



Press Release

Thursday, February 27

Council seeks public views on new HMO planning control to tackle overconcentration concerns

Growing concerns over the concentration of HMOs in Wisbech and their impact on local communities have prompted Fenland District Council to adopt a new planning tool, tightening rules around converting shared properties.

Under current national planning legislation, the Council has no powers to manage residential homes being converted into small Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) as the change of use does not require planning permission.

Now the Council has implemented a new planning control, known as an Article 4 Direction, to strengthen powers affecting new small HMOs in Wisbech.

It means residential homes can no longer be converted into small HMOs unless planning permission is granted by the Council.

The Wisbech Riverside and Wisbech South wards of Wisbech will be subject to the change with immediate effect (immediate Article 4 Direction), with the change of rule in the rest of the town – Wisbech North; Wisbech Walsoken and Waterlees; and Leverington and Wisbech Rural wards – intended to come into force in February 2026 (non-immediate Article 4 Direction).

The measure only effects 'small HMOs', which have been between three and six unrelated occupiers. 'Large HMOs', which are occupied by more than six unrelated occupiers, are already subject to planning permission.

The Council's Cabinet decided to adopt the direction at its meeting on Monday, February 24, due to growing concerns about the high concentration of HMOs in Wisbech and their detrimental impact on local communities.

An evidence paper before Members identified several concerns relating to the properties including noise nuisance, antisocial behaviour, increased pressures on parking, refuse, and community facilities, and impact on the character of the area. Other concerns include poor housing conditions and loss of family-sized housing.

Public consultation

Following the decision, a statutory process must be followed, including a public consultation and notifying the Secretary of State.

A consultation on the Article 4 Directions will run from Wednesday, February 26, to Friday, March 21.

To find out more and share your views, visit:

www.fenland.gov.uk/hmoarticle4direction

Printed copies of the survey are also available for collection from Wisbech Library. Completed copies can be emailed to planningpolicy@fenland.gov.uk or posted to:

HMO Article 4 Direction
Fenland District Council
Planning Policy
Fenland Hall
County Road
March
PE15 8NQ

Comments must be received no later than **11.59pm on March 21, 2025**.

After the consultation period, the Council will review all responses before deciding whether to confirm the immediate and non-immediate Article 4 Directions.

Cllr Sam Hoy, the Council's Cabinet member for Housing, said: "Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) play an important role in Fenland's housing market, providing flexible and affordable accommodation to meet the diverse needs of our residents.

"However, high concentrations of HMOs can have a significant impact on local communities. By implementing Article 4 Directions, we can ensure that new HMOs are developed in appropriate locations and to a high standard, striking the right balance between creating much-needed homes and protecting the character and wellbeing of our communities."

Cllr Dee Laws, Cabinet member for Planning, added: "Introducing Article 4 Directions will enable the Council to carefully assess the impact of all new HMOs in Wisbech, helping to prevent excessive concentrations in particular areas while ensuring we can continue to monitor their effects on the wider community. It also means we would be able to impose planning conditions such as limiting noise or providing adequate parking or bin storage."

Ends

Notes to Editors

For media enquiries, please contact the Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226 or email: communications@fenland.gov.uk