



## Frequently Asked Questions

Bolton Council is consulting on proposals to introduce a boroughwide Additional Licensing Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

HMOs provide important housing for many residents, including people on low incomes, younger adults, and those unable to access other housing options. However, evidence shows that a growing number of smaller HMOs in Bolton are poorly managed or unsafe, leading to risks for tenants and negative impacts on local neighbourhoods.

The proposed Additional Licensing Scheme would give the council stronger powers to improve safety, management standards, and housing conditions in smaller HMOs and certain converted buildings that are not currently covered by mandatory licensing.

This page answers some of the most frequently asked questions about the proposals, why they are being considered, how they may affect landlords, tenants and residents, and how you can share your views before a final decision is made.

### General Overview

#### **1. What is this consultation about?**

Bolton Council is consulting on proposals to introduce a **boroughwide Additional Licensing Scheme** for smaller Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and certain converted blocks of flats, to improve safety, standards and management in the private rented sector.

#### **2. Why is the council proposing an Additional Licensing Scheme now?**

Evidence shows a significant increase in smaller HMOs across Bolton, alongside rising complaints about poor conditions, fire safety risks, overcrowding, waste and anti-social behaviour. Many of these HMOs are not currently licensed.

**3. What is an HMO?** An HMO is a property occupied by **three or more people from two or more households** who share facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom. Some converted buildings containing flats can also be classed as HMOs.

#### **4. What is Additional HMO Licensing?**

Additional Licensing is a legal power under the Housing Act 2004 that allows

councils to require **smaller HMOs** to be licensed where there is evidence of poor management or conditions.

## **5. How is this different from mandatory HMO licensing?**

Mandatory licensing already applies to HMOs with **five or more occupants**. This proposal extends licensing to **smaller HMOs** that currently fall outside the mandatory scheme.

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## **Properties Covered**

### **6. Which properties would need a licence under the proposal?**

The scheme would apply to:

- HMOs with **3–4 occupants** sharing facilities (Section 254 HMOs), and
- Certain converted buildings where standards are inadequate and most flats are rented (Section 257 HMOs).

### **7. Would the scheme apply across the whole borough?**

Yes. The proposal is for a **boroughwide scheme**, not one limited to specific wards.

### **8. Would existing HMOs be affected, or only new ones?**

Both. All **existing and future HMOs** that meet the criteria would need to be licensed.

### **9. Does this affect single-family rented homes?**

No. Single-family homes are **not included** in this proposal.

### **10. Is selective licensing being introduced as well?**

No. Bolton Council is **not proposing selective licensing** at this time.

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## **Planning and Licensing**

### **11. Is an HMO licence the same as planning permission?**

No. Licensing and planning are **separate legal processes**. Some HMOs require **both**.

### **12. What is the Article 4 Direction and how does it relate to this scheme?**

The Article 4 Direction (introduced June 2025) requires planning permission for new HMOs. Licensing focuses on **management and safety**, while planning controls **location and use**.

### **13. Can I get a licence if my property doesn't have planning permission?**

In some cases, a **short-term licence** may be issued while planning issues are resolved, but a licence does **not override planning law**.

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## **Licence Conditions and Standards**

#### **14. What types of conditions would a licence include?**

Conditions would cover fire safety, gas and electrical safety, property condition, waste management, occupancy limits, and how landlords manage tenants and anti-social behaviour.

#### **15. Will properties be inspected?**

Yes. All licensed HMOs will be **inspected at least once during the licence period**, with higher-risk properties prioritised.

#### **16. Will there be minimum room sizes and amenity standards?**

Yes. Proposed standards include **minimum bedroom sizes**, adequate kitchens and bathrooms, and limits on overcrowding.

#### **17. How will fire safety be improved?**

Licensing requires appropriate fire alarms, fire doors, protected escape routes, risk assessments, and certification tailored to the size and layout of the property.

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#### **Fees and Duration**

##### **18. How much would a licence cost?**

The proposed licence fee is **£1,211 per property**, covering administration, inspections and enforcement.

##### **19. What does the licence fee pay for?**

The fee covers application processing, inspections, compliance checks, enforcement activity, and maintaining the public register of licensed HMOs.

##### **20. How long would a licence last?**

Licences can last for **up to five years**, but may be issued for a shorter period in some circumstances.

##### **21. How is the License fee paid?**

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:

Additional HMO Licensing Fee	Amount
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Part A – Application fee (payable on submission)	£760
Part B – Fee payable on approval of licence	£451
Total licence fee	£1,211

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

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## **Impact on Landlords and Tenants**

### **22. How will this affect landlords?**

Responsible landlords benefit from clearer standards and fair competition. Those with poorly managed properties will be required to improve or face enforcement.

### **23. Could landlords pass the cost on through higher rents?**

The council recognises this risk and has assessed it through an Equality Impact Assessment. The scheme includes **mitigation measures** and monitoring.

### **24. How will tenants benefit?**

Tenants should benefit from **safer homes, better management, clearer standards**, and improved routes for raising concerns.

### **25. What if a landlord does not apply for a licence?**

Operating a licensable HMO without a licence is an offence and may result in civil penalties, prosecution, rent repayment orders, and restrictions on eviction.

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## **Communities and Neighbourhoods**

### **26. How will this help local neighbourhoods?**

Licensing helps reduce waste problems, noise, overcrowding and anti-social behaviour, improving neighbourhood appearance and stability.

### **27. Why is the scheme boroughwide rather than targeted?**

HMOs are found in **every ward**. A boroughwide scheme avoids displacement and ensures consistent standards.

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## **Equality and Fairness**

### **28. Has the impact on vulnerable groups been considered?**

Yes. An Equality Impact Assessment found the scheme is likely to have **overall positive impacts**, particularly for low-income households and vulnerable tenants.

**29. What support will be available for landlords and tenants?**

Clear guidance, accessible information, advice, and support will be provided, including alternative formats and assistance completing applications or surveys.

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**Taking Part in the Consultation****30. How can I share my views?**

You can respond online, by phone, email, post, or by attending drop-in or virtual events during the consultation period.

**31. What happens after the consultation closes?**

All feedback will be analysed and published in a Consultation Report. A final decision will then be made on whether and how the scheme is introduced.