

Bedford Borough Council
Houses in Multiple Occupation
Supplementary Planning Document

For Consultation

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1 Introduction and Purpose

1.1 Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document

1.1.1 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) has been published to assist applicants - either landlords or developers - to make successful applications for development and to aid the Council in making consistent and transparent decisions when determining applications in relation to HMOs. The guidance applies for the creation of new HMOs or the addition of rooms to existing HMOs. Once adopted, it becomes a material consideration when determining planning applications.

1.1.2 HMOs play an important part of the housing mix within Bedford. The Council recognises their important role for providing accommodation to students, migrant workers, those on lower incomes and those who are not in a position or desire to own a home. There are also many property owners who may wish to contribute to meeting the demand for HMOs. However, as with other types of development an over concentration of a single type of dwelling may cause harm to an area. In 2019, the Council commissioned an independent study to review the evidence relating to the impact of HMOs in Bedford. This study concluded:

"There is evidence that in some areas, concentrations of HMOs are leading to a change in character which is having a harmful impact on the amenity and proper planning of the area. This is principally related to visual character and appearance though there is a moderate correlation between environmental complaint indicators and HMOs which should also be taken into account as part of a cumulative impact"¹

1.1.3 The principles within this document seek to provide guidance to manage the development of HMOs and their impact on visual character and appearance in addition to ensuring that they provide a high standard of living for prospective residents.

1.1.4 This document expands on and provides guidance on the application of the following policies contained within the adopted Bedford Local Plan 2030 as applicable to Houses in Multiple Occupation.

- Policy 2s - Healthy Communities
- Policy 30 - The Impact of Development - Design Impacts
- Policy 31 - The Impact of Development - Access Impacts
- Policy 32 - The Impact of Development - Disturbance and Pollution Impacts
- Policy 33 - The Impact of Development - Infrastructure Impacts

¹ WYG (2019) Bedford HMO Study- paragraph 8.1.1

- 1.1.5 The principles within this SPD are applicable to all areas within the administrative boundary of Bedford Borough. Property owners who wish to use their premises for HMO purposes under Permitted Development Rights (where no planning approval is required) are also strongly recommended to take these principles into account.

1.2 Definition of a House in Multiple Occupation:

- 1.2.1 Shared houses are known collectively as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The definition of HMOs can be found in Part 2 of the 2004 Housing Act and also the government website <https://www.gov.uk/private-renting/houses-in-multiple-occupation>
- 1.2.2 In summary, an HMO is a building or part of a building occupied by *at least 3* tenants, forming more than one household and where toilet, bathroom and/or kitchen facilities are shared. A dwellinghouse becomes an HMO if it is occupied by *3 or more unrelated* persons.

Aims of this SPD:

- 1.2.3 This SPD aims to provide guidance for applications to convert, use or develop properties for multiple occupation. It will be used by those making applications to inform them about the Council's requirements and standards for houses in multiple occupation and by Planning Officers to aid their assessment of such application.

2 Planning Policy Context:

- 2.1.1 This SPD has been informed by national and local policies together with the supporting evidence set out within the Bedford Borough Council HMO Study².
- 2.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019) sets out that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives: Social, Environmental and Economic. This SPD helps to ensure that within Bedford Borough, these roles can be balanced to create and support strong, vibrant and healthy communities. The table below summarises how these considerations have been embedded into this SPD:

Table 1: Role of Planning

Role of Planning	Aim	Approach
Social	to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment	Ensuring that HMOs contribute to providing housing for residents that require them; helping to ensure proposals contribute to a well-designed place and having regard to safety and security through design-led interventions.
Environmental	to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment;	Providing tools to ensure that proposals do not result in cumulative impacts that have an adverse impact on the built and historic environment.
Economic	to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy	Ensuring that HMOs can continue to form part of the overall housing mix for Bedford providing homes to support the local economy

- 2.1.3 The Bedford Local Plan 2030 does not contain a specific policy on HMOs. This SPD therefore provides additional detail as to how the principles of key policies relate to proposals for HMOs.

² WYG (2019) Bedford HMO Study

- **2S - Healthy Communities** particularly “ii. To have a positive relationship with the surrounding area, integrating well with and complementing the character of the area in which the development is located”
- **30 - Impact of Development - Design impacts**, ensuring positive contributions to the area’s character and identity, promote accessibility and permeability and the incorporation of measures to promote community safety ensuring private and public amenity spaces are clearly defined and integrate functional needs such as refuse/ recycling storage and collection points, car and cycle parking.
- **31 - The impact of development - access impacts** which relates in part to parking provision, safety or general disturbance and access arrangements
- **32 - The impact of development - disturbance and pollution impacts** which covers a range of considerations such as noise, vibration, smell, tranquillity, the suitability of the existing environment and factors which might give rise to disturbance of neighbours including overlooking, crime and community safety
- **33 - The impact of development - infrastructure impacts** which seeks to ensure that proposals are not harmful (including cumulative impacts) on the adequacy of existing infrastructure for example on utilities, schools, health and community facilities.

2.1.4 To reflect the local and national policy context, this SPD has been structured around four guiding principles. Table 2: Principles and their relationship with Local and National Policy summarises the related policy and strand of sustainability:

Table 2: Principles and their relationship with Local and National Policy

Principle	NPPF Principles			Bedford Local Plan 2030 Policy				
	Economic	Environmental	Social	Policy 2S	Policy 30	Policy 31	Policy 32	Policy 33
Principle 1: Maintaining Mixed and Balanced Communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Principle 2: Creating a Healthy Living Environment		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Principle 3: Ensuring Safe Access and Adequate Parking		✓				✓		

Principle 4: Creating Well-designed Places

		✓			✓		✓	
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3 Making a Planning Application

3.1 Planning Application Process:

3.1.1 Prior to submitting any proposals or planning applications, applicants are advised to engage in the pre-application process provided by the Council. Further information can be obtained via: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building/contact-planning/do-i-need-planning-permission/>.

3.1.2 Applications will need to be accompanied by the relevant supporting evidence. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Site Location Plan
- Internal layout plans
- Layout plans showing parking provision, drying areas and garden space
- Elevation plans where any extensions or new openings such as windows and doors are proposed
- Supporting statement including details of proposed parking provision
- Any required supporting evidence; for example, parking surveys.

3.1.3 A full list of the council's validation requirements together with details of how to make an application and any fees payable can be found on the Bedford Borough Council website via: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-applications/apply-for-planning-permission/planning-application-forms/>

3.2 The Use Classes Order and Article 4 Direction:

3.2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) provide details of the relevant Use Classes applicable to dwellinghouses and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

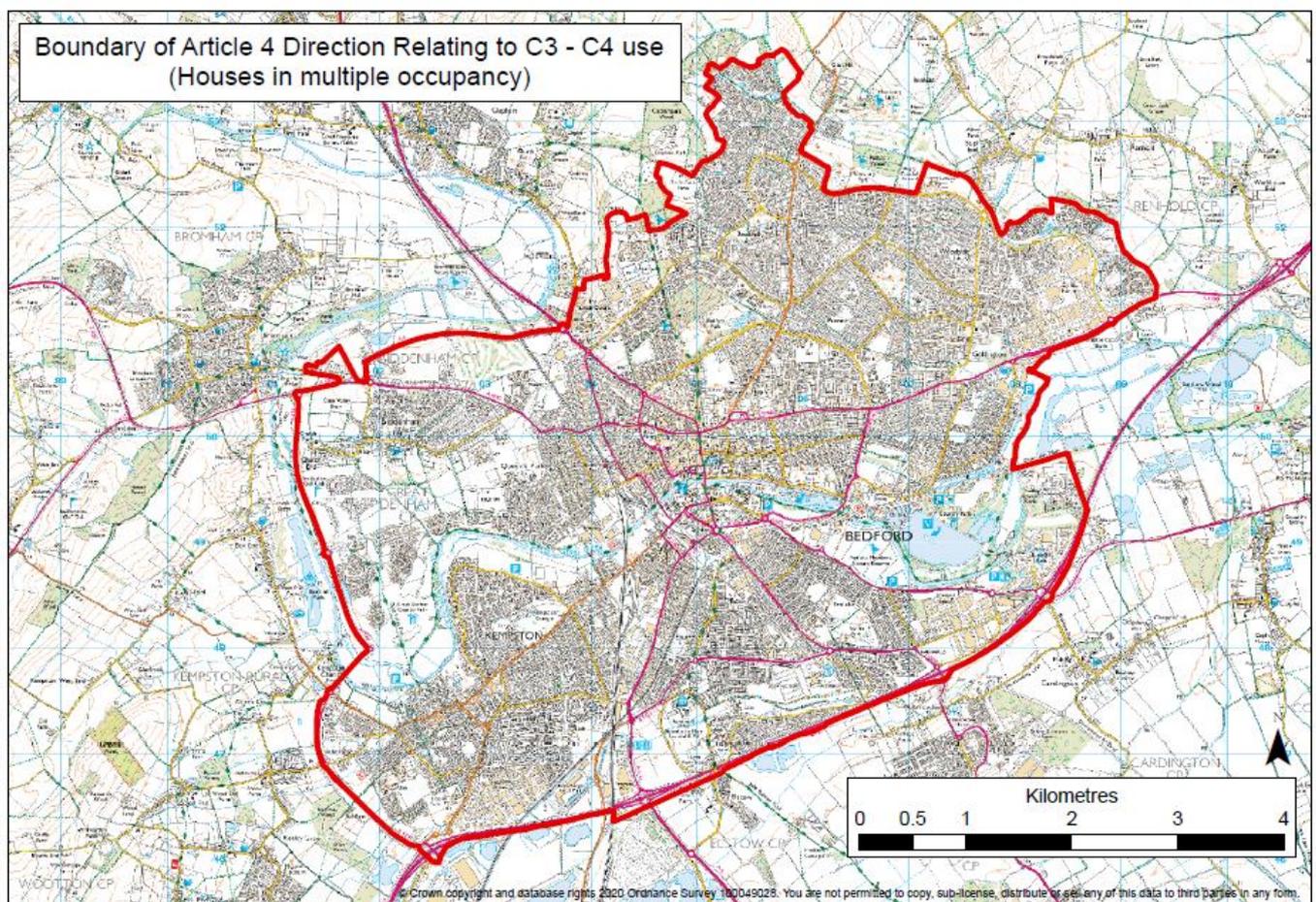
3.2.2 More detail on the Use Classes Order can be found here on the Planning Portal website: https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/9/change_of_use_

3.3 Article 4 Direction:

3.3.1 On **XXX** an Article 4 Direction came into force within Bedford Borough (readers – please note that a decision on whether to confirm the Article 4 Direction is due in November 2020) removing the permitted development right that allows a change of use from a dwellinghouse to a small house in multiple occupation. The use of an Article 4 direction does not mean development is not allowed, it means an application is required so that the proposal can be considered against relevant planning policies and considerations.

3.3.2 The area covered by the Article 4 for HMOs is set out below:

Figure 1: Area covered by Article 4



3.4 Is Planning Permission Required in Bedford Borough?

Change	Do I need Permission?
Change the use of a dwellinghouse (C3) to a small HMO (C4) of 3 – 6 unrelated persons in the built-up area of Bedford as defined on the map.	Yes- where the application falls within the area covered by the Article 4 Direction. Where the property is not located within the urban area an application is not required.
Applications for change of use from C3/C4 to a large HMO (Sui Generis) accommodated by more than 6 unrelated persons	Yes
Applications for the development of a large HMO (Sui Generis) accommodated by more than 6 unrelated persons	Yes
Development of a purpose-built HMO regardless of the number of persons sharing	Yes
Change of use of a other residential or non-residential property to a small or large HMO	Yes

3.5 HMO Licensing:

- 3.5.1 HMO Licensing is an entirely separate procedure from applying for planning permission and securing a licence does not necessarily guarantee compliance with the other. **All houses let in multiple occupation must be properly managed in accordance with the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006 SI 2006/372 and comply with local authority agreed conditions.** In addition to mandatory licensing, Bedford Borough Council also operates an additional licensing scheme. It is the responsibility of landlords to ensure that their property is operating with the correct licence and failure to do so is a criminal offence.
- 3.5.2 Further information on licensing can be obtained from the Public Sector Housing team or online via: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/housing/houses-in-multiple-occupation/hmo-licensing-information/>

Part 2: Making an Application: Principles and Conditions

4 Guidance:

All planning applications for the creation of new HMOs either through new development or change of use, in addition to change of use from a Small HMO (C4) to a Large HMO (Sui Generis) through the addition of new living spaces, will need to have regard to the guidance and principles set out within this SPD which are drafted around four core principles. All applicants are encouraged to use the Council's pre-application advice service in advance of making a formal application.

Principle 1: Maintaining Balanced, Inclusive and Mixed Communities

- 4.1.1 Local Plan **Policy 28S - Place Making** recognises that our quality of living is affected by our surroundings and has influences on the levels of crime, health, inclusion, community cohesion and wellbeing. Achieving an appropriate housing mix to meet Bedford's needs is vital to create the sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities³ envisaged within the Local Plan's vision.
- 4.1.2 Bedford Borough Council recognise that HMOs form an important part of the housing mix through the provision of flexible, affordable rental accommodation with rents for an en-suite bedroom in an HMO lower than the cost of a 1-bed flat. However, as evidenced in the report on the impact of HMO development⁴, an over-concentration of HMO accommodation in some areas of the town has led to identifiable impacts on amenity including: increases in waste associated problems due to inadequate or inappropriate waste storage; an increase in noise complaints and anti-social behaviour; visual impacts such as increased 'clutter' or unsympathetic creation of parking and waste storage areas over former garden spaces, and unsympathetic security measures and reported parking issues resulting in cumulative impacts on residential amenity.
- 4.1.3 Principle 1 is intended to support the creation of sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities and minimise cumulative impacts on amenity by avoiding an oversaturation of HMOs in any single area.

³ Bedford Local Plan 2030- Paragraph 10.11

⁴ WYG (2019) Bedford HMO Study

Principle 1: Maintaining Balanced, Inclusive and Mixed Communities

Planning applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation, including those which seek to add additional bed spaces, may be acceptable where:

- (a) They will not result in the total number of HMO households⁵ exceeding 30% relative to the total number of properties within a 100m radius of the application property; and***
- (b) They do not result in 3 or more adjacent HMO Properties or the sandwiching of family housing.***

Applications that are acceptable under principle 1 will still need to demonstrate how they comply with applicable local plan policies and the principles set out within the SPD.

Helps to deliver Local Plan 2030 Policies:

Policy 2S - Healthy Communities

Policy 33 - The impact of development - Infrastructure Impacts

4.1.4 Principle 1 aims to ensure that the demand for HMO accommodation can be met across the Bedford Urban Area in a way that does not lead to adverse impacts on the character of an area through a saturation of a single type of home. It has been developed to ensure that, when determining planning applications for HMO development, including the extension of HMOs to add additional rooms, there is not an over concentration in particular areas. To achieve this, the council will apply two measures:

- An overall threshold within a defined area applying to HMO⁶ households, and;
- Measures to manage the distribution within the immediate vicinity of a proposed property.

⁵ For the purposes of this SPD a 'household' is measured by the number of licensed bedrooms. 1 licensed bedroom = 1 HMO household irrespective of the number of inhabitants.

⁶ For the purposes of this measure, properties that have been converted into flats, known as "Section 257 HMOs" will not be counted as an HMO. These properties are part of Bedford Borough's additional licensing scheme but are not considered HMOs for the purposes of this SPD.

4.2 Managing the Concentration of HMOs

- 4.2.1 The overall threshold has been set to balance the need to ensure that communities remain mixed, whilst not precluding new HMO accommodation where it can helpfully and appropriately contribute to meeting overall housing needs. The threshold is intended to manage the cumulative impact of large and small HMOs within the immediate and wider area and to ensure that the planning process is able to manage the impacts of piecemeal expansion of HMOs effectively through the addition of extra rooms for additional households.
- 4.2.2 To achieve this effectively, the Council will seek to control the percentage of HMO households relative to the total number of properties - including family homes, shops and offices - within a 100m radius.
- 4.2.3 To calculate the number of HMO properties in each area, the Council will use a combination of data sources, including:
- HMO licensing data;
 - Planning records including properties subject to current applications and enforcement action;
 - GIS HMO layers.⁷
- Other sources as and when necessary such as Council Tax data
- 4.2.4 The radius of 100m will be measured in a straight-line distance from the centre of the subject property⁸. If any part of an HMO property boundary falls within the radius of 100m it will be included in its entirety in the calculations.
- 4.2.5 Bedford Borough Council has publicly available GIS layers (mapping) showing the location of licensed HMOs (large and small) and the number of licensed households within each. These layers can be used by applicants seeking to convert a property to HMO use to understand the number of HMO properties and the number of HMO households within the immediate vicinity of the application property and the likelihood that an area is reaching the 30% threshold. However, applicants must accept that actual data held by the Council will ultimately be used to determine the application.
- 4.2.6 **A worked example of Principle 1(a) is provided in Appendix 1 to assist making a successful application.**

⁷ These will be maintained by the council and updated when new licences are issued.

⁸ The "subject property" is the property subject to a planning application for conversion or extension.

4.3 Managing the Frequency of HMOs

4.3.1 The evidence suggests that in streets where there are multiple adjacent HMOs there are adverse impacts on visual amenity and increased concerns from local communities. Principle 1(b) seeks to ensure that where a proposal may be acceptable in terms of the wider area, it will not result in a concentration of HMO uses in specific streets and clusters. This is particularly important in the older areas of Bedford characterised by high density Victorian and Edwardian style terraced streets which have a higher population density. In general, proposals for new HMO accommodation should not:

- Result in three or more adjacent HMO properties; or
- Result in the 'sandwiching' of a dwellinghouse (C3) property

4.3.2 For the purposes of this SPD, an adjacent property is any property that shares one or more boundaries. For example, in a terraced street this would include the immediate neighbouring property and those where the rear garden is adjoining.

Principle 2: Creating a Healthy Living Environment

- 4.3.3 The majority of HMOs within Bedford Borough are formed through the conversion of existing residential properties. It is important that conversions result in a high-quality living environment for residents taking into consideration space and facilities including room sizes, health and safety, natural light and ventilation, internal layouts and access to open space. This will ensure that HMOs will contribute towards achieving relevant Local Plan Policies including **Policy 2S - Healthy Communities**
- 4.3.4 In addition to planning permission, before an HMO may operate applicants may be required to gain additional approvals including Building Regulations approval and an appropriate HMO licence before it can legally operate. Bedford Borough Council operates an 'Additional' Licensing scheme. As such, in addition to the mandatory licensing scheme for large HMOs, all small HMOs and some flats (known as S257 HMOs) require a licence to legally operate. Further information on Licensing is available from Bedford Borough Council's Housing Team <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/housing/houses-in-multiple-occupation/hmo-licensing-information/>.
- 4.3.5 Bedford Borough Council may grant licences ahead of a property being granted planning permission. The length of such licences will be for a shorter period of time to allow for permission to be applied for. This should be discussed with the Council's housing team. When considering applications for licensing, the Council's housing team may refer to the "*Guide for standards in houses in multiple occupation*" (updated in 2009) (or its successor document) to assist applicants to meet the required standards of safety for licensing. This document covers several aspects including management, repairs, electrical safety, fire safety, natural light and ventilation, and the basic amenity standards for example for bathroom facilities.
- 4.3.6 Further information on the requirements for Building Regulations Approval is available via the Council's website.
- 4.3.7 **The grant of planning permission does not mean that a property will be granted a licence to operate. Furthermore, the grant of a licence does not mean that a property will be granted planning permission for conversion to an HMO.**

Principle 2: Creating a Healthy Living Environment

Planning applications to convert a building into a House in Multiple Occupation or to extend an existing HMO (use class C4 or Sui Generis) to create additional bed spaces, will be required to demonstrate that the proposal has been designed to provide a high level of amenity for new and existing residents and to provide a healthy and safe living environment.

Proposals will be expected to provide:

- *A well laid out living environment⁹;*
- *Safe and secure bedrooms of an appropriate size for the number of proposed occupants.*
- *Kitchen area(s) and other shared communal spaces suitable for the proposed number of occupants;*
- *Adequate bathroom and sanitary facilities for the proposed number of occupants;*
- *Facilities for the drying of clothes and other laundry; and*
- *Access to private outdoor amenity space and/or located in close proximity to public open space.*

Helps to deliver Local Plan 2030 Policy:

Policy 2S - Healthy Communities

4.4 Suitable Properties and Layouts:

- 4.4.1 Whilst there is no specified minimum size for properties to be considered suitable for conversion into an HMO, not every property will be suitable for conversion or extension. When considering if a property may be suitable for use as an HMO, the quality of the overall living space will be a key consideration. In general, properties will need to provide residents with privacy, natural light and ventilation, appropriate facilities and suitable communal spaces commensurate with the size of the HMO and proposed number of residents. For the purpose of this SPD, “communal area” means a furnished lounge area or dining room of at least sufficient size for residents to sit down and relax or enjoy a meal.

⁹ For example: ensuring bedrooms are located away from communal areas and that where required, sub-division of rooms does not result in the creation of long or narrow corridors.

4.4.2 In addition, to protect the amenity and character of the local area HMO proposals will need to demonstrate they can provide the required standard of waste storage for the number of residents.

Layout:

4.4.3 For some HMOs, particularly smaller HMOs, there may be little change made to the internal layout of a property when converting the property for use as an HMO. However, others may require more extensive building work including the addition of new bathrooms and kitchens, the sub-division of larger rooms and the conversion of former living spaces to bedrooms (or bedsits). Where properties are undergoing more significant change, careful consideration should be given to the configuration of spaces to provide a high-quality living environment. In general, this will include:

- Opportunities to maximise natural light and ventilation in all living areas;
- The avoidance of narrow corridors or configurations that lead to unsafe layouts; and
- Ensuring bedrooms are located away from kitchens and communal spaces where possible

4.4.4 Where possible, external alterations such as the addition or removal of windows should be avoided to minimise harm to the character of the street. However, modest alterations/additions and the addition or relocation of window and door openings may be appropriate in some cases. These should be discussed as part of the pre-application process and would be considered having regard to relevant policies of the Local Plan and other design guidance.

Property Size:

4.4.5 Whilst there is no minimum size for a property to be converted to an HMO, it is unlikely that smaller, terraced properties will be able to deliver the standards of living space expected through conversion or extensions to add new rooms where these are not matched with additional communal facilities. In 2015, the Government published nationally described space standards for new dwellings. The Nationally Described Minimum Space Standards¹⁰ only apply to new-build dwellings and have no other statutory purpose. However, the standards have been included for indicative purposes as properties that exceed these minimum standards are

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524531/160519_Nationally_Described_Space_Standard_Final_Web_version.pdf

more likely to be able to accommodate a healthy living environment for residents, providing good levels of amenity.

Table 3: Nationally Described Minimum Space Standards (in m2 for a 2 storey dwelling)

Number of Bedrooms	4 persons	5 Persons	6 Persons	7 Persons	8 Persons
3-Bed	84	93	102	N/A	N/A
4-Bed	N/A	97	106	115	124
5-Bed	N/A	N/A	110	119	128

Table 4: Nationally Described Minimum Space Standards (in m2 for a 3 storey dwelling)

Number of Bedrooms	4 persons	5 Persons	6 Persons	7 Persons	8 Persons
3-Bed	90	99	108	N/A	N/A
4-Bed	N/A	103	112	121	130
5-Bed	N/A	N/A	116	125	134

Bedroom sizes:

4.4.6 Within HMO accommodation, bedrooms provide the private space for residents. The licensing regime sets out a minimum size for bedrooms¹¹. Table 6 sets out the minimum size of bedrooms (where communal facilities are and are not provided) required for licensing¹², together with the National Space Standards for bedrooms. Where possible minimum sizes should be exceeded.

Table 5: Minimum Bedroom Size (no Kitchen)

Bedspaces (no. of people)	HMO Licensing Minimum (sqm)- with communal area	HMO Licensing Minimum (sqm)- no communal area	National Minimum (sqm)- assumes communal areas
One	6.51	8	7.5
Two	10.22	13	11.5

¹¹ Bedford Borough Council Standards in HMOs- see: [https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Housing/Good%20practice%20guide%20HMOs%20April%202018%20\(4\).pdf](https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Housing/Good%20practice%20guide%20HMOs%20April%202018%20(4).pdf)

¹² where communal facilities are available within the property

4.4.7 As with the size of the property, the national space standards have been included as rooms that meet this size are more likely to provide a healthy living environment with sufficient storage for personal possessions and room to relax. The measurements **exclude** space with a headroom of under 1.524m (e.g. eaves or sloping ceilings) as per licensing requirements. However, so long as the minimum size for licensing has been met, the size of the bedrooms will be assessed in combination with the standards of other facilities available within the property.

4.4.8 In assessing proposals for HMOs, all bedrooms should provide:

- A suitable layout that minimises wasted space
- Natural light and ventilation
- Areas for storage of personal possessions
- Wash basin with hot and cold water¹³

4.4.9 Bedroom windows should also consider the outlook. Proposals where windows provide a limited or restricted outlook will be resisted.

4.5 Shared Facilities:

Communal Areas:

4.5.1 Communal areas to include seating areas and dining rooms are encouraged within HMOs to provide amenity space outside of private bedrooms and to promote opportunities for social interaction. All communal areas should have natural light and ventilation and be of an appropriate size for the number of residents. Where possible, they should be located close to kitchens, but away from bedrooms to minimise disturbance to residents.

Kitchens:

4.5.2 Access to good kitchen facilities is vital for the preparation of food and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Proposals will need to contain information about how each household will have access to kitchen facilities; be these individual or shared. Shared kitchens should be located a reasonable distance from bedrooms (no more than one floor). Where no separate dining area or communal area is provided, the kitchen should also have enough space for residents to eat meals, so they do not have to use their bedroom space for this purpose.

¹³ The corresponding housing regulations that apply to HMO properties require HMOs for 5 or more persons to provide a wash hand basin with hot and cold water and waste drainage where reasonably practicable to do so. For new HMOs or extensions, the Council encourages a wash basin to be provided in each bedroom where possible to do so irrespective of the size.

Where kitchens are located within bedroom spaces (bedsits) consideration will be given to the overall layout to ensure that proposals are hygienic.

4.5.3 The precise kitchen facilities that need to be provided will depend upon the number of occupiers and are assessed as part of the licensing regime. For planning purposes, within small HMOs (i.e. up to six residents) applicants will need to demonstrate that the kitchen area can accommodate the minimum facilities as follows¹⁴:

- Appropriately sized sink (minimum 1 ½) with drainer with mixer tap and supply of hot and cold water
- A cooker, grill and 4-ring hob
- Food preparation area minimum of 1500mm length (excluding 300mm on each side of cooker)
- Food storage areas of standard depth and height
- Area for a suitably sized refrigerator with freezer
- Area for washing machine
- Bin storage

4.5.4 Kitchen arrangements must demonstrate that the facilities can be provided safely, for example ovens and hobs should not be close to doorways and should have fitted work surfaces on either side. They will also need to be externally ventilated.

4.5.5 Within bedsits, more compact provision may be appropriate. For example, a cooking area comprising two rings and a mini oven, with space for fridge and work surface. The layout must contribute to a safe and hygienic living space.

Drying Areas:

4.5.6 HMO properties should provide indoor and outdoor areas for the drying of laundry. This does not need to be a dedicated drying room and could for example be combined with a utility area. However, the area proposed should be well ventilated to avoid condensation. The use of airing cupboards, kitchens or bedrooms will not be considered suitable. Outside drying space should be capable of providing a rotary/umbrella washing line or a long line and not overlap with storage for bicycles or bins (or car parking if provided).

¹⁴ As set out within the Bedford Borough Council Guide to HMOs. See: [https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Housing/Good%20practice%20guide%20HMOs%20%20April%202018%20\(4\).pdf](https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Housing/Good%20practice%20guide%20HMOs%20%20April%202018%20(4).pdf)

4.5.7 There are no prescribed size thresholds for drying areas and each proposal will be assessed on its own merits considering the proposed number of residents and location of the HMO.

4.6 Outdoor Amenity Space:

4.6.1 It is important for residents to have access to some private or, semi-private outdoor space only available to residents of that property. However, it is recognised that in order to meet other requirements of this SPD (for example, to ensure adequate parking for vehicles and bicycles set out in Principle 3) and the appropriate storage of bins (Principle 4), some space may be lost or repurposed.

4.6.2 In general, rear gardens should be approximately 50 sqm. This size provides a modestly sized garden and, in most cases, can accommodate a sitting out area, clothes drying area, small shed (or bicycle storage) and an area for the storage of refuse. These should be marked out on the layout plan. However, where the garden is not 50 sqm (such as in areas in and around the town centre), the requirement for private or semi-private spaces may be reduced where the applicant can demonstrate that:

- (a) Appropriate storage and drying areas can be provided in accordance with other principles within this SPD; and
- (b) the property is within 400m walking distance (approximately a 5-minute walk) of a public open space.

Principle 3: Ensuring Safe Access and Adequate Parking

- 4.6.3 Many HMOs in Bedford are in areas considered to be more sustainable by virtue of proximity to the town centre, employment opportunities and public transport networks. To help encourage residents to make sustainable choices it is important that HMOs, like other forms of development, provide safe access and secure storage for bicycles. However, not all HMOs are located within the town centre and, even for those that are, additional households may result in more cars being parked locally.
- 4.6.4 Across Bedford there are several Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs). These are areas where a permit is required to park on-street. Bedford Borough Council is responsible for issuing permits. At present, conversions within existing CPZs will not qualify for a resident's permit. This means that, within the CPZ, the numbers of cars and where they are parked can be controlled to some extent. However, regard will be had to the size of the property and its location in relation to uncontrolled areas to ensure that an increase in the number of households would not have a significant adverse impact on surrounding streets.
- 4.6.5 It is important that proposals, either for the creation of a new HMO or the addition of bedrooms, have regard to the guidance contained within the Bedford Borough Council Sustainable Parking SPD (2014), or any successor document.

Principle 3: Ensuring Safe Access and Adequate Parking

Proposals for new HMOs should ensure that they can be safely accessed. The main access point should be from the street and free from obstructions including car parking and bin storage.

New HMOs (and the addition of new HMO bed spaces in existing HMOs) will need to make provision for adequate cycle and car parking. The Council will apply the standard for cycle and vehicle parking as follows¹⁵:

- Cycle parking and storage: 1 per bedroom up to 10 bedrooms, and 1 per 2 bedrooms thereafter for long stay (residents) plus 0.5 short stay bicycle spaces per bedroom (visitors)***
- Car parking: 1 vehicle space per bedroom plus 0.4 visitor spaces per bedroom***

¹⁵ These standards may be subject to change should the Sustainable Parking SPD be updated

When calculating the number of vehicle spaces, proposals that provide a lower level of parking or a 'car free' development may be acceptable:

- (a) where the proposal is within a current Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ); or*
- (b) demonstrated to be located within an otherwise highly accessible location and does not result in the loss of all or the majority of existing garden space; and*
- (c) any potential parking impact on existing on-street parking is demonstrated to be acceptable.*

To help deliver Local Plan 2030 Policy:

- Policy 2S(iii) - Healthy Communities
- Policy 31 - the impact of development - access impacts

4.7 Safe Access:

4.7.1 Streets are one of the most important public spaces in which day-to-day interactions take place. Research into the impact of HMOs in Bedford found that in some areas of high HMO concentrations there was increasing visual and physical separation between the access to the property and the pavement. In addition to measures to ensure that proposals deliver the required levels of amenity, ensuring that proposals will not lead to visual and physical obstructions between the access and the street will help to ensure that these streets can be used safely by a wide range of people, including future residents.

4.8 Cycle Parking and Storage

4.8.1 Nearly all cycle journeys start from or end at home. It is essential that adequate convenient cycle parking is provided to encourage future growth in cycling and promote active lifestyles. Secure cycle parking is an important part of delivering this policy because it helps to encourage cycling. The Bedford Borough Council Sustainable Parking SPD provides guidance on cycle parking.

4.8.2 In addition to the number of spaces, proposals should consider the best practice guidance for cycle parking as set out within the Sustainable Parking SPD (or its successor). Applicants for HMO accommodation will need to demonstrate how the following principles have been incorporated:

- **Convenience:** does the provision make it easy for individual residents to park or remove bikes without bikes becoming entangled or needing to first remove other bikes.
- **Easy to access:** All cycle parking must be easy to get to with no inconvenient

detours, steps, steep slopes or narrow accesses. The route to/from the highway must be fully accessible and the surface smooth, stable and durable. Any doors or gates should be easy to use.

- **Secure:** all cycle parking should provide a means for bikes to be locked securely to an immovable object. Cycle parking for HMOs should normally be within a lockable secure compound, shed or garage providing the ability for each bike to be locked separately. Direct lighting is essential for personal security.
- **Protected from the weather:** e.g. undercover, in a secure shed or within a building

4.8.3 It is the Council's preference that, wherever possible, cycle parking areas are housed internally on the ground floor and this may require potential bedrooms to be converted to accommodate cycle storage. Where this is not possible, external storage in a secure locker or shed may be acceptable, having regard to the standards for amenity space (Principle 2) and the visual amenity and character of the street-scene. Cycle parking and storage within habitable bedrooms or communal amenity space is not acceptable.

4.8.4 Further guidance on the specific design for cycle parking, including how short-term parking may be accommodated as part of the overall proposal, is set out within the Sustainable Parking SPD. This guidance, or that in any successor document, should be carefully considered as part of designing secure cycle parking for HMO residents. In particular, the council will not support proposals that clutter and visually detract from the street scene or otherwise harm the public realm.

4.9 Car Parking:

4.9.1 Many of the areas with higher concentrations of HMOs lie within the Bedford Central Parking Zone (CPZ), which acts as a control for the number of vehicles that can be parked on-street through a permit scheme. As of 2013, no newly constructed residential dwellings, conversions or subdivisions of existing dwellings or other land use classes to residential use are eligible for residents' permits.

4.9.2 However, the CPZ does not cover the whole of Bedford and it is important to consider the potential impact that HMOs could have on parking in a local area. For example, the impact of a new or extended HMO as a result of its proximity to uncontrolled areas a few streets away. Dependent on the location of the proposed HMO development, specific consideration will need to be given to accommodating the demand for parking.

4.9.3 In general, the council will seek to ensure that the proposals for parking:

- Do not adversely impact on the design and setting of a property/streetscape.
- Do not impact upon neighbours on-street parking and visitor convenience
- Do not result in the blocking of footpaths or pavements or result in difficulty for pedestrians crossing the road; and
- Do not impair visibility at junctions

Proposals within the CPZ:

4.9.4 Car free development may be acceptable within the Core CPZ areas where it is more than 400m from the edge. Proposals that are less than 400m from the edge of the CPZ will need to consider the impact on non-controlled streets possibly requiring a night-time parking beat survey carried out to an agreed methodology where residential demand is highest to determine if any on-street capacity is available. This should be discussed as part of the pre-application process as early as possible.

On-street or 'kerbside' parking:

4.9.5 Where proposals involve the conversion of a property where sufficient on-site parking is not feasible, discussions with the local planning authority must take place as early as possible to see if there is capacity elsewhere so that the demand for parking can be satisfactorily managed. As with proposals that are less than 400m from the edge of the CPZ, parking beat surveys may be required to support an application.

On-plot Parking

4.9.6 Some properties will be able to provide parking 'on plot' and this is the Council's preferred approach where it can be sensitively incorporated into the design and streetscape. Where on-plot parking is possible, the guidance within the Sustainable Parking SPD (or any successor document) should be followed regarding parking space size and layout.

4.9.7 The Council acknowledges that for HMO development, a balance needs to be struck between the desire for on-plot parking and access for residents to private amenity space. The loss of a garden for on-plot parking may only be acceptable where the HMO is located within 400m walking distance of high-quality public open space as set out under Principle 2, subject to it not having a negative impact on the appearance, character and visual amenity of the area. The loss of front walls and other enclosures will usually be resisted due to the impact on the street scene.

Principle 4: Creating Well-designed Places

4.9.8 Most HMOs are formed through the conversion of existing dwelling stock. However, this does not mean that proposals will not need to consider design impacts. The evidence that supported the making of an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights for the creation of small HMOs identified a range of cumulative adverse visual impacts such as poorly located and designed waste and refuse storage, the proliferation of satellite dishes and other paraphernalia such as letter boxes, low- quality materials being used in replacement windows and doors, and parking arrangements that were created through the removal of front and side garden walls.

4.9.9 The following principle helps to ensure that HMOs can contribute to the creation and maintenance of well-designed places. The overarching principle is that, from the street, it should not be immediately obvious that a property is an HMO. Whilst this is a high standard, it is one that is considered appropriate to help address the small, cumulative impacts that lead to visual harm.

Principle 4: Creating Well-designed Places

From the street, it should not be immediately obvious that the property is an HMO. To achieve this, proposals should:

- *Ensure waste storage is well-designed and appropriately located having regard to the street-scene and amenity of HMO residents and neighbours.*
- *Respond to local context and design using appropriate materials and design and placement of supporting infrastructure, and where possible the retention of features such as boundary walls that contribute to the street scene.*

To help deliver Local Plan 2030 Policy:

- Policy 2S(iii) - Healthy Communities
- Policy 30 - the impact of development- design impacts
- Policy 32 - The impact of development- disturbance and pollution impacts

4.10 Waste and Refuse Storage:

4.10.1 An HMO is likely to generate more waste than a regular family dwelling. It is important that the location, design, and the size of the bin storage area is suitable, so as not to impinge on the amenity of HMO occupants or their neighbours and not to detract from the general

amenity and character of the area. The Study, prepared to support the introduction of an Article 4 Direction across Bedford, noted that the arrangements for the storage of bins for existing HMOs was contributing to a decline in visual amenity.

4.10.2 Planning permission will not be granted for an HMO where it cannot be demonstrated that appropriate provisions are made for the storage of bins and their collection. For the extension of an existing HMO, proposals will need to demonstrate that provision can be made for the storage of waste in accordance with this guidance.

Bin Storage - Design:

4.10.3 Often, when a property is converted to multiple occupation, ground floor living rooms are converted to bedrooms. Waste that is placed outside the windows of these bedrooms can create smells that in a normal dwelling (where the bedrooms are upstairs) would not normally lead to a nuisance. There is also the issue of noise associated with the movement of bins and placement of rubbish into bins adjacent to bedroom windows. These issues can, in turn, result in waste being left in unsuitable locations beyond the property boundary; for example, on the street.

4.10.4 Within Bedford, waste is stored and then collected from wheelie bins, which are placed on the street or at a designated collection point necessitating external storage. All external waste storage areas should be:

- Secure and unobtrusive – i.e. accessible to residents or collectors (where required), but not to others.
- Located away from occupied rooms; and
- Readily accessible (to allow residents to place bins at the collection point or the property to become a serviced collection point)

4.10.5 In some circumstances, storage may be provided to the front of a property. Where this is proposed it should be designed to avoid blocking natural surveillance between any occupied rooms (or those that are proposed to be used as bedrooms) and the street. Opportunities should also be taken to integrate the design of the external bin storage with the building façade to minimise the potential of harm to the street scene.

4.10.6 In many cases, storage to the rear or side of properties may be more appropriate. In these cases, as with storage to the front, the proposed area should not be located adjacent to an occupied room and there should be a clear, level route for bins to be taken to the street for collection. Ground covering, such as shingle, should be avoided due to the challenges this presents for safely moving wheelie bins.

Bin Storage requirements:

4.10.7 Providing adequate storage is an important element for encouraging responsible disposal of waste that arises from day-to-day living. As many residents of HMOs live as individual households, they may generate more waste than would be expected from a normal family home. The following standards have been provided and are correct at the time of publication. However, operational requirements for example the size of wheelie bins and total storage may be subject to change. The most up-to-date sizes can be obtained from the Council's website via: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-waste/household-bins-and-recycling/for-developers---providing-bins-for-new-builds/>

4.10.8 To help manage waste, as a guide HMOs will be expected to provide space for three 240 litre wheeled containers for the first three households and 180 litres of additional storage for each household thereafter.

4.10.9 Where it is not practical to provide separate bins for each household, provision should be made communally for shared bins for both waste and recycling. The total minimum volume of bin storage for each household proposed should be calculated at the rate of:

- 180 litres of storage for refuse;
- 240 litres of storage of recyclables;
- 240 litre of storage of garden waste (where applicable).

4.10.10 A bin storage area should provide enough space for the required number of bins plus space for them to be easily accessed by residents and manoeuvred by collection crews

4.10.11 Within Bedford Borough, the approximate dimensions of typical wheeled bin containers are as follows, and bin stores should be designed with these dimensions in mind:

Container Volume (l)	Container Height (mm)	Container Width (mm)	Container Depth (mm)
180	1070	480	550
240	1070	590	740
360	1090	600	880
660	1190	1220	770
1100	1470	1380	1090

4.10.12 Areas for bin storage should be designed in such a way as to discourage residents using the space for alternative purposes, such as parking.

4.11 Design:

4.11.1 The cumulative impact of minor alterations to buildings, such as the replacement of windows and doors with unsympathetic designs and low-quality materials, the placement of satellite dishes, mailboxes and replacement guttering can have a significant impact on the overall street scene. Many of these features are permitted development¹⁶ and are not able to be controlled fully through the planning process.

4.11.2 Nevertheless, the council strongly encourages applicants to consider the materials, design and siting of supporting infrastructure to minimise the cumulative impacts on the street scene and help to ensure that local distinctiveness can be reinforced and maintained. This can be achieved through:

- Replacing windows and doors with sympathetic designs;
- Considering materials carefully such as selecting those that are hardwearing and durable;
- Considering how the internal layout can ensure obscured glazing and waste/drainage is to the side or rear of a property;
- Minimising storage to the front of the property that obscures the property from the street due to storage in the front setback space of a property (see also the guidance on waste and refuse, in addition to parking)

4.12 Design - Conservation Areas:

4.12.1 Within Conservation Areas, the distinction between HMO and non-HMO properties is generally less pronounced in part due to the additional design protection and guidance provided in these areas. However, the cumulative impacts of minor alterations are leading to visual harm¹⁷.

4.12.2 The Bedford Conservation Area Appraisal indicates that this has:

“clear implications for the character of the area and its architectural and visual integrity. The loss of historic fabric and details, such as timber sliding sash windows, is evident, along with inappropriate ‘maintenance’, including the painting of stone dressings. So too is the creation of on-site car parking space or garaging either by the creation of forecourts in place of enclosed front gardens or by the conversion of complete rear gardens to car parks. In several locations

¹⁶ Does not apply to Listed Buildings or those within Bedford’s Conservation Areas where permitted development rights may have been removed

¹⁷ Bedford Borough Council (2008)-Bedford Conservation Area Appraisal paragraph 9.10.20

ranks of wheelie bins bear testimony to flat conversions."

4.12.3 In Conservation Areas, the Council will apply the highest standards of design to help preserve the historic fabric and protect the architectural and visual integrity of the Conservation Area.

This means that the following will not normally be permitted:

- The loss of boundary walls and gates;
- Parking arrangements that obstruct the street scene;
- The paving of front, rear and side gardens for vehicle parking, cycle parking or refuse storage.

4.12.4 Replacement windows, doors, guttering and the placement of satellite dishes will be controlled under the relevant heritage legislation having regard to the significance of the heritage asset(s) and their settings. All prospective applicants for proposals which include the extension to a property or other external alterations are encouraged to engage in the pre-application advice process as early as possible to discuss design, materials and suitability.

Appendix A: Worked Examples

Worked example area concentration:

The purpose of the area concentration calculation is to determine, as a percentage of all properties, the proportion of HMO households within a 100m radius of the subject property. For the purposes of the calculation, each HMO bedroom is counted as a single household (irrespective of the number of occupants) whilst the HMO itself constitutes a single "property".

All other address points (irrespective of whether these are houses, flats, offices, shops, etc) are counted individually as "properties". Two examples have been provided. The first considers a proposal to convert an existing (non-HMO) property into a 5-bed HMO and the second proposes an extension to an existing HMO.

Example 1: Conversion of a family home to create a new HMO for 5

Households:

Step 1: Establishing the baseline

Using address points generated from the Council's GIS system, there are 50 properties within the 100-metre radius consisting of:

- Offices x 1
- Shops x 2
- Houses and flats x 44
- Existing HMO (5 bedrooms) x 1
- Existing HMO (3 bedrooms) x 2

Step 2: Calculating Existing HMO Households

The number of existing HMOs (3), is then converted to number of HMO households using the Council's data. This results in the following number of HMO households:

- $5 \times 1 = 5$
- $3 \times 2 = 6$

There are 11 HMO households within the 100m radius.

Step 3: Assess against Principle 1(a)

The percentage of HMO households to the total number of properties is calculated:

$$11/50 = 22\%$$

Within this area, the threshold of 30% HMO households as a ratio to the total number of properties has not yet been met and therefore a proposal for a new or extended HMO may be acceptable subject to meeting the other criteria set out in this document and any other relevant planning policies.

Step 4: Assessing the Application

The application is to convert the subject property (a house) into a five-bedroom HMO. This would change the baseline and result in the following mix within a 100m radius of the subject property:

- Offices x 1
- Shops x 2
- Houses and flats x 43
- Existing HMO (5 bedrooms) x 1
- Existing HMO (3 bedrooms) x 2
- PROPOSED HMO (5 bedrooms) x1

Step 5: Calculating the potential households

The proposed number of HMOs (4), needs to be converted to HMO households, taking into account the subject property:

- $5 \times 1 = 5$
- $3 \times 2 = 6$
- [PROPOSED] $5 \times 1 = 5$

The new number of HMO households in the area would be 16 within the 100m radius.

Step 6: new percentage for the area

The percentage is recalculated:

$$16/50 = 32\%$$

The proposal would exceed the threshold of 30% HMO households against the total number of properties and would not be acceptable.

Example 2: Extension of an an existing HMO to add 1x new Bedroom (household):

Step 1: Establishing the baseline

Using address points generated from the Council's GIS system, there are 50 properties within the 100-metre radius consisting of:

- Offices x 1
- Shops x 2
- Houses and flats x 44
- Existing HMO (5 bedrooms) x 1
- Existing HMO (3 bedrooms) x 2

Step 2: Calculating Existing HMO Households

The number of HMOs (3), is then converted to the number of HMO households using the Council's data as follows:

- $5 \times 1 = 5$
- $3 \times 2 = 6$

There are 11 HMO households within the 100m radius.

Step 3: Assess against Principle 1(a)

The ratio of HMO households to the total number of properties is calculated:

$$11/50 = 22\%$$

Within this area, the threshold of 30% HMO households against the total number of properties has not yet been met and therefore a proposal for a new or extended HMO may be acceptable subject to meeting the other criteria set out in this document and any other relevant planning policies.

Step 4: Assessing the Application

The application is to extend one of the existing three-bedroom HMOs to add an additional bedroom – resulting in an additional HMO household. This would result in the following mix within a 100m radius of the subject property:

- Offices x 1
- Shops x 2
- Houses and flats x 44
- Existing HMO (5 bedrooms) x 1
- Existing HMO (3 bedrooms) x 1

- PROPOSED Extended HMO (4 bedrooms) x 1

Step 5: Calculating the potential households

The proposed number of HMO households is therefore calculated as follows:

- $5 \times 1 = 5$
- $3 \times 1 = 3$
- [PROPOSED] $4 \times 1 = 4$

The proposal would therefore result in a total of 12 HMO households within the 100m radius.

Step 6: new percentage for the area

The ratio is recalculated:

$$12/50 = 24\%$$

The proposal would not exceed the threshold of 30% HMO households against the total number of properties and the proposal to extend the three-bedroom HMO with an additional bedroom would be acceptable in principle provided it complies with other policies within this SPD.