

Executive

Draft Planning and Design Guidance: Subdivision of Buildings for Residential Uses

7 February 2011

Report of Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To recommend the Executive approve the draft 'Subdivision of Buildings for Residential Uses' document as informal guidance with immediate effect, so that it can be used to aid applicants when submitting applications and assist planning officers and committee members when determining such applications.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To approve the Planning and Design Guidance: Subdivision of Buildings for Residential Uses (attached as appendix 1).

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Homes and Communities Agency has mandatory room sizes for all public rented sector homes, but there is no national standard for private sector homes.
- 1.2 Recent research by CABI has revealed that occupants consider space inside modern homes too small and CABI recommends that Local Authorities should set their own minimum space standards, and many have done so.
- 1.3 Officers and members of this Council have over recent years expressed concern at the number of planning applications submitted for the conversion of houses into flats and bedsit accommodation where the quality of the proposed living environment is not considered to be acceptable. In many cases, the proposed room dimensions make it impossible to even arrange a modest amount of furniture and live comfortably.
- 1.4 The issues addressed by this document have also recently been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as part of its scrutiny review of council policy and practice in conservation areas. There is a report elsewhere on this

agenda which sets out the Committees recommendations to the Executive following this review. During this review, the Scrutiny Committee saw a draft of the Subdivisions document and expressed its strong support for it.

- 1.5 The draft document prepared by the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development has been consulted upon and is now brought before the Executive for approval.
- 1.6 The document sets out clear guidance on the sub division of buildings for residential use and it is designed to aid applicants, agents and developers in drawing up proposals and council officers in determining planning applications.

Proposals

- 1.7 The draft document was drawn up by an officer group from the Design and Conservation Team, Development Control, Building Control and Private Sector Housing. It includes guidance on minimum room sizes to ensure adequate internal living environments and also other matters such as the location of bin stores, down pipes etc that can have a wider impact on the street scene.
- 1.8 The draft document was subject to consultation with approximately 100 organisations and businesses with an interest in the subject, between 2 December 2010 and 7 January 2011. Thirteen responses were received and a précis of their content is included in appendix 2.
- 1.9 Following the consultation period, an additional paragraph (58) was added to the requirements set out for 'Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)'. No other alterations to the draft have been identified.

Conclusion

- 1.10 Subject to approval by the Executive, this document will be approved as informal planning guidance. As informal guidance, it will have limited weight but, having been the subject of consultation, will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for sub-division of buildings for residential use. Letters will be sent to all individuals and organisations known to submit such applications advising them of the document and it will be publicised as available on the Council's web site.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 The key issue considered in this report is the proposed improvement of living environments created by the sub-division of existing residential premises. It also provides guidance on the impact on such works on the external appearance of the building and any further impact on the street as a whole.
- 3.2 The Executive is invited to consider approving the draft document as informal planning guidance with immediate effect.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

- Option One** Approve the document without changes.
- Option Two** Approve the document with changes.
- Option Three** Do not approve of the document.

Consultations

Please see appendix 2 entitled 'Summary of Consultation Responses'.

Implications

Financial: The cost of preparation of the document has been covered by normal resources. It is anticipated that the use of this document will provide a higher quality of planning application and should therefore reduce the amount of time taken in processing and determining such applications. This should also result in a reduction in appeals and therefore a saving in appeal costs.

Comments checked by Eric Meadows, Service Accountant, 01295 221552.

Legal: The document will, if approved, be adopted as informal development principles. It will therefore not form part of the statutory development plan, but will be afforded weight as a material consideration in the determining of planning applications.

Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Team Leader – Planning & Litigation, 01295 221687.

Risk Management: It is anticipated that there will be a reduction in the risk of submission of poor quality planning applications.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer, 01295 221566.

Equalities It is hoped that people renting or buying converted flats in the private sector will be ensured decent homes.

Comments checked by Caroline French, Equalities and Diversity Officer, 01295 221586.

Wards Affected

All wards

Corporate Plan Themes

A safe and healthy Cherwell
A cleaner, greener Cherwell
Cherwell: An accessible, value for money Council

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Gibbard
Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Planning and Design Guidance: Subdivision of Buildings for Residential Use
Appendix 2	Summary of Consultation Responses
Background Papers	
None	
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