
Wirral Selective Licensing

Supporting Evidence and Rationale

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Section 1: Introduction

The private rented sector is the only housing option available to some of the most vulnerable people in society [1]. However, in some areas, properties in the private rented sector suffer from poor condition and poor management, which are both a consequence and a cause of low demand [1]. The proportion of private rented properties in Wirral increased significantly between the 2001 Census and 2011 Census, from 11% to 16%. According to the English Housing Survey, the national figure has increased by 2% between 2011 and 2015 and so if this is mirrored in Wirral, the private rented sector could now account for around 18% of all homes.

The Housing Act 2004 enabled local authorities to introduce selective licensing, if deemed appropriate, for privately rented properties in designated areas as an additional tool to improve both the lives of tenants and communities.

Local authorities are permitted to introduce selective licensing of privately rented properties in areas experiencing factors such as low housing demand and anti-social behaviour (ASB) to ensure a minimum standard of management is undertaken by landlords. On 1st April 2015 the Selective Licensing of Housing (Additional Conditions) (England) Order 2015 was made law which allowed local authorities to introduce selective licensing based on further factors including poor property conditions, high levels of migration, high level of deprivation and high levels of crime. Any new schemes can now only be introduced without Secretary of State Approval where the proportion of private rented properties in the designated area is above the national average of 19%. The Order also makes local authorities seek confirmation from the Secretary of State for any selective licensing scheme covering more than 20% of their geographical area, or affecting more than 20% of privately rented homes in the local authority area.

Wirral Council introduced selective licensing in 2015 within four lower super output areas located in Wallasey and Birkenhead, covering 1,326 private rented properties. As of September 2017, all but a handful of properties have been licensed and all licensed properties are in the process of being inspected. Of those properties inspected so far, only 28% of properties have met minimum standards and therefore Selective Licensing will ultimately have a positive impact on bringing many non-compliant properties up to standard. Landlords or agents who don't obtain a license can face an unlimited fine with a criminal conviction and this is evident in the fact that as of September 2017 there have been 25 individual prosecutions for failure to obtain a license and other associated Housing Act offences, resulting in total fines and costs awarded of £92,880. Further prosecutions are pending.

There is a commitment within Wirral's Housing Strategy to complete a feasibility study on the potential to extend selective licensing to further areas and therefore this Supporting Evidence and Rationale is part of that study.

What is Selective Licensing?

In areas subject to selective licensing, all private landlords must obtain a licence and if they fail to do so or fail to achieve acceptable management standards, the Local Authority can take enforcement action - e.g. issuing an unlimited fine or in some cases, assuming management control of the property. The London Borough of Newham introduced a selective licensing scheme covering *all* private rented properties in the borough in January 2013 and since this time a number of authorities have also introduced this option of introducing Selective Licensing in the entire area under their jurisdiction, rather than in selected

neighbourhoods. Since the Selective Licensing of Housing (Additional Conditions) (England) Order 2015, it is now much more challenging to do this. It is currently unknown how many local authorities have introduced selective licensing generally as the information is not held centrally, however in the Liverpool City Region, Liverpool City Council and Wirral Council have introduced schemes and Sefton Council completed their selective licensing consultation process in July 2017.

What can Selective Licensing achieve?

If implemented effectively, selective licensing can increase the professionalism and quality of the private rented sector in an area by ensuring:

- That landlords are 'fit and proper persons'
- Good and fair management of tenancy relations
- Support for landlords to participate in regeneration and tackle antisocial behaviour effectively
- Protection for vulnerable tenants from the worst housing conditions and from bad landlords
- Strategic knowledge to support Local Authorities in targeting health and safety inspections
- Support for landlords to improve the worst properties by helping them to achieve decent minimum standards in housing conditions and management
- Successful schemes may also increase the supply and choice of housing stock and reverse housing market decline in housing market renewal areas when used in conjunction with other measures

Benefits of Selective Licensing

Benefits to neighbourhoods and communities

- Increasing housing demand by improving property condition and reducing antisocial behaviour will improve problem areas, making these safer, more desirable places to live
- Reducing environmental costs and costs of crime, such as street cleaning and tackling fly tipping
- Making it easier to involve all landlords in wider strategies including crime reduction initiatives, local spatial strategies and other countywide plans
- Protecting vulnerable groups, who are often occupiers of privately rented accommodation which is poorly managed and maintained

Benefits to tenants

- More professional landlords should bring improvements to the quality and management of properties
- Potential economic benefits, for example in reduced heating costs and improved likelihood of regaining deposits
- Improvements to neighbourhoods will also benefit private tenants sense of security and community and improve social capital
- Better management practices should help to increase length of tenure and reduced incidence of unplanned moves or homelessness

Benefits to landlords:

- Responsible landlords will receive training, information and support
- A level playing field, where decent landlords are not undercut by an unscrupulous minority
- Poorly performing/inexperienced landlords will receive extra support to improve
- Improved rental incomes/fewer voids as areas improve
- Improvement in the reputation of all private landlords
- Shorter void periods and reduced tenant turnover
- The option to join the accredited scheme for additional support and advice
- A discounted selective licensing fee for landlord who already have their properties accredited within the selective licensing areas.

Benefits to Wirral Council

- Increased supply of good quality homes
- Landlords who have not responded to previous voluntary measures (such as Wirral's property accreditation scheme) will be forced to engage with the Local Authority. Landlords not meeting housing and management standards will be forced to improve their practices or leave the market
- Wirral will gain more knowledge about private renting in particular areas, enabling the Council to target support, information and enforcement more effectively, and to better understand the root of the problems the areas face
- Selective licensing is not however, a panacea and benefits should be expected to be realised in the longer term, rather than straight away

A wide range of evidence from a variety of relevant data sources has been compiled in this document to help identify potential areas which would be most appropriate to become areas of Selective Licensing. Evidence must demonstrate that an area is experiencing one or more of the following factors:

- low housing demand (or is likely to become such an area);
- a significant and persistent problem caused by anti-social behaviour;
- poor property conditions;
- high levels of migration;
- high level of deprivation;
- high levels of crime.

The evidence sought by Wirral Council has concentrated on indicators which together can demonstrate low housing demand and poor property conditions, which are heavily interlinked. Some of the other factors can be demonstrated by local indicators, however making a case that selective licensing will positively contribute towards these factors, or that the private rented sector could at the moment be a negative contributor to these, is more challenging. Supporting evidence related to deprivation, anti-social behaviour and crime have however been used as secondary indicators.

All data used is the most recent available for each individual indicator. Some data is provided as a snapshot at a moment in time, other data is provided by financial year or calendar year and some indicators span more than one 12 month period to provide a fuller dataset.

Data on all of the indicators (summarised in Figure 1 on page 7) is detailed in the sections following. The data is analysed on small geographic areas known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). LSOAs are used as

they are the lowest level of geographic data for which indicators are generally produced by central Government and other agencies and allow Wirral Council to produce a more localised picture of the different areas within the Borough. All LSOAs in Wirral were ranked based on these indicators and the 10 worst performing areas for every indicator were entered onto a master matrix document. This number of LSOAs (10) was decided upon, as it represents the 5% worst performing LSOAs in Wirral. Other targeted community projects and initiatives in Wirral have also chosen to operate in the 5% worst performing Wirral LSOAs (e.g. the Health Action Area initiative).

No LSOA where the proportion of private rented properties was below the national average reported in the most recent English Housing Survey, were included in the tables in the following sections. This complies with the Selective Licensing of Housing (Additional Conditions) (England) Order 2015 – Article 3 (1) (a) as Wirral Council is proposing to introduce selective licensing on the grounds of property conditions (as well as low housing demand). The 2015-16 English Housing Survey Headline Report released in March 2017 stated the national average was 20%.



Each of the indicators identified in Figure 1.1 above scored either one or two points. Those indicators which according to Government guidance [2] demonstrate low housing demand and poor property condition scored two points. Supporting indicators which demonstrate deprivation, anti-social behaviour and high levels of crime scored one point. The indicators and scoring differ from that used in the current Selective Licensing scheme's Supporting Evidence and Rationale written in 2014, due to the release of the 2015 Government guidance referred on page 6.

Table 1.1 below shows the list of indicators and points awarded for each in the matrix (see end of this document for matrix).

Table 1.1: Matrix points awarded per indicator

2 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage of privately rented properties• House sales• House prices• Long term empty properties• Length of time long term empty properties are left empty• Lettings turnover• Time taken for properties to let• Deliberately started fires• Fly Tipping• Environmental Health Complaints• Housing Team Interventions
1 point
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deprivation (overall and living domains of 2015 IMD)• Out of work and disability benefits (ESA, JSA and UC)• Injuries (sustained in the home)• Criminal damage• Housing benefit paid to private landlords

Section 2: Privately rented properties in Wirral

Only privately rented properties are subject to Selective Licensing, therefore, those LSOAs in Wirral with the highest concentrations of this kind of housing are likely to be candidates for the scheme. The ten LSOAs with the highest concentrations are shown in the table below.

Table 2.1: Ten LSOAs with highest percentage of privately rented properties in Wirral (2011)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	% private rented	No. private rented
E01007240	Oxton North	Oxton	40.9%	352
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	38.8%	278
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	38.4%	335
E01007179	Egerton North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	37.7%	231
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	37.7%	287
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	37.4%	293
E01007244	Oxton East	Birkenhead & Tranmere	37.1%	339
E01007218	Egremont North	Liscard	36.2%	237
E01007217	Liscard Central	Liscard	35.9%	284
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	35.7%	235
Wirral average			15.8%	112

Source: Census, 2011

As the table shows, 15.8% of housing stock in Wirral is privately rented (Census 2011), with an average per LSOA of 112 privately rented properties. All of the LSOAs shown here however, have rates of privately rented properties which are more than double this figure, with more than one in three of all the properties in the LSOAs shown, privately rented.

According to the Council's most recent Private Sector House Condition Survey (2013), private rented property in the Borough has almost three times the rate of Category 1 hazards (the worst rating under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System) as in the owner occupied sector. High levels of private rented properties, when combined with other evidence, can therefore also indicate greater levels of poor property condition in an area.

Section 3: Low housing demand

When Wirral Council was assessing evidence for the introduction of its current Selective Licensing scheme, official guidance as to how the authority should measure low housing demand was less specific than the subsequent 2015 Government guidance which recommends local authorities consider the following factors when deciding if an area is suffering from, or likely to become, an area of low housing demand:

- The value of residential premises in the area, in comparison to the value of similar premises in other areas which the authority considers to be comparable (whether in terms of type of housing, local amenities, availability of transport);
- The turnover of occupiers of residential premises (in both rented and owner occupied properties);
- The number of residential premises which are available to buy or rent, and the length of time for which they remain unoccupied;
- The general appearance of the locality and the number of boarded up shops and properties.

The indicators available to the local authority to LSOA level which can demonstrate the above and which have been used in the indicator matrix are described in more detail below.

Long term empty properties

Long-term empty properties are those which have been empty for longer than 6 months. The data presented here is as of 1st April 2017 and refers to privately owned empty property only. It shows that although *overall* Wirral has a low proportion of long term empty homes (privately owned), there are still many LSOAs with a much higher proportion of long term empties than the Borough average. Wirral's average long term vacant property rate of 1.17% (of the total stock) is lower than when this analysis was conducted in 2014 (when it was 1.56%). This is a reduction of 25% in the number of long term empty properties in Wirral over the last 3 years. In 2014 Wirral Council introduced the "empty property premium" which increased Council Tax by 50% for those properties empty for more than two years. This is likely to be the primary cause of the reduction in the Borough average long term vacant property rate.

Tackling empty homes and bringing them back into use can help tackle homelessness, prevent neighbourhood decline, improve the local economy and regenerate areas. It can also contribute providing wider housing choice and is an important part of the Government's Housing Strategy (2011) [3]. It is also seen as one of the priorities within the Government's most recent housing White Paper, "Fixing our broken housing market" (February 2017) [4].

Table 3.1 shows the ten LSOAs in Wirral with the highest proportion of private empty property in Wirral as of April 2017.

Table 3.1: Ten LSOAs with highest percentage of long term empty properties in Wirral (April 2017)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Percentage empty*
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	4.73%
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	4.56%
E01007295	Tranmere Urban Village	Rock Ferry	3.97%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	3.29%
E01007272	Seacombe West	Seacombe	3.27%
E01007176	Rock Ferry West	Rock Ferry	3.18%
E01007239	Oxton North East	Birkenhead & Tranmere	3.18%
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	2.95%
E01007234	Magazine Promenade	New Brighton	2.94%
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	2.91%
Wirral average (private stock only)			1.17%

*Percentage of privately owned stock empty for >6months

Note: Only those LSOAs where the proportion of private rented accommodation is in excess of 20% of all housing stock were included

Source: Wirral Council Housing Services / Council Tax, 2017

Length of time empty properties remained empty

As mentioned above, long term empty properties are those which have been empty for 6 months or longer. Table 3.1 above, showed properties which fell into this category as a percentage of all privately owned properties in Wirral (by LSOA). The measure shown in table 3.2 shows the length of time that long term empty, privately owned property had been empty (in days), by LSOA to April 2017.

Table 3.2: Length of time (in days) long term empty properties (privately owned) were empty, by LSOA to April 2017

LSOA Code	LSOA Name	Ward	Total days empty
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	24,938
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	24,656
E01007239	Oxton North East	Birkenhead & Tranmere	23,769
E01007160	Claughton East	Claughton	21,649
E01007141	Port Sunlight North	Bromborough	21,468
E01007237	New Brighton North	New Brighton	18,111
E01007295	Tranmere Urban Village	Rock Ferry	17,724
E01032903	Birkenhead North	Bidston & St James	17,655
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead and Tranmere	17,262
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	17,213
Wirral LSOA Average			5,261

Source: Wirral Council Housing Services / Council Tax 2017

House sales

The data in Table 3.3 below refers to the total number of house sales per LSOA, compared to the total amount of private housing stock in that LSOA. The Wirral average was 9.4%, but as the table shows, many LSOAs in Wirral had rates significantly lower than this. The ten with the lowest number of house sales per total number of private housing stock, for the four pooled (calendar) years of 2013 to 2016 are shown in table 3.3 and were entered onto the overall matrix (see end).

Table 3.3: LSOAs with the lowest rate of house sales as a proportion of private housing stock (2013-2016)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Percentage (%)
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	4.2
E01007270	Poulton South	Seacombe	4.5
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	4.5
E01007277	Town Hall	Seacombe	4.6
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	4.9
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Claughton	4.9
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	5.4
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	5.5
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	5.5
E01007176	Rock Ferry West	Rock Ferry	5.6
Wirral average			9.4%

Source: HM Land Registry, 2017

There were a total of 11,655 house sales in Wirral between 2013-16, an average of 57 sales per LSOA over this period.

House prices

The average house price in Wirral in 2013-16 was £163,842 (median value £147,801), but this figure hides large variations between Wirral LSOAs. For example, the average price in Caldy South was £712,000 – which was fifteen times higher than prices in Bidston St. James East LSOA, where the average was £46,000*. Table 3.4 below shows the ten LSOAs with the lowest average sale prices in Wirral in 2013-16. These ten were entered onto the matrix document at the end of this briefing.

*this LSOA was not an eligible area for Selective Licensing, having a proportion of privately rented properties which was below the required level – hence Bidston St. James East is not included in the top 10 lowest shown in the table below.

Table 3.4: Ten LSOAs with lowest average sold prices in Wirral in 2013-16 (4 years pooled)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Average house price
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	£59,238
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	£64,660
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	£68,165
E01007270	Poulton South	Seacombe	£69,089
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	£69,353
E01007294	Tranmere Parklands	Birkenhead & Tranmere	£70,468
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	£71,237
E01007272	Seacombe West	Seacombe	£73,491
E01007295	Tranmere Urban Village	Rock Ferry	£73,945
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	£76,028
Wirral LSOA (average)			£163,842

Wirral LSOA (median)	£147,801
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Source: HM Land Registry, 2017

Time taken for private rented property to let

Table 3.5 shows the 10 LSOAs with the longest times (in weeks) that private rental property was advertised before being let *per the number of private rented units in that LSOA*. The total number of weeks that properties were available before being let was summed for all properties by LSOA and divided by the total number of housing units. Longer times to let properties can indicate low demand. The average number of empty weeks for privately let properties in Wirral for 2016/17 was 1.7 weeks per LSOA.

Table 3.5: Ten LSOAs with highest longest weeks to let per units of private rented stock ratios (2016-17)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Weeks to let per private rented housing units
E01007295	Tranmere Urban Village	Rock Ferry	3.7
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	3.6
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	3.5
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	3.0
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	2.7
E01007239	Oxton North East	Birkenhead & Tranmere	2.6
E01007219	Egremont West	Liscard	2.6
E01007269	Seacombe Docks	Seacombe	2.4
E01007271	Poultton East	Seacombe	2.4
E01007240	Oxton North	Oxton	2.3
Wirral LSOA average			1.7

Source: Zoopla Property Group PLC, © 2017 (empty weeks) and Census 2011 (private rented stock)

This measure takes into account the numbers of private stock when highlighting areas where the time taken to rent was high, indicating as per Government guidance that the area may be suffering low housing demand as it is unattractive to prospective tenants.

Lettings turnover

The same Zoopla data was also the source for the information contained within Table 3.6 below. This shows the ten Wirral LSOAs with the lowest ratio of lets per privately rented property in 2016/17. This indicates high turnover because it shows for example, that there was one let for every 13 private rented dwellings in 2016/17 in Hamilton Square LSOA. For Wirral overall, there was only one let for every 102 dwellings, so all of the LSOAs listed had significantly higher lettings ratios than Wirral overall (more than 5 times as high). High turnover of lettings in the private rented sector can indicate instability and/or poor quality accommodation in an area.

Table 3.6: Ten LSOAs with highest rate of lettings turnover (of private rented stock) in 2016/17

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Ratio of lettings per dwelling in 2016/17
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead and Tranmere	13.2
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston and St James	15.9
E01007240	Oxton North	Oxton	16.0
E01007269	Seacombe Docks	Seacombe	18.1

E01007295	Tranmere Urban Village	Rock Ferry	20.9
E01007272	Seacombe West	Seacombe	21.4
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	22.7
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	22.8
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead and Tranmere	25.2
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead and Tranmere	25.4
Wirral Average			102.0

Source: Zoopla Property Group PLC, © 2017 (no. lettings in LSOA) and Census 2011 (private rented stock)

As the table shows, all of the LSOAs in the top ten are almost triple, and in the highest case, seven times the number of lettings than was the average for Wirral in 2016/17.

Fly-tipping incidents

Fly-tipping and alleyway dumping has a detrimental impact on neighbourhoods. As well as negatively affecting the visual environment, it can lead to vermin infestations and encourage arson. Wirral Council issues fixed penalty notices to householders who are caught dumping small amounts of rubbish in public areas. The data from these notices provides an indication of the extent of alleyway fly-tipping in areas and provides a direct link to one of the factors deemed by the Government as demonstrating low housing demand (the general appearance of the locality).

Table 3.7: Top ten LSOAs for rate of fixed penalty notices for alleyway fly tipping incidents in Wirral, 2015-17 (June 2015 to June 2017, 2 pooled years)

LSOAs	LSOA Name	Ward	Number	Rate per 1,000 population
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	47	2.8
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	26	2.0
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	27	1.7
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	21	1.4
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	18	1.3
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	20	1.1
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	17	1.1
E01032903	Birkenhead North	Bidston and St James	27	1.0
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	17	1.0
E01007125	Bidston St James South	Bidston & St James	19	1.0
Wirral Average				

Source: Wirral Council Waste Reduction, 2017

Deliberately Started Waste Fires

Deliberately started small waste fires involve wheelie-bins and fly-tipped waste. They can destroy property and be a threat to life as well as being another indicator of the poor appearance of an area due to the fly-tipping. There were a total of 746 deliberately started fires that Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service attended in Wirral in 2015-16 and 2016-17. This is an average of 10 per LSOA in Wirral, but as table 3.8 shows, all of the LSOAs entered into the matrix have more than this, with the top three having around double to triple this number.

Table 3.8: Number of deliberately started fires by LSOA in Wirral in 2015-16 and 2016-17: top 10 LSOAs

LSOAs	LSOA Name	Ward	Number (both years)
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	34
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	27
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	21
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead and Tranmere	19
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	19
E01007131	West Tranmere	Birkenhead & Tranmere	18
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	17
E01007139	New Ferry West	Bromborough	16
E01007269	Seacombe Docks	Seacombe	15
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	13
Wirral Average			10

Source: Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, 2017

Environmental Health Complaints

Wirral Council's Environmental Health Team receives complaints on a range of subjects, much of which can indicate an area having a poor quality environment or poor housing conditions. The type of complaints used to compile the data include complaints against private landlords, low level private rented housing repair complaints, vermin and noise.

Table 3.9: LSOAs with the highest ratio of environmental health complaints related to privately owned properties, per private rented unit, 2015-17 (2 pooled financial years)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	No. of complaints	Ratio of complaints to private rented
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	40	10.9
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	25	15.1
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	25	16.2
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	36	17.5
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	36	19.1
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	34	21.0
E01007138	New Ferry East	Bromborough	26	21.0
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	27	21.1
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	25	21.4
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	28	21.6
Wirral average per LSOA			18	51.2

Source: Wirral Council Housing Services, 2017

As Table 3.9 shows, the average number of interventions per LSOA in Wirral between 2015-17, was 18. All of the LSOAs in the table, with the highest rates of interventions (per privately rented properties) exceeded this average, with one LSOA standing out as having more than double the average number of interventions (Seacombe St. Pauls with 40 interventions).

The ratio of interventions per private rented units takes into account the amount of private rented accommodation in the area, so allowing for differences in the housing composition, a true comparison is possible. The ratio means that in the worst LSOA in Wirral (Seacombe St. Pauls), there was one intervention for every 10.9 (privately rented) houses in that LSOA. Just for comparison, the average for Wirral was that there was only one intervention for every 51.2 privately rented units in the borough.

Section 4: Properties in poor condition

In order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of local residents, Local Authorities have the duty to ensure that remedial action is taken on private properties where there are serious hazards that affect the health, safety and wellbeing of the occupiers. They carry out this duty using the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) during inspections which is a risk-based evaluation tool to help identify and protect against potential risks and hazards from deficiencies in residential properties. This was introduced under the Housing Act 2004 [5]. The underlying principle of the HHSRS is that, “any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor” [5]. There are two categories of hazards in the HHSRS with category 1 hazards being the most severe (see the [Housing, Health & Safety Guidance](#) for more information on what these categories refer to).

Given that a decision to enforce remedial action has financial implications for both the owner and the occupier (and such decisions may be subject to legal challenge and scrutiny), inspections clearly record information and are robust enough to provide evidence to support action. Decisions to intervene are not undertaken lightly and as such, are a good indicator to areas where housing in a state of poor repair may be concentrated. In addition to enforcement action, interventions may be informal such as a Healthy Homes visit, or request for help with heating via a Cosyhomes heating grant. These measures are also an indicator of poor property condition in the private rented sector and so are included as interventions in the data below. The ten LSOAs with the highest percentage of interventions as a percentage of all private housing stock are shown in table 4.1.

There were a total of 629 interventions in the two financial years of 2015/16 and 2016/17. This is a reduction on the previous time period (2,716 interventions undertaken in 2012/13 and 2013/14), mainly due to the Wirral Council free cavity wall and loft insulation programmes ending.

Table 4.1: LSOAs with the highest number of interventions due to poor condition (private housing, 2015-17)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	No. of interventions	Ratio of interventions to private rented
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	88	2.6
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	104	2.8
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	76	3.1
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	61	4.7
E01007219	Egremont West	Liscard	19	9.2
E01007239	Oxton North East	Birkenhead & Tranmere	20	11.7
E01007232	Egremont Promenade North	New Brighton	8	21.1
E01007277	Town Hall	Seacombe	9	24.1
E01007234	Magazine Promenade	New Brighton	8	24.9
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	8	25.1
Wirral average per LSOA			12	60.8

Source: Wirral Council Housing Services

The low number of private dwellings in some of the LSOAs in the table partly explains why the percentage of interventions as a proportion of all private stock is so high, but does still indicate areas of poor private housing condition. The top four ranked LSOAs are the existing selective licensing areas, reflecting the concentration of activity in these areas over the past two years.

Section 5: Supporting indicators

Supporting indicators have been identified which help provide a wider picture of areas that might additionally be experiencing three of the alternative factors which the Government stipulate can be used to introduce selective licensing: deprivation, anti-social behaviour and crime. Wirral Council however is not specifically introducing selective licensing to tackle any of these factors but a by-product of the scheme will be to have a positive impact on them.

Overall Indices of Deprivation (2015)

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD) is a measure of relative deprivation at a small area level, important in identifying disadvantaged areas so that limited resources can be targeted where they are most needed. The IMD covers a broad range of issues and refers to unmet need caused by a lack of resources of all kinds, not just financial resources. The IMD attempts to capture deprivation in its broadest sense, using seven distinct 'domains' (which together form the overall IMD).

Wirral's 2013 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey reported that the highest rates of poor housing conditions were in the geographical areas with there are also the highest levels of deprivation.

Table 5.1 below shows the 10 most deprived LSOAs in Wirral by name and ward they fall within. These ten LSOAs were entered onto the overall matrix.

Table 5.1: Ten LSOAs with most acute levels of deprivation according to the *overall* IMD (2015)

LSOA	LSOA Name	Ward	IMD Score*
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead and Tranmere	78.2
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead and Tranmere	75.7
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead and Tranmere	75.6
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	69.5
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead and Tranmere	69.4
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	67.6
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston and St James	66.3
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	65.8
E01007131	West Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	60.9
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	60.3
Wirral average			42.4

*higher score indicates greater deprivation

Living Environment deprivation

One of the seven individual 'domains' (or different dimensions of deprivation) which together make up the overall IMD includes 'Living Environment' and this measures the quality of individuals immediate surroundings, including housing quality. There is a domain titled, 'Barriers to housing and services', but this is a less appropriate indicator for this work, since it deals primarily with distance and accessibility to local services.

The IMD Living Environment domain is therefore a relevant and appropriate measure to use when considering areas for Selective Licensing. For information Table 5.2 indicates where areas of most acute need in Wirral are according to this measure.

Table 5.2: Ten LSOAs with most acute needs according to the IMD Living Environment domain

LSOA	LSOA Name	Ward	IMD Living Domain Score
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	53.51
E01007217	Liscard Central	Liscard	53.41
E01007234	Magazine Promenade	New Brighton	49.85
E01007276	Poulton North	Seacombe	49.48
E01007216	Liscard South	Liscard	48.99
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	47.96
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	47.55
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	46.00
E01007233	Earlston Gardens East	New Brighton	44.95
E01007277	Town Hall	Seacombe	44.89
Wirral average			23.24

*higher score indicates greater deprivation

Housing benefits data

As Selective Licensing aims to tackle properties which are privately rented and in poor condition, rates of Housing Benefit claimants (renting from private landlords only) is likely to be an important indicator of where problems may be most acute. Wirral Council's most recent Private Sector House Condition Survey (2013) found that whereas 23% of private sector dwellings failed the Decent Homes Standard, amongst households in receipt of benefits living in the private rented sector, 36% of homes failed the standard.

Housing Benefit data for this indicator is from February 2017.

Table 5.3: Wirral LSOAs with the highest percentage of Housing Benefit claimants (renting privately) 2017

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	Claimants	% LSOA population
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	264	16.8%
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	228	14.3%
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	162	12.5%
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	195	12.1%
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	191	11.9%
E01007131	West Tranmere	Birkenhead & Tranmere	198	11.9%

E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	210	11.8%
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	178	11.8%
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	159	11.5%
E01007294	Tranmere Parklands	Birkenhead & Tranmere	165	11.3%
Wirral Average			61	3.8%

Note: The true percentage of the population living in privately rented accommodation which is paid for by Housing Benefit is likely to be higher than these figures suggest, as many claimants will be families rather than individuals.

Source: Wirral Council Benefits, 2017

The ten LSOAs with the highest percentage of housing benefit claimants (renting from private landlords only) are shown in the table above. As the table shows, all of the LSOAs shown had rates that were more than three times the Wirral average of 3.8%, whilst in the LSOA with the highest rates (Birkenhead South LSOA, in Birkenhead & Tranmere Ward), around one in six of the population of the LSOA was a Housing Benefit Claimant. These ten LSOAs were the areas entered into the overall matrix.

Out of work benefits

Those receiving out of work benefits appear to be particularly vulnerable to experiencing poor housing conditions. As previously mentioned, Wirral Council's most recent Private Sector House Condition Survey found that whereas 23% of private sector dwellings failed the Decent Homes Standard, amongst households in receipt of benefits and living in the private rented sector, this rose to 36% of homes failing to meet the standard.

The main out of work benefits are Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) although people are slowly being moved onto Universal Credit nationwide. The ten LSOA's with the highest proportions of people of working age in receipt of these benefits are shown in tables 5.4 and 5.5 (and have been entered onto the overall Matrix in Section 14).

Table 5.4: Wirral LSOAs with the highest percentage of Job Seekers Allowance and Universal Credit (combined) claimants (numbers rounded to nearest 10) as of May 2017

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	Claimants	% LSOA population*
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	80	8.0%
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	110	7.9%
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	85	7.2%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	70	7.1%
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	50	6.5%
E01007131	West Tranmere	Birkenhead & Tranmere	60	6.2%
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	55	6.1%
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	60	5.9%
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	45	5.9%
E01007272	Seacombe West	Seacombe	50	5.6%
Wirral average			22	2.3%

*working age population

Source: NOMIS, June 2017

Table 5.5: Wirral LSOAs with the highest percentage of Employment Support Allowance claimants as of November 2016

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	Claimants	% LSOA population*
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	415	29.7%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	289	29.2%
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	272	27.0%
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	246	24.5%
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	188	24.3%
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Claughton	235	22.3%
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	204	22.3%
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	159	20.9%
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	242	20.4%
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	226	20.0%
Wirral average			87	9.7%

*working age population

Source: NOMIS, 2017

Criminal damage

Crime results in unsettled communities, undermines efforts to regenerate areas and is associated with other social and economic problems including deprivation. Criminal damage was chosen as an indicator to demonstrate crime levels due to its overlap with anti-social behaviour, both of which are further factors in considering whether or not to introduce selective licensing into an area. The table below show the LSOAs with the highest rates of recorded criminal damage in 2016-17.

Table 5.6: Rate of reported criminal damage by LSOA in Wirral in 2016-17: top 10 LSOAs (rate per 1,000)

LSOAs	LSOA Name	Ward	Rate (per 1,000) 2016-17
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	46.3
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	37.5
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead and Tranmere	31.3
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	27.8
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	27.8
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	26.9
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	24.5
E01007239	Oxton North East	Birkenhead & Tranmere	24.1
E01007217	Liscard Central	Liscard	23.5
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	22.2
Wirral Average			10.9

Source: Wirral Council Community Safety, 2017

All of the ten LSOAs shown in the table (and entered into the Matrix) have rates of criminal damage which are at least more than twice the Wirral average – and one, Birkenhead Central, has a rate which is four times the Wirral average.

Injuries (sustained in the home environment)

Data on injuries sustained in the home environment were provided by the [Trauma, Injury Intelligence Group \(TIIG\)](#) who compile and collate A&E injury data across the North-West of England. Obviously, not all injuries sustained at home will be due to people living in non-decent, dilapidated homes. Home condition is however, a contributory factor in a large proportion of home injuries. A correlation analysis examining the presence or otherwise of a relationship between household health / health service contact and housing conditions was carried out as part of Wirral Council's Private Sector House Condition Survey; this confirmed a statistically significant correlation. It is therefore appropriate to include this indicator as part of the rationale for selective licensing in Wirral.

Rates were calculated for each Wirral LSOA, using the number of residents from that LSOA who attended Arrowe Park A&E for any injuries sustained at home, over the previous 4-pooled years (2013/14 to 2016/17). Table 5.7 identifies the ten LSOAs with the highest rates of home injuries in Wirral in those years.

Table 5.7: Rate of A&E attendances for home injuries by LSOA, 2013/14 to 2016/17 (4 pooled years)

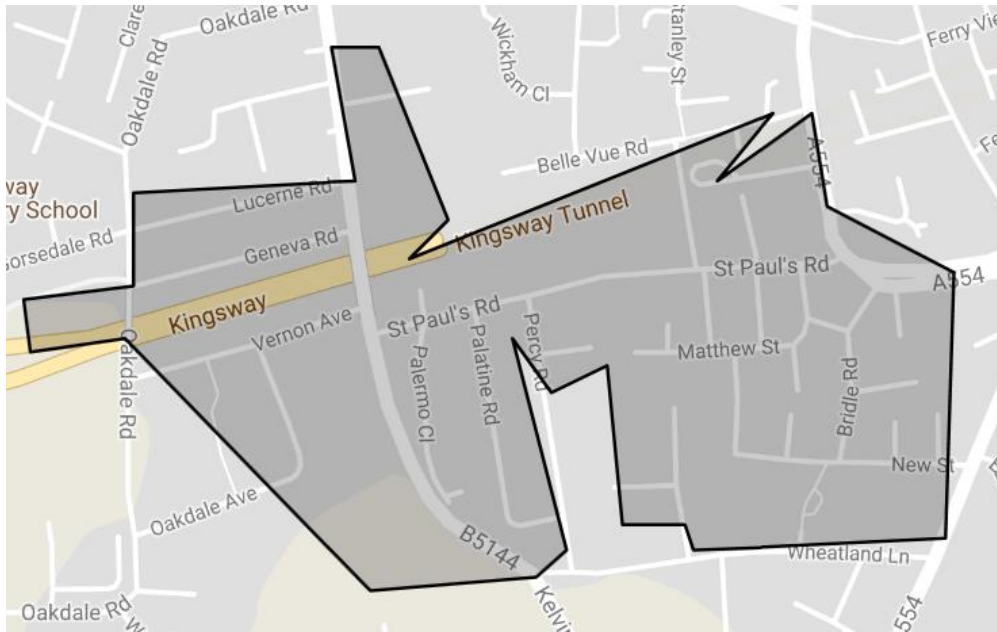
LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	No. home injuries	Rate per 1,000
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Claughton	353	206.2
E01007244	Oxton East	Oxton	256	117.8
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	255	134.4
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	252	143.3
E01007176	Rock Ferry West	Rock Ferry	240	147.7
E01007175	Egerton Park	Rock Ferry	232	125.8
E01007240	Oxton North	Oxton	229	133.4
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	218	131.1
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	216	132.1
E01007138	New Ferry East	Bromborough	206	121.1
Wirral average (per LSOA)			161	104.3

Source: TIIG ([Trauma, Injury & Intelligence Group](#)), 2017

Attendances for home injuries are broadly related to deprivation in Wirral, with higher rates in the areas of deprivation. In many cases however, people use A&E because it is convenient, which introduces an element of proximity bias into the data. Nevertheless, the ten LSOAs with the highest rate of attendance for home injuries at A&E are the ones which have been entered onto the overall matrix.

LSOA code	LSOA name	Ward	Constituency	Total no. of households	Total no. of private rented households	Proportion of private rented households	Injuries (occurring at home)	Deprivation (livelihood)	Deprivation (overall)	Workless benefits (ESA & JSA)	Workless benefits (JSA & Universal Credit)	Housing Benefit	Criminal damage	House sales
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	Wallasey	658	235	36%				1	1	1	1	2
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead	761	287	38%		1	1	1	1	1		2
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead	1170	292	25%			1	1	1		1	
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	Wallasey	667	201	30%			1	1	1	1	1	
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead	670	176	26%	1	1	1	1			1	
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead	926	193	21%			1	1	1		1	2
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	Birkenhead	612	231	38%						1		2
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead and Tranmere	Birkenhead	917	240	26%	1			1	1		1	
E01007295	Tranmere Urban Village	Rock Ferry	Birkenhead	522	161	31%								
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	Wallasey	784	293	37%				1		1		2
E01007239	Oxton North East	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead	781	233	30%							1	
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	Wallasey	680	238	35%						1		2
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	Birkenhead	813	253	31%	1	1			1		1	
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	Wallasey	548	157	29%			1	1	1			
E01007272	Seacombe West	Seacombe	Wallasey	605	177	29%					1			
E01007240	Oxton North	Oxton	Birkenhead	861	352	41%	1							
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	Birkenhead	733	175	24%			1				1	
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead	716	278	39%		1				1		
E01007269	Seacombe Docks	Seacombe	Wallasey	815	204	25%								
E01007176	Rock Ferry West	Rock Ferry	Birkenhead	739	167	23%	1							2
E01007131	West Tranmere	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead	716	278	39%			1		1	1		
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	Birkenhead	835	245	29%	1		1	1				
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	Birkenhead	679	186	27%			1					
E01007277	Town Hall	Seacombe	Wallasey	648	217	33%		1						2
E01007234	Magazine Promenade	New Brighton	Wallasey	715	199	28%		1						
E01007217	Liscard Central	Liscard	Wallasey	790	284	36%		1					1	
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Claughton	Birkenhead	919	295	32%	1			1				2
E01007270	Poulton South	Seacombe	Wallasey	778	251	32%								2
E01032903	Birkenhead North	Bidston and St James	Birkenhead	1081	291	27%								
E01007219	Egremont West	Liscard	Wallasey	628	174	28%								
E01007294	Tranmere Parklands	Birkenhead and Tranmere	Birkenhead	673	238	35%						1		
E01007244	Oxton East	Oxton	Birkenhead	913	339	37%	1							
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	Wallasey	873	335	38%						1		
E01007138	New Ferry East	Bromborough	Wirral South	782	173	22%	1							
E01007218	Egerton South	Prenton	Birkenhead	654	237	36%								
E01007141	Seacombe North	Seacombe	Wallasey	654	237	36%								
E01007160	Claughton East	Claughton	Birkenhead	822	189	23%								
E01007237	New Brighton North	New Brighton	Wallasey	866	292	34%								
E01007271	Poulton East	Seacombe	Wallasey	745	232	31%								
E01007139	New Ferry West	Bromborough	Wirral South	683	149	22%								
E01007232	Egremont Promenade North	New Brighton	Wallasey	619	169	27%								
E01007125	Bidston St James South	Bidston & St James	Birkenhead	784	203	26%								
E01007276	Poulton North	Seacombe	Wallasey	605	123	20%		1						
E01007216	Liscard South	Liscard	Wallasey	661	181	27%		1						
E01007233	Earlston Gardens East	New Brighton	Wallasey	765	231	30%		1						
E01007175	Egerton Park	Rock Ferry	Birkenhead	844	224	27%	1							

Map 7.2: Seacombe St.Pauls Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)



LSOA Code:
E01007273

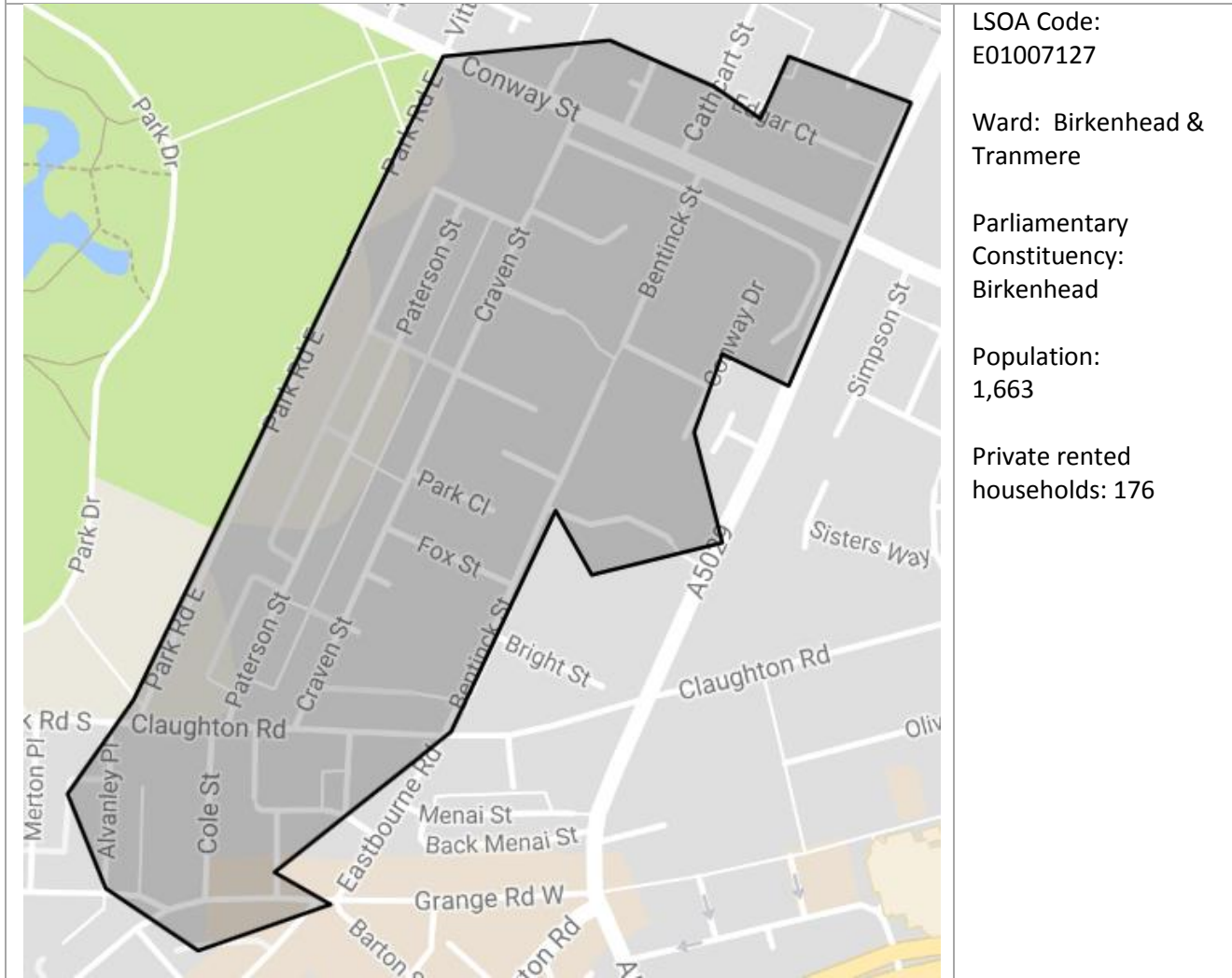
Ward: Seacombe

Parliamentary
Constituency:
Wallasey

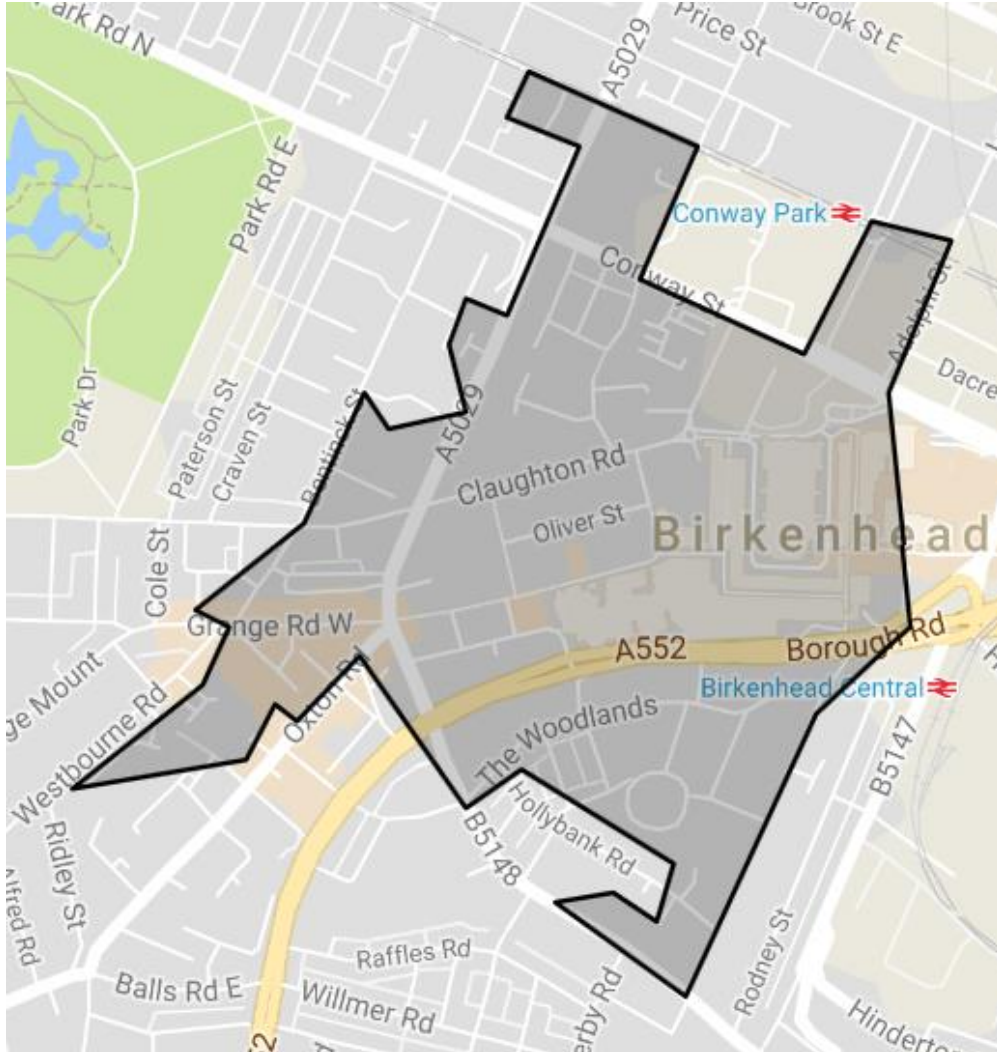
Population: 1,296

Private rented
households: 201

Map 7.3: Birkenhead West Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)



Map 7.4: Birkenhead Central Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)



LSOA Code:

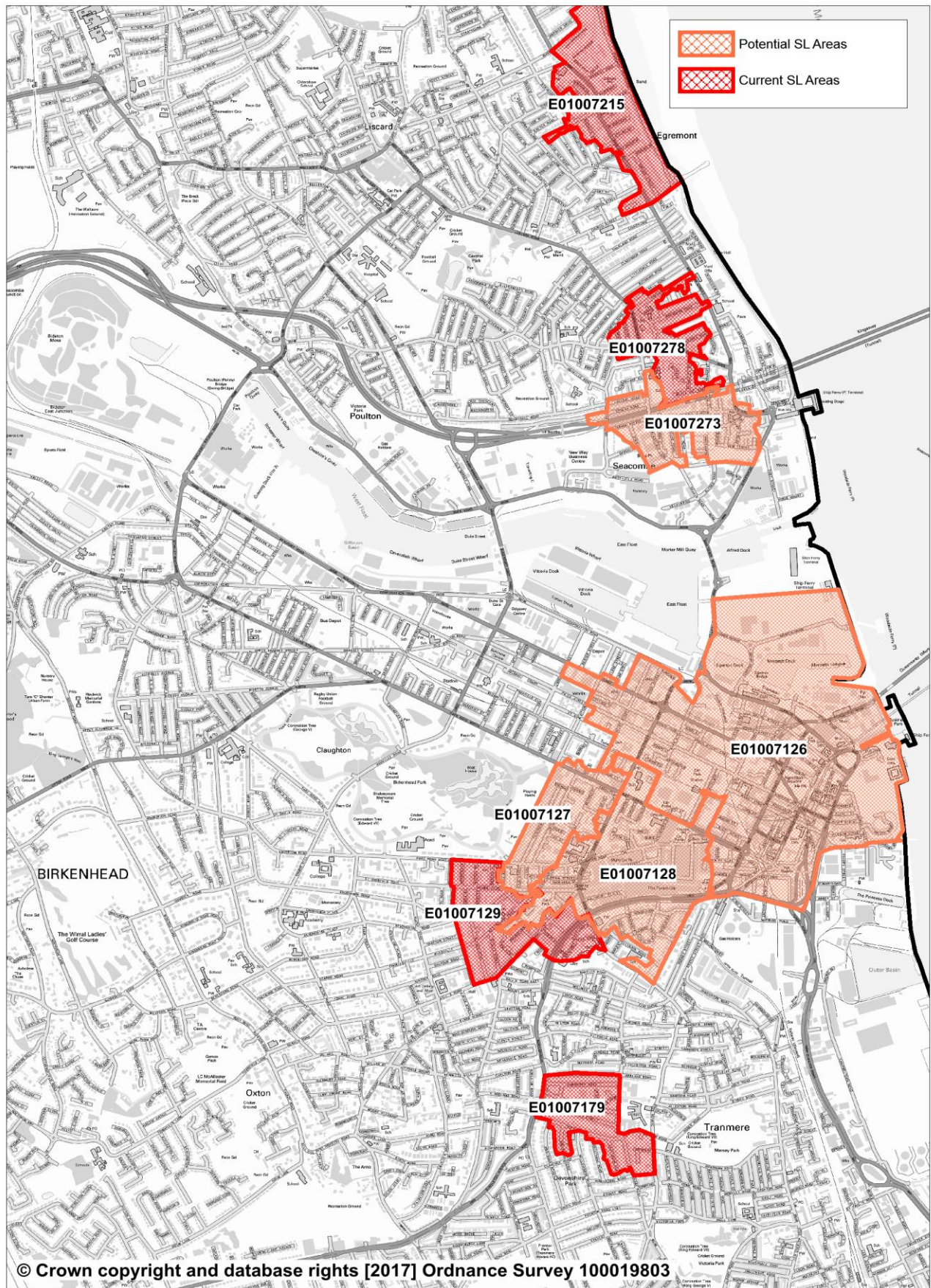
Ward: Birkenhead
& Tranmere

Parliamentary
Constituency:
Birkenhead

Population: 1,642

Private rented
households: 193

Map 7.5: Total current and potential Selective Licensing Areas in Wirral (8 Lower Super Output Areas)



Section 8: References

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Section 9: Glossary

Lower Super Output Area or LSOA:

Small geographical areas with an average population of 1,500. There are 206 LSOAs in Wirral.

Decent Homes Standard: The Decent Homes Standard is a national standard against which all homes can be measured. There are four criteria that a home is required to meet before being classified as 'decent'. These are: it meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing (currently the Housing Health & Safety Rating System); it is in a reasonable state of repair; it has reasonable modern facilities and service, and; it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. In Wirral, 23% of private sector dwellings fail the Decent Homes Standard, compared to 32% in the private rented sector. Where a household is on welfare benefits and living in the private rented sector, this rises to 36%.

Category 1 Hazard: The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) outlines potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in homes. There are 29 hazards assessed within the HHSRS, arranged in 4 main groups reflecting the basic health requirements of living in a safe home. Once these hazards have been scored in a home, they are grouped into categories, with "Category 1" hazards being the most serious, for example, the hazard could lead to death, permanent paralysis, permanent loss of consciousness, loss of a limb or serious fractures. The Housing Act 2004 puts local authorities under a general duty to take appropriate action in relation to Category 1 hazards. In Wirral, 10% of private sector dwellings have Category 1 hazards, compared to 20% in the private rented sector.

Housing Disrepair: To meet the Decent Homes Standard, dwellings are required to be in a reasonable state of repair. Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those where either: One or more of the key building components are old and because of their condition, need replacing or major repair, or; Two or more of the other building components are old and because of their condition need replacing or major repair. Across Wirral, 13% of private sector dwellings fail the repair requirements of the Decent Homes Standard, compared to 17% in the private rented sector.