2022 [Report on Houses in Multiple Occupation](#) (Agenda Item 5)
- 8.3. Planning Policy EAP on 21 February 2022 [Report on Houses in Multiple Occupation](#) (Agenda item 4)
- 8.4. Planning Policy EAP on 21 July 2021 [Minutes of meeting where verbal briefing was given by Interim Planning Policy Lead Manager](#)
- 8.5. [North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan Scope and Issues](#), March 2022