

Bedsit bedlam in Reigate and Banstead getting under control

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Strict controls on new HMOs in Reigate and Banstead could be brought in next year.

It comes as new bedsits have sprung up and clustered in Redhill and Horley at an enormous rate in recent years, driven by a demand for low-cost housing, with the council having no say on where they are.

The borough council is looking to bring in new powers to ban the automatic right to convert homes into bedsits for between three to six residents in order to control where they are built.

Making small HMOs go through the planning process, the council says, would relieve pressure on waste collection and parking – as well as ensure quaintly of design.

Currently landlords can convert their homes into small HMOs – properties rented by at least three people from more than one household with shared kitchen or bathrooms – under permitted development rights.

The council is looking to remove this and, if everything goes according to plan, would come into effect in 12 months to limit the council's financial liability against any conversions already under way.

HMOs of seven people or more already require planning permission.

Speaking at the July meeting of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's planning committee was its chairperson, Councillor Simon Parnall.

He said: "It doesn't remove existing HMOs nor would it prevent new HMOs from being created; however it would give the council greater control over location of, and the design of, the HMOs."

Currently there are 101 licensed houseshares on the council's registers with about three quarters occupied by up to six people.

There are at least 109 non-licensed HMOs with occupancy of three to four people. This, the meeting heard, was only an estimated number, and that, in reality, it may well be considerably higher.

The majority of the HMOs within the borough are in Redhill and Horley and in recent years the number of small HMOs on the register has increased by 400 per cent with a notable rise in complaints to planning enforcements following.

He added: "There can be issues about parking pressure, waste management, poorly maintained buildings, the general standard of accommodation, noise disturbance, anti-social behaviour, especially when there is an area where there is a larger number of HMOs."

The chair recognised the important role HMOs play in low cost accommodation but stressed the powers would give greater control over location, design and quality which in turn would better renters.

It would also, he said, help reduce the clustering of HMOs, reduce parking pressures and overflowing bins.

Cllr Rich Michalowski said: "I am hugely supportive of the recommendation...and good news for those who will be dwelling in HMOs. Great news for communities."

The deadline for responses to the <https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/article4directionHMOs> consultation is Thursday 24 September 2026.

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