

A Better Place to Rent in Bolton

Consultation on proposals for an Additional Licensing Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Easy-Read Summary of the Proposed Additional HMO Licensing Scheme



This summary explains Bolton Council's proposals in clear, straightforward language. It focuses on the key points residents, tenants and landlords need to understand, without technical detail or legal jargon. It is a summary of the full consultation document.

What is the council proposing?

Bolton Council is consulting on plans to introduce an Additional Licensing Scheme for some Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the whole borough.

The aim of the scheme is to make sure shared rented homes are safe, well managed and decent places to live, while also reducing problems such as poor conditions, waste, and anti-social behaviour that can affect neighbours.

No final decision has been made. The council is asking for views before deciding whether to introduce the scheme and, if so, how it should work.

What is an HMO?

An HMO is a property where three or more people live who are not all one family and where facilities such as a kitchen, bathroom or toilet are shared.

HMOs are often shared houses or flats and are commonly lived in by young professionals, students, single people, or people on lower incomes. They provide important and often more affordable housing.

However, when HMOs are poorly managed, problems can arise. These can include fire safety risks, damp and mould, overcrowding, and rubbish or noise issues that affect neighbours as well as tenants.

Why is additional licensing being considered?

In recent years, Bolton has seen a large increase in smaller HMOs, particularly those housing three or four people. Many of these properties do not currently need a licence.

Council records show that HMOs generate a much higher number of complaints than other rented homes. Issues reported include unsafe conditions, poor repairs, overcrowding and ongoing management problems.

At the moment, the council usually only becomes aware of these problems after residents complain. Licensing would allow the council to be more proactive by identifying HMOs earlier, setting clear standards, and checking that properties are being properly managed.

Which properties would need a licence?

The proposal covers two types of property, across the whole borough.

The first is smaller shared HMOs where three or four people live together as separate households and share facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom.

The second is certain converted blocks of flats, known as Section 257 HMOs. These are buildings that were converted into flats but did not meet building standards at the time and where most of the flats are rented. Even if individual flats look self-contained, risks can exist in shared parts of the building, particularly around fire safety.

What would licensing mean for landlords?

If the scheme goes ahead, landlords of these properties would need to apply for a licence and show that they manage their properties properly.

This would include keeping homes in good repair, making sure fire, gas and electrical safety checks are carried out, dealing with repairs promptly, managing waste properly, and taking reasonable steps to prevent anti-social behaviour.

Most responsible landlords already do these things. Licensing is intended to make sure everyone meets the same basic standards and that poor practice is tackled more effectively.

What standards would homes need to meet?

The council is proposing a set of minimum property standards, which are included in the consultation or comment.

In simple terms, homes would need to have enough space for the number of people living there, suitable kitchens and bathrooms, proper fire safety measures, and safe gas and electrical systems. Shared areas would need to be clean, safe and well maintained, with suitable arrangements for rubbish and recycling.

The full technical standards are set out in the main consultation document. At this stage, these standards are proposals only.

How much would a licence cost?

The council is proposing a licence fee of £1,211 per property, lasting for up to five years.

By law, the fee must be levied in two parts. Part A will be payable on submission of the application and will cover the cost of processing and the administration in determining the eligibility of the application. Should the application be refused or rejected by the council or withdrawn by the applicant this first Part A payment will not be refunded.

Part B will be payable once the application has been assessed and the decision is made to grant the licence. This will cover the administration, management, and enforcement of the licensing functions for the scheme. In the event that we decide to refuse a licence application, only the Part A fee will be payable.

The Fee is as follows:

Part A – Application Fee £760

Part B – Fee on approval of licence £451

Total £1,211

This is an annual amount of £242.20 and a weekly amount of £4.66

This fee would cover the cost of running the licensing scheme, including processing applications, inspections, and ongoing monitoring. It is not a fine or a penalty.

The council is asking for views on whether this fee is fair and proportionate and the proposed discount.

How would the scheme be enforced?

Licensing would give the council clearer powers to check properties and take action where standards are not met. The focus would be on preventing problems, supporting compliance, and only using strong enforcement where necessary to protect tenant safety.

How would this help residents and communities?

For tenants, the scheme would help ensure safer homes, clearer standards, and better management.

For neighbours, it would help reduce issues such as waste, noise and poorly managed properties.

For Bolton as a whole, it would support healthier living conditions and a fairer private rented sector.

What happens next?

The consultation will run from 2nd February 12pm until Sunday 19th April 11.59pm

If the scheme is approved, it is expected to be introduced in 2026, with advance notice given to landlords and residents.

How can you have your say?

You can take part by completing the online survey, sending comments by email or post, calling the consultation phone line, or attending a drop-in or online session. Full details are provided in the main consultation materials.

Thank you for taking the time to read this summary and share your views. Your feedback will help shape how housing is managed and improved across Bolton.