

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Full Council

Thursday 16 October 2025

Decision Report

Article 4 Direction for Blyth

Recommendation

Council resolve to:

1. Formally write to Northumberland County Council requesting that an Article 4 Direction be progressed for Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMO) within Blyth.
2. Provide local supporting evidence and observations to assist NCC in assessing the impacts on local amenity and community well-being, as it is required.

Ward

All.

Risk Management

None.

Objective

To promote the environmental, social, and economic wellbeing of the town and its community.

Crime Reduction

To reduce anti-social behaviour and promote safer, more sustainable neighbourhoods.

Report

On 18 September 2025, Blyth Town Councillors met with officers from Northumberland County Council's (NCC) Planning Department to discuss concerns regarding the increasing number of HMOs in the town.

Key points noted include:

- 83% of Northumberland's HMOs are in Blyth and Ashington, with a concentration in certain residential streets.

- Small HMOs (up to six occupants) do not currently require planning permission due to permitted development rights.
- Planning permission is required only for larger HMOs (seven or more occupants).
- An Article 4 Direction, if introduced by NCC, would remove permitted development rights for small HMO conversions from a dwelling (Use Class C3) to a small HMO (Use Class C4) without planning permission, enabling greater planning control and consultation with local stakeholders.
- NCC Officers advised that such a Direction must be supported by evidence of harm or negative impacts on local amenity or the well-being of the community. Evidence gathering will primarily be done by NCC although we can help identifying issues at street level with support from councillors and the community.

Councillors identified several areas of concern indicating that uncontrolled growth of HMOs may be having detrimental impacts on the character and amenity of parts of Blyth:

1. Change in community character and housing mix:
Increasing conversions of family homes to HMOs may be reducing the availability of family housing and altering the balance of long-term residents to short-term occupants.
2. Deterioration in property standards:
Reports of poor maintenance, neglected gardens, and general deterioration in the appearance of some HMO properties.
3. Environmental and amenity impacts:
Concerns about increased litter, fly-tipping, and parking congestion in affected streets.
4. Anti-social behaviour and transient populations:
Instances of noise, disturbance, and lack of community cohesion have been noted, particularly where occupancy turnover is high.
5. Data gaps:
Outside selective licensing areas such as the Croft Ward, there is limited formal data on smaller HMOs, creating difficulties in monitoring scale and impact.

The Council recognises that these issues collectively have a negative effect on local amenity, community well-being, and environmental quality, particularly in neighbourhoods with high HMO concentrations.

To process an Article 4 Direction the Council would need to formally write to NCC requesting that consideration be given to the introduction of the Direction in appropriate areas of Blyth where evidence demonstrates adverse impacts from HMO proliferation.

The letter would:

Request that NCC commence evidence gathering to support an Article 4 Direction in Blyth.

Outline the areas of concern that have led to this request.

Offer assistance from the Council and local councillors in identifying problem areas and gathering community-level evidence.

Emphasise the community's desire to retain a balanced housing mix and protect residential amenity.

Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk
6 October 2025