

Report Title:	Adoption of Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)		
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	11 th February 2026
Report of:	Head of Planning	Cabinet Portfolio:	Planning
Cabinet Lead Member:	Councillor A Barnes	Wards Affected:	All
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency
Integrated Impact Assessment:		Required: Yes	Attached: Yes
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Valley Plan Priorities	Thriving Local Economy: This involves securing new inward investment, creating a sustainable economy, matching local skills with future job opportunities, and supporting town centres as unique destinations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	High Quality Environment: This includes having a "clean and green" local environment, reducing the borough's carbon footprint, improving waste and recycling rates, and delivering new homes with a good mix of housing tenures.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Healthy & Proud Communities: This priority focuses on improving the health and physical/mental wellbeing of residents, reducing health inequalities, ensuring access to better leisure facilities and health services, and fostering a sense of pride in the community.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Effective & Efficient Council: The aim is to provide good quality and responsive services, embrace new technology, be a financially sustainable council with a commercial outlook, and ensure sound governance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To provide information about the responses to the public consultation on the Draft Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) SPG and to recommend adoption of the amended SPG.
- 1.2 The Draft SPG was published for 4 weeks consultation from 13 November 2025 until 11 December 2025. 41 representations were submitted in total. All representations have been considered and some changes are proposed to the SPG in response to comments made.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 **To approve the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for use in the determination of all planning applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation.**
- 1.2 **Minor amendments to the SPG including formatting changes to be delegated to the Head of Planning and Lead Member.**

3. BACKGROUND AND REASON FOR THE DECISION

- 3.1 Rossendale Borough has seen an increase in the number of HMOs in recent years. In response to concerns raised by local residents and Members, Rossendale Borough Council issued an Immediate Article 4 Direction on 19 September 2025, covering the entire borough for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). This means that planning permission is required

for all Houses in Multiple Occupation. It affects all properties which are being changed to small HMOs (i.e. with 3 to 6 unrelated individuals who share facilities, such as a kitchen), as they no longer benefit from permitted development rights. Conversion to a large HMO still requires consent. A separate consultation was undertaken on the introduction of this Article 4 Direction and the 21 comments received can be viewed at <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/file/19321/responses-received>

- 3.2 To assist in determining planning applications for HMOs (both small and large), it is considered necessary to issue specific planning guidance in order to manage their quality, spread and location. Therefore, the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been prepared to guide decisions on planning applications for HMOs in the Borough. The SPG contains new Policy 1 – Houses in Multiple Occupation, whereby planning applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation will be considered suitable provided they meet all eight criteria, as set out in the Policy.
- 3.3 The Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation was approved for consultation by Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee on 10 November 2025. The consultation period ran for 4 weeks from 13 November 2025 until 11 December 2025. An additional briefing session was held for members of O&S on 25 November. The Consultation Statement (attached to this Report) summarises the key responses to the Draft SPG and includes a table listing actions the Local Planning Authority is considering. These include both proposed amendments to the SPG in response of the representations made, and where required, further information and explanation.
- 3.4 In summary a total of 41 responses were submitted: six from statutory consultees (who had no comments to make), Rossendale Borough Council Waste and Recycling services, and 34 from residents, business owners, community service providers and 'others'. There were 2 representations with comments submitted by email and 33 representations submitted using an online form (SmartSurvey).
- 3.5 There was a recommendation from Rossendale Borough Council Waste and Recycling Services to amend Criterion 5 to refer to the number of occupants to ensure that there is not an under or over provision of containers for each waste type. The two Rossendale PCNs jointly objected to the Policy due to concerns that it could lead to extra pressure from the additional homes which would negatively impact on General Medical services provided to both existing and any new patients in the area.
- 3.6 Responses to the SmartSurvey showed that the Draft Policy Criteria were all supported by a majority of representations with the exception of Criterion 2 which was only supported by 42% (14 representations). However, these were not objections but rather suggestions to changing the threshold, please see para 3.9 below. There were a number of comments, queries and suggestions for changes for each of the criteria.
- 3.7 Some of the comments relate to licensing and HMO Standards and these have been referred to Environmental Health for their consideration. In summary these were:
 - Concerns about lack of enforcement for licensing generally.
 - Need for a selective licensing system for smaller HMOs (2-3 persons).
 - Update 2020 HMO Standards to improve fire safety and raise EPC minimum to C.
 - Carry out regular inspections and shorten licence periods for high-risk landlords.
 - Publish an HMO register and location map with annual enforcement information.
 - Check properties regularly to ensure standards and upkeep maintained.
 - Withhold licence until the building meets a satisfactory standard.

- Quinquennial report provided by landlord to include community views, fire service and police/crime incidents relating to HMO occupancy.
- Review Standards to ensure following the correct policy of checking NHS, MAPPA etc.
- Should be no gas provision allowed in any HMO due to safety reasons.
- Standards should be tighter.
- Need for sound / noise insulation.
- Standards should be renewed annually and amended. Any variation within the property should be legally enforced. Fee suggested for applications.

3.8 Comments, where appropriate, have informed proposed changes to the HMO Policy and Explanation Table.

3.9 Criterion 2 sets out the requirement for HMOs to be within walking distance (250m) of town centres and this was supported by 14 (42% of) respondents. A further 9 respondents (27%) did not agree and 10 (30%) were unsure. There were comments suggesting that the distance should be increased or decreased and also that a clearer definition of 'town centre' is required to reduce uncertainty.

3.10 Criterion 5 requires sufficient space storage provision for waste and recycling containers in a suitable enclosure area within the curtilage of the property. This (together with Criterion 7) was supported by the highest proportion of respondents (32 or 97% of representations to the SmartSurvey) and there were comments expressing residents' concerns about the need for waste and recycling to be managed effectively.

3.11 Other comments included objections to HMOs generally, concerns about the standard of accommodation being provided, landlords' profits, safety of local children and older people, immigration, type of residents likely to occupy HMOs and the concentration of HMOs in built up areas.

3.12 Proposed key changes to the Draft Policy are:

- Amendment to Criterion 2: deletion of 'town centre' and addition of text referring to 'the boundary of a Town Centre, or District Centre, or Local Centre or Neighbourhood Parade as identified in Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036 Policy R1: Retail and Other Town Centre Uses and the Local Plan Policies Map'. This is to provide greater certainty and clarity to the Policy.
- Amendment to Criterion 6 to remove "On submission, the property must be of a high standard" as at the point of submission some planning applications will include proposed refurbishment of and improvements to existing empty, neglected or run down properties as part of the HMO development.

3.13 There are also several changes proposed to the Explanation Table. These are:

- For Criterion 3 reference should be made to the Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties SPD. This provides detailed advice about development of residential driveways and off street parking including where proposals would lead to a loss of garden space.
- In addition, the Explanation Table for Criterion 3 should refer to the Accessibility Questionnaire in Appendix 1 of Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036.
- For Criterion 5 a minimum requirement for waste and recycling containers based on the number of occupants of the HMO should be added. This is to address concerns about the adequacy of provision and to minimise local problems of litter.

3.14 All of these are proposed in response to comments from respondents about how planning applications would be assessed.

- 3.15 The revised Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation showing the proposed changes to the Policy and Explanation Table is attached to this Report.
- 3.16 Adopting the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation will enable the Council to effectively manage planning applications for HMOs. It is not the purpose of the policy to refuse houses in multiple occupation but to ensure they are located in suitable locations with appropriate facilities and are not detrimental to the character or amenity of the area.

4. RISK

- 4.1 This policy has been consulted on widely with stakeholders, statutory consultees and local residents. On adoption, the SPG will be open to challenge in the period immediately post adoption. Planning decisions that are made using this policy as a reason for refusal can be appealed and so this policy could be scrutinised by Planning Inspectors. Nevertheless, the risk associated is considered to be outweighed by the need to issue further guidance to ensure the amenity for both the occupiers of the HMOs and neighbouring properties is maintained.

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS (FINANCE)

- 5.1 Adopting the SPG will likely require additional resources from the Planning and Environmental Health teams in determining these planning applications.

6. MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS (LEGAL)

- 6.1 Legal implications are covered in the body of the report. Consultation on the Draft SPG was undertaken for a period of at least four weeks. Comments received have been considered as set out in the attached Consultation Statement and the final document is recommended for adoption. The public consultation has allowed for concerns to be identified.

7. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment and Biodiversity Impact assessment accompany this Report.

8. POLICY/STRATEGY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036: Local Plan Vision and Objectives for People, Economy and Environment. Strategic Policy HS1: Meeting Rossendale's Housing Requirement and Strategic Policy ENV1: High Quality Development in the Borough
- 8.2 The Valley Plan – Our Place, Our Plan 2025-2025 emphasises that “having access to a good quality home to either rent or buy plays a fundamental part in our residents’ quality of life.” In order to achieve this, measures include:
 - boosting the numbers of homes which are affordable for local people to rent or buy;
 - having good access to facilities and services to improve both physical and mental wellbeing;
 - support communities to be vibrant, sustainable and for people to be proud of where they live.

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IMPLICATIONS

9.1 It is expected that the Rossendale Local Plan 2019-2036 will remain in force until it is replaced by a new Local Plan. As such this policy will apply to the area of Rossendale unless it is revoked or updated, or is successfully challenged, or a new local plan is brought forward.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Consultation on Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 10 November 2025)
<https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/1494/overview-and-scrutiny-committee>

10.2 Article 4 Direction - Houses in Multiple Occupation – 19 September 2025
<https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning/6>

10.3 Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036
<https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/local-plan/adopted-local-plan>

10.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) January 2026 - attached

10.5 Consultation Statement for Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) January 2026 - attached

10.6 Responses Received Consultation on Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) January 2026
<https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/file/19337/comments-received-during-the-consultation>

10.7 Equalities Impact Assessment - attached

10.8 Biodiversity Impact Assessment - attached



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Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

February 2026

Version for adoption by Cabinet

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) form a vital part of the private rented sector, providing cheaper, flexible, communal accommodation for people whose housing options are often limited. Previously popular for students, there is now also a growing number of young professionals and migrant workers who choose to share. HMOs provide flexible accommodation for people with short-term housing needs, including people in-between properties, those employed on short-term contracts, and others who are saving to purchase a home.
- 1.2 However, not all properties are suitable for multiple occupation, and the risk of overcrowding and fire can be greater than with other types of accommodation. Some HMOs are occupied by the most vulnerable people in our society.
- 1.3 The relatively cheaper housing attracts businesses specialising in delivering HMOs. Unchecked, an over-concentration of HMOs may cause adverse impacts, out-pricing families in need of housing, and changing the character of neighbourhoods. Properties should be suitable for occupation by multiple households, with no adverse impacts for occupiers or neighbouring properties.
- 1.4 The Council introduced an Immediate Article 4 Direction across the whole of Rossendale on 19 September 2025. This means that from then all properties operating as an HMO in Rossendale will require planning permission.
- 1.5 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been produced to manage the provision of all new HMOs in Rossendale and ensure high standards of accommodation, whilst maintaining the amenity and character of local communities. It is intended to ensure that applicants, communities and other interested parties can gain further detail on what is likely to be permitted.
- 1.6 The policy will not affect existing HMOs, but it will be an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications for all new HMOs.
- 1.7 This planning policy links to the Council's Housing Standards for HMOs, (most recently adopted in 2020), but it will be necessary for applicants/owners to check compliance with other legislation, e.g. licensing and building regulations.
- 1.8 The Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation was published for 4 weeks public consultation from 13 November 2025 to 11 December 2025. The Consultation Statement can be viewed on the website.¹

What is an HMO?

- 1.10 HMOs² are properties occupied by unrelated individuals, who share basic amenities such as a kitchen and/or bathroom. For planning, HMOs can be large (with more than 6 occupants in the dwelling) or small (for 3 to 6 occupants). Please see Appendix 1 for definition.

¹ <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/local-plan/supplementary-planning-documents-spds-guidance>

² UK Government Guidance. House in multiple occupation and residential property licensing reform: guidance for local housing authorities, October 2019. Available at: [Houses in multiple occupation and residential property licensing reform: guidance for local housing authorities - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/house-in-multiple-occupation-and-residential-property-licensing-reform-guidance-for-local-housing-authorities)

2. Policy and Legal Context

2.1 This section outlines the national and local policy context at the time of writing.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2025

2.2 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England. To achieve sustainable development, it expects the planning system to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities. There is no specific reference to HMOs but local planning authorities are required to make provision for size, type and tenure of housing needs for different groups in the community, including those who require affordable housing, families, and people who rent their homes.

2.3 Chapter 11 of the NPPF promotes making effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Chapter 12 emphasises the importance of creating high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places to promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future use.

2.4 This SPG will support HMO developments to ensure mixed and balanced communities with a high standard of accommodation and amenity.

Local Policies in Rossendale

Our Place, Our Plan

2.5 The Council Valley Plan 2021-2025 (Our Place, Our Plan), has a vision that is supported by four strategic priority areas:

“To have a thriving economy, built around our changing town centres, creating a quality environment for all and improving the life chances of all those living and working in our borough”



**Thriving Local
Economy**
Our Future



**High Quality
Environment**
Our Valley



**Healthy and Proud
Communities**
Our People



**Effective and
Efficient Council**
Our Hearts

2.6 Under Healthy and Proud Communities, the Council emphasises that "having access to a good quality home to either rent or buy plays a fundamental part in our residents' quality of life." In order to achieve this, measures include:

- boosting the numbers of homes which are affordable for local people to rent or buy;
- having good access to facilities and services to improve both physical and mental wellbeing;
- support communities to be vibrant, sustainable and for people to be proud of where they live.

2.7 One of the Strategic Priorities is to increase the number of good quality new homes and associated infrastructure built through both direct provision and by working with Registered Social Landlords and private sector developers.

Rossendale Local Plan (2019 – 2036)

2.8 The Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036, adopted December 2021, designates land and buildings for future uses to meet the Borough's needs and sets out how new development should look like and how it should fit with its surrounding.

2.9 The Local Plan's Vision states that

“housing and employment growth and a range of policies designed to enhance the built, natural and social environment, will boost the economic potential of the Borough and improve health and well-being of residents. The special character will be maintained whilst supporting and accommodating sustainable growth for the Borough, its residents and businesses”

2.10 The strategic objectives of the Rossendale Local Plan are to provide a greater choice and quality of housing by:

- Meeting housing and employment land needs in line with national policy whilst protecting the borough's natural and built environment, and;
- Improving housing choice and meeting housing needs for all groups, including specialist and affordable housing

2.11 Whilst there is no specific policy within the Local Plan relating to the development of HMOs, there is a concern that the recent rise in the number of HMOs in the Borough has the potential to impact the quality and choice of housing available. As a result, the Council introduced the Article 4 Direction requiring consent for all small HMOs and this supplementary planning guidance note is intended to help in the determination of such planning applications to ensure that suitable HMOs are delivered in the right places.

2.12 Policy HS5 of The Rossendale Local Plan requires that new housing development of more than 5 dwellings should have at least 20% specifically tailored to meet the needs of elderly or disabled residents or be easily adaptable in line with the Optional Standards M4(2) of the Building Regulations.

2.13 The Parking Standards set out in Appendix 1 requires new development to provide 2 parking spaces for new development with 3 bedrooms and 3 parking spaces for new development with 4 or more bedrooms. As HMOs contain individuals living independently of each other it is considered these standards could be applied, subject to any comments from LCC Highways.

Article 4 Direction

2.14 Although a large HMO always requires planning consent, a small HMO can be permitted development, unless these rights have been removed through the introduction of an Article 4 Direction³. Rossendale Borough Council issued an Immediate Borough-wide Article 4 Direction on 19 September 2025.

2.15 The Article 4 Direction removes the permitted development rights for the change of use from Class C3 residential dwelling to HMOs for 3 to 6 occupants (Class C4). By requiring planning consent, the Council can ensure that this accommodation is established in appropriate properties in suitable locations.

2.16 This does not apply retrospectively. Any small HMOs that were in operation prior to the introduction of the Article 4 Direction will not need planning permission. HMO owners can apply to the Council for a Lawful Development Certificate to confirm this, providing evidence.

2.17 Rossendale has recently seen a notable increase in HMOs across the Borough. These areas include on the main road networks and in established residential areas, with the potential to cause transport issues and change the character of the housing stock. Several HMOs clustered in one area can have an unacceptable impact on the local amenity and upset balanced communities.

Licensing

2.18 This SPG relates to planning applications. All property owners, agents etc who let houses in multiple occupation may also need to apply separately for an HMO licence. Please view the up-to-date licensing requirements on the Council's website. (Please see [HMO application form | Rossendale Borough Council](#))⁴

Planning Service

2.19 The Council offers a paid pre-application service for applicants prior to the submission of a planning application. Further details are available on the Council's website at <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning/4> This webpage also explains how you can apply for planning permission.

³ Article 4 Direction requiring planning permission for small HMOs, introduced by Rossendale BC on 19 September 2025, [Article 4 Directions | Planning | Rossendale Borough Council](#)

⁴ <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/11076/hmo-application-form>

3. SPG for Houses in Multiple Occupation

Purpose and Scope of the SPG

- 3.1 The Council wants to ensure the delivery of good quality accommodation in appropriate premises and locations to meet accommodation needs, without resulting in undue harm to the character and amenity of local communities.
- 3.3 Rossendale's stock of HMOs forms part of the private rented sector, providing much needed homes and contributing to people's housing choice. Generally, HMOs are more affordable, flexible, and suitable for younger people and other households that are not living as families. As well as reducing housing costs for individuals, sharing homes can have positive social benefits for occupiers.
- 3.4 Trends in the housing market make it difficult, especially for low-income and single person households, to find suitable accommodation to meet and suit their needs and preferences. Hence there is a role for HMOs in the housing mix.
- 3.5 Whilst contributing to meeting housing needs, the increase in the number of HMOs can have the potential to create harmful impacts. Concentrations within neighbourhoods can lead to imbalanced and unsustainable communities and can damage the residential amenity and character of surrounding areas.
- 3.6 Harmful impacts associated with high numbers of HMOs can include:
 - Reduced social cohesion resulting from demographic imbalance
 - Reduced housing choice resulting from housing type/tenure imbalance (e.g. from permanent family housing to more transient accommodation)
 - Reduced community engagement from residents resulting from an increase in the transient population of an area
 - Noise and disturbance resulting from intensification of the residential use;
 - Detriment to visual amenity resulting from poor or accumulative external alterations to properties and/or poor waste management
 - Highway safety and air pollution concerns resulting from congested on-street parking.
- 3.7 The increase in HMOs is not specific to Rossendale. Many communities across the UK have seen similar trends and councils are using a range of policy tools and housing and planning powers to tackle high concentrations of HMOs. One of the most typical has been through adoption of additional planning guidance.

SPG for Houses in Multiple Occupation

3.8 The following principles underly this policy:

- to ensure that new HMOs are delivered in suitable locations;
- to prevent over-concentration of HMOs order to safeguard communities, for example by ensuring a supply of housing for families,
- to protect the local character and amenity,
- to ensure the occupants of HMOs have satisfactory amenity, and
- to ensure that the development of HMOs does not impact on local character or the amenity of neighbours.

Policy 1 – Houses in Multiple Occupation

Houses in Multiple Occupation will be considered suitable where all the following criteria are met:

- (1) The HMO is not within 50m radius distance of an existing known HMO;
- (2) The development is within walking distance (within 250m) of the boundary of a Town Centre, or District Centre, or Local Centre or Neighbourhood Parade as identified in Rossendale Local Plan (2019 to 2036) Policy R1: Retail and Other Town Centre Uses and the Local Plan Policies Map;
- (3) There is sufficient off-street car-parking (unless the property is located in a very sustainable location with excellent access to public transport) and development will not increase highway safety concerns;
- (4) There is sufficient space within the curtilage for the provision of sufficient secure cycle parking;
- (5) There is sufficient space storage provision for waste and recycling containers in a suitable enclosure area within the curtilage of the property;
- (6) The condition of the property will be of a high standard, and will contribute positively to the character of the immediate locality with assurances that the condition of the property will be maintained following the change of use to HMO;
- (7) The increase in the number of residents will not have an adverse impact on the level of amenity neighbouring residents can reasonably expect to enjoy;
- (8) The development accords with the Council's latest version of Standards

for Houses in Multiple Occupation⁵.

Explanation

3.9 The table below provides an explanation for each of the criterion listed above:

	Criteria	Explanation
1.	The HMO is not within 50m (radius) distance of an existing known HMO;	This is to avoid clustering and adverse cumulative impacts on neighbouring properties.
2.	The development should be within walking distance (within 250m) of a town centre;	To be sustainable. Occupants are more likely to be reliant on public transport to access services.
3.	There is sufficient off-street car-parking parking (unless the property is located in a very sustainable location with excellent access to public transport) and the development will not increase highway safety concerns;	Where it can be expected that occupants are likely to have cars, there should be adequate parking so as not to impact on highway safety, in accordance with the Local Plan's parking standards and comments from the Highway Authority. Applicants also should have regard to the Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties SPD which provides guidance for the development of driveways and parking areas within the curtilage of residential properties. The sustainability of the location and access to public transport will be assessed in accordance with the Accessibility Questionnaire in Appendix 1 of Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036.
4.	There is sufficient space within the curtilage for the provision of sufficient secure cycle parking;	Occupants are more likely to rely on cycles, which need to be stored so as not to clutter streets or be stored inappropriately indoors.
5.	There is sufficient space storage provision for waste and recycling containers in a suitable enclosure area within the curtilage of the property.	To ensure the amenity of the locality is not adversely affected by waste and recycling containers or litter. The Council expects provision to be at a minimum ratio of one household waste bin and associated recycling containers per 5 residents. This may be subject to change in the future following a review of Council Policy.

⁵ <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/file/18511/hmo-property-standards>

6.	On submission of a planning application, the condition of the property must be of a high standard, and contribute positively to the character of the immediate locality with assurances that the condition of the property will be maintained following the change of use to HMO ⁶	To ensure the amenity for residents is not adversely affected by poorly converted properties and that the amenity for neighbouring properties is maintained following the conversion. Please refer to Appendix 1 – Property Condition Standards Checklist of RBC's Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation (2020) see 12th February 2020: Cabinet Rossendale Borough Council .
7.	The increase in the number of residents will not have an adverse impact on the level of amenity neighbouring residents can reasonably expect to enjoy.	To ensure that issues such as excessive noise or increased access to services are addressed.
8.	The development accords with the Council's latest version of Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation, published by the Environmental Health team ⁷	To ensure the HMO is suitable for people living in the property the policy addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legal standards – free from hazards• Management Regulations• Space standards / useable space• Washing facilities and toilets• Kitchens• Fire Safety• Waste disposal.

3.10 Policies from the adopted Rossendale Local Plan 2019-2036 (adopted December 2021) as well as other material planning considerations may also relevant to the determination of a planning application for a house in multiple occupation.

Please visit the Council's website for details of the Local Plan <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/local-plan/adopted-local-plan>

For details of other planning policies which may be relevant please visit <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/local-plan/supplementary-planning-documents-spds-guidance>

⁶[12th February 2020: Cabinet | Rossendale Borough Council](#)

⁷[12th February 2020: Cabinet | Rossendale Borough Council](#)

APPENDIX 1 – Definition of an HMO

The full legal definition of a House in Multiple Occupation is given under s.254 of the Housing Act 2004.

The Housing Act 2004 clarifies the definition of a house in multiple occupation (HMO), replacing the definition under the Housing Act 1985.

The definition of an HMO is found in Part 7 of the 2004 Act.

To be defined as an HMO, a building, or part thereof, must fall within one of the following categories⁸:

- a building or flat in which two or more households share a basic amenity, such as bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities: this is known as the 'standard test' or the 'self-contained flat test'
- a building that has been converted and does not entirely comprise of self-contained flats: this is known as the 'converted building test'
- a building that is declared an HMO by the local authority
- a converted block of flats where the standard of the conversion does not meet the relevant building standards and fewer than two-thirds of the flats are owner-occupied: this is known as a section 257 HMO

⁸ https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/housing_conditions/hmo_standards/house_in_multiple_occupation_hmo_definition#reference-1



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Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

February 2026

TRACKED CHANGE VERSION

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1. Introduction

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- 1.2 However, not all properties are suitable for multiple occupation, and the risk of overcrowding and fire can be greater than with other types of accommodation. Some HMOs are occupied by the most vulnerable people in our society.
- 1.3 The relatively cheaper housing attracts businesses specialising in delivering HMOs. Unchecked, an over-concentration of HMOs may cause adverse impacts, out-pricing families in need of housing, and changing the character of neighbourhoods. Properties should be suitable for occupation by multiple households, with no adverse impacts for occupiers or neighbouring properties.
- 1.4 The Council introduced an Immediate Article 4 Direction across the whole of Rossendale on 19 September 2025. This means that from then all properties operating as an HMO in Rossendale will require planning permission.
- 1.5 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been produced to manage the provision of all new HMOs in Rossendale and ensure high standards of accommodation, whilst maintaining the amenity and character of local communities. It is intended to ensure that applicants, communities and other interested parties can gain further detail on what is likely to be permitted.
- 1.6 The policy will not affect existing HMOs, but it will be an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications for all new HMOs.
- 1.7 Although this planning policy links closely to the Council's Housing Standards for HMOs, (the most recent version of which was adopted by Cabinet in 2020), it will be necessary for applicants/owners to check compliance with other legislation, such as licensing and building regulations.
- 1.8 **The Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) was published for 4 weeks public consultation from 13 November 2025 until 11 December 2025. The responses are published on the Local Plan page of the Borough Council's website and summarised in the accompanying Consultation Statement.**
- 1.9 **The SPG was adopted by the Borough Council on XXX 2026.**

What is an HMO?

1.10 Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)¹ are properties occupied by unrelated individuals, who share basic amenities such as a kitchen and/or bathroom. For planning, HMOs can be large (with more than 6 occupants in the dwelling) or small (for 3 to 6 occupants). Please see Appendix 1 for definition.

2. Policy and Legal Context

2.1 This section outlines the national and local policy context at the time of writing.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2025

2.2 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England. To achieve sustainable development, it expects the planning system to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities. There is no specific reference to HMOs but local planning authorities are required to make provision for size, type and tenure of housing needs for different groups in the community, including those who require affordable housing, families, and people who rent their homes.

2.3 Chapter 11 of the NPPF promotes making effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Chapter 12 emphasises the importance of creating high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places to promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future use.

2.4 This SPG will support HMO developments to ensure mixed and balanced communities with a high standard of accommodation and amenity.

Local Policies in Rossendale

Our Place, Our Plan

2.5 The Council Valley Plan 2021-2025 (Our Place, Our Plan), has a vision that is supported by four strategic priority areas:

“To have a thriving economy, built around our changing town centres, creating a quality environment for all and improving the life chances of

¹ UK Government Guidance. House in multiple occupation and residential property licensing reform: guidance for local housing authorities, October 2019. Available at: [Houses in multiple occupation and residential property licensing reform: guidance for local housing authorities - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/houses-in-multiple-occupation-and-residential-property-licensing-reform-guidance-for-local-housing-authorities)

all those living and working in our borough”



**Thriving Local
Economy**
Our Future



**High Quality
Environment**
Our Valley



**Healthy and Proud
Communities**
Our People



**Effective and
Efficient Council**
Our Hearts

2.6 Under Healthy and Proud Communities, the Council emphasises that “having access to a good quality home to either rent or buy plays a fundamental part in our residents’ quality of life.” In order to achieve this, measures include:

- boosting the numbers of homes which are affordable for local people to rent or buy;
- having good access to facilities and services to improve both physical and mental wellbeing;
- support communities to be vibrant, sustainable and for people to be proud of where they live.

2.7 One of the Strategic Priorities is to increase the number of good quality new homes and associated infrastructure built through both direct provision and by working with Registered Social Landlords and private sector developers.

Rossendale Local Plan (2019 – 2036)

2.8 The Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036, adopted December 2021, designates land and buildings for future uses to meet the Borough’s needs and sets out how new development should look like and how it should fit with its surrounding.

2.9 The Local Plan’s Vision states that

“housing and employment growth and a range of policies designed to enhance the built, natural and social environment, will boost the economic potential of the Borough and improve health and well-being of residents. The special character will be maintained whilst supporting and accommodating sustainable growth for the Borough, its residents and businesses”

2.10 The strategic objectives of the Rossendale Local Plan are to provide a greater choice and quality of housing by:

- Meeting housing and employment land needs in line with national policy whilst protecting the borough’s natural and built environment, and;
- Improving housing choice and meeting housing needs for all groups, including specialist and affordable housing

2.11 Whilst there is no specific policy within the Local Plan relating to the development of HMOs, there is a concern that the recent rise in the number of HMOs in the Borough has the potential to impact the quality and choice of housing available. As a result, the Council introduced the Article 4 Direction requiring consent for all small HMOs and this supplementary planning guidance note is intended to help in the determination of such planning applications to ensure that suitable HMOs are delivered in the right places.

2.12 Policy HS5 of The Rossendale Local Plan requires that new housing development of more than 5 dwellings should have at least 20% specifically tailored to meet the needs of elderly or disabled residents or be easily adaptable in line with the Optional Standards M4(2) of the Building Regulations.

2.13 The Parking Standards set out in Appendix 1 requires new development to provide 2 parking spaces for new development with 3 bedrooms and 3 parking spaces for new development with 4 or more bedrooms. As HMOs contain individuals living independently of each other it is considered these standards could be applied, subject to any comments from LCC Highways.

Article 4 Direction

2.14 Although a large HMO always requires planning consent, a small HMO can be permitted development, unless these rights have been removed through the introduction of an Article 4 Direction². Rossendale Borough Council issued an Immediate Borough-wide Article 4 Direction on 19 September 2025.

2.15 The Article 4 Direction removes the permitted development rights for the change of use from Class C3 residential dwelling to HMOs for 3 to 6 occupants (Class C4). By requiring planning consent, the Council can ensure that this accommodation is established in appropriate properties in suitable locations.

2.16 This does not apply retrospectively. Any small HMOs that were in operation prior to the introduction of the Article 4 Direction will not need planning permission. HMO owners can apply to the Council for a Lawful Development Certificate to confirm this, providing evidence.

2.17 Rossendale has recently seen a notable increase in HMOs across the Borough. These areas include on the main road networks and in established residential areas, with the potential to cause transport issues and change the character of the housing stock. Several HMOs clustered in one area can have an unacceptable impact on the local amenity and upset balanced communities.

² Article 4 Direction requiring planning permission for small HMOs, introduced by Rossendale BC on 19 September 2025, [Article 4 Directions | Planning | Rossendale Borough Council](#)

Licensing

2.18 This SPG relates to planning applications. All property owners, agents etc who let houses in multiple occupation may also need to apply separately for an HMO licence. Please view the up-to-date licensing requirements on the Council's website. (Please see [HMO application form | Rossendale Borough Council](https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/11076/hmo-application-form))³

Planning Service

2.19 The Council offers a paid pre-application service for applicants prior to the submission of a planning application. Further details are available on the Council's website at <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning/4>. This webpage also explains how you can apply for planning permission.

3. SPG for Houses in Multiple Occupation

Purpose and Scope of the SPG

3.1 The Council wants to ensure the delivery of good quality accommodation in appropriate premises and locations to meet accommodation needs, without resulting in undue harm to the character and amenity of local communities.

3.3 Rossendale's stock of HMOs forms part of the private rented sector, providing much needed homes and contributing to people's housing choice. Generally, HMOs are more affordable, flexible, and suitable for younger people and other households that are not living as families. As well as reducing housing costs for individuals, sharing homes can have positive social benefits for occupiers.

3.4 Trends in the housing market make it difficult, especially for low-income and single person households, to find suitable accommodation to meet and suit their needs and preferences. Hence there is a role for HMOs in the housing mix.

3.5 Whilst contributing to meeting housing needs, the increase in the number of HMOs can have the potential to create harmful impacts. Concentrations within neighbourhoods can lead to imbalanced and unsustainable communities and can damage the residential amenity and character of surrounding areas.

3.6 Harmful impacts associated with high numbers of HMOs can include:

- Reduced social cohesion resulting from demographic imbalance
- Reduced housing choice resulting from housing type/tenure imbalance (e.g. from permanent family housing to more transient accommodation)

³ <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/11076/hmo-application-form>

- Reduced community engagement from residents resulting from an increase in the transient population of an area
- Noise and disturbance resulting from intensification of the residential use;
- Detriment to visual amenity resulting from poor or accumulative external alterations to properties and/or poor waste management
- Highway safety and air pollution concerns resulting from congested on-street parking.

3.7 The increase in HMOs is not specific to Rossendale. Many communities across the UK have seen similar trends and councils are using a range of policy tools and housing and planning powers to tackle high concentrations of HMOs. One of the most typical has been through adoption of additional planning guidance.

SPG for Houses in Multiple Occupation

3.8 The following principles underly this policy:

- to ensure that new HMOs are delivered in suitable locations;
- to prevent over-concentration of HMOs order to safeguard communities, for example by ensuring a supply of housing for families,
- to protect the local character and amenity,
- to ensure the occupants of HMOs have satisfactory amenity, and
- to ensure that the development of HMOs does not impact on local character or the amenity of neighbours.

Policy 1 – Houses in Multiple Occupation

Houses in Multiple Occupation will be considered suitable where all the following criteria are met:

- (1) **The HMO is not within 50m radius distance of an existing known HMO;**
- (2) **The development is within walking distance (within 250m) of a town centre the boundary of a Town Centre, or District Centre, or Local Centre or Neighbourhood Parade as identified in Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036 Policy R1: Retail and Other Town Centre Uses and the Local Plan Policies Map;**
- (3) **There is sufficient off-street car-parking (unless the property is located in a very sustainable location with excellent access to public transport) and development will not increase highway safety concerns;**
- (4) **There is sufficient space within the curtilage for the provision of sufficient secure cycle parking;**

- (5) There is sufficient space storage provision for waste and recycling containers in a suitable enclosure area within the curtilage of the property;
- (6) ~~On submission of a planning application, the~~ The condition of the property must will be of a high standard, and will contribute positively to the character of the immediate locality with assurances that the condition of the property will be maintained following the change of use to HMO;
- (7) The increase in the number of residents will not have an adverse impact on the level of amenity neighbouring residents can reasonably expect to enjoy;
- 8) The development accords with the Council's latest version of Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation⁴.

Explanation

3.9 The table below provides an explanation for each of the criterion listed above:

Criteria	Explanation
1. The HMO is not within 50m (radius) distance of an existing known HMO;	This is to avoid clustering and adverse cumulative impacts on neighbouring properties.
2. The development should be within walking distance (within 250m) of a town centre;	To be sustainable. Occupants are more likely to be reliant on public transport to access services.
3. There is sufficient off-street car-parking parking (unless the property is located in a very sustainable location with excellent access to public transport) and the development will not increase highway safety concerns;	Where it can be expected that occupants are likely to have cars, there should be adequate parking so as not to impact on highway safety, in accordance with the Local Plan's parking standards and comments from the Highway Authority. <u>Applicants also should have regard to the Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties SPD which provides guidance for the development of driveways and parking areas within the curtilage of residential properties.</u> <u>The sustainability of the location and</u>

⁴ <https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/file/18511/hmo-property-standards>

		<u>access to public transport will be assessed in accordance with the Accessibility Questionnaire in Appendix 1 of Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036.</u>
4.	There is sufficient space within the curtilage for the provision of sufficient secure cycle parking;	Occupants are more likely to rely on cycles, which need to be stored so as not to clutter streets or be stored inappropriately indoors.
5.	There is sufficient space storage provision for waste and recycling containers in a suitable enclosure area within the curtilage of the property.	To ensure the amenity of the locality is not adversely affected by waste and recycling containers or litter. <u>The Council expects provision to be at a minimum ratio of one household waste bin and associated recycling containers per 5 residents. This may be subject to change in the future following a review of Council Policy.</u>
6.	On submission of a planning application, the condition of the property must be of a high standard, and contribute positively to the character of the immediate locality with assurances that the condition of the property will be maintained following the change of use to HMO ⁵	To ensure the amenity for residents is not adversely affected by poorly converted properties and that the amenity for neighbouring properties is maintained following the conversion. Please refer to Appendix 1 – Property Condition Standards Checklist of RBC's Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation (2020) see 12th February 2020: Cabinet Rossendale Borough Council .
7.	The increase in the number of residents will not have an adverse impact on the level of amenity neighbouring residents can reasonably expect to enjoy.	To ensure that issues such as excessive noise or increased access to services are addressed.
8.	The development accords with the Council's latest version of Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation, published by the Environmental Health team ⁶	To ensure the HMO is suitable for people living in the property the policy addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legal standards – free from hazards• Management Regulations• Space standards / useable space• Washing facilities and toilets• Kitchens• Fire Safety• Waste disposal.

3.10 Policies from the adopted Rossendale Local Plan 2019-2036 (adopted December 2021) as well as other material planning considerations may also relevant to the determination of a planning application for a house in multiple occupation.

⁵[12th February 2020: Cabinet | Rossendale Borough Council](#)

⁶[12th February 2020: Cabinet | Rossendale Borough Council](#)

Please visit the Council's website for details of the Local Plan
<https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/local-plan/adopted-local-plan>

For details of other planning policies which may be relevant please visit
<https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/local-plan/supplementary-planning-documents-spds-guidance>

APPENDIX 1 – Definition of an HMO

The full legal definition of an House in Multiple Occupation is given under s.254 of the Housing Act 2004.

The Housing Act 2004 clarifies the definition of a house in multiple occupation (HMO), replacing the definition under the Housing Act 1985.

The definition of an HMO is found in Part 7 of the 2004 Act.

To be defined as an HMO, a building, or part thereof, must fall within one of the following categories⁷:

- a building or flat in which two or more households share a basic amenity, such as bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities: this is known as the 'standard test' or the 'self-contained flat test'
- a building that has been converted and does not entirely comprise of self-contained flats: this is known as the 'converted building test'
- a building that is declared an HMO by the local authority
- a converted block of flats where the standard of the conversion does not meet the relevant building standards and fewer than two-thirds of the flats are owner-occupied: this is known as a section 257 HMO

⁷ https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/housing_conditions/hmo_standards/house_in_multiple_occupation_hmo_definition#reference-1



Consultation Statement for Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

January 2026

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Responsible Service	Forward Planning	Version/Status	Version 1
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Consultation Statement for Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Rossendale Borough has seen an increase in the number of HMOs in recent years. It is estimated that there were around 110 licensed and unlicensed HMOs across the Borough in November 2025, with clusters in some areas. Whilst HMOs can make a contribution to the private rented sector stock and provide an essential housing tenure for predominately young and single people and those on low incomes, they can have significant adverse social, amenity, environmental and economic impacts. These impacts include a detrimental effect on highways and parking, effects on local residential amenity, problems with waste disposal, increases in local rents, and adverse effects on the housing market.
- 1.2 In response to concerns raised by local residents and Members, Rossendale Borough Council issued an Immediate Article 4 Direction on 19 September 2025, covering the entire borough for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). This means that planning permission is required for all HMOs. It affects all properties which are being changed to small HMOs (i.e. with 3 to 6 unrelated individuals who share facilities, such as a kitchen), as they no longer benefit from permitted development rights. Conversion to a large HMO still requires consent. It is anticipated that the Article 4 Direction will be confirmed in March 2026.
- 1.3 To assist in determining planning applications for HMOs (both small and large), it is considered necessary to issue specific planning guidance in order to manage their quality, spread and location. Therefore, the Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation was prepared and approved for a 4-week consultation at the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 10 November 2025](#).

2.0 Consultation Process

- 2.1 The public consultation started on 13 November 2025 and closed on 11 December 2025. Letters were sent by email to consultees held in the Council's Local Plan consultation database (including statutory consultees), and the consultation was publicised with a press release, on social media and on the Local Plan and Consultation pages of the Council's website. Consultees were invited to register for the Local Plan consultation database if they so wished.
- 2.2 The online proforma contained specific questions related to the criteria of the policy, inviting respondents to agree, disagree, state if they were unsure and to record any specific comments. Comments and responses were also invited in writing and by email.

3.0 Summary of Responses

- 3.1 A total of 41 responses were submitted: 7 from statutory consultees including Rossendale Borough Council Waste and Recycling services, and 34 from residents, business owners, community service providers and 'others'. Responses were submitted by email (8 responses in total including 2 with comments) and by completing online forms (33 responses) using SmartSurvey. The complete responses are available to view on the Council's website at

<https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/file/19337/comments-received-during-the-consultation> .

3.2 In summary the email responses included the following:

- Statutory consultees National Highways, Coal Authority, Natural England, Historic England and Lancashire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) all had no specific comments.
- Rossendale Borough Council Waste and Recycling suggested criteria based on the number of occupants to ensure that there is not an under or over provision of bins for each waste type.
- Rossendale East PCN and Rossendale West PCN submitted a joint response expressing concerns that the Policy could lead to pressures from additional homes which would negatively impact on General Medical services provided to both existing and any new patients in the area. Both of the Rossendale PCNs would like to explore any opportunities provided by section 106 / CIL funding initiatives.
- An individual expressed concerns that the 50-metre rule (the first criterion of the Policy) is unenforceable when most HMOs are unlicensed and therefore unknown, and that the 250-metre town centre rule (the second criterion) risks worsening congestion, increasing ASB in hotspots, and lacks a clear definition of 'town centre' and therefore enforceability.

3.3 Headline results from the online questionnaire include the following (note - results may not add up to 100% due to rounding):

- 26 representations (79%) agreed that any new HMOs should not be within 50m radius distance of an existing known HMO. 6 (18%) did not support this and 1 (3%) was unsure. There were several suggestions to increase the minimum distance.
- 14 representations (42%) agreed that any new HMOs should be within walking distance (within 250m) of a town centre, 9 (27%) did not agree and 10 (30%) were unsure. There were concerns about how 'town centre' would be defined, that the criterion would limit the availability of sites, that HMOs should not be located close to schools or older people, and that they should be accessible to public transport.
- 28 representations (85%) agreed that there should be sufficient off-street car-parking (unless the property is located in a very sustainable location with excellent access to public transport) and that the development should not increase highway safety concerns, 4 (12%) disagreed and 1 (3%) was unsure. There were comments that gardens should be protected, off street parking should be provided and concerns about how 'excellent access to public transport' would be defined.
- 27 representations (82%) agreed that there should be sufficient space within the curtilage of the property for sufficient secure cycle parking, 1 (3%) disagreed and 5 (15%) were unsure). Overall, the comments were supportive.
- 32 representations (97%) agreed there should be sufficient space storage provision for waste and recycling containers in a suitable enclosure area within the curtilage of the property, none disagreed and 1 (3%) was unsure. The comments generally were supportive with suggestions for further detail.

- 31 representations (94%) agreed that the condition of the property must be of a high standard, and contribute positively to the character of the immediate locality with assurances that the condition of the property will be maintained following the change of use to HMO. None disagreed and 2 (6%) were unsure. There were several comments expressing concerns about how this would be assessed.
- 32 representations (97%) agreed that the increase in the number of residents should not have an adverse impact on the level of amenity neighbouring residents, 1 (3%) disagreed and none were unsure. There were comments about subjectivity in applying the criterion and concerns about noise and disturbance.
- 29 representations (88%) agreed that the development should accord with the Council's latest version of Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation, 3 (9%) disagreed and 1 (3%) was unsure. There were various comments about the Council's Standards and the need for review.
- 27 representations (82%) supported the use of the Supplementary Planning Guidance to inform decisions on planning applications for new HMOs, 2 (6%) disagreed and 4 (12%) were unsure. There were concerns about the social cost / potential for substandard accommodation, the 'types' of residents and children's safety and landlords' profits.

3.4 A more detailed summary of the comments received is outlined in the table below in the first column. The second column explains the Local Planning Authority's response and any actions undertaken.

Key comments received during the public consultation	Actions the Local Planning Authority is Considering
(1) The HMO is not within 50m radius distance of an existing known HMO	
The 50-metre rule is unenforceable when most HMOs are unlicensed and therefore unknown.	The Council maintains a register of large HMOs which require a licence, and holds some information about the location of many small HMOs (from Council Tax records etc). Consultations on planning applications will provide an opportunity for information to be submitted about other existing HMOs in the local area.
Need to update licensing process and increase inspections and include for smaller HMOs (3-4 residents).	<p>Refer all comments relating to licensing and HMO standards to Environmental Health for consideration and possible review/update.</p> <p>The Council's Standards for HMOs apply to both licensable and non-licensable HMOs but licences are only required by law if the property is occupied by five or more persons, from two or more separate households. The Standards are appended to the SPG and may be amended by Environmental Health if required.</p>
Distance should be increased e.g. to 100m, 200m, 250m or 500m.	The 50m rule was supported by a majority (26 or 79%) of respondents and is considered reasonable.
Concerns about large 'influx' of unknown residents/immigrants and formation of ghettos. Restricting	Taken together, the criteria in the Policy will help to ensure numbers and locations of HMOs are managed effectively.

Key comments received during the public consultation	Actions the Local Planning Authority is Considering
numbers would be better.	
(2) The development is within walking distance (within 250m) of a town centre	
Risks worsening congestion and increasing concentration of ASB.	By limiting developments to accessible locations occupiers are more likely to walk to access local services and would be less reliant on cars.
Clearer definition of 'town centre' required.	The Policy criterion should be amended to: <u>'The development is within walking distance (within 250m) of a town centre the boundary of a Town Centre, or District Centre, or Local Centre or Neighbourhood Parade as identified in Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036 Policy R1: Retail and Other Town Centre Uses and the Local Plan Policies Map.'</u>
Would limit availability to urban areas.	Occupants would benefit from better accessibility to local services.
Distance should be increased to 400-500m and also within 50m of a bus route. Distance should be reduced to 200m.	250m is widely accepted as a walkable distance to access local shops and services. Longer distances could discourage walking. Refer to Criterion 3 for public transport.
(3) There is sufficient off-street car-parking (unless the property is located in a very sustainable location with excellent access to public transport) and development will not increase highway safety concerns	
Should protect front garden areas. Parking spaces should be behind the dwelling. (Note - This was provided in response to Q4).	<p>The Explanation Table should refer to the SPD on Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties which provides some protection for front garden areas:</p> <p>'Where it can be expected that occupants are likely to have cars, there should be adequate parking so as not to impact on highway safety, in accordance with the Local Plan's parking standards and comments from the Highway Authority. Applicants also should have regard to the Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties SPD which provides guidance for the development of driveways and parking areas within the curtilage of residential properties.'</p>
Off street parking should be provided. Local Plan parking standards should be applied or minimum 1 space per resident, plus disabled and visitor/staff parking.	Local Plan parking standards are referred to in the Explanation Table.

Key comments received during the public consultation	Actions the Local Planning Authority is Considering
Need to define 'excellent access to public transport'.	<p>The Explanation Table should refer to the Local Plan Accessibility Questionnaire. Add: <u>'The sustainability of the location and access to public transport will be assessed in accordance with the Accessibility Questionnaire in Appendix 1 of Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036.'</u></p>
Avoid areas with high number of vehicle crashes.	This criterion will be subject to comments from the Highway Authority, who will be consulted on planning applications.
<p>(4) There is sufficient space within the curtilage for the provision of sufficient secure cycle parking</p>	
Should reference Sustrans policies.	The Local Plan promotes cycling as a sustainable form of transport and was subject to public consultation. LCC Highways will be able to comment on planning applications.
Cycle parking should not be in the detriment of car parking spaces.	The Policy requires all criteria to be met and therefore proposals should address both car and cycle parking.
<p>(5) There is sufficient space storage provision for waste and recycling containers in a suitable enclosure area within the curtilage of the property</p>	
Criteria should be based on number of occupants to ensure that there is not an under or over provision of bins for each waste type.	<p>Further information should be added to the Explanation Table:</p> <p><u>'The Council expects provision to be at a minimum ratio of one household waste bin and associated recycling containers per 5 residents. This may be subject to change in the future following a review of Council Policy.'</u></p>
Policy widely supported subject to sufficient provision within curtilage and recycling undertaken.	Noted.
<p>(6) On submission of a planning application, the condition of the property must be of a high standard, and contribute positively to the character of the immediate locality with assurances that the condition of the property will be maintained following the change of use to HMO</p>	
HMOs do not provide suitable accommodation for people today.	HMOs are accepted by the Government as acceptable housing, provided they meet certain standards.
How will properties be checked / maintained? Need to define minimum standards.	<p>There is a reference to the Council's Standards in the Explanation Table and maintenance of these standards is the responsibility of Environmental Health. Some applications will include proposals for renovations and improvements to existing buildings.</p> <p>The criterion should be amended to:</p> <p>'On submission of a planning application, the The</p>

Key comments received during the public consultation	Actions the Local Planning Authority is Considering
	<p>condition of the property <u>must</u> will be of a high standard, and will contribute positively to the character of the immediate locality with assurances that the condition of the property will be maintained following the change of use to HMO.'</p> <p>Planning applications will be assessed against the criteria in Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036 Strategic Policy ENV1: High Quality Development in the Borough and the National Space Standards.</p>
Should not be used for illegal immigrants.	The Policy cannot be used to discriminate against different groups of people.
External appearance should match existing area.	The planning application process will help to ensure any external alterations are sympathetic to the character of the building and surrounding area.

(7) The increase in the number of residents will not have an adverse impact on the level of amenity neighbouring residents can reasonably expect to enjoy

Very important but subjective. Quinquennial amenity report should be considered.	<p>Planning permission can only rarely be revoked but Environmental Health have powers in respect of providers. Amenity will be taken into account for future planning applications.</p> <p>Taken together, the criteria in the Policy will help to ensure the numbers of residents in HMOs are managed effectively to protect local residential amenity.</p>
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(8) The development accords with the Council's latest version of Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation

Standards require reviewing and updating.	Refer all comments relating to licensing and HMO Standards to Environmental Health for consideration and possible review/update.
Concerns about HMOs being easy way for some landlords to make money.	The licensing process and SPG will help to manage proposals and protect residents.
What happens when no longer HMOs?	Please refer to the Article 4 Direction. Most proposals would not need planning permission to revert back to residential dwelling houses.
Why is the Council consulting now – is it concern about immigrants?	Concerns have been raised about the recent increase in numbers of HMOs in some areas.

General support for proposed SPG and Other Comments

Various concerns repeated.	Generally addressed in existing criteria and / or amendments to the Policy – see above.
Reference to adopted Local Plan and other SPGs / SPDs will need updating.	Noted.

Key comments received during the public consultation	Actions the Local Planning Authority is Considering
Concerns about child safety.	Concerns should be referred to Police / Lancashire County Council / other safeguarding services.
Concerns about exploitation of vulnerable residents, including immigrants.	Concerns should be referred to Police / Lancashire County Council / other safeguarding services.
Change wording of policy from "should" to "must".	The Policy criteria apply the terms 'will' and 'is' to provide certainty.
Rossendale GP Practices are already either at their limit or very close to it in terms of GP patient registrations and on that basis, without the provision of additional funding, object to this proposal.	The GP Practices will be consulted on proposals as part of the planning application process.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) was published for 4 weeks public consultation from 13 November 2025 until 11 December 2025. The intention of the SPG is not to stop all HMOs being created but to ensure that HMOs brought forward are suitable for their occupants, and do not create amenity issues for neighbouring properties and/or upset the balance of local housing markets.
- 4.2 In total 41 representations were submitted from statutory consultees, individuals, local businesses and organisations, through an online consultation form (SmartSurvey) and by email.
- 4.3 The representations have been considered by the Forward Planning Team and a number of amendments are proposed to the Policy in response to comments submitted.

Equality Impact Assessment

The council carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to analyse the effects of our decisions, policies or practices.

Throughout this document, policy refers to any policy, strategy, project, procedure, function, decision or delivery or service.

The EIA should be undertaken/started at the beginning of the policy development process before any decisions are made.

Policies are developed and reviewed using a consultative approach involving relevant internal and external stakeholders. Officers must consider what action needs to be taken to help overcome or minimise any disadvantages that people who share a protected characteristic will experience in compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Name of policy:	Supplementary Planning Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
Lead officer name	Anne Storah
Job title	Principal Planning Officer (Forward Planning)
Service area	Planning
Telephone contact	01706 252418
Email contact	annestorah@rossendalebc.gov.uk
Date Assessment commenced	15/07/25
Date assessment completed	08/01/2026

The main aims/objectives of this policy are:

Given the increase in the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) that have been seen in Rossendale since the last Census in 2021, and concerns raised by residents, an Immediate Article 4 Direction was introduced on 19 September 2025. This means that permitted development rights have been removed for small HMOs and so anyone wanting to convert a house into a small HMO (for between 3 and 6 separate households/individuals who share facilities) as of that date now needs to apply for planning permission. Large HMOs for 7 or more occupants will still need planning permission.

The Council wants to introduce specific planning policy to determine how planning applications for HMOs are determined. Of particular concern is the need to ensure that the new accommodation provides suitable accommodation for the occupants, as well as ensuring that HMOs do not cluster in certain locations. Clustering can have detrimental impacts on the local amenity and character, affecting the delivery of wider housing objectives.

These impacts were discussed in earlier research and include¹:

- anti-social behaviour, crime, noise and nuisance
- imbalanced and unsustainable communities

¹ [Houses in multiple occupation & planning restrictions](#) (2017)

- negative impacts on the physical environment and streetscape
- pressures upon parking provision
- growth in private rented sector at the expenses of owner-occupation
- pressure upon local community facilities and
- restructuring of retail, commercial services and recreational facilities to suit the lifestyles of the predominant population

Although the report is a little dated, it is considered that these problems can still exist and in particular can be more severe if HMOs are formed in smaller dwellings as appears to be the recent trend in Rossendale.

It is recognised that HMOs make an important contribution to the private rented sector by catering for the housing needs of specific groups/households and by making a contribution to the overall provision of affordable or private rented stock. However, this needs to be balanced with the potential harm identified above. The best way of balancing the need against possible harm and to ensure that suitable accommodation will be provided would be through determination of a planning application. In order to support this, and address the concerns that HMOs may pose, the Council wants to issue specific planning guidance.

Indicate the status of the policy or decision

New/proposed Modified/adapted Existing

Indicate protected characteristics have been assessed

Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Religion/belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy/maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marriage or civil partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1. State any positive or negative impact on the protected characteristic(s) (added additional rows if needed)

Protected characteristic	Positive/Negative	How does it impact?
Age	Neutral	The impacts of the policy will apply equally across all groups
Disability	Neutral	The impacts of the policy will apply equally across all groups
Religion/belief	Neutral	The impacts of the policy will apply equally across all groups
Race	Neutral	The impacts of the policy will apply equally across all groups
Pregnancy/maternity	Neutral	The impacts of the policy will apply equally across all groups

Sexual orientation	Neutral	The impacts of the policy will apply equally across all groups
Gender reassignment	Neutral	The impacts of the policy will apply equally across all groups
Sex	Neutral	The impacts of the policy will apply equally across all groups
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	The impacts of the policy will apply equally across all groups

2. Explain and give examples of any evidence/data used (add additional rows if needed)

Evidence	How does this have an impact on the protected characteristic?
	HMOs have historically provided student occupation in towns with Higher Education provision. However, they now provide accommodation for more groups, for people who want the flexibility that this accommodation provides or are unable to afford, or are saving for, accommodation with private facilities.

3. Outcome of EIA

What course of action does this EIA suggest you take?	Please indicate
Outcome 1- The EIA has not identified any potential for negative impact on the protected characteristics. Progress to EIA approval – section 5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Outcome 2- The EIA has identified a possibility for negative impact on the protected characteristics. An EIA Action Plan must be completed to mitigate the negative impact – section 4 before approval section 5	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. EIA action plan

Based on the above impact assessment, findings/evidence and outcomes identified, please complete the Action Plan below. The action plan should address:

- Any gaps in findings/evidence research including any consultation or engagement regarding the policy and its actual/potential impacts
- How you will address any gaps
- What practical changes/action that will help reduce any negative impacts identified
- What practical changes/action that will help enhance any positive contributions to equality

Negative impact identified	Action required	Lead officer	To be completed
N/A			

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Monitoring and reviewing the effect of the policy

Please state how you will monitor the impact and effect of this policy

The SPG will be monitored for effectiveness as part of the annual Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), this will cover how many HMOs have been determined and the outcome.

The need for a review of the policy will be determined as part of the AMR process and the Local Plan review.

5. EIA approval (to be completed by the relevant Head of Service/Director)

- Outcome of EIA agreed/approved by Management Team: (date)
- Published on council website: (date)

Signed: David Smurthwaite (Head of Service/Director) (date)

BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Name of Policy, Decision, Strategy, Service or Function, Other: (please indicate)	Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for Houses in Multiple Occupation	
Lead Officer Name(s) & Job Title(s) :	Anne Storah – Principal Planning Officer	
Department/Service Area:	Planning	
Telephone & E-mail Contact:	01706 252418	
Date Assessment:	Commenced: 15/07/2025	Completed: 08/01/2026

The Council has a duty to protect and enhance biodiversity under the Environment Act 2021. This assessment must be completed for all key decisions included in the Forward Plan to analyse the effects of our decisions, policies or practices.

Stage 1 This stage determines whether a full assessment is required

1.1 Description of the proposed decision

Given the increase in the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) that have been seen in Rossendale since the last Census in 2021, and concerns raised by residents, an Immediate Article 4 Direction was introduced on 19 September 2025. This means that permitted development rights have been removed for small HMOs and so anyone wanting to convert a house into a small HMO (for between 3 and 6 separate households/individuals who share facilities) as of that date now needs to apply for planning permission. Large HMOs for 7 or more occupants will still need planning permission.

The Council wants to introduce specific planning policy to determine how planning applications for HMOs are determined. Of particular concern is the need to ensure that the new accommodation provides suitable accommodation for the occupants, as well as ensuring that HMOs do not cluster in certain locations. Clustering can have detrimental impacts on the local amenity and character, affecting the delivery of wider housing objectives.

The policy itself will not have any implications as it will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications relating to housing.

1.2 Will the proposed decision have any impacts on the type, area (or length) or conditions of natural habitats within the Borough?

Yes No

If no, proceed no further if yes continue to
stage 2

Stage 2 This stage helps understand whether any impact on biodiversity is positive or negative.

2.1 Will the proposed decision have a positive or negative impact on biodiversity? (A positive impact would increase the range of species or habitats or increase the protection of existing habitats, a negative impact would do the opposite.)

Positive Negative

2.2 Describe the impact, in particular drawing attention to scale. Also please state if the impact will affect a Habitat or Species of Principal Importance, Irreplaceable Habitat (it is possible to check for those on PlanWeb or Magic map) or it the project will affect a habitat or specie identified on Lancashire's Biodiversity Action Plans (please visit <https://www.lgap.org.uk/home.htm> for more information).

2.3 If the impact is positive you need go no further.

Stage 3 This stage allows any negative impact to be balanced against the other positive benefits of the proposed decision using the framework created by the wellbeing power set out in the Local Government Act 2000

3.1 Indicate the benefits which will be delivered by this decision under the following headings. As far as possible quantify benefits (eg by jobs created).

**Economic
Environmental
Social**

3.2 Are there steps which are planned or could be taken to mitigate the impact on biodiversity (eg relocating certain species during building work, improving a natural habitat somewhere else to offset the impact of this project).

Stage 4 This stage sets out the balance between the negative impacts on biodiversity and the other positive impacts so that Councillors can make an informed decision.

Positive impacts
(eg X jobs created)

Negative Impacts
(eg acres of habitat lost)

Biodiversity Impact Assessment
(under the Biodiversity duty contained in the Natural
Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended) and the Environment Act 2021)

