



Consultation Representations

Article 4 Direction

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Overview and Representations

Consultation undertaken in the preparation of the Article 4 direction

Introduction

Notice has been given on the 18th March 2026 that the Council has made a Direction under Article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). A period of consultation was undertaken from 19th March and the 17th April 2026 inviting representations with consultation activities aligned with those of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document and requirements within the Schedule 3 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

Confirmation of the direction would require planning consent for the change of use of a building within Class C3 (dwelling houses) to a use falling within Class C4 (houses in multiple occupation) through the removal of permitted development rights for this type of development. The Direction would apply to the entire area of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

Representations Received / Council Consideration

During the consultation period 18 representations were received. These representations can be summarised as falling into 2 categories:

- **Organisations-** Natural England, Coal Authority, Home Office, Prism Planning, National Residential Landlords Association, Stockton Liberal Democrats, The Canal & River Trust, North Yorkshire Council, Historic England.
- **Local Resident-** 9 local residents

In deciding whether to confirm a direction made under Article 4(1), the local planning authority must take into account any representations received during the period. Responses received are detailed below alongside consideration given the Council

Representations by Organisations

Respondee	Comment / main issue(s) raised	Council response / consideration
Home Office (Asylum Support)	<p>Thank you for your correspondence of 19 March 2026 to the Home Office regarding the draft Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Supplementary Planning Document and the proposed Article 4 designation.</p> <p>We acknowledge receipt of your letter confirming that Article 4 Direction for the Stockton-on-Tees area is scheduled to come into effect on 22 March 2027.</p> <p>We have noted the contents of your correspondence. Thank you once again for taking the time to write to the Home Office.</p>	Comments noted
Rod Hepplewhite, Prism Planning	A very sensible move, IMHO, as I fail to understand why CoU from Class C3 to C4 was ever made permitted development in the first place. Class C3© should be enough (e.g. your typical student house) without needing planning permission.	Comments noted and support welcomed

	<p>Good luck with bringing the SPD into force.</p>	
The Coal Authority	<p>Thank you for your recent consultation on the draft houses in multiple occupation consultation</p> <p>The Coal Authority are a Statutory Consultee in the planning process in coalfield areas across England, Scotland and Wales.</p> <p>Is it noted that your Authority's boundary falls outside of the coalfield area. On this basis we have no interest in your plan area and no comments to make on the above consultation or on any future emerging planning policy documents.</p>	Comments noted
Natural England	<p>Thank you for your consultation request on the above dated and received by Natural England on 18th March 2026.</p> <p>Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.</p> <p>Our remit includes protected sites and landscapes, biodiversity, geodiversity, soils, protected species, landscape character, green infrastructure and access to and enjoyment of nature.</p> <p>Whilst we welcome this opportunity to give our views, the topic of the Supplementary Planning Document does not appear to relate to our interests to any significant extent. We therefore do not wish to comment.</p> <p>Should the plan be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment, then, please consult Natural England again.</p>	Comments noted
North Yorkshire Council	<p>Thank you for your email of 8th April 2026 providing us with the opportunity to comment on your current consultation on the above Supplementary Planning Document and Article 4 designation.</p> <p>We have reviewed your document and conclude that there are no cross-boundary impacts or strategic matters which require cooperation and therefore have no comments to make.</p> <p>We look forward to continued engagement between ourselves as we progress with planning documents.</p>	Comments noted
National Residential Landlords Association	<p>The NRLA is an association following the merger of the National Landlords Association and the Residential Landlords Association. Our membership represents over 110,000 landlords and agents, the largest 2enalizes2on in the sector.</p> <p>We appreciate the opportunity to provide our input on the consultation concerning the introduction of a borough wide Article 4 Direction in Stockton-on-Tees.</p> <p>The NRLA strives for a just legislative and regulatory framework for the private rented sector, ensuring that landlords are aware of their legal rights and obligations.</p>	Both the Stockton-on-Tees Plan and the Powering Our Future programme affirm the Councils commitment to driving economic growth to support community prosperity and well-being. The delivery of good quality, affordable housing in well-connected neighbourhoods is integral to this. Alongside this 'housing and the physical environment' is a focus area within A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees. HMOs form part of the

<p><u>Main Objections</u></p> <p>The need for HMOs in specific communities</p> <p>Certain segments of the community necessitate HMO accommodation, especially in student neighbourhoods and rural regions, for instance. It is exclusively the private rented sector that provides such housing alternatives.</p> <p>The council's proposal for an Article 4 Direction of this nature in a rural setting poses challenges. Rural areas usually have lower demand for HMOs; plus, rural areas often face housing shortages especially for young adults or low-income individuals or people seeking affordable shared living arrangements for example.</p> <p>Furthermore, in some rural areas, small scale HMOs support local economies by housing seasonal workers, apprentices or tourism employees. Restricting this option can undermine business needs and local vitality.</p> <p>Limiting C3 to C4 conversions removes a flexible, low-cost housing option in places that may already be struggling provide that type of property in the first place.</p> <p>Rent increases and costs</p> <p>As previously mentioned, an Article 4 Direction will diminish the availability of small HMOs in areas where there is both demand and necessity for such accommodation. Consistent with the principles of supply and demand, this will result in higher rental prices in those areas, particularly if they are in proximity to such things like major work places, infrastructure and services like hospitals. Pushing up rental levels will not help those who are seeking this type of housing.</p> <p>There is also added planning for what was previously a permitted change for a landlord, which includes planning fees, potential consultant costs and time delays. There is no guarantee of approval, even if the HMO meets safety and amenity standards.</p> <p>Enforcement activity</p> <p>Local authorities have many existing and robust enforcement powers which can be used to rectify problems in HMOs, such as-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal Behaviour Orders • Crime Prevention Injunctions • Interim Management Orders • Improvement Notices • Litter Abatement Notices (Section 92 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990) • Fixed Penalty Notices or Confiscation of equipment (Sections 8 and 10 of the Noise Act 1996) • Directions regarding the disposal of waste (for example, Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990) 	<p>borough's housing supply and contribute to residents housing choice by providing low-cost and flexible housing for residents whose housing options may be limited.</p> <p>Whilst the Article 4 direction proposed would cover the entirety of the Borough we would not consider the entirety of the borough to constitute a 'rural area' as indicated within the response.</p> <p>The Article 4 Direction does not restrict HMOs but requires an application for the change of use from C3 to C4 via the removal of permitted development rights. A Supplementary Planning Document is being prepared alongside the Article 4 direction which seeks to ensure proposals for HMOs contribute positively to making places better for people, improving standards of accommodation, and reducing detrimental impacts on neighbours. Within the SPD guidance are a series of measures which seek to avoid over-concentrations of HMOs which could lead to a community becoming unsustainably balanced and at risk of associated effects. Therefore, these measures are considered to be a pragmatic approach to achieving balanced communities and does not constitute a blanket ban.</p> <p>Enforcement powers will be used as and when appropriate. However, the approach of implementing and Article 4 direction alongside SPD is considered appropriate and pragmatic.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notices to remove rubbish from land (Section 2-3 of the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949) • Civil Penalties under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 • Prohibition Orders <p>These powers do not require consultation to implement. The local authority can work with private landlords to deal with these concerns wherever they arise.</p> <p><u>Conclusions</u></p> <p>The NRLA's position on Article 4 Directions is that they distort the housing market and that local authorities should use already existing enforcement powers rather than planning permissions to address the condition, quality and environmental issues that affect HMOs.</p> <p>We believe that landlords should retain permitted development rights as determined by demand in the market. Article 4 Directions fail to address criminal landlords and poor management as they can still operate outside of the law and acceptable standards.</p> <p>It is important that elected councillors and officials consider the overall impact on their area. There is no guarantee that planning powers will have any impact overall.</p>	
<p>The Canal & River Trust</p>	<p>We are the charity who look after and bring to life 2000 miles of canals & rivers. Our waterways contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities and economies, creating attractive and connected places to live, work, volunteer and spend leisure time. These historic, natural and cultural assets form part of the strategic and local green-blue infrastructure network, linking urban and rural communities as well as habitats. By caring for our waterways and promoting their use we believe we can improve the wellbeing of our nation. The Canal & River Trust (the Trust) is a statutory consultee in the Development Management process, and as such we welcome the opportunity to input into planning policy related matters to ensure that our waterways are protected, safeguarded and enhanced within an appropriate policy framework.</p> <p>The Trust have reviewed the document/policies contained within the document and based on the information available we have no comment to make.</p>	<p>Comments noted</p>
<p>Stockton Liberal Democrats</p>	<p>The introduction of an Article 4 Direction on HMOs is a significant step, and it's vital that it strikes the right balance between protecting communities and maintaining access to affordable housing.</p> <p>While there are legitimate concerns about the concentration of HMOs in certain areas, particularly around issues like anti-social behaviour, pressure on local services, and changes to neighbourhood character, this policy must not become a blunt instrument that limits housing supply or unfairly penalises responsible landlords.</p> <p>Stockton already faces real challenges in housing availability and affordability. HMOs, when well-managed,</p>	<p>Both the Stockton-on-Tees Plan and the Powering Our Future programme affirm the Councils commitment to driving economic growth to support community prosperity and well-being. The delivery of good quality, affordable housing in well-connected neighbourhoods is integral to this. Alongside this 'housing and the physical environment' is a focus area within A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees. HMOs form part of the borough's housing supply and</p>

	<p>play an important role in providing flexible, lower-cost accommodation for working people, young residents, and those in transition. Restricting them without a clear, evidence-led approach risks pushing people into more precarious or unsuitable housing situations.</p> <p>The key here is enforcement and standards, not just restriction. Poorly managed properties and rogue landlords should be the priority for action, rather than imposing blanket controls that impact everyone.</p> <p>The Council must ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions are based on robust local data, not perception • There is clear engagement with residents, landlords, and tenants • The policy is regularly reviewed for unintended consequences • Resources are in place to enforce existing regulations effectively <p>If this directive is to work, it must be part of a wider housing strategy, one that increases supply, improves standards, and supports sustainable communities across Stockton.</p> <p>Without that, there is a real risk this becomes more about optics than outcomes.</p>	<p>contribute to residents housing choice by providing low-cost and flexible housing for residents whose housing options may be limited.</p> <p>A Supplementary Planning Document is being prepared alongside the Article 4 direction which seeks to ensure proposals for HMOs contribute positively to making places better for people, improving standards of accommodation, and reducing detrimental impacts on neighbours. Within the SPD guidance are a series of measures which seek to avoid over-concentrations of HMOs which could lead to a community becoming unsustainably balanced and at risk of associated effects. Therefore, these measures are considered to be a pragmatic approach to achieving balanced communities and does not constitute a blanket ban.</p> <p>The LA has two regulatory controls which can be applied that require landlords to effectively manage HMOs. These are mandatory HMO licensing and selective licensing.</p> <p>Once adopted the SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning application. Once a new local plan is adopted, existing Local Plan policies and SPDs would be considered out-of-date. Therefore, the appropriate place to consider policy review will be through the preparation of the Local Plan for the borough.</p>
<p>Historic England</p>	<p>Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above. Historic England is the Government’s statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. We are a non departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). We champion and protect England’s historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.</p> <p>We note how HMOs form part of the boroughs housing supply, contribute towards meeting housing needs, and support the continued viable use or re-use of vacant</p>	<p>Comments noted. Matters relating to the draft SPD have been considered within the consultation statement associated with the SPD.</p>

	<p>buildings as set out in Section 4: (Guidance / Overview). They also intensify use of properties and hence concentrations of HMOs can impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties and the character of the local area. The Council are proposing to put in place an Article 4 Direction, and associated SPD, to support mixed and balanced communities and ensure new HMOs do not result in adverse impacts on local amenity and quality of life.</p> <p>Article 4 Direction</p> <p>We note the intention is for the Article 4 to apply to all land within the administrative area of the Council including all conservation areas. Stockton Borough Council has 11 in total. We have no comments on the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Article 4 Direction itself but refer you to our comments below.</p> <p>Draft SPD</p> <p><u>Section 3</u> The adopted heritage policy is included in Section 3 / Policy Context / Local Plan 2019. We support the reference to Policy HE2 – Conserving and Enhancing Stockton’s Heritage Assets. We support the inclusion of this policy.</p> <p><u>Section 4</u> Three measures (or tests) are set out in the SPD. These would be material in the assessment of planning applications for HMOs across the borough including in all conservation areas. These aim to 1) avoid concentrations of HMOs 2) avoid grouping of HMOs and 3) avoid a C3 use being sandwiched between HMOs.</p> <p>We support the positive statement that HMOs support ‘continued viable use or re-use of vacant buildings’ in Section 4, but question why the SPD does not give any weight to a proposal which brings a vacant building back into active use. For example, where an HMO is proposed within a vacant designated heritage asset, or non-designated heritage asset - including those on a Local List put in place by the Council in the future - this could be included as an additional test.</p> <p>We refer you to our publication and research on how repurposing built heritage can help create dynamic, comforting, and sustainable living places Heritage Works for Housing Historic England. Historic England research provides evidence on how empty traditional properties can contribute to housing delivery. Figures from 2025 indicated 670,000 new homes could be provided in vacant floor space within historic buildings across England.</p> <p><u>Section 5</u> There is little reference to the historic environment other than in the Section 5 (Achieving good accommodation standards / External Alterations). The text in this section does not reference works to listed buildings being subject to additional controls. We suggest the following amendments and additions to this paragraph.</p>	
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	<p>Care and attention are required where a proposal is located within a conservation area or is a listed building. Applicants will be required to ensure that proposals accord with policies on conserving and enhancing the historic environment.</p> <p>If a building is located within one of the Borough's 11 conservation areas, we encourage review of the Conservation Area Management Plan and the associated Character Appraisal Supplementary Planning Document - Conservation and Historic Environment Folder and management plan. As an example, there may be a requirement for features such as original timber windows to be incorporated into conversion schemes for guidance on appropriate external alterations.</p> <p>Where a building is listed, external and internal alterations require listed building consent. Such alterations are required to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the building. It is important to consider this requirement when designing internal layouts (Figure 10), formulating energy efficiency measures and when considering any alterations to improve natural light, introduce entrance points and provide external storage.</p> <p>If you have any queries about any of the matters raised above or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.</p>	
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Representations by Local Residents

Respondee	Comment / main issue(s) raised	Council response / how this has been addressed within the SPD
Response 1	I agree that the change proposed will be of benefit to local communities within Stockton, and i commend officers for working to deliver this change.	Comments noted and support welcomed
Response 1	<p>I wish to be consulted on Article 4 notification. Around 3/4 years ago a property developer purchased the property next door to ours.</p> <p>We were told at the time it was for student accommodation. When occupants were put into the property we found out it was actually an HMO. Since this point we have had to endure the slamming of the front door of the property and loud banging noises from within the property through the night.</p> <p>The exterior of the property is poorly maintained and falling into disrepair. We have approached the 'owner / operator' <i>#response moderated to remove identifiable information#</i> on numerous occasions to voice our concerns though nothing seems to be done about it. We are not happy that nothing is being done to improve matters.</p>	<p>The article 4 notice was served in accordance with Schedule 3 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Should the Article 4 direction be confirmed it will also be undertaken in accordance with the same legislation.</p> <p>Respondee has been contacted in relation to remaining elements of the response.</p>
Response 3	I fully support this proposal as described on this website.	Comments noted and support welcomed
Response 4	You should also include change of use from C3 to C2 as well as C3 to C4 to create the need for a planning application instead of just an application for lawful permission. This would allow local people to have a	Change of use from C3 to C2 does not constitute permitted development and as such planning consent is normally required. It should be noted that there

	say in their local area, which at present, on this matter, we do not.	is case law that indicates exceptions where a material change of use has not occurred. However, this would be on a case-by-case basis, and would not be resolved through the introduction of an Article 4 direction.
Response 5	I don't know what this means.	Comments noted
Response 6	Anybody who wants to turn a house into a HMO should require planning permission. Irrelevant of the size of the property.	Comments noted
Response 7	We dont want it	Comments noted
Response 8	Self	Comments noted
Response 9	Restricting the HMO business in anyway takes away the chance for creating new business, revenue, jobs and economic advantages. There are many abandoned buildings available for new business. The landlords have already sold their cheaper stock and are hanging on the open market. Making more barriers for business does provide growth,, which is what the country needs to present.	<p>HMOs form part of the borough's housing supply and contribute to residents housing choice by providing low-cost and flexible housing for residents whose housing options may be limited. The Article 4 Direction does not restrict HMOs but requires an application for the change of use from C3 to C4 via the removal of permitted development rights.</p> <p>The associated SPD seeks to ensure proposals for HMOs contribute positively to making places better for people, improving standards of accommodation, and reducing detrimental impacts on neighbours. Within the SPD guidance are a series of measures which seek to avoid over-concentrations of HMOs which could lead to a community becoming unsustainably balanced and at risk of associated effects. Therefore, these measures are considered to be a pragmatic approach to achieving balanced communities and does not constitute a blanket ban.</p>

Outcome

Having considered and taken into account the representations received, the local planning authority intends to confirm the Article 4 Direction. Necessary processes will be undertaken, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) to confirm the Direction which will come into force on Monday 22nd March 2027.