# Southend Council to tighten rules on HMOs amid community backlash and safety concerns



The Southend-on-Sea local plan is set to introduce stricter regulations aimed at managing the proliferation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) that have increasingly become a focal point of community concern. As the council continues to shape this pivotal document, it is anticipated that the new policies will specifically target the burgeoning issues that HMOs present in central Southend, particularly regarding community cohesion, waste management, and parking.

Kursaal ward councillor Matt Dent has expressed particular concern over the impact of HMOs on local residents. He noted that the concentration of properties rented out as individual rooms has created significant challenges, including heightened conflict over parking spaces and waste management disruptions. Dent pointed out that current planning laws allow for the conversion of residential homes into HMOs with up to six bedrooms without needing planning permission. This means that many changes have gone unregulated, effectively sidelining any planning considerations related to the quality of life for existing residents.

Speaking about the impending local plan, Dent stated, “While HMOs undoubtedly have their place as part of a healthy housing ecosystem, in Kursaal ward we’ve seen the results of unchecked overconcentration.” He highlighted that the community has suffered due to the “high turnover” of tenants associated with these properties, which has fed into broader issues of antisocial behaviour. The upcoming local plan aims to address these problems head-on, granting the council the tools needed to weigh the impacts of HMOs on local infrastructure and community health.

While the council’s measures have been welcomed by some, residents like Leanne Kelly have voiced their frustrations, arguing that the initiative comes “far too late.” She contended that Southend Council has exacerbated its challenges by permitting the unchecked rise of HMOs, a situation that has strained waste services and worsened parking congestion. Kelly’s sentiments echo the concerns of many locals who have witnessed the transformation of their neighbourhoods into areas dominated by transient tenants.

Mounting reports have highlighted the precarious conditions often found in HMOs across Southend. Instances of overcrowding, such as a case involving a landlord who housed 16 adults and five children in unsafe conditions—lacking essential amenities like heating and proper fire escapes—underscore the urgent necessity for improved housing regulation. Such events confront the council with the pressing need to uphold safety standards in housing while simultaneously enforcing compliance among landlords.

Moreover, as Southend-on-Sea grapples with issues of housing shortages and escalating demand, a broader narrative emerges. An investigation revealed that across England, approximately 160,000 individuals reside in unlicensed and overcrowded accommodations, a staggering reality that calls for significant reform in housing policy. With over 670 unlicensed bedsits currently identified in Southend alone, the ongoing challenges faced by the council in regulating these properties become increasingly pronounced.

Recognising the need for systemic reform, Southend Council is moving to enhance standards, mitigating substandard living conditions that have persisted for too long. New proposals aim to ensure that landlords adhere to stringent health and safety criteria, with penalties for non-compliance reaching up to £30,000. This initiative represents the council's determination to take back control and prioritise tenant welfare amid growing pressures from private landlords seeking to exploit vulnerable populations.

As Southend-on-Sea prepares to unveil its new policy framework, the implications for the local community are profound. Striking a balance between the need for diverse housing options and maintaining quality of life for residents will be paramount. The administration's proposed regulations on HMOs may serve as a turning point, addressing long-standing grievances while aiming to restore harmony to the affected communities.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/southend-council-set-to-tackle-surge-in-hmos/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=southend-council-set-to-tackle-surge-in-hmos), [[4]](https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/23024886.southend-landlord-rules-set-tightened-council/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/southend-council-set-to-tackle-surge-in-hmos/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=southend-council-set-to-tackle-surge-in-hmos), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-66204433), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/19/bedsit-britain-160000-people-in-england-crammed-into-unlicensed-housing)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/southend-council-set-to-tackle-surge-in-hmos/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=southend-council-set-to-tackle-surge-in-hmos), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/19/bedsit-britain-160000-people-in-england-crammed-into-unlicensed-housing), [[6]](https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/24560292.westcliff-appeal-lodged-plans-15-bed-hmo/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-66204433), [[6]](https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/24560292.westcliff-appeal-lodged-plans-15-bed-hmo/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.southend.gov.uk/housing-information/houses-multiple-occupation), [[4]](https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/23024886.southend-landlord-rules-set-tightened-council/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.southend.gov.uk/housing-information/houses-multiple-occupation), [[4]](https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/23024886.southend-landlord-rules-set-tightened-council/), [[7]](https://oc2.southend.gov.uk/document/6/344)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.yellowad.co.uk/southend-council-set-to-tackle-surge-in-hmos/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=southend-council-set-to-tackle-surge-in-hmos> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.southend.gov.uk/housing-information/houses-multiple-occupation> - This page from Southend-on-Sea City Council provides detailed information about Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), including definitions, licensing requirements, and regulations. It outlines the criteria for HMOs, the necessity for licensing, and the council's enforcement actions to ensure compliance with housing standards. The page also offers guidance for landlords and tenants regarding HMO regulations and the application process for HMO licenses.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-66204433> - An article from BBC News reports on a landlord in Southend-on-Sea who was fined after housing 16 adults and five children in unsafe conditions. The property lacked heating, had rooms without fire escapes, and was deemed dangerous by authorities. The landlord admitted to multiple counts of failing to comply with housing regulations and was fined nearly £8,000. The council emphasized the importance of maintaining safe and licensed accommodation for residents.
4. <https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/23024886.southend-landlord-rules-set-tightened-council/> - This article from the Echo discusses Southend-on-Sea City Council's plans to implement stricter regulations for landlords to combat substandard housing conditions. The proposed policy aims to improve health and safety standards, address issues like mold and damp, and ensure energy efficiency. The council seeks to enforce these standards across the city, with the potential to fine non-compliant landlords up to £30,000. The initiative follows public consultation and aims to protect vulnerable tenants.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/19/bedsit-britain-160000-people-in-england-crammed-into-unlicensed-housing> - An investigative report by The Guardian highlights the widespread issue of unlicensed and overcrowded housing in England, with nearly 160,000 people living in such conditions. The article focuses on Southend-on-Sea, where over 670 unlicensed bedsits are operating below the council's radar. It discusses the challenges councils face in regulating HMOs and the impact on residents' living conditions, emphasizing the need for stricter enforcement and better housing standards.
6. <https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/24560292.westcliff-appeal-lodged-plans-15-bed-hmo/> - This article reports on a developer's appeal against Southend-on-Sea Council's rejection of plans to convert a former hotel into a 15-bed House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in Westcliff. The council's refusal was based on concerns about the concentration of HMOs in the area and potential negative impacts on the community, including increased antisocial behavior and parking issues. The developer has appealed the decision, seeking to overturn the council's refusal.
7. <https://oc2.southend.gov.uk/document/6/344> - The Southend-on-Sea City Council's Development Plan Document (DPD) outlines policies regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). It addresses issues such as the concentration of HMOs, their impact on community cohesion, and the strain on local services. The document sets criteria for the approval of HMO applications, including considerations for parking, waste management, and the overall character of the area. It aims to balance the need for HMOs with the preservation of community quality of life.