



## **What is a HMO?**

HMOs are 'shared' houses where more than one household live together.

A household is either a single person or members of the same family who live together. A family includes people who are:

- married or living together - including people in same-sex relationships
- relatives or half-relatives, for example grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings
- step-parents and step-children

## **What is the study about?**

The study will investigate whether the council should remove permitted development rights that currently mean that family homes can be converted into small HMOs (for up to 6 persons) without the need for planning permission. The removal of these rights is known as an 'Article 4' direction.

## **Why are you doing the study now?**

Local concerns have been raised regarding the impact of increasing numbers of HMOs and the consequences this has on character and amenity of the local area and areas of Bedford Town Centre. Elected members have requested that a study be undertaken to look at if there are planning tools that could be used to help manage HMOs.

## **Why do we need a study to inform an Article 4 Direction?**

Article 4 Directions are intended to be used in exceptional circumstances and where evidence suggests that development under permitted development rights harms local amenity or prevents the proper planning of an area.

The 'making' of an Article 4 direction must be supported by robust evidence which demonstrates such harm or that effective and appropriate planning is being compromised.

## **Would an Article 4 stop all HMOs?**

An Article 4 Direction removes Permitted Development Rights. It means that proposals for HMOs will need to apply for planning permission before they can be converted. It would not stop all new HMOs.

## **If the council decides to make an Article 4 Direction, would current HMOs need to apply for planning permission?**

Article 4 directions do not apply retrospectively. Making an Article 4 Direction would not mean that current HMOs would need to apply for planning permission to continue to operate. Rather, proposals for new HMOs would be required to apply for planning permission.



## **What area would an Article 4 direction apply to?**

The area that an Article 4 direction would need to apply to is being considered as part of the study.

## **What is a HMO Licence?**

Some HMOs require a licence to operate to ensure that properties are well managed and safe. All large HMOs require a licence to operate (known as a 'mandatory' licence). These are HMOs with at least five tenants, forming more than one household who share toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities with one another. Local Authorities may also licence smaller HMOs. Bedford operate an 'additional licence' scheme. It is an offence to operate a HMO without the required licence.

Further information is available via the Bedford Borough Council website.

<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/housing/houses-in-multiple-occupation/hmo-licensing-information/>

## **How do I know if my property is a licenced HMO?**

If you are thinking of renting a room in a HMO, or a shared house, you can check with Bedford Borough Council if the property is licenced. See <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/housing/houses-in-multiple-occupation/hmo-licensing-information/> for further information.

## **How can I report issues with a HMO?**

If you are a tenant, any issues you are experiencing should be reported to the landlord or letting agent in the first instance.

A landlord of a HMO must meet certain standards and legal requirements. If you have complaints, or concerns about a property these can be reported via the Bedford Borough Council via the website: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/environmental-issues/> where they can be investigated.

## **When will the study be completed?**

The study is due be completed in the Autumn and will then be presented to the Council's Executive to decide what, if any action, needs to be taken.

## **How can people get involved in the study?**

As part of the agreed methodology, we are keen to hear views from members of the public and other stakeholders.

- A drop-in session has been arranged at Borough Hall for Thursday 4th July 2019 between midday and 8pm where members of the project team will be available.
- A consultation website, including a comment form can be accessed via [www.wyg.com/planning/consultations/bedford-hmo-study](http://www.wyg.com/planning/consultations/bedford-hmo-study)
- You can email comments to [bedfordhmostudy@wyg.com](mailto:bedfordhmostudy@wyg.com)



## **Who can get involved?**

We are interested in hearing from a range of stakeholders. This includes:

- Residents of Bedford and Kempston
- Letting Agents
- Landlords
- Tenants of HMOs and other private rented housing (including students)
- Organisations and community groups
- Elected members

## **What type of information are you using?**

The study will analyse a large amount of data already held by Bedford Borough Council such as the number of licenced HMOs, Environmental Data (noise complaints, pest complaints etc) and demographic information (age and incomes).

To help us understand this information, it is important that it is supported by the views of the local community. We would like to try to understand:

- The demand for HMO/ Shared house accommodation in Bedford
- Why people choose this type of accommodation in Bedford
- What criteria they look for in shared accommodation
- Experiences of living in shared accommodation
- What landlords look for in prospective properties
- Perceptions about specific areas

## **How will my answers be used?**

All answers will be anonymous, and you will not be able to identify individual responses in the final study. However, we do need to collect some personal data to help us analyse responses. For example, to help assess specific areas.

## **What will happen next?**

After the consultation events, WYG will finalise its report and give a recommendation as to whether in our view the Council has the required evidence to 'make' an Article 4 Direction. If the recommendation is to proceed, the Council will then go through the relevant legal steps. Planning guidance will be prepared to assist those making applications and the community to understand what is required. If it is not recommended that an Article 4 Direction be made, the Council will keep the evidence under review.