

TOURIST FLAT CRACKDOWN IN MALAGA: AIRBNB-STYLE PROPERTIES MUST NOW HAVE A SEPARATE ENTRANCE TO THE OTHER HOMES IN THEIR BUILDING

THE first bandage is being applied to staunch the torrent of tourist rentals that have been flooding Malaga's housing market.

A new regulation means that Airbnbs and similar lets in residential buildings will now be required to have a separate entrance for tourists to come and go from.

The rule will not apply to the some-8,000 pre-existing tourist apartments in Malaga, but only to those that have been registered after the approval of the tourist housing decree last February.

Since then, 800 applications have been submitted to the town hall to set up a tourist flat in the Costa del Sol capital, highlighting the shocking scale of the housing crisis as the long-term rental market withers.

It is hoped that the tough requirement to demonstrate that new tourist apartments have an independent access to the main entrance will go some way to reversing this trend.

The rule has actually been in place since a 2011 urban development plan but it is only now that the town hall has decided to get serious about enforcing it.

The Councilor for Urbanism, Carmen Casero, explained that the Junta's new tourist housing decree means houses must comply with the planning regulations of the cities in which they are located.

Previously they were only required to have a first occupancy licence.

The Malaga General Urban Development Plan stipulates: "An activity of this group may be carried out in a building intended totally or partially for housing only in the case that it has adequate independent access and evacuation elements from those of the rest of the building, as well as general installations (electricity, water, telephone, etc.) also totally independent of those of the rest of the building."

The new instruction was approved on Friday and is now in force, so new tourist housing in the city must have this separate entrance.

It is hoped to significantly limit the proliferation of such accommodations, but it does not solve the existing saturation.

"This creates a situation of calm, of a brake on a process that is reaching excessively high numbers and influences the urban model," said the mayor of Málaga, Francisco de la Torre.

“We recognize the positive role of tourism, both hotels and tourist housing, but we want it to be done in terms of harmony and coexistence.”

Malaga is also working on two further ordinances to clamp down on tourist rentals.

One will amend the General Plan to limit tourist apartments, and the other will introduce zoning restrictions to control their concentration in certain areas.

A study commissioned by the Urban Planning Department is expected to help lay out these regulations, though the completion date for the study is yet to be announced.

The town hall is also addressing the conversion of commercial premises into residential units, a growing trend in the city.

In December alone, 38 commercial-to-residential conversions were approved, primarily in the districts of Cruz de Humilladero, Carretera de Cádiz, and Bailén-Miraflores.

De la Torre mentioned that the city is exploring legal measures to ensure that conversions of commercial premises to residential units are for long-term rentals, with a minimum lease term of one year.

This initiative is intended to complement the new regulations on tourist apartments and prevent the diversion of residential uses to commercial spaces.