

Immediate Article 4 Direction: Frequently Asked Questions

What is an Article 4 Direction?

An Article 4 Direction is a legal mechanism used by local authorities that removes permitted development rights. This means that the planning permission will now be needed for conversion of all properties into Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO).

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

Currently, a family home can be converted into an HMO, for up to six residents (a small HMO) without planning permission. Such a conversion is what's known as "permitted development". Larger HMOs already require planning permission and will continue to do so once the Article 4 Direction takes effect.

Bolton Council has gathered evidence that the ability to convert a family home into a small HMO, without planning permission, is having a negative impact on residents and stakeholders throughout the borough and has therefore introduced an immediate Article 4 Direction to address this.

What is an immediate Article 4 Direction?

An immediate Article 4 Direction withdraws these "permitted development" rights throughout the borough, meaning that anyone who wants to convert a family home into an HMO of any size will need to apply for planning permission.

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

When would the Article 4 Direction come into effect?

The Article 4 Direction came into effect as soon as it was introduced on 13th June 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.

I am an 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, means 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. 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.

Additional documents

You can download a copy of the immediate Article 4 Direction, including a map defining the area and associated documents below.

- [HMO Article 4 Direction Cabinet Report June 2025 \(Including the EIA\)](#)
- [HMO Article 4 Direction Background Document April 2025](#)
- [Proposed Article 4 Boundary Map 2025](#)
- [Notice of Making the Article Direction 2025](#)
- [Sealed copy of the Immediate Article 4 Direction 2025](#)