



LORD STREET LIVING- GUIDANCE NOTE

RESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

Introduction:

Lord Street is traditionally the main retail high street in Southport and is comprised of numerous historic buildings, many of which are listed. The quality and quantity of heritage buildings and assets in the area has resulted in Lord Street being designated as a Conservation Area.

The aim of the Lord Street Living project is to encourage, where appropriate, the conversion of vacant space above and to the rear of shops into residential units. It is intended that increasing residency along Lord Street should bring many socio-economic benefits to Southport town centre including improved night-time and year-round economies.

This document aims to help you think about some of the things you need to consider when converting vacant space to residential accommodation. In brief it covers:

1. Definitions of Flats and HMOs
2. Practical Considerations – space, policy requirements, amenity etc.
3. Ongoing Management
4. Further information
5. Level of Amenity Flowchart

Please note that this document **does not cover Conservation** requirements and approaches. These will be discussed separately during a first meeting with a Conservation Officer and available as a separate document **Lord Street Living Conservation Requirements**.

Website: www.lordstreetliving.org

email: lordstreet.living@sefton.gov.uk

1. DEFINITIONS FLATS AND HMOS

Housing:

Flats – separate housing units each with their own basic amenities (bathroom, toilet, kitchen)

HMOs – defined in the Housing Act 2004 as a property where occupants share one or more basic amenities (toilet, bathroom, kitchen) and is occupied by 3 or more people who do not form a single household.

Selective Licensing Scheme: Adopted in March 2023, the Council approved designation of an 'Additional (HMO) Licensing scheme for privately rented HMOs in parts of Southport, meaning landlords need to obtain a licence from the Council. Please note granting of planning permission does not automatically mean a licence will be granted. Check with the Housing Standards Team (see information at the end).

Planning:

HMOs – identified in Town and Country Planning (Use classes) Order 1987 as “*use of a dwelling house by 3-6 residents as a “house in multiple occupation” (Use Class C4)* or a large HMO (more than 6 people sharing) (Sui Generis). The Order relies on the Housing Act for definition of HMO.

Article 4 Direction – Adopted in September 2018, there is no permitted development rights in Southport town centre for automatic conversion of residential units to HMOs.

As HMOs can be used to house a variety of residents, if you are considering converting to this use please seek further guidance before you start development.

2. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Room Sizes and habitation requirements:

a) Self-contained flats

To ensure appropriately sized accommodation the following explains the minimum gross internal floor size standards (m²).

	Total size of accommodation	Minimum main bedroom size ^{2 & 3}	Minimum secondary bedroom size
Studio Flat ¹	25	n/a	n/a
1 bedroom flat	37	10.5	n/a
2-bedroom flat	61	10.5	8.5
3-bedroom flat	74	10.5	8.5

¹ A studio flat is accommodation which has all the living accommodation (bedroom, kitchen, living room) within a single room/space. ² a main bedroom is the only bedroom in a one-bedroom flat or the largest bedroom in flats with two or more bedrooms. ³ The minimum bedroom floor areas exclude any en-suite bathroom, shower or toilet facilities.

b) Single Room Bedsit (HMO) Accommodation¹ – Minimum internal room sizes

	Accommodation that has access to a communal living room/lounge area		Accommodation that does not have access to a communal dining room or lounge area	
	Single Person	Two Person	Single Person	Two Person
Single room bedsit without kitchen facilities	10m ²	12.5m ²	15m ²	18.75m ²
Single room bedsit with integral kitchen facilities	13m ²	16.25m ²	19.5m ²	24.4m ²

¹ These areas can include en-suite bathrooms, toilets or shower rooms as long as the bedroom/living space does not fall more than 3m² below the standards above and the main room size is no less than 8.5m² in any case.

Avoid ‘inner room’ situations where escape from a bedroom is only possibly by passing through an area of higher risk e.g. living room or kitchen. Bedrooms on the ground floor facing the highway will not be permitted. Basement conversion to habitable rooms is unlikely to be accepted and can affect the appearance of heritage buildings.

Roof space Accommodation

The floorspace of rooms in a roof space should not include areas with a floor to ceiling height of 1.5m or less, rather these can be used for storage. Habitable rooms in roof spaces should have a reasonable outlook and not solely from roof lights which can spoil the appearance of heritage assets. Rooms in roof spaces should also be internally insulated from excess cold or heat.

Communal and shared space in HMOs

It is recommended all residents in HMO schemes have access to communal areas, particularly if residents will otherwise only have one room to spend the majority of their time. If the rooms are likely to be spacious (meeting higher minimum standard) there may be some flexibility around providing communal space.

Shared bathrooms should not be more than one floor up or down from the bedsit units they serve. Shared kitchens should be no more than one floor up or down from the bedsit units they are intended for unless they include a dining area, or a separate dining room is provided nearby. No resident will be expected to go outside or into another building to access a bathroom or kitchen.

Shared facilities, where residents may be expected to socialise for any time should be located to minimise the impact on bedrooms, both within the building and adjoining properties, typically on the ground floor. Guidance on the size of communal rooms can be found in the '***Conversions to Flats and Houses in Multiple Occupation' SPD.***

Outlook

Normal technical standards for outlook requirements may not apply for conversions on Lord Street due to the density of the existing built environment. Each case will be assessed on its own merits. However, all habitable rooms should have at least one window facing outside. Each case will be judged on its own merit with regards to feasibility of meeting minimum distance between residential unit requirements.

Outdoor /Amenity Space

There is generally a requirement for all residents to have an appropriately accessible (not required to leave the property) communal space; rear garden, communal roof terrace, balcony or combination of these. For historic buildings it may be appropriate for removal of extensions to achieve this requirement or reduction of numbers of flats within the property. However, if it can be demonstrated that the conversion of a heritage asset is essential for its preservation or enhancement, then the amenity requirement may not apply. This will be judged on a case-by-case basis. (see flow chart at end of this document and the Open Space SPD on Council's webpages).

Bin Storage

A suitable space for refuse and recycling bins must be provided for all occupants to the rear of the property and the area must be within 25m of a publicly accessible pavement for ease of collection. The Environmental Health Team will be consulted on all refuse provision.

Access and Parking & Cycling

Access to upstairs properties should ideally be directly from the street. If access to the properties is only possible via a 'gated alley' this should be from the front or side of the building, be separated from the areas used for bins, should be surfaced appropriately and be

adequately always lit for the safety and security of the residents and visitors. Access via external staircases is not considered appropriate.

3. ONGOING MANAGEMENT

Licencing requirements

It is important to note that a licence will be required for HMOs (under a separate consent process) even if planning permission is not required. Furthermore, the granting of planning permission does not automatically mean that a licence will be granted. You should check the requirements for a licence separately with the Housing Standards Team.

The requirements for a licence would likely include consideration of room sizes (against licence standards if they are different to planning requirements), heating, kitchen and bathroom facilities, fire precautions, housing health & safety, security and the storage / disposal of household waste.

Whilst these are not planning considerations, applicants are strongly advised to ensure all licensing requirements can be met before planning permission is sought.

Management Plans

The Council will require the submission of a management plan as part of the planning application for an HMO. The agreed management plan will need to be adopted by the landlord, and the use of the property as an HMO implemented in accordance with the agreed details. The management plan will be expected to cover matters such as:

- The arrangements for the management and maintenance of all communal areas within the building.
- The arrangements for the management and maintenance of the garden/outdoor space within the curtilage of the property, which includes the maintenance of garden walls and fences
- How nuisance and annoyance to other occupiers of the house, or residents in neighbouring properties and the local area, is avoided, reduced by preventing anti-social behaviour from occupiers of and visitors to the property, and by effectively dealing with complaints made to the landlord directly or via the Council or Police. In this regard the Council's guide for landlords to managing anti-social behaviour – 'Sefton landlord ASB guide' – should be considered. A contact should also be provided for the reporting of complaints.
- The keeping of records of complaints about antisocial behaviour which will be provided to the Council on request.
- The management proposals for the servicing and the storage, transfer and collection of waste ensuring that appropriate arrangements are made.
- Preventing the premises to be used by more tenants than the approved number
- Commitment to securing relevant licences as required by Sefton Council.

This will ensure that there is a visible statement provided as part of the planning application process that provides greater clarity / detail about the arrangements in terms of the management of the property. This should not prove onerous for good landlords and will allow them to highlight good management practices. The implementation of the approved management plan will be secured by condition.

Where conversion is to individual flats, it can still be useful to have a management plan that covers relevant areas above and ongoing maintenance of the property, particularly where a service charge is paid by tenants. Ultimately, the condition of the property falls within the owner's responsibility.

The information above is taken from Sefton's '**Conversions to Flats and Houses in Multiple Occupation**' Supplementary Planning Document adopted May 2023. We would recommend you refer to the full document when developing your conversion proposal.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

Building Control – you are likely to need to make a separate Buildings Regulations application alongside your planning application.

Web: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/building-control.aspx>

Email: building@sefton.gov.uk

Planning Department Pre-Application Service

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/get-advice-on-development-proposals-before-making-an-application/>

Email: planning.department@sefton.gov.uk

Planning Policy & Adopted SPD

There are several adopted SPDs including; Sustainable Travel and Development, Design, and the Conversions to Flats and Houses in Multiple Occupation referred to in this document.

Adopted SPDs:

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy-including-local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/adopted-supplementary-planning-documentsguidance/>

Other relevant policy information:

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy-including-local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/>

Housing Strategies and Policies:

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/housing>

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing/>

Conservation & Heritage Information for Sefton:

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/conservation-and-heritage/>

Conservation enquiries can be emailed to:

Heritage.Queries@Sefton.gov.uk

5. AMENITY FLOWCHART



