

Appendix 1 – Background information to the request to includes HMOs as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Select Committee work programme

To investigate options for future direction in policy development to mitigate the impact of the density and proliferation of Houses of Multiple Occupation on residents of the RBC wards neighbouring the RHUL campus.

NB:

- RHUL have a stated ambition to increase student numbers from today's 12,000 to around 15,000 by 2029-30. The planned increase in campus accommodation is only 1400, leaving an additional 1600 students to be accommodated in private accommodation the surrounding area.
- RBC has no records of the total number of HMOs, (only registerable ones), but a respected resident has mapped the Borough's 963 Class N Council Tax Exempt dwellings (which is considered the best guide to student occupied HMO dwelling numbers) and his work shows 47% of the entire Borough HMOs are in Englefield Green, representing over 14% of the dwellings in those two wards.

This matter is a key concern for residents in wards Englefield Green East, Englefield Green West and Egham Town and the problem is raised repeatedly at Councillors' surgeries, on the doorstep, on social media, as a planning objection and in complaints to RBC as a primary cause of nuisance behaviour and ASB.

In March this year a [report on this subject was submitted to Planning Committee](#) regarding the introduction of an 'Article 4 Direction' which would have offered a step towards managing this problem. The Planning Committee agreed to support further research, but the consequence of delays in new national planning legislation means the 'Article 4 Direction' cannot be in put in place any time soon because amendments will be required to the new iteration of the RBC Local Plan and this may not happen for some years hence.

[Report on Article 4 Direction March 23](#)

Extracts from that report by Planning Policy Team:

2.2 HMOs are recognised as meeting important and specific housing needs in Runnymede, particularly for people on low incomes, as house prices in the borough are high. However, high concentrations of HMOs can present challenges to the sustainability of neighbourhoods and impact on their character and residential amenity. This is often the case in university towns where the concentration of student HMOs in specific areas can lead to issues with the resident population.

4.21 The potential impacts of concentrations of HMOs in an area, and particularly those relating to student HMOs, can include the following:

- *Increase in population densities resulting in increases in domestic refuse, litter (e.g. fast food and pizza boxes) and fly-tipping of unwanted household items (e.g. discarded beds/mattresses, sofas and fridges);*
- *The removal of hedges, fences, gates, and gardens for driveways;*
- *The proliferation of 'to-let' boards, unkempt gardens and yards;*
- *Dilapidated external residential facades and the disrepair of housing (depending on the landlord);*
- *The exclusion of local families and low-income individuals and households from the local housing market;*
- *The replacement / displacement of local families by transient student populations;*
- *The marginalisation and polarisation of local families;*
- *The gradual closure of local crèches, nurseries and schools, and other community facilities;*
- *The loss of family-oriented public and private services;*

- *Higher levels of burglary and crime;*
 - *The formation of a new sense of place, and a different type of ambience in the neighbourhood;*
 - *Room arrangements and a lifestyle which can exacerbate noise nuisance (e.g. parties, higher occupancy levels in HMO);*
 - *The conflicts between the everyday living routines (e.g. timing of work, play and sleep) of established residents and many students;*
 - *Increased car parking and congestion*
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The communities of Englefield Green East, Englefield Green West and Egham Town are affected by every one of the listed 'potential impacts' and waiting for years until the Article 4 Direction might be put in place should not be the only hope for long-suffering residents in these wards.

Whilst the Article 4 Direction would seem to be the only tool available to potentially stem the growth in HMO numbers or manage their density and distribution, mitigating policies have been adopted by other 'University Towns' to alleviate the worst impacts of having such a high concentration of HMOs and these should be considered by RBC:

1. More stringent enforcement of current regulations [The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) in respect of condition of gardens and building frontages, bin management etc.
2. Extending licencing to all HMOs under [Housing Act 2004 Part 2 Licencing of houses in multiple occupation](#) and not only for households with 5 or more occupants as at present eg [Hounslow appendix 3](#)
3. Toughen local HMO licencing conditions to include landlord responsibility for ASB. See reference to Landlords' responsibility for ASB in [Warwick DC HMO Licence conditions](#)
4. Improve communications with landlords RBC HMO guidance [RBC HMO guidance](#) versus: [Warwick DC HMO guidance](#) and [Landlords tackling ASB](#)
5. Introducing a Joint Enforcement Team to help reduce ASB as other local Surrey Borough Councils have done: [Spelthorne JET Pilot](#)

I note that the Overview & Scrutiny committee may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research, and do all other things that we reasonably consider necessary to inform our deliberations and essentially, we may also consider inviting RHUL as a witness to attend and address the committee about their growth plans in respect of accommodation, parking provision and other related matters.