

Immediate Article 4 Direction:

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



What is an Article 4 Direction?

An Article 4 Direction is a legal mechanism used by local authorities, that removes permitted development rights, to convert Use Class C3 dwellings into C4 Houses in Multiple Occupation. This means that planning permission will be needed for the conversion of a dwellinghouse into a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO).

The General Permitted Development Order allows for some types of development or changes of use to take place without planning permission, such as minor extensions to dwellings, or changing the use of a building from a bank to a shop. These exceptions are set out in the “[*General Permitted Development Order \(2015\)*](#)”.

An Article 4 Direction enables local planning authorities to remove a particular permitted development right, in the interest of the proper planning of their area.

What is a HMO?

A HMO is a House in Multiple Occupation. Generally, a HMO is a house or flat shared by an unrelated group of people, such as people on low incomes, students, young professionals and those on short term work contracts. Usually, they have their own bedroom and share the bathroom and/ or kitchen facilities. Where 3 or more unrelated people share a house or flat in this way, it is defined as a HMO. It does not include a house converted to self-contained flats, where occupants have access to their own bathroom and kitchen facilities.

What are the current challenges and why is Halton Borough Council proposing to introduce an Article 4 Direction?

Currently, a dwellinghouse can be converted into a HMO, for up to six residents (a small HMO), without planning permission. Such a conversion is what's known as “permitted development”. Large HMOs already require planning permission and will continue to do so once the Article 4 Direction takes effect. Large HMOs are currently classified as Use Class Sui Generis. More information on Use Classes can be found [here](#).

Halton Borough Council has gathered evidence that the ability to convert a dwellinghouse into a small HMO, without planning permission, is having an impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents and local character throughout the designated areas in the borough. Therefore, the Council have decided to introduce an immediate Article 4 Direction to address this, effective 24th September 2025.

What is an immediate Article 4 Direction?

There are two types of directions under the General Permitted Development Order: non immediate directions and directions with immediate effect.

- Non-immediate directions are those where permitted development rights are withdrawn following a prior notice period which includes a period of consultation.
- Immediate directions are where permitted development rights are withdrawn with immediate effect. These are then confirmed by the Council following consultation, including with the Secretary of State.

Halton has introduced an immediate Article 4 Direction, which means that anyone who wants to convert a dwellinghouse into a HMO of any size, within the defined areas, will need to apply for planning permission, on or after 24th September 2025.

It is important to note that planning permission may still be granted and therefore the immediate Article 4 Direction will not have the effect of stopping all conversions of dwellinghouse to HMOs.

When does the Article 4 Direction come into effect?

The Article 4 Direction came into effect as soon as it was introduced on **24th September 2025**. Therefore, all conversions from a dwelling to a small HMO now require planning permission. Any conversions which had taken place using permitted development rights prior to the date the Article 4 Direction was introduced, will not retrospectively require planning permission and can continue to operate.

What about small HMOs which were already in existence before 24th September 2025?

The Article 4 Direction will not affect existing small HMOs. It only applies to changes of use which take place on or after 24th September 2025.

I am a HMO landlord; how will these proposals affect me?

If you are a landlord of an existing HMO of up to six residents, which was converted from a dwelling using permitted development rights prior to the date the Article 4 Direction was introduced (24th September 2025), you are **not** affected by this decision.

This Article 4 Direction does **not** affect landlords who have already, or plan to, convert dwellings to larger HMOs or other types of buildings to HMOs. The rules in these cases remain identical to how they were prior to the introduction of an immediate Article 4 Direction. These conversions continue to require planning permission.

If you are a landlord who was intending to convert a dwelling into a small HMO for up to six residents, you will now need to apply for planning permission to undertake such a conversion.

HMO Licensing

All HMOs for 5 or more Tenants in the borough, including those subject to the article 4 direction, require a mandatory HMO license and must comply with the Council's amenity standards.

Further information on amenity standards and an online application and payment form can be found at:

[Private Sector Housing](#)

Halton council has not introduced additional licensing for HMOs in any area of the borough. Therefore, whilst smaller 3 or 4 bed HMOs in the article 4 area will now require planning permission, at the time of writing they **do not** currently require an additional HMO license.

If you have a query or want to enquire about the latest housing standards or HMO licensing, please email: environmental.protection@halton.gov.uk

Conversions of other types of properties

The requirement for planning permission for the conversion of other types of properties e.g. pubs to HMOs will continue to be required.

Additional documents

You can download a copy of the immediate Article 4 Direction, including a map defining the area and the associated documents [here](#).

Dated: 24th September 2025.