

HMO review

Additional HMO licensing is often a source of confusion and complexity for both landlords and tenants. Often tenants do not know if their property requires a licence, and landlords are often faced with inconsistent or menial requirements to meet which offer little real benefit to the tenant.

With the implementation of Rent Smart Wales and the incoming Renting Homes Act we believe efficiencies can be found to benefit both landlords and the local authority.

Local Authorities now have access to a database of all registered landlords, and know who is responsible for managing those properties. This information should be linked up to reduce duplication of information and potentially reduce cost.

Conditions attached with licences should be more consistent and focus on the most important aspects of housing, rather than imposing costly measures which provide little real benefit.

We would like to see more consistency in the conditions attached to licences, rather than being subjective to the views of the visiting officer.

Officers most often exercise this function by granting licenses pending conditions / improvements. This is where inconsistencies between HMO licenses occur and frustration between landlords amounts, as different officers interpret things differently.

One solution to this is to fully review HMO standards in Cardiff. Working with landlords to establish a more rigid and focused set of standards.

Some issues can be addressed through the conditions of Rent Smart Wales licences and the Code of Practice. Rent Smart Wales also requires compliance with all other rules and regulations impacting landlords.

We also have concerns about the extension of additional HMO licensing areas throughout Cardiff. At its simplest, this would be a policy to effectively ban the HMO from the streets of Cardiff—completely ignoring the many advantages of HMOs and putting the more wealthy ahead; effectively pricing young professionals, students and those on the Single Accommodation Rate out of Cardiff.

Although we would welcome a review, we are strongly opposed to any plans to extend additional HMO licensing throughout the whole Cardiff area.

A New Approach to Waste Collection

Waste is a big issue for landlords, tenants and residents. It can impact the surrounding areas, giving impressions to visitors and setting the scene of our city.

Waste issues are more prevalent in the Cathays, Roath and Plasnewydd areas of Cardiff, especially around the end of the academic year. This can cause significant problems for students, landlords and waste collection teams—not to mention this visible impact on the area.

The high density of accommodation in this area requires a greater resource allocation, such as education programs and enforcement.

The Get It Out For Cardiff campaign has made inroads, however the local authority can do more to help alleviate the issue.

We would like to see a two week period, towards the end of the academic term, where both black bins and recycling waste are collected.

OR

One collection period where 2 additional bags of black bin waste can be placed alongside a normal black bin collection date.

Further

We would also like to see the Wedal Road HWRC kept open, as this is the only waste centre serving the Cathays and Roath areas. Closing the HWRC would not only be detrimental to our efforts to recycle more, but would require residents to drive to alternative locations—encouraging more cars into the area.



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Local Election Manifesto

1. Support the Get It Out For Cardiff Campaign by increasing collection capacity over key dates
2. Reconsider C4 planning restrictions, recognising that HMOs provide a vital source of accommodation to a number of demographics
3. Support landlords to help tackle homelessness in Cardiff and build good working relationships with the sector.
4. Conduct a full review into the effectiveness and necessity on additional HMO licensing in light of recent legislative changes

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Support landlords to help tackle homelessness

Landlords often received mixed messages from different departments and areas within the local authority. On one hand, housing options teams understand the role and importance of the PRS in addressing homelessness, and work hard to ensure positive relationships with the sector.

On the other hand, landlords are often vilified and seen as an easy target, often blamed for many issues over which landlords have relatively little control.

Such issues can include antisocial behaviour, correct waste presentation, cohesion in neighbourhoods, to name just a few. Although landlords can take steps to help resolve these issues, we are not the main factors controlling them.

We would like to see other areas of Cardiff Council adopt a similar approach to that of the housing options team and other housing departments, recognising the role and importance of the PRS in solving housing issues, rather than using landlords as a scapegoat.

There is always room for improvement, however we would like to work with the local authority to accomplish this.

One suggestion would be the establishment of landlord liaison committees to look at key areas, such as waste, homelessness, HMO licensing, security, housing strategy, welfare and planning.



Review C4 planning restrictions

Cardiff has a chronic shortage of suitable accommodation, especially in the one and two bedroom category. Recent changes to housing benefit rents mean that those in receipt of benefits will find it increasingly difficult to find a home.

For many in this situation, the only realistic solution is accommodation within a HMO.

Students and young professionals, perhaps moving to Cardiff for the first time, also look towards HMOs as a suitable source of housing. They offer comparatively cheap rates, allowing people to save for a home of their own and help create a peer group and work as an introduction to life in Cardiff for many young professionals.

However, recent changes in C4 planning classification means that, as a new provider, it is becoming near impossible to offer this type of accommodation. Further, HMO accommodation that is used to house a family cannot then revert to its HMO status to house a group of professionals or be used to house those currently living on the streets.

All of this reduces the amount of available accommodation and increases the cost of what remains available.

We would like to see Cardiff Council reverse the decision to introduce C4 planning restrictions on HMO property.

OR

We would like Cardiff Council to alter the planning conditions, so that a greater amount of HMOs can be built where there is a demand, and that a property does not lose its HMO status simply because it may have been used to house a family (which do not qualify as HMO residents).

