

Homes in Multiple Occupation (HiMO's)

The private rented sector has become a significant component of the city's housing offer and now accounts for 21% of the total housing stock in Coventry. It forms an integral part of the city's housing pathways and includes a variety of types of provision including HiMO's and shared housing.

Both the Coventry SHMA (2012) and the Joint SHMA (2013) considered the importance of the private rented sector in meeting the city's housing needs and how it provides a well-established role in helping to ensure sufficient housing is accessible to all aspects of the city's population. Indeed, the SHMA also highlighted that HiMO's can provide an affordable housing option for young professionals and graduates and a first foot on the housing ladder for many of the city's young people in general. They therefore contribute towards meeting the housing demands of the cities workforce both current and future.

Although private rented homes in general have very similar characteristics to those in-home ownership, the HiMO and shared housing elements often draw concerns from local communities for a variety of reasons. The principle concern reflects the loss of traditional family housing to shared accommodation or HiMO's and the often transient nature of residents hence impacting on community cohesion, the provision of local services, parking pressures and the appearance and maintenance of properties. These issues have been highlighted through a range of consultation events that have informed this Local Plan.

The 2011 census identified that 6,780 households in Coventry (around 5%) are living in multi-person households. In addition, a further 200 were classed as living in shared accommodation (0.1%). It is especially prevalent in parts of the city that benefit from excellent accesses to the universities, the city centre and some of the other locations within the centres hierarchy. The Census also highlighted that these properties are generally concentrated in a small number of areas across the city.

Such concentration of property type however reflects similar patterns across the whole of Coventry. This can be identified through the Coventry SHMA's 5 sub-markets, which are reflective of different housing characteristics throughout the city. Indeed, this draws out examples such as areas to the south of the city which focus on low density large family homes, or a concentration of social and affordable rented homes to the south east or north east, or a focus on higher density modern family homes within an urban village environment towards the centre and north of the city. As such, although the city has an overall focus towards smaller lower value homes at the local level there is no evidence of an 'atypical' balance or mix of property types or community. Instead there is greater evidence of localised concentrations, albeit of varying types and tenures. This in part reflects historic development patterns within Coventry, but also reflects market pressures, housing pathways and access to jobs and education. More recently, changes to national permitted development rights, and difficulties accessing mortgage finance, have supported the growth in the city's multi person households and the private rented sector.

Policy H11: Homes in Multiple Occupation (HiMO's)

1. The development of purpose built HiMO's or the conversion of existing homes or non-residential properties to large HiMO's will not be permitted in areas where the proposals would materially harm:
 - a. the amenities of occupiers of nearby properties (including the provision of suitable parking provisions);
 - b. the appearance or character of an area;
 - c. local services; and
 - d. The amenity value and living standards of future occupants of the property, having specific regard to internal space and garden/amenity space.

To reflect permitted development rights, policy H11 relates to large HiMO's. This includes the conversion or development of homes to occupy more than 6 unrelated individuals. This does not mean the property must contain more than six bedrooms to be classified as a large HiMO. Indeed, it may only contain 3 double bedrooms for example. In order to clarify this aspect of HiMO development, planning applications should clearly highlight the intended occupancy or potential occupancy of bedrooms as part of a Planning Statement or Design and Access Statement.

This Plan has already identified the importance of diversifying the city's housing stock, and the influence of the private rented sector in general is no exception to that aim. The Council considers one of the most integral implications of this though relates to the quality of the rental offer and management of properties, especially during times of vacancy. Although key to ensuring high quality environments they are issues more related to wider Housing Strategy and Environmental Health. As such, these issues will be tackled through the review of the Council's Housing Strategy. In parallel with the performance of local centres and services, concentrations of HiMO's (small and large), shared accommodation and the private rented sector in general will be monitored closely as part of implementing this Local Plan and supporting the Housing Strategy. This will help to ensure any adverse impacts are managed and combated in the most appropriate way.