



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

January 2026



A High Quality Environment

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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 numbers would be better.	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
(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: 'The development is within walking distance (within 250m) of a town centre <u>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).	The Explanation Table should refer to the SPD on Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties which provides some protection for front garden areas: '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> '
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.
Need to define 'excellent access to public transport'.	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</u>

Key comments received during the public consultation	Actions the Local Planning Authority is Considering
	<u>with the Accessibility Questionnaire in Appendix 1 of Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036.</u>
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.
(4) There is sufficient space within the curtilage for the provision of sufficient secure cycle parking	
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.
(5) There is sufficient space storage provision for waste and recycling containers in a suitable enclosure area within the curtilage of the property	
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.	Further information should be added to the Explanation Table: <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>
Policy widely supported subject to sufficient provision within curtilage and recycling undertaken.	Noted.
(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	
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.	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. The criterion should be amended to: 'On submission of a planning application, the <u>The</u> condition of the property <u>must will</u> be of a high standard, and <u>will</u> 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.'

Key comments received during the public consultation	Actions the Local Planning Authority is Considering
	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.
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>
(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.
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.

Key comments received during the public consultation	Actions the Local Planning Authority is Considering
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.