

Brighton & Hove City Council

Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee

Agenda Item 12

Subject: Co-Living Development - Interim Planning Guidance

Date of meeting: 15 June 2023

Report of: Executive Director – Economy, Environment & Culture

Contact Officer: Name: Robert Davidson
Tel: 01273 291580
Email: Robert.Davidson@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report seeks the Committee's agreement to publish Interim Planning Guidance to assist in the determination of planning applications for 'Co-living' housing development in the city. The Interim Guidance references adopted policies in the City Plan Parts 1 and 2 and would be used for development management purposes. A copy of the Interim Planning Guidance is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The Interim Guidance will assist planning officers in determining planning applications for Co-living development. It will also provide clear advice for developers in terms of the Council's requirements and expectations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Committee agrees the Interim Planning Guidance on Co-living housing development attached at Appendix 1 to be used for development management purposes.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Co-living is a newly emerging category of residential development which has very different characteristics to both traditional self-contained housing and conventional HMOs. The term 'Co-living' is used to describe proposals for large-scale purpose-built shared accommodation comprising private individual studio rooms supplemented by extensive shared communal areas and facilities such kitchen, dining, living and recreation space. Other onsite amenities such as co-working space, a café/restaurant and gym are often also provided.
- 3.2 Co-living is mainly targeted towards young professionals in the 18-35 age range and Co-living developments to date have been concentrated in large urban areas with a substantial post-graduate/ younger professional population such as London, Manchester and Birmingham. Co-living

accommodation often functions as a flexible and short term housing choice which can lead to a fairly transient population with a high turnover of residential occupants.

- 3.3 The private living units are generally (often exclusively) designed for single person occupancy and are much smaller than minimum Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). Co-living developments also differ from conventional houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) due to their much larger scale, and greater extent of shared communal spaces and facilities.
- 3.4 Co-living is not specifically defined as a separate housing category in national planning policy or guidance, or in the Use Classes Order. As such, it would be classified as a 'Sui Generis' use rather than C3 which applies to self-contained residential dwellings.
- 3.5 However, national planning guidance does allow Co-living developments to be counted towards the city's overall housing supply figures on a pro-rata basis (1.8 Co-living units to one dwelling) because this type of development is seen as a form of communal housing. Such developments in Brighton & Hove would therefore contribute towards the city's strategic housing target in City Plan Policy CP1.
- 3.6 Within Brighton & Hove there is currently only one Co-living development which has received planning permission, a development of 83 co-living residential units at 19-24 Melbourne Street (BH2019/01820) which has not yet been built. A second and much larger application for 269 co-living units on an adjoining site at Enterprise Point and 16-18 Melbourne Street (BH2022/01490) was recently refused (against officer recommendation) by Planning Committee on grounds relating to scale/bulk/intensification of use and impact on neighbouring uses.
- 3.7 The planning applications at Melbourne Street have highlighted the lack of a specific policy for Co-living housing in the current City Plan. As Co-living is very different to traditional forms of housing, there are a number of important questions to consider. Key issues include:
 - the extent of demand/need for Co-living type housing in the city;
 - the quality and standard of the residential accommodation provided;
 - how Co-living developments can be integrated existing communities and contribute to mixed sustainable neighbourhoods; and
 - how they can contribute to addressing the city's identified housing needs, including by providing affordable housing contributions.
- 3.8 Although City Plan Parts 1 and 2 do not include direct reference to Co-living housing, the Plan does include several relevant policies which are important to the assessment of Co-living development proposals and the determination of planning applications. This includes policies relating to sustainable neighbourhoods, housing density, housing mix and quality, affordable housing, design, and protection of amenity.
- 3.9 The Interim Planning Guidance at Appendix 1 of this report draws on these policies in order to set out a proposed framework to assist the assessment of development proposals for Co-living development in the city. The aim is to ensure that such proposals accord with the development strategy and planning policies within the City Plan; contribute to meeting the city's

identified housing needs; provide good quality residential accommodation; and maintain sustainable neighbourhoods. The Interim Guidance will assist planning officers in determining planning applications for Co-living development. It will also provide a clear steer for developers in terms of the Council's requirements and expectations.

- 3.10 In the longer term, officers will consider whether there is a need for a specific Plan policy for Co-living as part of the ongoing City Plan review. More detailed guidance regarding accommodation standards for Co-living could also be provided in due course drawing on similar planning guidelines already published in London and Birmingham.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The alternative to preparing Interim Planning Guidance would be to consider planning applications for Co-living on an individual case by case basis as has been the approach up until now. However, as noted above, Co-living is a newly emerging housing category which has very different characteristics to both self-contained housing and conventional HMOs. There are no direct references to Co-living in the City Plan, although the Plan includes a number of policies which are helpful in determining Co-living planning applications. The Interim Planning Guidance will help to ensure a consistent approach to assessing Co-living proposals. It also clearly sets out the Council's expectations and planning policy requirements for applicants and promoters.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The Interim Planning Guidance has been prepared through joint working by Planning and Housing officers. It is intended that it will have the status of informal guidance and it is based on interpretation of existing planning policies in the City Plan (that were subject to extensive consultation). It is therefore not considered necessary to undertake wider public consultation on the Interim Guidance.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Co-living is a newly emerging housing sector and there is likely to be increasing interest in developing this form of housing in the city. The Interim Planning Guidance will help provide a consistent approach to determining planning applications for Co-living housing, ensuring that such developments provide a good quality living environment for their residents and contribute to meeting identified housing needs and building sustainable communities in the city.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising from the Interim Planning Guidance.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 24/5/23

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The Interim Planning Guidance does not seek to introduce any new policy but sets out how existing policies in the adopted City Plan Parts 1 and 2 will

be applied. It is intended to be used as informal guidance by planning officers in their interpretation of the Plan's policies. Therefore it is considered there are no legal implications.

Name of lawyer consulted: Katy Kam

Date consulted: 24/5/23

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 The Interim Planning Guidance will promote equalities by helping to ensure that Co-living developments provide a good quality living environment for all residents in terms of private living space, shared communal facilities, accessibility and outdoor amenity. It will also help to ensure that neighbouring uses and activities are not adversely impacted by Co-living developments.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 The Interim Planning Guidance does not directly address issues of environmental sustainability, although these will be addressed by other City Plan policies and Council guidance. The Interim Guidance will support social and community sustainability by encouraging Co-living schemes to be provided as part of a wider mix of housing sizes and tenures and by ensuring that developments are well integrated with and contribute positively to their wider neighbourhood. The Guidance will also help ensure that Co-living developments provide good quality residential accommodation and standards of residential amenity which will support health and wellbeing.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices [delete if not applicable]

1. Brighton & Hove Co-living Interim Guidance Note (June 2023)