

**SOUTHAMPTON
CITY VISION**
Local Plan



HOMES

3. HOMES

- 3.1 Southampton is a city of around 249,000 people living in 110,000 homes. It is the second most densely populated of the South East's local authority areas, with almost 5,000 people per square kilometre. It is a growing city and saw a population increase of over 5% between 2011 and 2021¹.
- 3.2 In addition to policy on the number of new homes needed in the city (policy ST1), the Local Plan also provides guidance on the specific type of homes required and criteria for development. This includes the delivery of affordable homes which is one of the key challenges facing the city. These policies must be read together with later sections in the plan which ensure new development is sustainable and well designed. This chapter includes the following policies:
- HO1 Density
 - HO2 Housing Mix
 - HO3 Affordable housing
 - HO4 Conversion to residential use
 - HO5 Housing Retention
 - HO6 Houses in Multiple Occupation
 - HO7 Purpose Built Student Accommodation
 - HO8 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Accommodation for Travelling Showpeople
 - HO9 Houseboats and Moorings

DENSITY

- 3.3 Whilst there is continuing pressure for higher densities to deliver development in Southampton, it is important that this is properly planned having regard to the importance of securing well-designed, attractive, and healthy places.
- 3.4 The Council will ensure developments make the optimal use of available land, appropriate to their context, and support the regeneration of previously developed land, whilst avoiding homes being built at densities which are too low to achieve the housing delivery required to support the Southampton's predicted population growth over time.
- 3.5 To ensure this residential growth is sustainable, higher-density development will be focussed in the following highly accessible locations: the city centre, Shirley town centre, district centres, and the key public transport corridors and hubs.

Policy HO1 (S) – Density

New residential development should accord with following density standards, although all applications will be judged on their own merits and in light of local context:

¹ Source 2021 Census

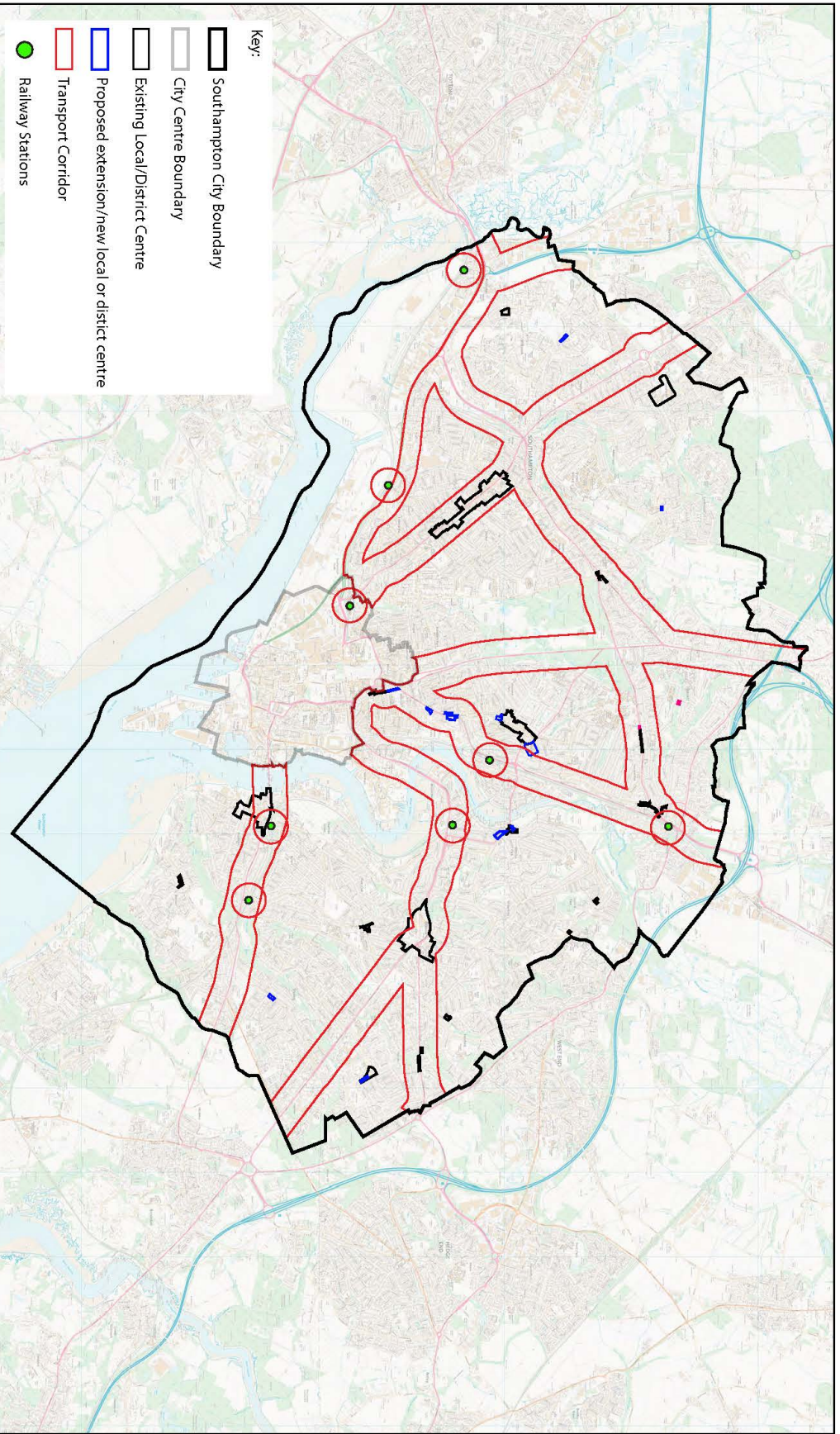
AREA	DENSITY STANDARD (dwellings per hectare (dph)) [see Key Option 2]
City Centre	250dph minimum
Town and District Centres	150dph minimum
Transport Corridors and Hubs [see Key Option 1]	100dph minimum
The rest of the city	Between 35dph and 75dph, depending on local context

Development will be permitted where it has an optimal and appropriate density, having regard to the following criteria:

1. The need to protect and enhance the character of existing streets and neighbourhoods;
2. The need to provide adequate high-quality open space either on site or in the local area;
3. Flood risk and the need to provide appropriate reduction and mitigation measures;
4. Accessibility and the need to create and/or integrate with existing active travel and public transport links and hubs, where possible;
5. The need to demonstrate appropriate and respectful design in accordance with adopted character or conservation area appraisals;
6. The need to demonstrate the efficient and effective use of land; and
7. The need to demonstrate connectivity to heat network zones.

The optimal use of derelict, vacant and underused land must also be made to help achieve the required densities for residential development provided that:

8. The land is not identified as being safeguarded for non-residential use;
9. The location of any development would not present significant harm to the amenity of existing occupiers on adjoining land;
10. The site is not unfit for development by reason of its location close to dust, fumes, hazards or nuisance created by nearby industrial or commercial activity; or
11. The land does not support significant wildlife or nature conservation interest



Transport Corridor - 400m buffer

This map is a product of the Strategic Planning and Transport Planning Department of Southampton City Council. It is for information only and does not constitute a contract. Southampton City Council 10/01/2022

Scale: NTS 1 | Date: Sept 2022



Map 1 Transport corridors and buffer

Overall Approach

- 3.6 The need to provide a significant number of new dwellings within Southampton's constrained urban area will inevitably lead to a general increase in density. However, the appropriate densities of new development will vary across the City depending on the local context. Intensification and higher densities will be appropriate in some parts of the City in order to make best use of the land, to support a range of local services and infrastructure and to create a residential environment with a mix of housing.
- 3.7 At all densities housing needs to be energy efficient, of an appropriate character to its setting, provide adequate amenity, be of high quality and provide mitigation measures where necessary. To develop healthy places, usable outdoor space for residents should be maximised and could be provided in forms such as gardens, roof terraces and balconies.
- 3.8 The Council measures density by the number of dwellings per hectare (dph)(i.e. gross density). The City Centre is the key area for the city's highest density residential development therefore, in line with average densities on recent development schemes, a minimum density of 250dph will be required. In Shirley Town Centre and the four District Centres, 150dph has been set as the minimum requirement whilst in the buffers surrounding transport corridors and hubs the standard will be 100dph. Again, these densities relate back to averages on recent completions and higher minimum densities are considered appropriate in these locations as they offer quick and direct access to a range of amenities, services and employment opportunities and good access to public transport.
- 3.9 For all other areas of the city, densities are expected to fall between 35dph and 75dph given the diverse range of density contexts in different areas of the city.
- 3.10 To help achieve the densities proposed, the most effective use of land will be needed, and this includes optimising the reuse and regeneration of previously developed land for residential use. However, it is recognised that certain areas of previously developed land may not be suitable to be redeveloped for residential use such as where there remain ongoing industrial uses nearby.
- 3.11 The policy sets out the proposed requirements to optimise the density of new residential development. The Council will also seek to optimise the density of mixed use and non-residential development. In accordance with Policy IN3, single storey developments will not be permitted in the city, town and district centres.

Key Policy Options

Key Option 1 – Density band for transport corridors and hubs

Option 1a – To include a density band for transport corridors and hubs with a buffer of 400m and minimum density standard of 100dph (see map 1 above). This will align with National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 125(a) which supports optimising the use of land, including the use of minimum density standards in accessible locations as a means to support sustainable growth.

Options 1b – To not include a density band for transport corridors and hubs (see map 1 above). This would enable development of lower densities to be accepted and could result in a larger housing shortfall in Southampton.

Key Option 2 – Proposed density levels

Option 2a – To support the density levels proposed in Policy HO1. This will help achieve housing targets but will require building to greater densities that have been proposed in previous Local Plans which will mean changes to the types of housing being developed including an increase in the number of developments for taller buildings.

Option 2b – To support a higher density target than that proposed in Policy HO1. This will further help in achieving housing targets but will require additional taller and landmark buildings to be built which may have a negative effect on the appearance and character of the city.

Option 2c – To support a lower density target than that proposed in Policy HO1. This may be more reflective of the current status quo approach to density but will result in more land needing to be developed to meet housing targets.

Evidence

Existing Evidence:

- 3.12 The PTAL map was devised in 2007 as a tool to gauge accessibility levels across the city in terms of public transport use. It has been used to identify concentric bands of accessibility from which appropriate densities have been matched. However, it is some time since it was introduced and the evidence to support it gathered, therefore it is no longer considered an appropriate and applicable tool for comparing and identifying accessibility and density characteristics across the city.
- 3.13 The Residential Design Guide SPD is widely used for providing qualitative and quantitative guidance on residential development, and this supports the appropriate provision of residential environments of varying densities.

New Evidence:

- 3.14 Chapter 11 of the NPPF 2021 continues the theme of making the best use of brownfield land (more commonly called previously developed land in the NPPF 2012). It encourages a proactive role to be taken in bringing forward land to meet identified development needs, and this can include using land in public ownership, using brownfield registers to identify sites, more effective use of underutilised space, and entertaining upward expansion and conversions, where compliant with other policies.

HOUSING MIX

- 3.15 Retaining existing housing numbers, upgrading existing stock and ensuring new developments are built at an appropriate density will all help meet the overall housing need in Southampton.
- 3.16 In planning for housing, the aim is to provide a broad housing mix in the city in order to meet identified needs – this can include the delivery of private housing (owner occupied and rented), and affordable housing in terms of the tenure and a range of housing types covering a varied housing mix to include family housing, Houses in Multiple Occupation, co-living

homes, specialist accommodation for the elderly and vulnerable and purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) should there be an evidenced demand.

Policy HO2 (S) - Housing Mix

- 1. Development across the city must provide a mix of homes, tenures and bedroom sizes to meet a range of housing needs provided they support mixed and balanced communities, including:**
 - a. traditional family housing;**
 - b. the improvement and retention of, and an increase in, the provision of homes for older people (supported housing, housing with care, residential homes and nursing homes), specialist housing and for Disabled People of all ages;**
 - c. the provision and control of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) (see Policy HO6);**
 - d. the provision and control of Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) (see Policy HO7);**
 - e. proposals for Self and Custom Build homes across a range of sites [see key option 1];**
 - f. the provision and control of build to rent units; and**
 - g. the provision and control of homes used for co-living.**

Family Homes

- 2. In order to ensure family housing needs are met across the city:**
 - a. There will be a target of 30% of total dwellings (gross) as family homes on residential developments of ten or more dwellings or sites which exceed 0.5 hectares [see key option 2]**
 - b. There will be no net loss of family homes on sites capable of accommodating a mix of residential units unless there are exceptional circumstances justifying this loss (also see Policy HO5: Housing Retention) [see key option 3].**
- 3. Family homes are dwellings of three or more bedrooms with direct access to useable private amenity space or garden for the sole use of the household (see amenity space standards below) [see Key Option 4]**
 - a. Flat and maisonette – 20m² per unit**
 - b. Terraced – 50 m²**
 - c. Semi-detached 70 m²**
 - d. Detached – 90 m²**
 - e. Sheltered accommodation – 30 m² per unit**

- 4. Specialist housing schemes entirely for older people and supported accommodation for Disabled People are required to provide private amenity space based on the standards in criterion 3. They must be supported by an appropriate on-site management plan. The requirements in criterion 2 above do not apply to these schemes.**

Overall Approach

- 3.17 The demand for one-bedroom and two-bedroom properties is not a new trend in Southampton, in recent times it has been the most predominant accommodation type being built. Frequently smaller developments in the city have involved the loss of a large house to be replaced with flats. There remains a continued need for one-bedroom and two-bedroom properties, but in order to meet overall housing needs, it is important to develop a mix of new housing types and tenures across the city as well as protect existing family housing stock.
- 3.18 When planning new developments, the appropriate percentage of family housing for each site in the first instance will depend upon the established character and density of the neighbourhood. It will be important to introduce a greater mix of people into the city centre, parts of which may be suitable for family homes. This can include high density schemes with a family orientated layout and environment which should be designed in at the concept stage. Applicants will also need to provide a strong justification in those instances where it wouldn't be possible to fully meet the family housing target. In terms of family homes falling within university campus or hospital sites, any proposals to demolish these should incur a net increase in family homes unless the proposal is for education, research or healthcare uses, and accords with other relevant policies in this plan. Family homes are also considered in Policy HO5: Housing Retention with regards to the proposed redevelopment of the existing housing stock (e.g. replacement of two smaller units with a larger family home).
- 3.19 Southampton has evidence of overcrowding in housing, exacerbated in some of its many Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Policy H8 of the original Local Plan and CS5 of the Core Strategy highlights the usefulness of a density policy to steer different types and intensity of housing to the most suitable locations. It is therefore important that new development adopts living standards that are appropriate and adaptable for the future in the city. Additional standards would support a density policy and ensure future homes secure appropriate living conditions.
- 3.20 In accordance with Government legislation, the Council is committed to increasing self and custom-build housing and to raising awareness of this type of housing as a route to home ownership. Self and custom build therefore provides another option on supply and housing choice. The council has established a self-build register and supports proposals for self and custom build, subject to meeting other planning policies. The Council has opted to not allocate any sites for self and custom build but will support schemes which include flexibility to deliver self-build and custom build housing as part of residential developments.
- 3.21 Build to rent is an increasingly popular type of housing with schemes being permitted in the city over recent years. Schemes usually offer longer tenancy agreements and are often professionally managed by the owner or operator. It will be important to ensure that the provision of build to rent units maintains balanced and mixed communities and do not become the dominant housing type in any one area of the city. These schemes will also be expected to provide private usable amenity space. The proposed format of this will be

considered on a case-by-case basis. However, build to rent schemes will be expected to contribute to a satisfactory living environment for prospective occupants.

- 3.22 Co Living is also a growing sector within the overall housing mix. It will be important to ensure that this does not harm the overall mix and balance of existing communities by becoming the dominant housing type or prevent opportunities for more affordable housing options to come forward in any one area of the city. It is also important that they are well designed and Co Living schemes provide appropriate private and communal space for the number of people living there and sharing communal areas. The proposed format of this private and communal space will also be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Key Policy Options

Key Option 1 – Self build and Custom build housing

Option 1a – to support proposals for self and custom build homes without identifying specific plots and site allocations across the city – this is the Council's preferred approach whereby the Council would support proposals for self and custom-build as part of residential developments coming forward.

Option 1b – to identify specific plots and site allocations for self and custom build homes or require a proportion of larger developments to include custom or self-build homes where possible – the Council has opted against this approach to identify specific plots and site allocations.

Key Option 2 – Proportion of family homes with new development

The Council is open to reviewing the proportion of family homes required with new development along with how this is considered on a city wide basis as per the options set out below.

Option 2a – to support the 30% family homes percentage target in Policy HO2

Option 2b – to support an alternative higher or lower family homes percentage target in Policy HO2

Option 2c – to propose separate targets for family homes in high-density and low-density areas (e.g. higher or lower targets in accessible locations including the city, town and district centres).

Key Option 3 – Net loss of family homes

Option 3a – no net loss of family homes across the city unless in exceptional circumstances such as where there are significant wider benefits from a redevelopment that can be robustly justified and the impact on the amenity of neighbouring and nearby residents is acceptable – there is a genuine need to provide for family homes across the city. Many have been lost over the last few decades through conversion into separate flats to meet an increased demand from students and single adults. Therefore, as well as supporting the provision of new family homes, the Council also supports this option as its preferred approach in order to minimise the net loss of family homes across the city.

Option 3b – support a more flexible approach to the net loss of family homes – this approach would risk more family homes being lost across the city which are already in short supply

Option 4 – Family home definition

The Council will explore whether people would consider a family home in the city centre to be one which may not necessarily have all of the features that are required under the existing family homes definition. For example, there could be a compromise on the private usable amenity space whereby shared communal spaces are instead provided. The proximity of the Central Parks as another example could compensate for the lack of private usable amenity space. The Council is therefore open to changing this definition if it is felt this would be needed.

Option 4a – to maintain the Council’s definition of what constitutes a family home

Option 4b – to redefine the definition of what constitutes a family home in the city centre (e.g. three bed dwellings to incorporate the use of shared communal spaces rather than private usable amenity space)

Evidence

Existing Evidence:

- 3.23 Evidence in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) reveals the need to plan for the increasingly ageing population (for those aged 65 plus and particularly for those aged 85 plus), a need to maintain and enhance family housing stock (3+ bedrooms), as well as continuing the provision of smaller residential units.
- 3.24 The SHMA 2014 shows the highest demand to be for 2 and 3 bed properties in the market housing sector. Evidence from the SCC Housing Register and wait times shows that the greatest need is for three bed affordable homes. Since the “family accommodation offer” is most appropriately met in suburban and rural areas, it is in the urban area of Southampton where the housing offer is focussed towards smaller properties serving professional, small family and student markets.
- 3.25 With the PfSH Strategy is currently being reviewed, the 2016 Spatial Position Statement and its supporting evidence remains a relevant consideration. One of the spatial principles identified within this relates to ‘*supporting a balance of housing sites to widen choice and support delivery*’. Southampton is one of 2 anchor cities within which it is expected that a third of new housing will be provided, with a “cities first” approach.
- 3.26 The Build to Rent sector has continued to grow as an emerging sector particularly across a number of cities nationwide. Demand in Southampton is also growing² for this type of housing to meet the needs of various groups such as single young professionals who may have recently graduated but want to continue living and working in the city.
- 3.27 The need to maintain a self and custom build register has been a statutory requirement following the publication of the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act (2015). The level of demand is established by reference to the number of entries added to an authority's register during each 12-month base period.

² Currently evidenced through an increase in planning applications for build to rent units.

New Evidence:

- 3.28 New housing needs to have regard to the Green City Charter and the Councils housing strategy to enable longevity and flexibility in new housing and its occupiers
- 3.29 NDSS (Nationally Described Space Standards) March 2015 introduced.
- 3.30 Building Regs 2015 Part M4 (2) and M4 (3).

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 3.31 One of the key challenges of this plan is to deliver the right type of new homes needed in Southampton as well as the right number to meet the city's housing targets. There is a relatively low level of home ownership in Southampton compared to the national average, with only half of dwellings being owner occupied and a quarter are privately rented. The affordability of housing remains a key issue for the city and one the Council is trying to address as part of its own programme of affordable homes delivery on its own land.
- 3.32 This policy seeks to deliver a range of affordable homes through the planning process as part of new development including rented homes and affordable home ownership. The policy also sets out a requirement for First Homes in line with Government policy.

Policy HO3 (S) - Affordable Housing

- 1. On housing sites of 10 or more dwellings, or of 0.5 hectare or more in size (irrespective of the number of dwellings), the council will seek provision of, through negotiation, 35% of dwellings to be affordable housing [See Key Options 1, 2 and 3].**
- 2. The appropriate proportion and type of affordable housing to be provided by a particular site will take into account:**
 - a. The costs relating to the development; in particular, the financial viability of developing the site (using an approved viability model and made publicly available). For exceptional cases not covered by the Local Plan viability assessment, where targets cannot be met in full as demonstrated in an independent viability appraisal commissioned by the council and paid for by the applicant, the maximum viable level will be sought;**
 - b. Constraints on the development of the site imposed by other planning objectives;**
 - c. Local needs in respect of the mix of dwelling types and sizes and levels of affordability, including the criteria set by the Government's First Homes initiative; and**
 - d. The need to achieve a successful housing development in terms of the location and mix of affordable homes.**
- 3. Where a site is developed in phases, the affordable housing requirement will be calculated based on the total development size and must be provided on each phase or subdivision. The**

Council will not accept the deliberate subdivision of sites to provide individual parcels of development land to avoid the affordable housing threshold.

- 4. Affordable housing should be provided on-site, unless in exceptional circumstances when the provision of an alternative site or a commuted sum would result in a more effective use of resources or mix of housing as agreed by the council.**
- 5. The exact tenure split on each site will be subject to negotiation using the following criteria:**
 - a. A minimum of 25% of all affordable housing provision will be First Homes in accordance with national policy, meeting the Government criteria and price cap and available to purchasers meeting the local connection criteria [See Key Option 4];**
 - b. No less than 10% of all dwellings on the site will be affordable home ownership (including First Homes);**
 - c. The preferred tenure for the remaining proportion of affordable housing will be rented, unless an alternative housing tenure is required to meet local need or other strong reasons in connection with the delivery of affordable housing.**
- 6. The exception to the tenure split above is Build to Rent Schemes, fully meeting the government definition and requirements, where the affordable element is expected to be delivered as Affordable Private Rent. To address the high levels of affordable housing need in the city, the Council will seek 35% affordable housing on Build to Rent schemes.**
- 7. Student housing schemes with occupation restrictions are exempt.**

Overall Approach

- 3.33 Planning authorities are required to assess the need for affordable housing and consider how this need can be addressed. Policy HOU3 proposes retaining the existing percentage requirement for larger developments. The requirement will be confirmed after further assessments of housing need and viability. Affordable housing is defined in national guidance as housing for sale or rent for those whose needs are not met by the market. It includes affordable housing for rent, starter homes, discounted market sales housing and other subsidised routes to home ownership.

Housing need in Southampton

- 3.34 In 2021, the average house price in Southampton was £235,000³ which equates to 7.33 times⁴ the areas average salary. As of December 2021, there were 7,647 people on the Council's Housing Register waiting for social accommodation, either council owned accommodation or through nomination to a housing association vacancy. This figure includes those on the waiting list who may have additional priority due to homelessness, overcrowding, medical requirements and those looking to downsize.

³ ONS HPSSA dataset 9 – Median house prices for Local Authority areas (June 2022)

⁴ ONS Housing affordability in England and Wales: 2021 (published March 2022)

- 3.35 There is a real pressing need for 3-bedroom homes and one third of the demand on the housing register is for homes of this size⁵. Households requiring accommodation with 3 or more bedrooms are experiencing a wait which can exceed 10 years. Half of the demand on the housing register is for 1-bedroom homes including older persons housing. Households requiring 1-bedroom or 2-bedroom homes are experiencing a wait which can exceed 4 years. For those requiring age designated accommodation the waiting times are significantly shorter.
- 3.36 The median cost of renting a home privately in Southampton is £800 per month⁶. In 2018, the average rent in Southampton was around 35% of the average gross monthly salary of residents⁷. Therefore, private rented properties are not an affordable alternative for many people.

Affordable housing requirements

- 3.37 The Affordable Housing policy set out above, requires affordable homes to be provided on schemes with 10 or more dwellings, and with the aim that at least 35% of the total dwellings are affordable, and provided on-site. Schemes offering higher levels of affordable housing including 100% affordable housing schemes will be supported providing they meet the other policies in the plan.
- 3.38 The policy applies to sites meeting either the minimum size threshold of 0.5 hectares or with at least 10 dwellings. The Council will not accept the deliberate subdivision of sites into individual parcels to avoid meeting these thresholds. Where a development site has been sub-divided into small development parcels and these thresholds have been reached cumulatively through successive applications, planning contributions will be sought on subsequent planning applications. For larger sites, affordable housing is expected to be provided in a timely manner and distributed across the development schemes.
- 3.39 A quarter of the 35% affordable housing element is made up of First Homes (see below). National policy states that 10% of all dwellings should be affordable home ownership. If the First Home component does not deliver this proportion, additional affordable home ownership homes may be required. The preferred tenure for the remaining affordable housing is rented.
- 3.40 The affordable housing requirement will apply to developments including new flats and houses. It may also apply to developments where care is provided for residents such as supported housing schemes including those in use class C2. In recent years, new types of specialist housing have emerged. The affordable housing requirement will apply to such housing which is self-contained and used as a single dwelling for an individual household, as well as designed for residential purposes with facilities for cooking, eating and sleeping and with flexible levels of care and support. Although on-site provision will generally be sought in accordance with the policy if the site is large enough, there may be circumstances where the council seeks an off-site commuted sum in lieu of on-site provision. For other types of development involving dwellings such as aparthotels, the council will consider safeguards to

⁵ Data in the Affordable housing framework 2022

⁶ Private rental market summary statistics in England (published June 2022)

⁷ Private rental market summary statistics in England (published June 2022)

avoid its use for longer term residential accommodation. Student housing with occupation restrictions will be exempt.

- 3.41 Build to Rent schemes are designed specifically for the rental market instead of home ownership. They have to meet set criteria including meeting a size threshold of at least 50 homes, offering longer tenancy agreements and being in single ownership and management control (see Policy HOU2 Housing Mix). For Build to Rent schemes fully meeting the Government's criteria, the type of affordable housing sought will be affordable private rented homes and the overall requirement for 10% of all homes to be in affordable home ownership does not apply.
- 3.42 In seeking the targets for affordable homes the council will only take into account viability issues for those exceptional cases not covered by the Local Plan viability assessment. Such viability issues must be fully evidenced and the detail contained appropriate to the size/scale of the proposed scheme. Incomplete or poorly evidenced submissions will be returned. For transparency, the information submitted as part of, and in support of, viability reports will be made publicly available and subject to public consultation as part of the planning application. In these instances, the council will use independent assessors, paid for by the applicants, to check the submissions provided and challenge as necessary. The valuer may include costs for input by quantity surveyors and/or other specialist expertise. The council will consider and take advice on the need for fixed term or other reviews to ensure all relevant information is captured and/or to reassess later stages of development when these are finalised. The council will also consider whether there is potential for variations to the scheme including a larger viable scheme (which meets the policies on design and density elsewhere in this plan) to be developed on the site. If this is the case, a viability argument will not be accepted for the smaller scheme. If it can be demonstrated that the development cannot deliver 35% affordable housing for viability reasons and the proportion of affordable home ownership is therefore less than 10% of all dwellings, this proportion will not be increased solely to meet the national requirement for affordable home ownership.

First Homes

- 3.43 This scheme was introduced by the Government in 2021 to promote home ownership by improving affordability to first time buyers and is the government's preferred type of discounted market housing. First Homes are available at a minimum of 30% discount from market rates, and in perpetuity, requiring a charge to be placed upon the land. The charge is placed upon land at first sale which is capped at £250,000 (after the discount has been applied). Each subsequent sale should reflect the discount from market rate, with properties sold at no more than 70% of their market value.
- 3.44 The objective is that 25% of all Affordable Housing provision delivered through section 106 shall be First Homes and they will be prioritised over other Affordable Housing tenures. After First Homes are allocated at 25%, the Council will consider the appropriate tenure and split between Social Rent, Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership in line with the policy criteria. Consistent with affordable housing policy, First Homes are to be provided on-site in the first instance, and only exceptionally via a financial contribution and if the latter then 25% of the total contribution is to go towards First Homes. Affordable housing only schemes are exempt from the requirement to deliver First Homes. If First Homes are withdrawn or become

discretionary during the lifetime of the Local Plan, the Council will reassess the appropriate affordable housing tenure for development.

- 3.45 The national criteria for First Home buyers are that they are first time buyers; their total household income must be less than £80k; the First Home should be the sole or primary residence; and it must be secured with at least 50% mortgage. The Council has implemented an interim local connection test with criteria relating to the period of time the purchaser has lived in the city (a minimum of the previous 3 years) and any eligibility as an Armed Forces employee. This may be reviewed in the future. First Homes are marketed initially to people meeting these criteria. If no buyer achieving these criteria is found after 3 months, the local connection criteria drop away and the homes are marketed under the national criteria for a further 3 months. If no buyer is found after this period, then an application may be made to the Local Planning Authority for the home to revert to market sale and the council compensated for the loss of a First Home.

Overall Viability

- 3.46 The Local Plan will be subject to a whole plan viability assessment to consider the cumulative impact of its policies and this will inform the next version of this plan.
- 3.47 Viability plays a large part in the delivery of affordable housing and the Council is conscious that sites can be affected by requirements that are too onerous and/or risky to ensure delivery. Therefore, an appropriate balance needs to be struck between meeting the needs of affordable housing for all aspects of the community in need, the requirements of the NPPF and the Council's own evidence gathering, and creating an environment that enables affordable housing some security and assurance in its delivery.

Key Policy Options

Key Option 1 – overall affordable housing target

Option 1a – the policy will include an overall affordable housing target of 35%, to be confirmed after further assessments. This continues the current percentage and seeks to meet the housing needs, subject to viability

Option 1b - the policy will include an overall target of less than 35% due to the difficulties in delivering a viable development achieving the higher target

Option 1c – the policy will include an overall target of more than 35% due to the extent of affordable housing need in the city

Key Option 2 – minimum requirements not subject to viability

Option 2a – the policy includes a target of 35% affordable housing and does not split this requirement further to include minimum mandatory requirements. This seeks to maximise the amount of affordable housing and sets clear expectations about the targets sought

Option 2b - the policy will set out a minimum affordable housing requirement (to be determined in the Local Plan viability assessment) in addition to the target. Developments not proposing any affordable housing, or not meeting this minimum requirement, will not be permitted. This may

deliver some extra affordable housing units however they may be small numbers spread over different developments. It may lead to further challenges on viability grounds

Option 2c – the Council will consider whether to require high density development above a minimum density per hectare for the part of the city where they are located to fully meet the percentage requirement, not subject to viability. This would prevent schemes which are overdevelopment and where the inclusion of additional homes and storeys makes the affordable housing requirement unviable. However, it could affect the type of housing built and does not set clear expectations about targets to be met

Key Option 3 – affordable housing requirement from specialist housing

Option 3a. Affordable housing will be sought from specialist housing including housing with care, supported housing and age restricted housing in order to meet the affordable housing needs of all members of the community (which may include some schemes in use class C2). This is likely to be a commuted sum but could be on-site.

Option 3b – specialist housing will be exempt from Affordable Housing contribution

Key Option 4 – First Homes

Option 4a – tenure split will require 25% First Homes and the policy will specify the preferred mix of Social Rent, Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership for the remaining 75% of the affordable housing provision. It will include a local connection text to provide opportunities for residents and Armed Forces employees to access First Homes before they are marketed more widely

Option 4b – the policy will not require a local connection criterion for First Homes to make First Homes available to people wishing to come to live in the city at the same time as current residents and Armed Forces employees

Option 4c – the details of the local connection criteria for First Homes will be amended which could include people working in the city or change the residency requirements from a minimum of 3 years

Evidence

Existing Evidence:

- 3.48 Southampton City Council Housing Strategy 2016-2025 – provides data on housing and information on the council's approach
- 3.49 Partnership for South Hampshire (PFSH) Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 - stated that 44% of households in the Southampton Housing Market Area were unable to afford regular market housing. The specific need for Southampton depends on the proportion of income spent on housing. It ranged from 256 – 900 dwellings per annum in Southampton, based on significantly lower housing targets for the city.

New Evidence:

- 3.50 Local Plan Viability Study – the proportion and mix of affordable housing will be tested within the whole plan viability assessment

3.51 Local Plan Housing Assessment – this will consider the types of homes needed

CONVERSION TO RESIDENTIAL USE

3.52 The conversion of suitable buildings for housing and other initiatives, such as promoting flats above shops, can bring new life into centres and further reduce the need to build on green spaces. Re-using vacant and under-used buildings can provide sustainability benefits such as reducing the need to travel and lessening the demand for new building materials and resources. Re-using vacant and underused buildings can also do much to stimulate a mix of uses associated with the evening and night-time economy. Policy HO4 will work alongside the current system of Permitted Development Rights which, subject to Prior Approval along with any other restrictions and conditions, allows for some buildings to be converted to dwellings depending on their Use Class.

Policy HO4 - Conversion to Residential Use

- 1. The council will grant permission for the conversion of non-residential premises to C3 residential use across a range of housing types including by tenure and bedroom size [see key option 1], providing that:**
 - a. surrounding land uses are compatible with the creation of a satisfactory residential environment; and**
 - b. the new residential development can be successfully integrated with any surrounding non-residential uses and it provides suitable mitigation where it is identified that the operation of a surrounding non-residential use would have an adverse effect on the new development; and**
 - c. there is adequate parking provision that has regard to Policy DE11: Parking and the Council's latest parking standards; and**
 - d. there is suitable and available access for all, including Disabled People, to public transport, active travel modes, pedestrian facilities and local amenities; and**
 - e. the relevant criteria in Policy DE1: Placemaking and Quality of Development and Policy HO2: Housing Mix (in cases where family homes are provided) are met whereby decent usable private amenity space, outlook, access to daylight and sunlight, and means of privacy is built into the development for prospective residents; and**
 - f. the existing land use is not protected or safeguarded by another policy of this Plan.**

Overall Approach

3.53 Empty property and unused space above shops and businesses is considered to be a wasted resource. Flats over shops and the re-use of vacant and under-used buildings can be a valuable source of new housing. This is expected to provide a number of opportunities for increasing housing provision from conversions and redevelopment particularly within the

city centre, district centres and along main transport routes. This will help towards meeting the city's housing needs and whilst this will likely constitute a small overall proportion of these needs, it will nevertheless make a vital contribution over the Plan period. Such an approach will also help with the potential for wider regeneration and renewal across the city.

- 3.54 The potential for additional accommodation to be provided through such conversions is considerable. Any such conversion makes a valuable contribution to housing supply such as through bringing an empty property back into use. It also brings additional life and security to an area. These units that are converted are often suitable for one and two-bedroom dwellings. There is likely to be greatly increased demand for this size of property in the future, and potential for further supply has been coming increasingly from the conversion or replacement of redundant office premises.
- 3.55 In addition to the provision of one and two bed residential properties, the policy aims to promote a wider mixture of housing types arising from the conversion of non-residential uses. This will help to ensure that family homes are also provided as part of the mix to meet a demand from families whether this be within the city centre, along key transport corridors or hubs or city suburbs (see Policy HO2: Housing Mix for the Council's proposed approach to family housing). A mix of housing will help with creating more diverse communities throughout the city as a whole.
- 3.56 It will be important and necessary for new residential conversions to protect the amenity of prospective residents in order to provide health and wellbeing benefits. It will also be important to ensure that the operations of existing businesses are unharmed, particularly within the city centre where residential densities are the highest. For example, there can be environmental health related issues such as noise from uses associated with the night-time economy, smells from takeaways and restaurants associated with the evening economy and noise and air pollution (traffic) related issues associated with the Port. In these instances, it will be important to ensure a balance is struck to ensure any adverse effects are either mitigated, avoided and in the best-case scenario eliminated. This will help to ensure a high standard of residential amenity for future occupants and for existing businesses to continue operating and trading without a threat of enforcement or at the worst case, potential threats to close. This would also be in accordance with the 'agent of change' principle. This means that existing businesses should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of development permitted after they were established whereby responsibility for mitigating impacts from existing noise-generating activities or uses on the proposed new noise-sensitive development is managed and maintained by the person or business responsible for the change.
- 3.57 A sufficient level of parking should also be provided in accordance with Policy DE11: Parking and the technical standards set out in the Council's latest or successor Parking Standards SPD. Car free developments may also be supported in certain circumstances in locations which include the city centre, town, district centres and along public transport corridors provided this does not compromise the functionality and safety of the highway network for road users and pedestrians (see Policy DE11: Parking).
- 3.58 The Government have introduced numerous permitted development rights over recent years. Some of these relate to the conversion of certain non-residential uses to residential development. The policy will therefore only apply to those for which planning permission is

required unless any permitted development rights are subsequently removed through future legislation or an Article 4 Direction made by the Council.

Key Policy Options

Key Option 1 – Housing Types

Option 1a – to promote a range of housing types within conversion of non-residential properties to residential use throughout the city – the Council acknowledges there is a wide range of housing needs including by tenure and property size. This approach could also deliver more family homes in the city centre. This is the Council’s preferred approach subject to further evidence being undertaken on housing needs for instances where permitted development rights do not apply.

Option 1b – to maximise the provision of smaller properties and flats within conversions of non-residential properties to residential use throughout the city – this approach is less preferable since it would not allow for a range of housing types to be developed for meeting wider housing needs.

Option 1c – to maximise the provision of smaller units in the city centre and a wider range of housing types throughout the rest of the city – the Council is open to seeing whether this approach could be preferable to Option 1a subject to further evidence being undertaken on housing needs. However, it might not result in the creation of many family homes in the city centre.

Further Considerations

- 3.59 The potential for future changes to the planning system and a further relaxation in permitted development rights.
- 3.60 The design of future commercial uses and non-residential development and its potential adaptability / flexibility to be converted to residential use.

Evidence

SCC Empty Property Strategy

PfSH SHMA (2014) – the Council will be commissioning further evidence for the purpose of identifying housing needs including by tenure and bedroom size across the city.

SCC Housing Strategy 2016-2025

Prior Approval and Permitted Development Rights

HOUSING RETENTION

- 3.61 There is a substantial need for housing in Southampton. Therefore, it is the Council’s preferred approach that the net loss of housing will be strongly resisted to support Policy HO2: Housing Mix. The net loss of housing will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances such as where there are significant wider benefits from a redevelopment that

can be robustly justified and the impact on the amenity of neighbouring and nearby residents is acceptable.

Policy HO5 – Housing Retention

- 1. In order to help meet housing need, planning permission which would result in a net loss of dwellings will only be granted if:**
 - a. surrounding uses make their retention for residential use unacceptable;**
 - b. a proposal seeks to combine small dwellings to create larger family homes in accordance with Policy HO2;**
 - c. the proposal provides a necessary community facility designed to meet an identified need in the neighbourhood that fulfils the criteria of Policy IN7: Community Facilities and Uses;**
 - d. the proposed development fulfils other regeneration aspirations of the Council or lies within the defined boundary of a university campus site (see Policy IN10) or a designated principal health centre (see Policy IN11) as shown on the Policies Map. [see Key Option 1]**
- 2. Development proposals must be supported with a full justification statement setting out the reasons for the proposed loss of dwellings.**

Overall Approach

- 3.62 Central Government's principal aim is to increase the number of homes being built in England, with a continuing focus on sustainable development in urban areas such as Southampton. Ensuring that the city's existing number of houses is not reduced by preventing the net loss of housing, except in exceptional circumstances, supports this by ensuring there is a continuous baseline of housing as a starting point to support the aim of increasing the number of homes in the city.
- 3.63 There may be locations where the current residential use is incompatible with the surrounding area, due to the impact of existing commercial or other neighbouring uses that have a detrimental effect on the amenity of residents and their overall quality of life such as through high levels of noise or odour. In such circumstances, the loss of housing to a commercial or other use that better aligns with existing neighbouring uses and would be less negatively affected by them may be acceptable subject to the provisions of the other policies in this plan.
- 3.64 Joining smaller residential units together to create larger family dwellings may be acceptable because there remains an identified need for family housing. However, to limit the loss of existing residential stock such developments should not result in the net loss of more than a single dwelling to create each new larger family dwelling. Combining smaller dwellings to create larger ones may be particularly acceptable where the existing units do not meet the residential space standards (both internal and external) and the replacement housing delivers better quality accommodation and a better housing mix for Southampton.

- 3.65 A net loss of housing may be acceptable in cases where new community facilities such as community centres, libraries, schools or health centres will be provided although this is not an exhaustive list of such facilities and further examples are set out in the supporting text of Policy IN7: Community Facilities and Uses. However, there must be a demonstrable need for the proposed new community facility in order to justify any loss of existing housing.
- 3.66 Where property in residential use remains within the established boundary of a university or hospital as shown on the Policies Map, the loss of such property for education, research or healthcare uses will be acceptable, where it accords with other relevant policies.
- 3.67 The Council's preferred approach is for there to be no net loss of family homes. Where sites containing existing family homes (or where family homes were previously located before being demolished) are redeveloped and intensified, at least the same number of family homes (which fully meet the definition in Policy HO2: Housing Mix) should be re-provided on site. The loss of an individual family home and its subdivision into flats will be resisted unless the development delivers a replacement family home such as a ground floor three bed flat with separate living space and garden suitable for a family.

Key Policy Options

Key Option 1 – Exceptions for allowing the loss of housing

Option 1a – supporting all the proposed exceptions allowing the loss of housing as set out in Policy HO5. This allows for flexibility in all those circumstances in which it may be acceptable for housing units to be lost as a blanket restriction on loss of housing would be overly restrictive and could hinder important developments coming forward that would deliver significant public benefits. However, if such developments occur this would necessitate more housing being delivered elsewhere to ensure housing targets are met.

Option 1b – supporting only some of the proposed exceptions allowing the loss of housing as set out in Policy HO5. This would reduce the scope of where the loss of housing would be acceptable thereby helping to retain housing stock. However, it may not be flexible enough to capture all circumstances where loss of housing may be appropriate to support development that could offer significant public benefits.

Further Considerations

- 3.68 A blanket resistance to any housing loss would deny opportunity to improve or diversify residential provision, and therefore is not considered a reasonable option.

Evidence

Existing Evidence:

- 3.69 Residential completions data shows that residential losses form 'part of the equation' of resultant net gains. It is usually the case that some residential loss is experienced in order to achieve higher gains on a development site. The following table shows the proportion of loss, year on year, when compared to the total gain, but understanding that in every year

this loss is replaced by net gain.

Table 2: Residential losses as a percentage of total housing gains

YEAR	Percentage Loss
2016/17	20
2017/18	9
2018/19	18
2019/20	8
2020/21	12

3.70 This provides evidence of a level of urban renewal and replacement. In some years the loss has been a relatively high proportion due to demolitions associated with the Estates Regeneration programme. It important that this loss does not become depletion on its own, but that it is part of a wider increase or improvement in the number and type of new housing responding to identified need.

New Evidence:

3.71 The NPPF 2021 focuses upon achieving sustainable development and delivering a sufficient supply of homes, which includes resisting loss where it is not justified. It is through strategic planning policies that such restriction can be applied.

HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMOs)

3.72 A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is a residential property occupied by a group of unrelated persons such as students, key workers and young professionals who share communal facilities such as a kitchen, living room or bathroom/toilet.

3.73 The Use Classes Order establishes two different types of HMO depending on the number of occupants:

- A Class C4 HMO use is defined as housing where between 3 and 6 unrelated people reside and share amenities
- A larger HMO with 7 or more people sharing is unclassified as 'Sui Generis'

3.74 With a city-wide Article 4 Direction being made effective in March 2012, planning permission is required to change the use from a C3 family dwelling to a C4 HMO (a change to a Sui Generis HMO needs planning permission in its own right). Permitted development rights remain to change an HMO to a C3 family dwelling without planning permission. Whilst both forms of HMOs have a different use class to a C3 family dwelling, both types of HMO properties are still a form of dwelling house which can be capable and suitable for use as a family dwelling in the future.

3.75 HMOs provide an important contribution to the mix of housing within the City. In particular, they provide affordable accommodation to those who cannot afford to buy or rent a home

of their own as well as providing the option to share certain household running costs, such as utility bills, between tenants thereby reducing an individual tenant's living costs. Consequently, having access to this type of accommodation can help attract workers to the city who need a more affordable option whilst also continuing to support existing workers who want to continue living in the city. HMOs also provide opportunities for people to live together who are not co-habiting couples and who otherwise may not wish to live alone thereby reducing potential instances of social isolation and the negative effects this can have on mental health and wellbeing.

- 3.76 There are 3,717 Licensed HMOs on the Council's public register as of August 2022 although there are around a further 1,000 HMOs which are in the process of applying to be added to the register or that the Council are chasing to make the necessary application. The HMOs in the City are generally distributed in high concentrations near the City, Town and District Centres as well as in areas surrounding the universities and Southampton General Hospital.
- 3.77 It is evident in particular areas of Southampton that the increased level of transient population associated with a high concentration of HMO households has negatively changed the character of the area by unbalancing the sustainable mix of households in a community. This conflict with the existing community can lead to adverse impacts where the balance between owner-occupied and family households begins to be over-dominated by a growth in more transient types of households that are less invested in the sustainability of the community. As such the control of HMOs through the planning system is necessary to prevent the overprovision of HMOs in these areas and to control the impact from any imbalance in the community between family and transient households. The approach to family homes is set out separately in Policy HO2: Housing Mix whilst Policy HO6 addresses HMOs. In addition to planning controls, the management of HMOs are subject to other regulations within the Council including mandatory and additional licensing schemes under the Housing Act.
- 3.78 A threshold test has historically been used by the Council to determine whether the proportion of existing HMOs to the number of existing owner-occupied and family occupied dwellings in a local neighbourhood will be further imbalanced by new HMOs past a certain tipping point. This threshold test was previously introduced as guidance in the Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD but it is now the Council's preferred approach to incorporate the threshold test into policy whilst retaining the SPD to provide guidance as to how the threshold test is carried out.
- 3.79 A second policy threshold test is proposed as an option under the Local Plan consultation. This threshold test is in recognition of managing the incremental negative impact to character, amenity, and parking pressure on local communities, already affected by high HMO concentrations, where HMO owners seek to extend their existing HMO stock to create larger HMOs (7 or more persons).

Policy HO6 – Houses in Multiple Occupation

- 1. Development comprising C4 or larger Sui Generis HMOs will be permitted unless:**
 - a. the proposal would adversely affect the mix and balance of households in the community by causing the proportion of HMO dwellings to exceed 10% of surrounding residential**

properties [see Key Option 1]; or

- b. the proposal would adversely impact on the character and amenity of the local area; or
 - c. the proposal would not provide an adequate quality internal and external living environment for future residents; or
 - d. the proposal would result in increased parking pressure on local streets when considered against the specific parking standards for HMOs; or
 - e. the proposal would result in neighbouring occupiers being adversely affected by increased noise disturbance; or
 - f. the proposal would result in any residential property being 'sandwiched' between two HMOs.
2. In exceptional circumstances where a resident is struggling to sell their property for continued C3 use in a location where 80% of existing surrounding properties are HMO dwellings, evidence that no reasonable demand exists for the residential property continuing as a C3 use will form a material consideration in whether conversion to an HMO will be supported. To demonstrate there is no reasonable demand, applications must be supported by a marketing report to evidence a period of marketing spanning a minimum of six months, with the property offered at a reasonable price (based on an assessment of the property market in the local area) or rental level to be verified in writing by a qualified person in a relevant profession, such as an estate agent), and with little or no interest from prospective buyers.
3. For Sui Generis HMO proposals, the following will also apply:
- a. In locations where the 10% threshold has not been breached, Sui Generis HMOs will be supported where the proportion of HMO properties in the local area does not exceed 50% of the total residential dwellings [see Key Options 2 and 3].
 - b. In locations where the 10% threshold set out in criterion 1a. has already been breached, proposals for the change of use of an existing HMO to a Sui Generis HMO will not be supported, except in situations where the concentration of HMOs in the surrounding area is 60% or more [see Key Option 4].

Overall Approach

- 3.80 Data collected on the number and location of HMO planning applications since the introduction of the Article 4 Direction and the new Licensing regime shows a growth in HMO numbers and a 'locational spread' to those Wards in Southampton that are less saturated with HMOs. Whilst the Council is unable to reverse the impact on communities which have already suffered the impacts of highly concentrated HMOs, this demonstrates success in the Council's strategy to relieve pressure on those neighbourhoods affected by localised concentrations of HMOs. It is therefore the Council's preferred approach to continue applying the threshold test to prevent the overconcentration of HMOs in a neighbourhood.

The methodology the Council will use to undertake the threshold test in determining planning applications for HMOs can be found in the Council's Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD. This SPD also sets out standards for ensuring the provision of high-quality HMOs along with HMO specific parking standards.

- 3.81 Larger Sui Generis HMOs can accommodate 7 or more tenants with this higher level of occupancy incrementally increasing negative impacts to character and amenity and parking pressure. Consequently, the Council will apply a secondary threshold test to prevent the proportion of HMOs in a locality becoming dominated by larger Sui Generis ones. The methodology the Council will use to undertake this secondary threshold test will be set out in an update to the Council's Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD.
- 3.82 HMOs can result in increased incidences of noise disturbance that adversely affect the occupiers of neighbouring properties. HMO developments will need to ensure that the risk of such noise disturbance is minimised, including the use of mitigation where necessary such as incorporating measures to soundproof party walls.
- 3.83 The policy seeks to prevent the "sandwiching effect" where family homes find themselves situated between HMOs and therefore subject to potential negative impacts including more intensive noise disturbance. Further guidance on the Council's approach to the 'sandwiching effect' can be found in the Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD.
- 3.84 In areas where the threshold test was already significantly breached prior to its introduction the concentration of HMOs may be so great that the introduction of any new HMOs would not change the character of the neighbourhood. Consequently, the retention of any remaining C3 dwellings would have little effect on the balance and mix of households in the community. In these exceptional circumstances the last remaining families in the community who are struggling to sell their property as a family home can seek to have it converted to an HMO subject to the other criteria of this policy. Further guidance on how the exceptional circumstances test will be applied is set out in the Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD.
- 3.85 In areas where the threshold of existing HMOs has been breached the imbalance between family and transient households can be further exacerbated by extending existing HMOs to enable occupation by additional tenants. This can result in further detriment to character, amenity and parking pressure. To prevent this the Council will refuse planning permission for applications that seek to extend existing HMOs to create larger Sui Generis HMOs. However, applications that seek to extend larger Sui Generis HMOs solely to improve the quality of the internal living environment for tenants, such as by providing additional communal space, such as a larger kitchen, may be considered acceptable subject to assessment against the other relevant policies of the Plan.
- 3.86 Where an HMO owner seeks to dispose of their existing HMO stock, the Council will rely on its housing retention policy (see Policy HO5) to prevent the converse adverse impact to the mix and balance of the community that arises from sub-dividing HMOs dwellings into multiple flats. This will encourage the return of existing HMOs into family housing (including as part of a conversion mix) where appropriate, especially in areas of high HMO concentration, to further meet the Council's aspirations to retain and increase the number of family homes in accordance with Policy HO2 to ensure mixed and balanced communities.
- 3.87 The Council will pursue its strategy of protecting local communities from the potential negative impacts of HMOs, but at the same time acknowledges the contribution HMOs make

to the mix of housing in Southampton and the opportunities they provide for low-income households to live and work in the city.

Key Policy Options

Key Option 1 – Threshold to prevent overconcentration of HMOs

Option 1a – incorporating a 10% threshold into the Local Plan to prevent an overconcentration of HMOs in a locality (i.e. the application site and its surrounding residential properties) that could otherwise unbalance the mix of family and transient households in a neighbourhood. By including this threshold in the Local Plan rather than just the Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD it ensures it will have a strong and clear bearing in the determination of any relevant planning applications. However, due to the complexities of the Local Plan and the requirement for it to be independently examined, the threshold cannot be easily or quickly updated if there is a need to change it.

Option 1b – retaining the 10% threshold only as supplementary guidance in the Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD rather than incorporating it into the Local Plan. This approach would be more agile if the threshold needs to be amended as the SPD can be more easily and quickly altered compared to the Local Plan. However, an SPD does not carry as much weight as the Local Plan in the determination of planning applications.

Key Option 2 – Secondary threshold to prevent overconcentration of larger Sui Generis HMOs

Option 2a – introduce a threshold for larger Sui Generis HMOs so that these do not make up more than 50% of the HMOs in a locality (i.e. the application site and surrounding residential properties). This will introduce greater control to prevent overconcentration of larger Sui Generis HMOs but will restrict their prevalence as a housing option for those who would like to live in this sort of accommodation.

Option 2b – introduce an alternative threshold for restricting the number of larger Sui Generis HMOs in a locality. This could allow more flexibility in the provision of larger Sui Generis HMOs but may not provide adequate control to ensure that they do not become overconcentrated in a particular area.

Key Option 3 – Geographic coverage of larger Sui Generis HMO threshold

Option 3a – apply the secondary threshold for restricting the overconcentration of larger Sui Generis HMOs in a locality (i.e. the application site and surrounding residential properties) to all Wards of the City. This reflects the current geographic approach to controlling HMOs that is used with the 10% threshold but may be too restrictive for those parts of the City where HMOs are not overly concentrated.

Option 3b – only use the secondary threshold for larger Sui Generis HMOs in those Wards that have high concentrations of HMOs. This takes a targeted approach to address the overconcentration of larger Sui Generis HMOs in those areas of the City where it is an established issue. However, this may not provide adequate protection for other parts of the City where there is not generally an overconcentration of HMOs at the current time but if this becomes an issue in the future it would not be quick or easy to amend the Local Plan policy to address it.

Key Option 4 – Restricting extensions to HMOs where the 10% threshold has already been breached

Option 4a – in those areas where the 10% threshold has already been breached, to not grant planning permission for applications that would seek to extend existing HMOs in order to increase the number of occupiers to become a larger Sui Generis HMO. This would help prevent the incremental negative impacts to character, amenity and parking pressure that arise from increasing the number of occupiers in HMOs in areas which already have an imbalance between family and transient households. However, this would be taking a blanket approach to try to resolve this issue.

Option 4b – not applying a specific restriction on extending HMOs in those areas where the 10% threshold has already been breached. This would allow applications to be considered on a case-by-case basis in line with the current approach but may not provide a strong enough policy basis to prevent the incremental negative impacts to character and amenity that can arise from extending HMOs to create larger Sui Generis HMOs.

Evidence

Existing Evidence:

- 3.88 Article 4 - A city wide Article 4 Direction relating to HMO was adopted in Southampton on 23 March 2012, and this removes permitted development rights, so that planning permission is now required to change the use of a Class C3 dwelling house to a Class C4 HMO where between three and six unrelated people share.
- 3.89 Houses in Multiple Occupation SPD adopted 4 May 2016 - The Council's revised Supplementary Planning Document on HMOs was adopted in May 2016 and this supports both policy and planning guidance. It applies a consistent thresholds citywide approach, introduces a new policy on 'sandwiching' and clarifies where 'exceptional circumstances' apply.

New Evidence:

Mandatory HMO licensing

- 3.90 As of 1 October 2018, all HMOs with five or more occupants, that form more than one household sharing a toilet, bathroom and kitchen, are subject to Mandatory HMO licensing. (An exception to this is purpose-built flats with five or more occupants situated in a block comprising three or more self-contained flats). This has bolstered the SPD approach and adds weight to policy.
- 3.91 There is additional HMO Licensing in Bevois, Bargate, Portswood and Swaythling for any purpose-built flat in use as an HMO (three or more occupiers from two or more households), and licences are issued for the maximum permitted period of five years (from the date of approval).
- 3.92 The NPPF 2021 (para 62) identifies the importance of planning for difference groups in the housing market, including accommodation for students and those favouring a shared arrangement as exists with HMOs. Therefore, the provision of such a policy conforms with latest Government guidance.

PURPOSE-BUILT STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (PBSA)

- 3.93 The University of Southampton and Solent University, together with the city's other Further Education colleges, cater for over 40,000 students. There are halls of residence operated by the universities, private student accommodation in the form of shared houses (usually HMOs - Houses in Multiple Occupation), private halls of residence and developments of studio flats exclusively for students, often known as Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA). In 2020 there were approximately 15,600 (10,800 in 2016) purpose built bed spaces in the city including university halls of residence. PBSA accounts for an ever growing proportion of the student accommodation provision in Southampton.
- 3.94 PBSA is managed communal accommodation, restricted to occupancy by students undertaking a full-time course of higher education, and it is the student's primary residence. They can take the form of studio flats or study bedrooms in cluster flats, in either new build properties or conversions.
- 3.95 A number of blocks of new purpose-built student accommodation have been constructed in the city centre and in the Portswood area of the city over the last decade.

Policy HO7 – Purpose-Built Student Accommodation

New Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)

- 1. The development of new Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) whether through new build or the conversion of existing buildings will be supported if:**
- a. there is a need demonstrated by the applicant through robust and up-to-date evidence; and**
 - b. it is developed in sustainable locations in the first instance prioritising the city centre in preference to areas of the city with lower accessibility that also have a greater potential for creating a community imbalance [see key option 1] or prioritised for those with special needs in the university campus sites as per Policy IN10: Universities; and**
 - c. the accommodation is accessible by active travel modes (walking and cycling) and/or by public transport from the relevant campus sites and educational establishments and is supported by a travel plan; and**
 - d. the proposal has on-site management (including arrival and leaving day procedures) secured through a legal agreement and would not cause unreasonable harm to the residential amenity of the surrounding area through issues such as increased noise and disturbance, taking into account the cumulative impact of existing and planned student accommodation in the local area; and**
 - e. the accommodation provides a high-quality and healthy living environment, including adequate facilities and communal internal space for all schemes and good quality design; and**
 - f. an agreement is in place to control and manage the level of student car parking which will be provided in accordance with the Council's latest parking standards; and**

- g. the occupancy of the development is restricted to students during term time through the imposition of planning conditions or an appropriate legal agreement.**

Adaptability of Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)

2. In addition to meeting the criteria above, the development of new Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) will also be supported if:

- a. the building is designed with flexibility to allow it to be adapted and reconfigured through internal and external alterations to meet wider identified C3 residential use class housing needs in future. This is provided it can be demonstrated there is no longer a need for the PBSA (criterion 3.a.) or it can be suitably replaced (criterion 3.b.); and**
- b. planning conditions are attached to any granted approval or an appropriate legal agreement is signed to allow it to be used for short-term tourist accommodation during the university summer break [see key option 2].**

Loss of Purpose-Built Student Accommodation

3. The loss of existing student accommodation will not be permitted unless:

- a. it can be demonstrated that the accommodation is not needed in the light of the demand for student bedspaces in the city; or**
- b. the applicant has provided demonstrable evidence to show that proposals for an equivalent or more suitable form of replacement provision will come forward in an alternative sustainable location in the city and within an accessible travelling distance from the relevant education establishments as per requirements set out in criterion 1.c. above; and**

4. Provided the loss of Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) can be justified in accordance with criterion 3.a. and 3.b. above, any proposal for C3 residential use must provide for affordable housing in accordance with Policy HO3: Affordable Housing, family homes in accordance with Policy HO2: Housing Mix, the creation of a high quality internal and external living environment with sufficient amenity space and living space in accordance with Policy DE1: Placemaking and Quality of Development (including usable private amenity space required for family homes in accordance with Policy HO2: Housing Mix) and adequate vehicle and cycle parking provision in accordance with Policy DE11: Parking.

Overall Approach

3.96 The provision of high quality student accommodation which provides for a healthy living environment is one of the key components in attracting students to study in the city. Purpose-built student accommodation is an alternative to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) but it is generally more expensive. Past and projected growth in the number of students has incentivised the provision of this accommodation type.

- 3.97 Developers will be required to provide evidence of need in support of applications for new PBSA. The Council's consideration of need will include permitted schemes which have not been built out and applications for the conversion of schemes to C3 residential use. Whilst the city centre is the preferred location for new PBSA, applicants will also be required to consider the cumulative impact of existing student accommodation taking into account the number of students living in purpose-built student accommodation and in HMOs in the surrounding area. It will consider if new PBSA accommodation would create or exacerbate an existing community imbalance, place an unacceptable strain upon local facilities or have an unacceptable impact on local amenity. Proposals for new PBSA in areas outside of the city centre, particularly in less sustainable out of centre locations in the rest of the city and away from key transport hubs are therefore unlikely to be considered favourably.
- 3.98 Any PBSA will be required to include internal communal space within its design. This will need to be usable for wider student living (e.g. include space for storage) and general relaxation and provide a genuine alternative to bedroom accommodation. Internal communal space should also constitute more than just a ground floor café type use with regards to its wider offer. For example, internal communal space can include other facilities such as workspace, cinemas, gyms and games rooms as some examples.
- 3.99 The provision of vehicle and cycle parking as part of PBSA schemes will be supported provided they are in accordance with the latest standards set out in the Council's latest or successor Parking Standards SPD. The provision of vehicle and cycling parking associated with PBSA will also be subject to being controlled and managed through an agreement.
- 3.100 With the current projected growth of the city's two universities, it is expected that the demand for existing PBSA in the city will remain strong from students for the foreseeable future. However, there could be unforeseen circumstances such as a drop in student numbers over the period of the plan. In such instances, the applicant would be expected to provide supporting evidence alongside any proposal to demonstrate the falling demand and why the PBSA is surplus to requirements. Alternatively, the applicant may wish to provide convincing and compelling evidence to show that replacement PBSA will be provided in an alternative sustainable location if it is proposed to demolish or change the use of an existing PBSA building.

Key Policy Options

Key Option 1 – The location of student accommodation

Option 1a – to focus the provision of new PBSA in the city centre – this is the Council's preferred approach in order to ensure the creation of vibrant and balanced community

Option 1b – To let the market determine where new PBSA is developed within the city including in areas outside of the city centre – this option is less preferable to the Council due to the community imbalance that could be created in the city suburbs. The provision of more PBSA in these locations could potentially place a wider unacceptable strain upon local facilities or have an unacceptable impact upon local amenity.

Key Option 2 – Adaptability of PBSA to allow future conversion to short term tourist accommodation

Option 2a – The policy to condition PBSA to be used for other uses such as for overnight stays – this is the Council's preferred approach which would allow PBSA to be conditioned upon approval so that it can be used as short-term tourist accommodation during the summer break once students vacate at the end of term. This approach would allow for balanced and socially cohesive communities which would remain vibrant throughout the year. This approach would also help to strengthen the appeal of the city as a destination for overnight stays and support the Cruise industry.

Option 2b – The policy to not include a requirement to condition PBSA to be used for other uses such as for overnight stays – there are no disadvantages to this approach. However, it would not maximise the benefits offered through short-term tourist stays.

Evidence

Existing Evidence:

3.101 HMO SPD

3.102 Development continues to need to have regard to the Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.

New Evidence:

3.103 NPPF 2021 specifically refers to students in para 62, where it stipulates the need to plan for homes for different groups within the community, and the list includes students, recognising this category as a significant cohort.

3.104 HESA - source of Higher Education data. This includes information about the number of students studying in each institution/city - <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis>

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION AND ACCOMMODATION FOR TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE

3.105 The Council has a responsibility to ensure the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are met when they choose to locate in Southampton as part of their nomadic way of life. Current accommodation provision in the City includes a designated public Gypsy and Traveller site located at Kanes Lane, private Gypsy and Traveller sites with permanent planning permission at Botany Bay Road and South East Road and two Travelling Showpeople Yards at Candy Lane and Coles Yard.

3.106 The Council supports improvements to the existing accommodation at Kanes Hill as well as its further expansion if there is an identified need in the future. The Council also supports the provision of new accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in

appropriate locations where there is an identified need once any expansion of the Kanes Hill site has been occupied.

Policy HO8 – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Accommodation for Travelling Showpeople

- 1. In considering proposals for accommodation sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, planning permission will be granted where the following criteria are met:**
 - a. The site is well related to, and within a reasonable distance of, local services including education establishments, shops, community facilities and health and welfare services that have capacity to serve the Travelling Community;**
 - b. The site is not, or will not by the end of its expected lifetime, be within a tidal or fluvial flood risk zone 2 or 3 when accounting for climate change predictions;**
 - c. The site is capable of being provided with on-site services including potable water and power supply and sewage disposal; and**
 - d. The amenity of any existing neighbouring and nearby residential dwellings is protected.**

- 2. Specifically at the site at Kanes Hill, the Council will support improvements to the overall site, and the provision of 5 additional permanent pitches for Gypsies and Travellers [see Key Option 1], provided:**
 - a. A demonstrable local need for the additional pitches emerges;**
 - b. The utilities on the site are improved to resolve existing issues as well as accommodate the needs of the additional pitches;**
 - c. The woodland between the site and Mosaic Close is retained; and**
 - d. Adequate protection is provided to Netley Common SINC.**

- 3. The provision of further permanent pitches for Gypsies and Travellers will only be supported once the additional 5 pitches at Kanes Hill have been provided and occupied. In addition, the provision of further pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and plots for Travelling Showpeople will only be supported if the proposal, in addition to the criteria above:**
 - a. Is meeting an additional unmet local need for the next 5 years;**
 - b. Does not adversely affect the amenity of the occupants of the site or nearby residents and businesses;**
 - c. Is soft landscaped and screened from surrounding uses;**

- d. Has a satisfactory means of access, adequate parking and turning space;**
 - e. Does not generate traffic of a scale or type inappropriate to the locality, and which is likely to cause a hazard to road safety.**
- 4. All proposals for additional pitches or plots at Kanes Hill or elsewhere should have an appropriate layout and facilities.**

Overall Approach

- 3.107 The definition of a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showperson for planning purposes is set out in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) prepared by the Government in 2015. The PPTS also sets out objectives to ensure that the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are met including making assessments of the level of need for accommodation and identifying suitable land for pitches and plots.
- 3.108 The need for additional pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and plots for Travelling Showpeople in the period up to 2040 were identified in the Southampton Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2021). This Assessment also considered whether there were any unmet needs from neighbouring authorities under the Duty to Cooperate. As no unmet needs were identified by neighbouring authorities, the City Vision focuses entirely on meeting needs arising from within Southampton.
- 3.109 It was identified there was a need for five pitches in Southampton for Gypsy and Traveller households that meet the planning definition in the PPTS. As the majority of need identified was from households living on the site at Kanes Hill, the expansion of this site will be supported subject to specific criteria. This includes the full retention of the woodland buffer to the residential properties on Mosaic Close in order to protect their amenity. The woodland buffer to Netley Common helps to protect the SINC that is located there and should be retained to the extent that is needed to fulfil that protective role. The wider area around the Kanes Hill site is known to have several Bronze Age burial grounds and therefore new development must be mindful of the potential archaeology of the site in line with Policy EN7: Archaeological Heritage Assets.
- 3.110 In addition to any expansion at Kanes Hill, the Council will also support improvements to the overall site that will address identified issues such as those relating to electricity provision and drainage.
- 3.111 There is also an identified need of nine additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households who do not meet the planning definition in the PPTS. However, it is the Government's intention in the PPTS that the needs of such households are met as part of the general housing need which is considered under Policy ST1: Development Targets.
- 3.112 There is an identified need of four plots for Travelling Showpeople that meet the planning definition in the PPTS. However, following engagement with the relevant Travelling Showpeople households that have generated this requirement it has been determined that this need will be met on a new site that is located in another local authority area outside of Southampton. Consequently, there is no current need to plan for a new site for Travelling Showpeople.

3.113 It is recognised that these needs represent the current situation and that these may change in the future depending on changes in household formation and in-migration. Consequently, criteria are established for permitting additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots should there become an established need once the proposed occupation of the Kanes Hill site is fully occupied.

3.114 Due to historic low numbers of short-term unauthorised encampments, and the opportunity for short-term visitor requests to be made at the Kanes Hill site there is not currently an identified need for a formal transit site in Southampton. However, there is a need for a more strategic approach to managing transit provision across Hampshire and the Council will work positively with the other local authorities in the County to address this.

Key Policy Options

Key Option 1 – Plan for additional pitches to 2040

Option 1a – provide 5 additional pitches at Kanes Hill and establish criteria for providing further pitches in Southampton where they meet additional unmet need. This allows the Council to address the need identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2021 whilst establishing a process to address any further unmet need that could arise in the future. It would mean the exact location of any additional pitches is addressed in an ad hoc basis and depends on where future planning applications come forward.

Option 1b – identify land for further pitches in addition to the 5 extra pitches proposed at Kanes Hill. This allows the Council to provide for additional pitches in a planned manner but would result in more pitches being allocated than currently identified needs require.

Evidence

Existing Evidence:

3.115 The previous Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was dated 2014 and has been superseded.

3.116 Housing Act 1985.

New Evidence:

3.117 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) 2015 revised the definition of Gypsies and Travellers to:

“Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family’s or dependants’ educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such”.

3.118 This updated definition removes reference to people ‘permanently ceasing to travel’ qualifying for gypsy and traveller status.

- 3.119 The 2021 commissioned report by ORS (Opinion Research Services) presents the latest up to date evidence. As of September 2021, the GTAA identifies:
- 1 public Gypsy and Traveller site at Kanes Hill (14 pitches);
 - 1 privately owned site with permanent planning permission at South East Road (4 pitches);
 - a total of 8 pitches on a residential street (Botany Bay Road);
 - 2 Travelling Showmen’s yards at Candy Lane and Coles Yard (9 plots).
- 3.120 The GTAA determines a requirement of 5 pitches in Southampton over the GTAA period to 2040 for Gypsy and Traveller households that meet the PPTS planning definition, and 9 pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households who did not meet the PPTS planning definition. With regard to Travelling Showpeople households (that also meet the PPTS planning definition) 4 plots are the identified requirement but it is accepted that this need could be met on a new yard in another local authority area. No public transit sites have been identified, nor requirement recommended.
- 3.121 Housing and Planning Act 2016
- 3.122 NPPF 2021 and the revised Planning Practice Guidance 2021.

HOUSEBOATS AND MOORINGS

- 3.123 As a maritime city, there has been a long history of houseboats in Southampton with a small number still situated along the banks of the River Itchen. Whilst houseboats can provide well needed homes for local people, it is vital that any new houseboats and their associated moorings, or changes to existing houseboats, are carefully designed and sited to minimise the potential impact on the character of the waterfront as well as the local nature, wildlife, and ecology conservation interests.

Policy HO9 – Houseboats and Moorings

- 1. Proposals for new, extended or altered houseboats and their moorings will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that:**
 - a. the design and siting of the houseboat and mooring will not lead to an over-concentration of houseboats and moorings or cause unacceptable harm to the character and amenity of the river frontage;**
 - b. the design and siting of the houseboat and mooring does not adversely affect any nature, wildlife or ecology conservation interests, evidenced by a Habitats Regulations Assessment;**
 - c. the proposal will not unacceptably harm existing or future water-based employment and recreation opportunities or result in an adverse impact on navigational safety;**

- d. suitable arrangements can be made for parking, refuse storage, cycle storage, access and service connections so as not to damage the character of the area or adversely affect any nature, wildlife or ecology conservation interests;**
- e. any boundary treatment does not over-dominate the appearance of the street frontage and will not result in the loss of landscaped boundaries; and**
- f. the proposal will not significantly harm existing residential amenity.**

Overall Approach

- 3.124 Traditionally, the River Itchen has offered the greatest opportunity for house boats. This is because Southampton's other waterfront areas (outlined in waterfront policy DE4) are located on the coastline. Future development of house boats will therefore continue to be supported on the River Itchen in appropriate locations.
- 3.125 The Council will resist any development which would cause unacceptable harm to the character or nature conservation interests of the waterfront due to inappropriate design, siting or over-development. Landscaping is key to preventing unacceptable harm and ensuring there is a positive contribution made to habitat formation and retention. As such, all proposals must seek to incorporate appropriate and proportionate landscaping to prevent the loss of habitat throughout the site and to enhance habitats and nature conservation interests, where possible. Unacceptable harm applies to the houseboat itself, its mooring and ancillary structures. It applies to the impact on both the river and land, including to below mean low water as well as to inter-tidal habitats. Due to the potential for unacceptable impacts on the Solent and Dorset Special Protection Areas (SPA), the Solent and Southampton Water SPA/Ramsar site and designated features of the River Itchen Special Area of Conservation (SAC), arising from issues such as shading, disturbance and loss of habitat, all proposals will be subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment. Impacts on the features of the Lee-on-the-Solent to Itchen Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and various Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) will also need to be satisfactorily addressed.
- 3.126 Great care therefore needs to be taken with the design, concentration and siting of house boats to ensure the river frontage is protected from harmful forms of development. It is also important to ensure adequate arrangements can be made for parking, the storage of waste, access and for service connections in order not to damage the character of an area. The Council will only support planning proposals for house boats which do not damage the current and future potential for water-based employment and recreation opportunities.

Key Policy Options

No other reasonable options identified. The policy provides guidance for the provision of new, and changes to existing, houseboats and moorings to ensure that they have the appropriate services and to avoid harm to the natural environment and character of the area.