

Notice of Motion (Full Council)

Title of Motion: **HMOs in Sandwell**

Date of Council meeting the motion is to be submitted to:

Proposer: **Councillor Cllr Luke Giles**

Seconder: **Councillor Cllr Nicola Maycock**

“Council notes community concerns about the rise in the number and concentration of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in parts of Sandwell, and the associated challenges for local communities, including parking pressures, waste management, anti-social behaviour, and impacts on community cohesion and amenities.

Council further notes that the draft Sandwell Local Plan is expected to come into effect in the first half of 2026. This will introduce a robust policy framework to control HMOs, including:

- Limiting HMOs to no more than 10% of residential properties within a 100m radius (including all existing HMOs).
- Preventing the conversion of family-sized dwellings to HMOs in areas with proven demand for family homes.
- Preventing a family home from being “sandwiched” between two HMOs or other non-family residential uses.
- Preventing the creation of a continuous frontage of three or more HMOs.
- Setting criteria for impact on neighbours, local character, parking, access to amenities, and accommodation standards.
- Requiring all HMOs to comply with Sandwell’s HMO licensing before planning permission is granted.
- Applying these policies to both new HMOs and intensification/expansion of existing HMOs.

Council previously considered an Article 4 Direction in 2022. An Article 4 Direction would require anyone wishing to convert a house to an HMO of any size to apply for planning permission, removing permitted development rights for the change of use from dwelling houses (C3) to small HMOs (C4). The council could then assess each application against local policies (such as limits on HMO numbers, protection of family homes, parking, and amenity standards). Additional HMO licensing was introduced in June 2024 to improve the management and standards of HMOs of all sizes across the borough. Landlords must apply for a licence for each HMO 3 or 4 people from 2 or

more households sharing amenities (such as kitchens or bathrooms). The council will inspect properties to ensure they meet safety and amenity standards. Failure to license a property can result in unlimited fines or civil penalties up to £30,000.

Council believes that –

- Sandwell needs a mix of housing, including family size homes and smaller low-cost properties, to meet the needs of local residents.
- The new draft Local Plan will give many more new tools to limit the proliferation of HMOs, showing how seriously the Council takes the concerns of local residents.
- The additional licensing scheme covering all sizes of HMO (not just larger ones) ensures that landlords must meet high standards and manage their properties well, and shows the Council's determination to ensure all homes are safe and that noise, waste problems and neighbour nuisance are dealt with

Council further believes that it should continue to listen to the concerns of local residents and take all further actions in their power to reduce the number of HMOs and ensure those that exist are of high quality and do not cause disruption to local communities. Article 4 Directions are a proven tool for local authorities to manage the spread of HMOs and protect residential amenity, as demonstrated in many other towns and cities across the UK.

Council therefore calls on the Leader and Cabinet to –

1. Endorse the work of officers by preparing the evidence base and supporting policies for an Article 4 Direction including mapping existing HMOs in Sandwell and assessing local impacts, and to consult with residents, ward councillors, and stakeholders, for implementation following the adoption of the new Local Plan.
2. Ensure that all future HMO applications are assessed against the new Local Plan policies, including limits on concentration, protection of family homes, and standards for accommodation and management.
3. Continue to enforce HMO licensing requirements and act against unlicensed or substandard HMOs, supporting tenants to take action against landlords who provide unsafe or poorly-managed accommodation, and by seeking the severest penalties against landlords that do not meet licensing standards.