

Agenda Item 14.

TITLE	Houses in Multiple Occupation
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 September 2016
WARD	Shinfield North
DIRECTOR	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Positive steps have been taken by ward members to address some of the parking problems on the Shinfield Park Estate. Regular licensing inspections are now programmed to protect the health and safety of occupants of HMOs.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the report be noted

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report provides an update on Houses on Multiple Occupation at Shinfield Park since the issue was considered by the OSC in November 2015 and sets out that:-

- there are no outstanding planning and planning enforcement cases.
- there is now a programme of inspections of HMO properties by the licensing team
- change in legislation has resulted in less interest in HMOs by landowners
- there have been 10 complaints (4 from the same person) about HMOs in Shinfield Park to Environmental Health
- the Shinfield Neighborhood Plan includes a policy relating to HMOs
- discussions about Civil Parking Enforcement and extending parking on the estate have been held between local residents and members

Introduction

Council policy and practice in respect of Houses in Multiple Occupation and more specifically relating to Shinfield Park was an issue considered by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23rd November 2015. The briefing papers and policy that was submitted to this meeting are appended to this report for reference. At the meeting, it was resolved that:-

- 1) The planning and licencing position regarding HMOs in the borough generally and Shinfield Park shall be specifically should be monitored and reviewed and a report would be brought to the Committee in six months;

- 2) Councillor Bathth would contact the Parish Council with regard to the suggestion that the Borough provide land and the Parish Council fund the provision of parking;
- 3) The Executive Member for Resident Services would consider the issue of the licencing of HMOs particularly in the Shinfield Park area.

In accordance with above resolution, this matter is now before the OSC to report back the position following the previous meeting.

Update

In respect of the regulatory controls over HMOs in the borough (namely, planning, planning enforcement, licensing and nuisance), since the OSC in November 2015 the following updates are provided.

Planning

There have been no new planning applications for large HMOs received for Shinfield Park. There are no outstanding planning enforcement cases.

Licensing

There is now a programmed inspection list relating to existing licensed HMOs in the borough. In Shinfield Park, there are 13 known licensable HMOs which are either licensed, due renewal, or in progress. There are/have been no significant issues identified with respect to their use as HMOs for the occupiers, as they are in the main, high end HMOs with ample, good to excellent amenities. *(Note- the licence can only address the suitability of the accommodation in health and safety terms and it cannot address impacts on neighbours/parking)*

Complaints about HMO properties to Environmental Health (nuisance)

The following complaints have been received since April; 2015:-

- There have been 2 complaints regarding the presence of HMO's /associated parking concerns at HMO addresses.
- There has been 1 complaint regarding a smoke alarm sounding at an HMO address.
- 1 complainant has made 4 complaint
- 2 complaints against 1 HMO address – 1 related to the presence of the HMO, 1 related to audible music in cars visiting the property.
- 1 complaint related to waste at HMO address – management regulations letter has been sent to the manager (no subsequent reports to date).

Other general updates

Generally fewer approaches have been made for licensing applications and these are more dispersed. Nationally, the rules on investment buy to let, have made HMOs less attractive to investors. Also, a portfolio landlord has reported that there has been a downturn in demand for rooms – It used to be oversubscribed, but now rooms are waiting to be let.

Shinfield Neighborhood Plan

The Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan contains a specific policy relating to HMOS and if adopted, it will be a development plan that applies to the Shinfield plan area. The policy states that the required level of parking provision may vary depending on the location and the specifics of the proposal. However, the minimum should be for the provision of one parking space per bedroom either on-site or on-street depending on the parking capacity available in the area, unless otherwise justified by providing details, for example, as to what measures will be taken to deal with anticipated traffic impacts of the scheme. Applications will normally be expected to include a parking survey. As a result of this policy, if adopted, there will be an increased parking requirement for planning applications for HMOs in the Shinfield Park area in the future.

Other sites

Notably 2 addresses on Chrysanthemum Drive (newish development south of M4 off Cutbush Lane), have caused concern to local resident's. These concerns are mainly based on a restrictive covenant and on parking grounds but the properties do not present concerns to potential HMO occupiers, as both are high end HMOs with ample, good to excellent amenities). Therefore, the concerns cannot be addressed through the licencing regime.

Highways and parking issues

The ward member for Shinfield (Councillor Bath) has met with local residents together with the Executive Member for Highways (Councillor Richards) to look at the parking issues. The area is suffering from on street car parking problems which are detrimental to both the street scene and pedestrian safety by cars routinely obstructing footways. Local residents feel there was insufficient parking provision overall on the estate. It was discussed whether the possible introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) later in 2017 (but still subject to Executive approval) would improve the current parking issues.

A review for CPE commenced early in 2016 looking at the borough's existing traffic regulation orders, road markings and associated parking signs to ensure they are suitable to support CPE. The review highlighted numerous improvements required to the existing TROs, road markings and parking signs that needed to be implemented to ensure CPE could be enforced and be robust if challenged via the parking appeals process. These improvements are being made before CPE goes live, which is programmed for the second half of 2017, subject to approval at the 28 September 2016 Executive.

New parking arrangements and changes to the existing arrangements would be required to address parking issues at Shinfield Park. Borough wide, changes to parking arrangements will be assessed and quantified after CPE has been implemented and established. There will be a process put in place to allow local residents and ward members to request a review of existing parking arrangements and for new arrangements, and any changes or larger scale improvements will be addressed on a priority basis, and subject to appropriate availability of resources and funding.

Specifically for Shinfield Park Estate, the introduction of CPE could support the robust enforcement of residents parking should it be introduced. However, the introduction of residents parking would require support of the majority of local residents. Assuming it is introduced, it would restrict dwellings to a maximum of 2 on street car parking permits per dwelling, assuming the dwelling does not already benefit from off street car parking. Permits are priced between £30 (first permit) and £60 (second permit) per annum which

would go towards funding on street enforcement. However for all large schemes, including a scheme Shinfield Park Estate, to progress would require adequate officer resources and initial funding to design and implement the TRO, signs, lines and set up the residents permit scheme.

Transferring land from open areas to parking

At the meeting between members and local residents, a number of areas that could be transferred to parking were discussed and it was agreed to identify land ownership of these areas as a starting point. *(note – it is understood that the parish council have reported that they have no funding to deliver this and at present, there are no WBC funds identified).*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

N/A

Cross-Council Implications

N/A

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

List of Background Papers

N/A

Contact Claire Lawrence	Service Planning
Telephone No 01189 746444	Email claire.lawrence@wokingham.gov.uk
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