

Motion from the Liberal Democrat Group

To be moved by Cllr Cherry Beath

Houses in Multiple Occupation:

The Council:

1. Notes the forthcoming review of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Bath, as announced earlier this month; the discussions held at the Planning, Housing and Economic Development PDS Panel of 5 January 2016; and policies relating to student accommodation in the draft Placemaking Plan for B&NES as well as the Article 4 Direction and Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on HMOs of 2013.
2. Recognises the importance of the contribution made by Bath's Universities and students to the economy, employment and culture in Bath and the wider area.
3. Notes that the Universities' growth plans may bring up to 9,200 additional students to Bath but that there are limited options for purpose-built student accommodation due to planning constraints, the lack of available sites and the need to prioritise the delivery of strategic planning requirements.
4. Recognises that not all HMOs are occupied by students and that HMO accommodation is an important source of affordable housing, particularly for younger people.
5. Notes that the remit given to the Bath City Forum is narrow and does not cover areas of North East Somerset that may suffer from any knock-on effects of increased HMO's or further restrictions on HMO's in Bath.
6. With regard to the forthcoming review of the Supplementary Planning Document on HMOs in Bath and in the interests of maintaining balanced communities, the Council calls for consideration to be given to:
 - a. Amending the threshold after which applications for new HMOs would be refused from 25% to 20%.
 - b. Introducing an additional provision which would prevent permission for purpose-built student accommodation being granted in areas which are already defined by the SPD as having more than 25% of the housing stock as HMOs.
7. The Cabinet is also asked to consider introducing mandatory licensing of landlords across B&NES in order to improve housing standards for tenants in rented accommodation.