

Motion to Shropshire Council: Implementation of Article 4 Directions in Oswestry and Shropshire Market Towns requested by:

Oswestry Rural Parish Council

Proposed by: Councillor Peter Richardson

Seconded by: Councillor William Jones

Date: 25 September 2025

Title: Safeguarding Community Cohesion and Housing Standards – Call for Article 4 Directions

This Council:

Notes:

1. The increasing number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) being proposed and developed in Oswestry and other market towns across Shropshire;
2. The negative impact that concentrations of HMOs can have on local communities, including:
 - Reduced housing availability for families and long-term residents;
 - Strain on local services and infrastructure;
 - Increased complaints relating to anti-social behaviour, waste management, and property standards;
 - Erosion of community cohesion and sense of place;
3. That under current permitted development rights, landlords and developers can convert dwellings into small HMOs (up to 6 residents) without the need for planning permission, unless an **Article 4 Direction** is in place;
4. That other local authorities facing similar pressures—such as Oxford, York, and parts of Birmingham—have successfully introduced Article 4 Directions to regain planning control over HMO developments;
5. That Shropshire Council has a statutory responsibility to maintain a balanced housing market and protect the character and wellbeing of its towns and communities.

Therefore, this Council urgently requests that:

1. The relevant Portfolio Holder and Planning Policy Officers begin, as soon as possible, the process of implementing an **Article 4 Direction** in Oswestry, removing permitted development rights for changes of use from C3 (dwelling house) to C4 (HMO);

2. Undertake a review of other Shropshire market towns (including but not limited to Ludlow, Bridgnorth, Market Drayton, and Whitchurch) to assess the need for similar Article 4 protections;
3. Commit to public consultation and stakeholder engagement as part of the Article 4 implementation process, to ensure that residents, landlords, councillors, and housing professionals are fully informed and involved;
4. Report progress on the Article 4 process to Full Council within six months, with a clear timetable for introduction where justified.

Rationale:

This motion does not seek to eliminate HMOs entirely, but to bring much-needed democratic oversight and local accountability to their expansion. Without intervention, Oswestry and other market towns risk becoming oversaturated, with long-term social, economic, and environmental consequences. It is time for Shropshire Council to exercise its powers proactively in the interests of local communities.