



BLACKBURN
with
DARWEN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**PROPOSAL TO DESIGNATE THE
SELECTIVE LICENSING SCHEME IN
DARWEN**

Submission for decision 9th February 2017

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Foreword

“Our vision for Blackburn with Darwen Borough is to build safer and stronger communities and improve people’s health and well-being. We are a Borough of contrasts: popular suburban housing areas and semi-rural villages in the West Pennine Moors that sit close to inner urban neighbourhoods which have some of the most acute economic, physical and social problems in the country.

Our aim is to re-introduce and extend selective licensing in the Darwen area of the Borough. This area was hit more than most by market collapse following the financial crisis of 2008. It caused the loss of a stable community, more empty properties and an increase in the number of private sector rented properties.

Currently, the management practices of some landlords and the anti-social behaviour of their tenants has caused concern for many years. Alongside this, the number of private rented tenancies has led to an imbalance that is jeopardising regeneration .Progress has been made since the scheme for Central Darwen was designated in 2009, particularly in combating anti-social behaviour but there a lot more is more to do. Residents are in favour of the scheme and are keen to work with the Council and the police to create a community where people are proud to live in harmony with clean and safe streets.

We also recognise the strategic role of the private rented sector in creating a strong and sustainable housing market. Blackburn with Darwen depends heavily on the private rented sector and we look forward to using the licensing scheme to work with landlords to realise our vision of creating the strong and safe community we aspire to.

The successes of the scheme to date show that without placing any additional burden on council taxpayers we can ensure that all landlords are made to participate and effectively support other long term and partnership initiatives in the area.

Councillor Arshid Mahmood

Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services

1) Why selective licensing re-designation in Darwen?

Part 3 of the Housing Act 2004 gives local authorities the power to make a selective licensing designation for privately rented properties in selected areas experiencing low housing demand and/or are experiencing “a significant and persistent” problem of anti-social behaviour which is directly or indirectly attributable to the way private rented property is managed. The purpose of such schemes is to improve standards of property management in the privately rented housing sector and tackle anti-social behaviour. A selective licensing area can operate for a maximum of 5 years where a landlord renting a property will need to obtain a licence from the Council. When applying for a licence, landlords will be required to provide evidence that they are “fit and proper persons” and that they manage their properties correctly, including taking appropriate action to deal with tenants who are causing anti-social behaviour.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council recognises the valuable role that the privately rented sector performs in the Borough’s housing market where landlords manage and maintain their properties effectively. The Council is keen to work with all landlords in a constructive and positive way.

However, areas experiencing low housing demand with high levels of private renting often face a greater incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour, where some landlords are content to let properties to people who have little interest in settling in the area on a long term basis, nor do they take sufficient care in vetting prospective tenants or monitoring their behaviour and their impact on the local neighbourhood. This can result in a transitory population with no community ties and sometimes no interest in treating neighbours with proper respect. This can often make long term residents fearful, makes owner occupiers unwilling to settle or improve their homes and consequentially leads to further decline.

Conditions applying to selective licensing

Section 80 (6) of the Housing Act 2004 states selective licensing designation may be made if the area to which it relates satisfies the following condition:

- The area is one experiencing low housing demand (or is likely to become such an area) and the Local Housing Authority (LHA) is satisfied that making a designation will, when combined with other measures taken by the LHA, or by the LHA in conjunction with others, contribute to an improvement in the social or economic conditions in the area.

Guidance published in March 2015 states that an area can be considered as having a high proportion of privately rented properties if it is above the figure from the English Housing Survey as the figure nationally. The figure as of March 2014 was 19%. The proportion of privately rented housing in this area is around 29.7%.

From 1st April 2015 the government introduced a new requirement that applications for Selective Licensing designation must be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation if the designation together with existing designations affect more than 20% of private rented homes in the local authority area, based on figures from census data. The re-designation of the Darwen area will not need to be referred to the Secretary of State.

Whilst the area has seen a reduction in crime, rates are still higher than the borough average so there is still work to be done here. The area experiences a significant and persistent problem caused by anti-social behaviour, but this has reduced at a faster rate than the rest of the borough (see Appendix 2). However, some private sector landlords in the area are still not taking appropriate action to combat the problem that it would be appropriate for them to take; and the making of a re-designation, when combined with other measures taken by the

LHA, or by the LHA in conjunction with others, will lead to a further reduction in, or elimination of, the problem.

In such areas with high levels of private renting the Council believes selective licensing provides a range of tools to encourage private landlords to improve the management and housing standards of their properties which otherwise cannot be achieved just using other housing powers. In the longer term, this will bring about sustainable improvements to the well-being of the local neighbourhood and its residents. It will stabilise the local housing market and will directly assist responsible landlords in running their business more profitably.

Selective licensing previously introduced in Central Darwen and the original designation in the Infirmary area of Blackburn together with other associated measures is now producing tangible results by helping to stabilise these areas, reducing anti-social behaviour and crime and increasing resident confidence.

The selected area in Darwen

The housing stock in Blackburn with Darwen is approximately 60,500 homes dominated by terraced properties making up 46% of the total stock. In comparison, a third of the houses in Lancashire and only a quarter in England are terraced. Some wards within the Borough such as Ewood, Mill Hill, Wensley Fold and Sudell have a high proportion of housing that is terraced with many still in poor condition. The 2009 Borough House Condition survey indicated 45% of the total stock in Blackburn with Darwen failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

The proposed Darwen area is an urban area of 3164 properties. The area is defined by a dense grid of streets lined with two-storey brick and stone terraced housing. Some back streets were alley-gated due to incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour. Alley-gating has helped improve security and prevented some anti-social behaviour; however the dumping of rubbish and the need for alley-gating is a reflection of the difficulties the area experiences.

The boundary and the streets within the proposed Selective Licensing area are shown in Appendix 9. It has been proposed for selective licensing re-designation because:

- Demand for properties remains low. The rate of empty properties in the proposed Darwen area is 9.1% which is over double the Borough average.
- House prices have fallen over 2009-16 (-14.5%) compared with an increase of 9.8% for the Borough as whole
- Whilst crime has reduced in the area it is still significantly above borough average rates and anti-social behaviour is still a concern despite rates falling faster than the borough average over recent years. As per the original designation proposal, management practices of some landlords results in increased complaints to the Council especially around anti-social behaviour. Continuing the selective licensing scheme will help continue to raise management standards, remove poorer landlords and help to contain further anti-social behaviour.

See also statistics in Appendix 1.

Continuing selective licensing in the area is the primary vehicle for stabilising the area and building on the successes to date. Heavy reliance continues to be placed on private landlords and private owners improving their own properties as a lack of funding means that

further proposals planned by the Council for further capital investment in housing are challenging.

2) Neighbourhood problems and the need for selective licensing

The proposal for re-designating selective licensing status (Housing Act 2004 section 80) is based on the need to address the following primary issue - that the area is experiencing or likely to become an area of low demand.

There is also evidence that whilst the area has seen a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour, it is still a problem in this area.

Low demand and neighbourhood decline

When selective licensing was originally introduced to the Darwen area in 2009, Blackburn with Darwen had around 34% of low demand stock. Only Burnley had more low demand housing in Pennine Lancashire.

Low demand and neighbourhood decline is shown by the following indicators:

- Stagnant housing market and low house prices
- Prevalence of short term and long term empty property
- High level of rented accommodation
- High population turnover
- High levels of disrepair and lack of property investment
- Crime and anti-social behaviour
- Resident dissatisfaction and lack of confidence in the future of the area

The following analysis shows how the proposed Darwen area experiences these major indicators of low demand.

Falling House Prices and Tenancy Turnover

The average price of an established property in 2009 (i.e. not a new-build) was £64,076 in the area and £113,289 for the borough. Data for 2016¹ suggests that this has decreased to £54,800 for the area and increased to £124,353 for the borough. Housing market weakness in the local area is reflected in the fact that many privately rented properties are being advertised at rents below the Local Housing Allowance (housing benefit eligible) level.

Total transactions for the area were 64 in 2009 and 101 in 2016 . Across the borough there were a total of 1,382 transactions in 2009 and 1,386, in 2016 (i.e. virtually no change). The increased turnover reflects 'churn' in the private rented sector reflecting short term tenancies and a transient population (see also below).

The data is available under Appendix 1.

Empty properties

There are currently 2,604 empty and unfurnished properties in the borough, accounting for 4.2% of the housing stock of 61,459 (April, 2015). 1,436 of these properties have been empty for over 6 months and 484 properties have been empty for at least 2 years. Empty property figures for the borough have reduced from their high point in April 2012 when the total figure of empty properties was 3,417. Despite continuous efforts to bring empty

properties back into use, those successfully re-occupied are replaced as quickly by other properties appearing on the Council Tax list as empty.

In April 2015, the proposed selective licensing area had 291 empty and unfurnished properties. Of these, 50 had been empty for two or more years and 54 had been empty from a year up to two years. 124 properties had been empty for less than six months and 63 had been empty for six months to a year.

The Council's Empty Homes Strategy focuses on bringing private sector properties back into use by working with others or as a last resort, enforcement. The introduction of selective licensing compliments this by reinforcing the duty of landlords to upgrade and manage their property responsibly and discourage them from leaving properties vacant.

The Empty Homes Strategy will also give greater impetus to tackling long term vacant properties. Some owners are reluctant to rent out property because of negative stories about the behaviour of tenants. A co-ordinated improvement in management practices and support will reassure landlords that they can let their property knowing that all landlords in the area are following good management guidelines.

High level of rented accommodation

Privately rented accommodation caters for people in many different circumstances and within different segments of the housing market. At the cheaper end of the market it suffers from a poor image that is unfair to responsible landlords who look after their property and see it as a long term investment, both in terms of the physical structure and interior conditions, but also in protecting the interests of their tenants. However, some less responsible landlords are associated with poor management practice that negatively impacts on their tenants and causes significant problems for the wider neighbourhood.

Growth in the "buy to let" market has added a new dimension to the private rented sector bringing about an influx of both individual and institutional investors into the rented sector attracted by capital appreciation as much as by rental income, It is evident some estate agents or investment companies often specifically market properties at investors rather than for owner occupation.

A reliance on assured shorthold tenancies gives minimal security to tenants. In recent years of those accepted as eligible for rehousing under homelessness legislation, the ending of a shorthold tenancy is the most common reason for homelessness.

High population turnover

The presence of a transient population housed in privately rented accommodation has a negative impact on the desirability of the area and accelerates existing low demand arising out of the poor property condition. Population turnover data is no longer published by the Office for National Statistics which means a comparison for the selective licensing period is not possible.

The privately rented sector is increasingly the last resort for those denied access to social housing. In some cases these will be people who have been evicted or are denied entry to other forms of housing, sometimes for anti-social or criminal behaviour. The client group tends to be more transient than other tenures, due to a young age group and the use of assured shorthold tenancies.

As explained previously there is often little community integration or investment by people who will soon be moving on, however the Sudell area has a popular and successful Community Centre where volunteers work hard to maintain and extend the feeling of community and to support local residents.

High levels of disrepair and lack of property investment

Historically, the Borough House Condition Survey 2009 found 53.8% of properties in the selective licensing area and surrounding boundary (see report) did not meet the decent homes standard. This compared with the estimate of 45.8% for the Borough and the national average of 27% (English House Survey: HOMES 2010).

Regeneration activity in the wider Darwen area includes:

- An extensive new build provided by Together Housing on the large Queen / Hindle Street clearance area providing homes for sale and affordable rent.
- There has been the creation of a new health centre by Blackburn with Darwen Primary Care Trust.
- Redevelopment of the run down Ellenshaw estate is under way.
- The successful Darwen Academy.
- The new Shorey Bank development will provide extra care housing and bungalows for older people.

The re-designation selective licensing proposal critically depends on ongoing multi-agency work through the locality teams and community initiatives such as Your Call. This is because they continue to work to stabilise and improve the area, protecting recent investment and equally importantly, preventing difficulties undermining and spilling outside the proposed selective licensing area.

Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour and Complaints

The reporting for crime has changed during the duration of the scheme for example; fraud is no longer included in crime statistics. However, both the Central Darwen selective licensing area and the borough have experienced a reduction in crime over the period. Crime data between 2009/10 (696) and 2015/16 (653) shows a reduction of 6% in the Central Darwen area. Crime in the borough has reduced by 14% between 2009/10 (11,934) and 2015/16 (10,296).

Anti-Social Behaviour reporting also changed in 2011 and changes include hoax calls being recorded separately. However, ASB reduced between 2009/10 (1409) and 2015/16 (560) i.e. by 60% in the Central Darwen area. This reduction exceeded that in the Borough overall where asb fell from 18,094 in 2009/10 to 8,630 in 2015/16 (-52%).

The extent of problems in the area can also be analysed by the number of complaints received by the Housing & Localities service. The majority of complaints have remained consistent over the period, with most complaints relating to cleansing and environmental nuisance / crime. The impact of campaigns to promote the reporting of environmental issues must also be taken into consideration as well as the introduction of charging for some services as part of the council's austerity measures.

A breakdown of complaints in the proposed area is given below:-

Service	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	total	% Borough
Abandoned Vehicles				7	14	27	35	83	8.32
Amenities			2	18	24	12	15	71	3.95
Community Hygiene	333	156						489	14.1
Cleansing		538	705	644	560	580	599	3626	20.1
Community Safety	9		19	10	12			50	8.26
Dog Control	58	86	92	105	79	76	60	556	8.52
Drainage	9	26	13	9			1	58	8.16
Environmental Crime Officers		75	275	504	516	627	756	2753	17.24
Environmental Town Rangers	505	263						768	17.86
Graffiti Removal	18	13	7	16	18	12	5	89	10.95
Housing Standards Team	141	83	103	79	96	86	114	702	17.1
Pollution Control	78	208	257	252	234	195	88	1312	12.18
Pest Control	175	140	89	91	108	59	78	740	4.28
Grand Total	1326	1588	1562	1735	1661	1674	1751	11297	

3) Impact of Selective Licensing in the earlier Central Darwen area

The scheme has resulted in positive action being undertaken by landlords in improving their properties, in particular the safety of gas and electricity systems. The statistics below highlight the work undertaken to date. As the serving of a notice could lead to the revocation and need for a reapplication of a licence, landlords have implemented changes as recommended by the inspections team on all occasions.

- a) Number of properties brought up to standard: 222 properties have been improved following inspections and the number of housing disrepair complaints has decreased.
- b) Improvements through gas/electricity safety checks: 38 certificates were submitted stating the electrical wiring was unsatisfactory and a further 83

certificates where the property had been re-wired or where works had been carried out immediately prior to the certificate being submitted. This indicates that the wiring in 121 properties (35%) was made safe as a result of the scheme.

- c) Number of inspections: During the selective licensing period, 241 privately rented properties were inspected. Over 84% of inspections led to licence holders being contacted about required works.

4) Supporting Local Strategies

Selective licensing is not a stand-alone response to the perceived problems in the Darwen area, but is an integral component of a strategic, Borough wide approach to poor housing conditions, poorly managed properties and low housing demand. Selective licensing supports Blackburn with Darwen Borough's broader strategies and complementary policies on private sector housing renewal, regeneration, empty homes, homelessness and community safety. The table below indicates the main strategies that are linked to and support selective licensing. Other neighbourhood initiatives are outlined in section 6.

Table 1 Strategic fit of selective licensing

Local strategy/policy	Relevant aim of strategy	What will selective licensing contribute?
<p>Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy (PLHS) 2009-2029</p> <p>This Strategy Needs Updating</p>	<p>The PLHS aims to increase the supply of properly managed affordable privately rented housing in reasonable condition by collaboration and stronger regulation across Pennine Lancashire.</p> <p>Improve the housing offer and tackle poor housing conditions. Reduce crime and fear of crime.</p>	<p>Selective licensing aims to improve the quality of life of tenants and residents and overall sustainability of the area.</p> <p>It will help improve confidence in the housing market locally and contribute to making terraced housing more attractive across the Borough and Pennine Lancashire.</p>
<p>Corporate Plan 2016-19 (TBC December 2015)</p>	<p>The corporate plan as agreed by elected members, for residents, staff and partners, outlines the Council's top priorities for the next three years. It describes how the Council will continue to improve services and prepare for the difficult financial challenge ahead.</p> <p>The priority is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivering growth and improving the quality of housing. <p>The pledges are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To have annually increased the numbers of new homes built in line with the Borough's 	<p>Better management of property means improvement in physical conditions, less long term empty property and a greater demand for rented housing.</p> <p>Higher rental stream and more responsible tenants leads to a "win-win" position adding overall benefits to the area through rising affluence, increased community confidence and higher house values.</p> <p>More settled tenancies and less voids will give landlords encouragement to invest in the property. As landlords improve quality they are able to attract</p>

Local strategy/policy	Relevant aim of strategy	What will selective licensing contribute?
	<p>aspiration and local plan target.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To have reduced the number of bed spaces in Houses In Multiple Occupation and improve property and management standards. - To have implemented selective licensing for private rented housing, have improved living conditions, environment and quality of life thereby directly impacting on improved health. 	<p>higher rental stream. Other landlords see this and wish to emulate it. A more settled, less transient community will encourage owner occupiers to invest in their homes with more confidence over the future.</p> <p>Greater improvement in landlords' choice and control of tenants. More emphasis on promoting long term community commitment rather than short term benefit. Tenants in a settled community will have greater emotional attachment to the area.</p> <p>It is more likely that they will take greater care of the property, stay longer and have greater respect for neighbours and forge social networks.</p> <p>Better housing standards will reduce tenant dissatisfaction and contribute to more healthy lifestyles and wellbeing. This will reduce costs to the health service and other public services.</p>
<p>Community Safety Strategy 2015-18</p>	<p>The vision for the strategy is:</p> <p>“To work together to make Blackburn with Darwen a better place, where crime continually reduces, innovative and excellent practice is the norm, and fear of crime is not a constraint to daily life and investment.”</p> <p>Priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour & Enviro-Crime • Reduce Repeat Offending • Tackling Violent Crime & Domestic Abuse • Make our Roads Safer 	<p>Residents are reassured that the authorities are aware of problems and are taking action.</p> <p>Greater control over tenants is in landlords' interests leading to less low level nuisance and more consideration of residents. Residents see their area is improving in terms of desirability, house prices and quality of environment.</p> <p>Less transient population and higher management standards lead to greater social control and cohesion.</p> <p>Acceptable behaviour in a neighbourhood that appears to be cared for will be influenced by formal sanctions as well as</p>

Local strategy/policy	Relevant aim of strategy	What will selective licensing contribute?
		<p>informal ones. The unacceptable nature of low level nuisance will be reinforced by landlords and underpinned by licensing. Low level nuisance is associated with more serious crime as an atmosphere of neglect encourages an 'anything goes' attitude.</p> <p>The partnership approach to crime and anti-social behaviour will provide more support to landlords to carry out their responsibilities.</p>
<p>Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy for Blackburn with Darwen and Hyndburn 2010-2015</p> <p>This Strategy needs a Refresh</p>	<p>Raising standards and management of privately rented housing is a primary objective of the Strategy</p> <p>Improving choice and access to affordable good quality housing.</p> <p>Fulfilling the Council's statutory duties for improving housing conditions under the Housing Regulatory Reform Order 2002 and Housing Act 2004.</p> <p>Making better use of the privately rented sector to help meet the Borough's housing requirements.</p> <p>Address vulnerable people's housing and support needs.</p>	<p>Rising aspirations in the neighbourhood will eventually benefit a wider area in terms of house prices and neighbourhood conditions. A good quality private rented sector has an increasingly important part to play in the housing market, particularly for those unable to buy.</p> <p>There is a need for higher quality rented accommodation, not just for the poorest end of the market.</p> <p>An unregulated private rented market often means an unsupported environment for the most vulnerable in society. Tenancy support along with improved conditions offer vulnerable people, who are over-represented in this sector, a better quality of life.</p> <p>Reduces the occurrence of empty houses.</p>
<p>Integrated Homelessness Strategy 2014 - 19</p>	<p>To continue to provide the people of Blackburn with a first class service that builds on our past successes and moves forward to a true cross disciplinary multi-agency approach to homelessness and its adverse effects on health, wellbeing and community safety.</p>	<p>In 2013 – 14 approximately 22% of successful homeless applications to the council come from the ending of assured short hold tenancies. Many unrecorded tenancies break down that could be prevented. Better management with support to landlords means less homelessness.</p> <p>Increasing emphasis on prevention of homelessness through tenancy breakdown will be aided by better management standards and support for landlords.</p>

Local strategy/policy	Relevant aim of strategy	What will selective licensing contribute?
Mandatory licensing of houses in multiple occupation / Article 4 Planning Policy directive	. An Article 4 Planning Policy directive has been in force since February 2013. It covers Sudell and Sunnyhurst wards in Darwen. It was approved by the Council to control any change of use for converting a family dwelling to a House in Multiple Occupation.	Selective licensing will regulate properties not covered by this measure or which were converted before it came into force. There are several two storey HMOs in the area and the selective licensing scheme will promote better management of properties housing vulnerable people and offer a joined up approach to wider licensing of the private rented sector.
Empty Homes Strategy	To tackle the high levels of empty properties across the borough using current and new intervention tools following the end of HCA funding.	Empty homes brought back into use and improved to modern standards. Where properties are privately rented this will improve their potential to be let and tenants being more satisfied reducing tenancy turnover. Greater support to landlords to improve and let to responsible tenants. Less blight to the area and a more confident housing market.

5) Option appraisal

The selective licensing scheme aims to raise standards in the private rented sector in the Darwen area. Alternative approaches in tackling the causes and symptoms of low demand have been considered. However, assessing projects in isolation is less effective than pursuing a coordinated approach that is joining a range of tools, agencies and services together.

Our objectives for the proposed Darwen area are:-

- To improve the management of the private rented stock in the area
- To increase the value of properties in the selected area
- To improve the environment and domestic waste disposal
- To reduce the turnover of occupants to create sustainable communities
- To reduce the number of vacant properties and the length of time they remain vacant
- To reduce the levels of anti-social behaviour
- To build on the Council's other initiatives in the area

A detailed appraisal of the options is given in Appendix 3. Without selective licensing the other tools available will not adequately tackle property management and tenant behaviour. The following summary explains these options and why selective licensing is required.

Housing Act 2004 Enforcement

These powers are an effective tool to tackle hazards and improve standards in individual privately rented property, but do not operate in a strategic way over a distinct area.

Empty Homes Strategy

The council is committed to tackling long term empty houses where practical either by negotiation with owners or in the last resort taking enforcement action. In recent years, funding had also been secured from the Homes and Community Agency to improve a limited number of properties across the Borough however this is no longer available.

Landlords Forum/Accreditation

So far there has been limited interest shown by landlords in the Borough to voluntarily join and be proactively involved in a forum which offers support services to landlords. Efforts to establish accreditation schemes have again been largely ignored by them. The Council will consider convening a Landlords Forum for the area depending on landlord engagement.

Other powers

These are generally not applicable to improving management standards in the private rented sector.

Selective licensing

Selective licensing continues to be the most suited method of supporting the regeneration of the area and as a response to poor management, tackling anti-social behaviour and by assisting landlords to manage their properties in a responsible manner.

What selective licensing offers

The scheme would continue in its current format whereby landlords will be required to obtain a licence for every dwelling they manage and comply with specified conditions including complying with appropriate legislation. A licence will last for a maximum of 5 years or the length of designation of the proposed area and will carry a cost of £750 per property which can be paid by annual instalments by Direct Debit of £150 each year. A reduction of £150 will be applied to the overall cost of the fee if the applicant submits a fully completed application form and all requested documentation within 3 months of the designation area coming into force. Payment must be received in full or a direct debit payment plan agreed. Failure to continue to make the annual direct debit payment will result in prosecution for a breach of the licensing conditions. Landlords of the licensing schemes that have now been completed, who have failed to pay their previous licensing costs in full will not be eligible for the discount or to pay in instalments.

The council's selective licensing team will work alongside a range of agencies to deliver services to the area. Advice and guidance will be provided to all licensed landlords. In cases of poor tenant behaviour landlords will receive support from the Council or other agencies in dealing with their tenants' behaviour effectively. There has been joint work with our Registered Provider partners so that should we need to serve interim or final management orders, we will negotiate with one of them to take on the management responsibilities. The team will seek solutions to long term empty property or derelict land which blights the area.

By promoting the successes of the scheme locally, it is hoped to increase the receptiveness of those poorer landlords and those landlords who are a part of the scheme will be made to feel that the Council are in partnership with them and are there to give support. This will be highlighted when they are having difficulties meeting the conditions of the licence or when the landlord is having trouble with anti-social behaviour from tenants.

Re-designating the area under Selective licensing is therefore the best option alongside other initiatives to tackle the problems of housing market decline associated with private sector tenancies in the Darwen area. It will ensure that all landlords letting properties within

the area participate; it will effectively support other long term and partnership initiatives in the area and will improve working relationships with landlords.

6) Consultation on re-designation of selective licensing in Darwen

Wide ranging consultation has taken place with the local residents, landlords owning property in the area and through local community forums. Newsletters were sent to all addresses in the proposed licensing area and adjacent streets surrounding it, to the addresses of all known private landlords owning property in the area, their letting agents, the Residential Landlords Association (RLA), the National Landlords Association (NLA), local social registered landlords and Shelter explaining the scheme along with invitations to attend open “drop in” consultation sessions. The open events were held on Tuesday 20th September and Wednesday 5th October 2016 between 2pm and 7pm for everyone who might be affected where people could learn about the scheme and ask questions. Questionnaires were sent out with the newsletters, made available at the drop in sessions, on line or on request and people were invited to give their views and comments by Friday 25th November 2016.

Residents

The results of the consultation are outlined below and included in appendix 5. 202 households responded to the questionnaire and of these 111 are very satisfied/fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live. 72 respondents are fairly dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with their local area. A key issue that respondents are concerned about is rubbish dumping which has been described as a major or big problem by 109 residents. Other problems were considered as ‘major’ or ‘big’ as follows – Not treating others with respect (67) ; Drug use or dealing (54) ; Drunkenness / rowdy behaviour (49) ; Smaller numbers recorded Nuisance neighbours and Verbal abuse as problems but these were outnumbered by those who considered these as ‘Not a problem’. The majority of respondents were very or fairly satisfied with their home as a place to live (169) but fewer were satisfied with the area (111). Many respondents (78) have felt that the condition of the houses in the area have got worse in the last five years along with how the area looks (102) and the number of empty properties (57). . This reflects the growth in private renting in the area.

Responses from private tenants are very low so their views on satisfaction with the home are not reflected in the survey. The results of the residents’ consultation do not necessarily reflect the improvements that have been identified through regular monitoring. This applies especially to perceptions of safety in the area. Whilst crime and anti-social behaviour has decreased, only 10 residents responded that the ‘Feelings of safety’ had improved. It may take some time to fully reverse the negative perceptions that exist. Redesignation of the area will continue to build on the positive improvements already identified. Further details of responses are given in Appendix 5.

Landlords

76 people responded to the landlords consultations, of these 68 were landlords, 4 were letting/management agents, 3 were former landlords, and there was 1 prospective landlord. Respondents reported a low number of problems with references, anti-social behaviour, and

their tenants being victims of anti-social behaviour, non-payment of rent and difficulty finding tenants. The majority of respondents agreed with a discount for landlords who apply for a licence within the first six months and disagreed with a fine for late applicants. 55 respondents did not support the re-introduction of selective licensing in the area which is not surprising given the cost of the fee but encouragingly 11 (17%) of respondents did support its re-introduction. The majority (46) do not believe that the scheme has made the area more attractive but a significant number say they don't know (23). Most respondents (35-45) feel that the condition of properties, levels of anti-social behaviour, number of empty properties, rental return, the area as a place to live and the demand for housing has stayed the same in the last five years. Encouragingly 23 of the landlords would be interested in joining a landlords' forum for the area. Further details and the responses to comments raised by both residents and landlords are available under appendix 5.

7) Partnerships and Regeneration Activity

All regeneration initiatives in the Darwen area have a common objective that the economic, social and environmental decline is addressed, residents' confidence is raised and community pride is promoted. Despite the cuts in budgets across the public sector, partners have continued to work together to meet their shared objectives for the area.

New initiatives supporting Selective Licensing

The proposed Darwen area is being re-designated on the basis of low demand. Subject to the necessary resources being available new initiatives in the area will include the promotion of a tenant's handbook which will outline the rights and responsibilities of the landlord and the tenant. The handbook will provide information to help the tenant settle in; information about the local area; advice on managing the relationship between the tenant and the landlord; dealing with any problems; safety issues; gas/fire safety requirements and advice on ending tenancies. It will also be a useful method through which to provide information on council services such as refuse collection, recycling and bulky items collection.

A model tenancy agreement similar to that published by the Department for Communities and Local Government is also being developed. A model tenancy agreement would include landlords and tenants checklists, key dates and example inventories. The agreement would aim to strike a fair balance between the interests of landlords and tenants. Whilst there would be no legal requirement to use this agreement, it supports tenants who want to negotiate a secure, long-term tenancy. Further initiatives being considered include the scope for a landlords' forum and a pilot scheme to assist landlords with the disposal of bulky waste to be trialled for an initial 12 month period.

Citizen Engagement with Local Councillors

Council Community Navigation Officers are in regular close contact with local ward Councillors and whilst formal ward solutions meetings are not set, issue based ward meetings are arranged when requested. Darwen uses a wide range of venues for community engagement, dependant on what is available in each ward. Churches, pubs, Children's centres, Derwent Hall and supported older peoples accommodation e.g. Willow Gardens, are just some of the examples.

Many of the Darwen Councillors hold their own ward surgeries monthly. If Cllrs feel they may need support from council officers they are in direct and regular contact.

Darwen has its own **Town Council**; residents pay a precept Council tax. The Town Council meets monthly and membership includes some of the existing Borough Councillors. This allows residents from around the centre of Darwen to have a greater level of involvement in the partnership and collaboration of local decision making. Local needs and wishes have effected decisions on finance and the environment e.g. money has been allocated for parks, park group activities, family fun days etc. Darwen has a reputation for providing an annual Food Festival, drawing visitors from around the region. Relationships with local businesses are well established. In partnership with local business CROWN, the Town Council provide a small grant scheme providing opportunities for local community groups to apply for up to £2,000 for neighbourhood events that encourage and facilitate community cohesion.

The Town Council are significantly involved in supporting our local groups of refugees.

Crime Prevention Measures

Considerable work is undertaken to reduce ASB and crime in the area by Lancashire Constabulary in partnership with the Transforming Lives locality team and the Community Safety Team. Key activities include identifying residents at risk due to ASB; targeting the vulnerable groups and individuals identified and offering bespoke packages of support to individuals via the Transforming Lives panel. In addition, children and young people at risk of criminalisation due to ASB issues are supported along with families who are victims of this behaviour.

Lancashire Constabulary continues to promote safe messages and initiatives to communities in the area including sign-up to 'In The Know' which is a free messaging service which lets residents decide when and how they are kept informed about the issues that matter to them. For example, regular crime updates and information about what the local neighbourhood policing team is doing.

Locality Team

A Shared Neighbourhood Team, made up of police and Council staff, based in local community facilities, has helped to bring the neighbourhood police (such as beat managers and Community Navigation officers) closer to their local areas. The Shared Neighbourhood Team works together to tackle those issues that are causing the most concern to local people. The Council's Locality Lead managers ensure all officers in these teams collectively respond to concerns and plan ahead to stop problems arising. Some of the partnerships and collaborative working include: Together Housing on all social landlord estates, Reach Out, Cornfield Cliffe food bank, CVS, Planning and community consultation, use of Section 106 finance, Age UK, Youth Services and many more. Officers also focus on improving Community Safety Partnerships and engage with the community through information and engagement events.

Transforming Lives

Transforming Lives is a way of working as early as possible with families and individuals in Blackburn with Darwen to prevent costly interventions down the line. It aims to ensure that residents experiencing a range of problems get the right support that they need, when they need it and that their support is coordinated across the breadth of services, thus avoiding duplication of interventions.

Principles underpinning the approach are:

- 1. Work early: Identify early opportunities to engage with vulnerable people*
- 2. Work together: Across organisations; single approach*

3. *Work holistically: It is everyone's business, and it is everyone's responsibility to support*

4. *Work with: Recognising people are central to finding the solutions*

5. *Work effectively: To understand and overcome barriers to achieve better outcomes*

6. *Work upstream: Implementing upstream interventions to reduce demand on public sector.*

The Transforming Lives delivery model in BwD has resulted in locality working through multi-agency teams, where cases are discussed, action taken and progress reviewed via a multi-agency model.

In 2016 there were 164 Transforming Lives cases in Darwen with 119 residing in the Sudell, Marsh House or Earcroft wards. 74 cases came from the Sudell ward alone.

Troubled Families

The Troubled Families programme began in April 2012 and is delivered by the Council on a payment by results model. The programme aims to create better chances for families and to reduce costs to the taxpayer. The programme criteria have been expanded since its initial launch and include the following:

1. Parents and children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour
2. Children who have not been attending school regularly
3. Children who need help: children of all ages, who need help, are identified as in need or are subject to a Child Protection Plan
4. Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion or young people at risk of worklessness
5. Families affected by domestic violence and abuse
6. Parents and children with a range of health problems

There are currently 162 open Troubled Families cases in Darwen. Of these 116 are from the Sudell, Marsh House and Earcroft wards. 77 are from the Sudell ward. Issues impacting on families in these wards include financial hardship and rent arrears alongside poor and overcrowded housing conditions.

Environmental Improvements

Your Call activities range from 43 individual litter pickers supported by Community Connectors who regularly litter pick their own areas to Your Call Clean Ups often requested by Ward Councillors and include dog fouling initiatives e.g. free dog chipping. All the Darwen Parks have Friends groups who tidy up the park and also undertake working maintenance parties as well as holding community events, promoting volunteering and building community resilience. Many of the constituted groups hold their own events and deliver community based projects e.g. St. Peters Residents Association.

8) Implementation of Darwen Selective Licensing Area

Selective licensing has proven to be vital in tackling low demand and anti-social behaviour which is an indicator of low demand. Results in both Blackburn with Darwen and elsewhere have shown it works well and is a valuable tool in supporting regeneration work and preventing absentee or irresponsible landlords undermining it. The Council wants to support private landlords who often provide housing for excluded sections of the community, but are not prepared to tolerate landlords who do not take responsibility or tenants who misbehave. The fee structure has been set to support those landlords who wish to co-operate with the Council and penalise those who do not.

This document provides the justification and evidence to show why Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council believes re-designation and extension of the Darwen area is beneficial to the Darwen area.

Why is re-designation necessary?

The area's potential

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and local partners have worked hard to address the issues the Darwen area faces by building relationships with the community and embarking on a number of complementary initiatives, strategies and regeneration programmes.

Private and public sector investment has changed the area considerably since the implementation of the selective licensing scheme in 2009 but there is still potential to improve the area further. Confidence needs to be restored in the housing market and further investment needs to be sought. Re-designating the area would complement the current regeneration work and this is supported by the local community who are aware of the problems and welcome the Council taking action to address them. There is strong support amongst residents and this demonstrates a real desire from the community to make Darwen a place people want to live in and move to. Relationships have been built with local landlords in recent years and re-designation would allow us to build on this and improve the conditions for tenants further whilst providing support to landlords as well. The lessons we have learnt from the initial designation have been implemented in the other selective licensing areas and will also be implemented in the re-designation.

The need to support the privately rented sector

Privately rented housing is essential to provide homes for local people, but the standard of the housing in the Darwen area was generally poor. For many years some landlords in the area have provided properties that are largely poorly managed, not maintained and not run professionally. This has caused the residents and the local community to suffer years of decline. Whilst the original designation has seen some improvements with some of the landlords with the worst tenants taking advice and working with the local residents' association to manage their properties better and some poor landlords choosing to sell rather than managing their houses professionally there is still significant scope to build on the work undertaken to date. The majority of landlords have engaged with the local authority and despite some initial reticence, have complied with the required conditions.

The implementation of selective licensing to date has highlighted learning points that have been incorporated into the most recent designation.

The lessons learnt include:

- Clarity over boundaries – ensuring the boundary of the designated area is, where feasible, along clear lines, for example, train lines, canals and boundaries with Registered Social Landlord properties (which are exempt from the scheme). This is to reduce the likelihood of the boundary running down the middle of streets.
- Clarity over fees - ensuring the fees are clearly set out and easily understood by landlords including guidance about the payment explaining that we allow the fee to be paid annually but it is not an annual fee.
- Provision of advice to landlords on who should be the licence holder – this is to avoid landlords paying for another application if they use a managing agent and decide to change agent.

- Clarity over the restrictions on transfer of licences - ensuring landlords are aware that licences cannot be transferred between licence holders. To change the licence holder a new application and fee must be received.
- Agreement to flexibility of payment for late applications – initially this was refused, however it was found that providing flexibility increased the likelihood of fees being paid. In addition, if legal action was taken and the court considered the lack of flexibility unreasonable the landlord would receive a conditional discharge resulting in resources being wasted.
- Requirement to pay accumulated fees for applications in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 - this was not applied initially resulting in landlords misunderstanding the licence fees.
- Introduction of card payments – this has increased the collection rate and is an increasingly popular payment route.
- Need to reduce administration - the following processes have been introduced to reduce the administrative burden:
 - Use of standardised letters and automated production of letters;
 - Introduction of early payment discount where a full application is received before a certain date;
 - Requirement to submit electrical installation condition report and Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) as part of a full application; this has had a significant impact on the time spent chasing certificates;
 - Obtaining e-mail address as part of the application process which has led to quicker correspondence and a reduction in postal costs;
 - Accepting scanned copies of certain documents by e-mail;
 - Requesting details of whether licence holder or manager is responsible for fees and gas safe certificates.
- Proactive inspections of properties have been very successful in requiring landlords to remedy conditions in substandard properties and hence improve the health and well-being of vulnerable tenants. It has also reduced the number of retaliatory evictions.
- The need for multi-agency information sharing and action relating to environmental enforcement (rubbish in back alleys, noise nuisance etc.) and anti-social behaviour.

Re-designating and extending the Darwen area will enable the Council to continue to work with landlords and give them the support and incentives to raise standards thereby providing homes fit for the 21st century. It will ensure landlords have the knowledge, skills and support they need to operate as professional business people and make it worthwhile to invest in their properties, contributing to the regeneration of the local area.

Fee charges

The Council has the power to charge landlords a fee for administering the selective licensing scheme and the proposed fee takes into account only the costs incurred by the Council in carrying out its selective licensing functions. The Housing Act 2004 also allows Councils to take into account costs incurred by them in carrying out their functions in relation to Interim and Final Management Orders (so far as they are not recoverable under that part of the Act). All licensing fees can be set against tax.

The fee has been proposed at £750 per licence (plus the cost of the Disclosure Scotland Scheme check) and this will last for five years or the length of time of the re-designation. Different rates apply in the case of a House in Multiple Occupation.

To assist landlords, payments can be spread over the 5 years by paying £150 each year by Direct Debit to reduce the initial outlay. Landlords licensing their properties from year 2 onwards would need to pay for the years that had elapsed before being able to pay for the remaining years on an annual basis by Direct Debit. This should reduce the burden on landlords and will illustrate to them that the fee is only for running the scheme.

Discussions have been held at consultation events and by individual contact with landlords about the fees and the advice has been that landlords within a successful scheme are able to offset the licence fee against tax and will benefit in the long run by increased property capital values, reduction in turnover of tenants, increase in the popularity of properties due to improvements in the overall appearance of the area and a reduction in antisocial behaviour. This fee would be reduced to £600 if payment is made within 6 months of the date of designation. Landlords who have failed to pay their previous licensing costs in full will not be eligible for the discount or to pay in instalments. An additional charge will be added for applications received 12 months after the date of designation. This responds to landlords' comments about the better landlords being penalised to pay for those landlords who try to avoid licensing.

A full explanation of fee charges is set out in Appendix 8.

Licensing Conditions

A licence is valid for up to 5 years or the length of the period of designation. Every licence will have a set of conditions which the licence holder will be required to comply with. There are certain mandatory conditions which the Council must include in the licence. For example, if gas is supplied to the property, a licence holder would have to produce an annual gas safety certificate obtained within the last 12 months. The Council has discretion to add other conditions. A copy of the licensing conditions proposed for the re-designation and extension of the Darwen selective licensing area is given in Appendix 7.

Our capacity to deliver the Selective Licensing scheme

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has already successfully implemented four selective licensing schemes along with HMO licensing that provides effective support services to both landlords and tenants.

As per Government guidelines the scheme is adequately resourced through the Housing Standards Team in Housing Services who will manage the scheme. The team's approach has always been to advise and assist first, only using enforcement as a tool of last resort when persuasion has failed. The team works closely with numerous other departments and agencies such as registered providers in connection with empty properties, housing advice, planning etc. The team is well placed to signpost landlords to other services, providing contact details and doing joint visits.

As per the previous scheme, progress will be reviewed by monitoring the number of empty homes, house price changes, anti-social behaviour and the number of enforcement actions or notices served.

The Council focuses on providing high quality customer services. Its work with local neighbourhoods is strong and effective and it has the experience and capacity to continue delivery of the scheme in the Darwen area. Selective licensing is not seen as a stand-alone tool, but a major driving force which will continue the work already undertaken in the Darwen

area. Re-designation and extension is fully supported by the council and the community. It will help make a real difference to the continuing prosperity of the area. Guidance released by the Department for Communities and Local Government in 2015 recognises that “licensing may have to be a long term strategy and that it will not provide instant solutions. It also appreciates that, if in the initial phase there has been little improvement in the area, this does not necessarily mean that a designation is a failure.”

On this basis, it is important to maintain the investment that has been made into the selective licensing scheme within Darwen and to continue to build on this work over the next five years.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: House price and house build data

Appendix 2: Crime Statistics

Appendix 3: Options Appraisal

Appendix 4: Residents and landlords consultation questionnaires

Appendix 5: Responses to consultation from residents and landlords/managing agents

Appendix 6: Fit and proper person definition and conditions

Appendix 7: Selective licensing mandatory and additional conditions

Appendix 8: Selective licensing fees

Appendix 9: Map of the selective licensing area

Appendix 1: House price and Empty Property Data

Variable	Year	Darwen SL	BwD	Notes
House price established all	2016 (partial) ²	54,800	124,353	Between 2009 and 2016, the Darwen SL area saw a 14.5% decrease in the price paid for established houses in the area, compared to the borough as a whole which saw a 9.8% increase. The prices paid for homes in the borough in 2016 so far show an increase, with houses in Darwen SL area selling on average at a reduced price now than in the base year or 2009.
	2015	55,798	143,247	
	2014	55,248	118,417	
	2009	64,076	113,289	
Percentage change for established properties	2009-2016	-14.5%	9.8%	
House price - new build all	2016 (partial)	-	233,125	Data for 2016 so far suggests the borough has seen further increase in the price paid for new homes.
	2015	-	177,344	
	2014	-	140,713	
	2009	-	122,179	
Percentage change (Source: Land Registry Price Paid data)	2009-2015	-	90.8%	
New build transactions	2016 (partial)	-	8	The number of new build transactions so far 2015 (up to August) suggests there will be fewer new build sales than previous years
	2015	-	74	
	2014	-	111	
Established transactions	2016 (partial)	101	1,378	The number of transactions of established properties in 2015 (up to August 2015) appears to be in line previous years
	2015	113	1,850	
	2014	82	1,513	
Total number of transactions (Source: Land Registry Price Paid data)	2016 (partial)	101	1,386	The increase in the total number of transactions in 2013 and 2014 in Darwen was driven by an increase in new build transactions. Data from 2015 so far, suggests that new build sales will not have the same impact
	2015	113	1,850	
	2014	82	1,513	
	2009	64	1,382	

² All references to partial data: up to October 2016 (24th)

Empty properties

Snapshot as at April 2015	Housing Stock	Empty properties	Empty properties as a % of housing stock
Borough	61,459	2,604	4.2%
Darwen SL Area	3,200	291	9.1%

There are currently 2,604 empty properties in the borough, (April 2015) accounting for 4.2% of the housing stock of 61,459. With the Darwen SL area of 3,164 properties, 291 (9.1%) are currently empty.

Blackburn with Darwen Empty properties	Period of time	N	% of total empty
	One to two years	456	17.5%
	Six months to a year	494	19.0%
	Two years or more	484	18.6%
	up to six months	1168	44.9%
Total		2604	100%

Snapshot: As at April 2015

Darwen SL Empty properties	Period of time	N	% of total empty
	One to two years	54	18.6%
	Six months to a year	63	21.6%
	Two years or more	50	17.2%
	up to six months	124	42.6%
Total		291	100.0%

Snapshot: As at April 2015

Appendix 2: Crime Statistics

a. To March 2016

Variable	Year	Darwen SL	BwD	Notes
Crime data (fraud reporting changed, from 2013/14 fraud is not recorded in crime statistics)	2015/16	653	10,296	Data obtained from MADE. Please note that not all crime data is geo-referenced (within Lancashire as a whole, 97.85% of crime is georeferenced). Also, figures do change following audit. Statistics are influenced by changes in recording rules e.g. fraud recording. However, these figures do present a picture of crime within an area.
	2014/15	678	10,020	
	2013/14	681	10,464	
	2009/10	696	11,934	
	2007/08	819	13,996	
	% change between 2007/08 and 2015/16	-25.4%	-35.9%	
ASB reporting changed 1.4.11 e.g. hoax calls recorded separately from this date	2015/16	560	8,630	Data obtained from MADE. Please note that not all ASB is geo-referenced (within Lancashire as a whole, 99.37% of ASB is georeferenced). Also, figures do change following audit. Statistics are influenced by changes in recording rules e.g. changes in classification from 1/4/2011 e.g. hoax calls recorded separately and thus a perceived reduction in ASB numbers. However, these figures do present a picture of crime within an area. <i>Source data extracted from MADE based on geographical boundaries</i> <i>Source: Supplied by MADE Lancashire CC – based on geographical boundaries</i>
	2014/15	679	8,973	
	2013/14	835	10,558	
	2009/10	1,409	18,094	
	2007/08	1,545	19,244	
	% change between 2007/08 and 2015/16	-175.9%	-123.0%	

b. April 2016 - January 2017

Crime

Apr-Dec16	BwD	Darwen SL Area
<i>All Crime</i>	9288	571
Violent crime	2782	180
Other acquisitive crime	2099	108
Damage / arson	1502	104
Vehicle crime	1049	48
Burglary	915	78
Public order	330	24
Sexual offences	285	8
Drug offences	181	11
Other	105	7
Weapons offences	32	3
Driving offences	8	0

ASB

Apr-Dec16	BwD	Darwen SL Area
<i>All ASB</i>	<i>6646</i>	<i>456</i>
Nuisance	3912	288
Personal	2536	154
Environmental	198	14

Appendix 3: Options Appraisal

Option	Outcome	Barriers	Risks	Resource Implications
Housing Act 2004 Enforcement	Repair of individual privately rented houses. An effective tool for dealing with health or safety hazards.	<p>An effective tool, but does not go far enough to tackle the scale of problems across the Borough.</p> <p>Not all problems are reported to the Council. If tenants do report problems there is a risk of retaliatory eviction or harassment by their landlord.</p> <p>Only responsive to individual complaints and not carried out on a proactive area basis.</p> <p>Does not tackle anti-social behaviour by tenants or management standards.</p>	<p>Resource intensive.</p> <p>Taking action to tackle hazards is complicated and can be slow. Landlords can be obstructive and dealing with the worst problems can mean the Council taking action through the courts which is time consuming and resource intensive.</p>	Can only achieve widespread impact in improving property conditions by a major increase in Council resources.
Empty Property Strategy	<p>Reduced number of empty properties.</p> <p>Bring back into use for rent or sale.</p> <p>Better management if moved to a Registered Provider.</p> <p>Owner leasing to a Registered Provider.</p>	<p>The Council has limited funding to tackle a limited number of properties across the Borough.</p> <p>Properties cannot always be bought by agreement at a price that allows the Registered Provider to buy and improve them for rent.</p> <p>Will not tackle the wider issues of poor management or anti-social behaviour.</p>	The private rented sector is too large to tackle through this strategy alone.	The Council and our partnering Registered Provider have limited capital to purchase and renovate empty properties for affordable housing where necessary.
Special interim management	Allows a local authority to take on the day to day	Process requires considerable resources, gathering of detailed evidence	A short term solution to management failings of the	Resource intensive. Even retention

Option	Outcome	Barriers	Risks	Resource Implications
orders	management of a private sector tenancy where certain prescribed conditions are met relating to anti-social behaviour and protection of the health, safety and welfare of persons.	and authorisation by the Residential Property Tribunal. The Council no longer manages its own housing stock and would require the co-operation of an RP partner to deliver tenancy and property management services.	landlord resulting in anti-social behaviour affecting the health, safety and welfare of persons. Landlords may see the process as too draconian a solution.	of the full rental income may be inadequate to properly manage and maintain a tenancy. Any additional costs would have to be borne by council tax payers.
Landlords' Forum	A Borough wide landlords' forum meets regularly for improved dialogue with landlords about Housing Benefit issues and new legislation.	Only a minority of landlords are willing to work with the council or participate in the existing Forum. The existing forum has a limited function and does not extend to providing more intensive support and training to landlords due to the low level of landlord participation.	Only the better motivated landlords will be willing to participate. Doesn't impact on landlords who fail to participate.	Low resource input required.
Accreditation scheme	Provides an opportunity to differentiate between those landlords who operate acceptable management standards and those that don't.	The majority of accreditation schemes have operated on the basis of specific incentives for participating landlords, e.g. access to property improvement grants, however with the current economic situation the Council is unlikely to be able to offer financial incentives. Experience to date shows only limited support by landlords for accreditation. Recent research shows even where	Only the better motivated landlords will be willing to participate. Does not impact on those landlords who do not maintain or manage their properties properly.	Reasonable level of resource input required for uncertain returns. Council funding contribution is required at a time of severe resource constraints.

Option	Outcome	Barriers	Risks	Resource Implications
		landlord organisations run accreditation schemes they still require council funding and landlords are still reluctant to participate.		
Town and Country Planning Act section 215	Discretionary council power to tackle derelict land or property adversely affecting the visual amenity of an area.	Can only be used to tackle the external fabric of a building in an area where the majority of the properties are in good condition. No formal action can be used for internal works or management standards.	Will not improve overall impact of the privately rented sector.	Valuable tool for tackling derelict land, but mostly not applicable to poor property conditions or management.
Selective licensing	<p>All landlords required to adhere to locally determined licence conditions.</p> <p>Advice and support readily available for all landlords.</p> <p>Requires all landlords to operate on a level playing field.</p> <p>Improved reputation of landlords.</p> <p>Improved tenancy and tenant management.</p> <p>Impacts on anti-social behaviour of</p>	<p>Potential resistance from landlords.</p> <p>Licence fee is an additional cost for landlords who may increase rents to cover fees.</p>	May drive some landlords out of the area, increasing the number of empty properties.	<p>Fee can be charged to recover revenue costs of the scheme.</p> <p>Scheme is permitted to be self-financing.</p> <p>Landlords' business operation improves.</p>

Option	Outcome	Barriers	Risks	Resource Implications
	tenants. Area based - forming an important component of a more comprehensive area strategy.			

Appendix 4: Residents and landlords consultation questionnaires



September 20

Selective Licensing in your area

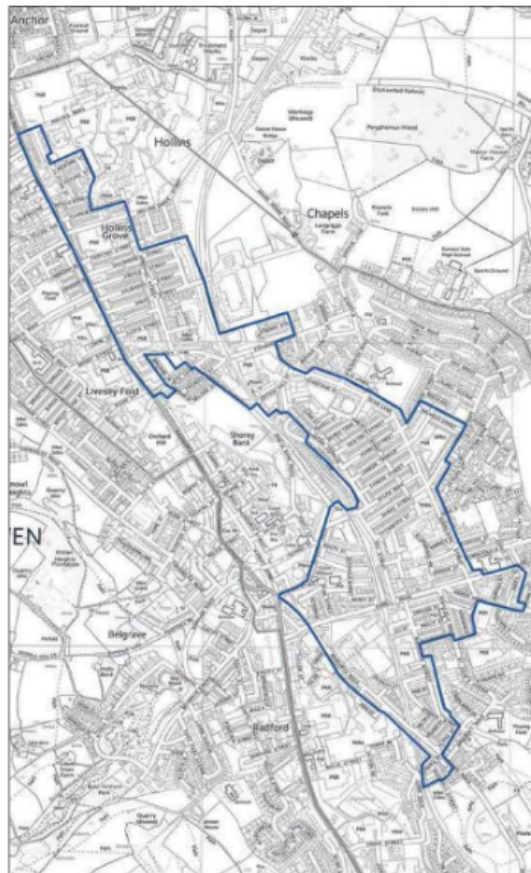
Come along to one of our drop in sessions at Darwen Valley Community Centre, Sudellside, Darwen BB3 3DL on Tuesday 20th September and Wednesday 5th October between 2pm and 7pm.

Find out about Selective Licensing and how the proposed scheme would affect the Darwen Area. For more information go to www.blackburn.gov.uk/selective-licensing-consultation

Introduction

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is considering re-introducing and expanding the area of a Selective Licensing Scheme in Darwen (see map).

If you would like to discuss how Selective Licensing will affect you please contact the Housing Standards Team on 01254 585457.



What Is selective licensing?

Part 3 of the Housing Act 2004 provides powers for local authorities to introduce Selective Licensing of privately rented houses in designated areas suffering from:

- low housing demand and/or
- significant and persistent problems caused by anti-social behaviour

The aim of Licensing is to reduce anti social behavior ensuring that all rented properties are well managed and stopping decline in the designated area.

How does selective licensing work?

Private landlords or their managing agents will be required to obtain a licence from the Council in order to let or manage each property they have in the designated selective licensing area

A licence fee is payable and a licence lasts for a maximum of 5 years.

Letting a licensable house without a licence, without a reasonable excuse, will be a criminal offence, subject to an unlimited fine. In addition, if found guilty a rent repayment order may be applied for requiring repayment of the previous 12 months' rent. A person will not be guilty of such an offence if there is a full application outstanding with the Council for the grant of a licence or if there is a Temporary Exemption Notice in place.

How is the proposed area chosen?

The scheme may be introduced if the area meets the following conditions:

The area has or is likely to have low demand for housing (or is likely to become such an area) with a significant number of privately owned houses let on short term arrangements and the Council is satisfied the introduction of licensing would lead to an improvement in the social or economic conditions of the area.

The benefits

The Council believes that Selective Licensing will ensure that:

- Privately rented properties will be well managed
- Anti social behaviour will reduce
- Demand for properties will increase, leading to the area becoming a more attractive place to live
- In turn this should mean increases in rental values and property prices

Our vision is to build safer and stronger communities and improve people's health and well being, we believe Selective Licensing can help us to achieve that.

Licence fees and duration

A licence will normally last for a maximum of 5 years and carry a fee of **£750** per property. Landlords may be able to choose to pay this fee by direct debit annual instalments of £150 per year dependent on circumstances and previous history.

Consideration will be given to an early payment discount and/or a late application charge.

How do landlords obtain a licence?

Landlords apply to the Council for a property licence and if the Council is satisfied the licence holder and the person managing the property are 'fit and proper' persons a licence will be granted. In deciding this, the Council must have regard to, amongst other matters:

- Any previous convictions relating to violence, drugs, sexual offences or fraud; and
- Whether the proposed licence holder has contravened any laws relating to housing or landlord and tenant issues; and
- Whether the person had been found guilty of unlawful discrimination practices.

What requirements must the landlord fulfil?

The licence must include certain mandatory conditions relating to the management of the house, requiring the licence holder to;

- Present a gas safety record annually to the Council (if there is gas supplied to the house)
- Keep any electrical appliances and furniture (supplied under the tenancy agreement) in a safe condition
- Fit smoke detectors and maintain them in proper working order
- Fit a carbon monoxide detector in any room containing a solid fuel appliance

- Provide the occupier with a written statement of the terms of the occupation (tenancy agreement)
- Demand references from any prospective tenants

Additional conditions will also be included which relate to the use and occupancy of the house and its contents and physical condition.

Consultation

We must consult on the proposed Darwen area scheme with those persons likely to be affected by it including; landlords, tenants, local residents and businesses. The consultation period will run for a minimum of ten weeks to give everyone time to consider our proposals and respond fully.

We intend to consult with you using the following methods:

- Consultation events
- Questionnaires
- Council website
- Local press
- Newsletters

Have your say

Your views are important to us and we are seeking to obtain the views of all those who could be affected by the proposed Darwen Selective Licensing Scheme. A questionnaire is attached to this newsletter. It will also be available at the drop in sessions, on-line or by request. Alternatively you can contact us by e-mail at housingstandards@blackburn.gov.uk direct with your views as soon as you have had time to consider the proposals.

Please note the consultation period ends on Friday 25th November 2016.

In addition there will be two opportunities for you to attend drop-in consultation events where you can come along and learn more about the proposed scheme. You will have an opportunity to speak to us informally and ask any questions, raise any concerns or make any comments in relation to the scheme.

What happens next?

At the end of the consultation period the Council will consider any representations that have been made by the local residents, landlords and businesses before deciding whether or not to re-introduce and expand Selective Licensing in Darwen. The Council will publish the results of consultation and details of the scheme within 6 weeks of the end of the consultation period.

If Selective Licensing is re-introduced there will be a minimum 3 month notification period before the scheme will come into force.



Selective Licensing Consultation

Resident's views

We want to hear your views about the selective licensing scheme that has recently finished in Central Darwen and ran for five years. The information you tell us will be treated confidentially and only be used in the analysis of this consultation and in providing feedback to you.

Completed questionnaires can be left in the survey collection box at Darwen Valley Community Centre, Sudellside, Darwen BB3 3DL or posted back to the council at 'SL Consultation, Housing Standards Team, N Floor Tower Block, Blackburn Town Hall, Blackburn BB1 7DY'. Thank you for sending us your views. We need to have questionnaires sent back to us by **Friday 25th November 2016**.

1. Before you received this questionnaire, had you heard about the Selective Licensing scheme?

- Yes, I knew there was one in/near to this area
 Yes, I have heard of it, but didn't know there was one in this area
 No
 Don't know

2. Does your household own or rent this address?

- Owns outright/with mortgage loan
 Part owns and part rents (shared ownership)
 Rents from housing association or council (with or without housing benefit)
 Rents from private landlord or letting agency (with or without housing benefit)
 Other please state.....

3. Approximately, how long have you lived at this address?

- Less than a year
 One to two years
 Three to five years
 Over five years
 Don't know

4. Overall, how satisfied are you with your home as a place to live?

- Very satisfied
 Fairly satisfied
 Neither
 Fairly dissatisfied
 Very dissatisfied
 Don't know

5. Overall, how satisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?

- Very satisfied
 Fairly satisfied
 Neither
 Fairly dissatisfied
 Very dissatisfied
 Don't know

6. Thinking about your local area - in the last year, how much of a problem have the following been?

	A major problem	A big problem	A minor problem	Not a problem	Don't know
Verbal abuse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nuisance neighbours (including intimidation and harassment)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rubbish dumping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People being drunk or rowdy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People using or dealing drugs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People not treating others with respect and consideration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. What is your postcode? (this will help us to identify issues relevant to your area)



8. If you have any problems with anti-social behaviour or crime in your area, is it local residents causing these or people from outside your area?

- People from outside my area
 Local residents
 Both people from outside the area and local residents
 I don't know
 I don't have any problems with anti-social behaviour or crime

9. Again thinking about your local area, have there been any changes in the following over the last 5 years

	Improved	Stayed the same	Got worse	Don't know/haven't lived here that long
The way the area looks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feelings of safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendliness/knowing your neighbours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The condition of houses in the area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The number of empty properties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Questions 10, 11 and 12 are only for people who rent their homes

10. How satisfied are you with your landlord?

- Very satisfied
 Fairly satisfied
 Neither
 Fairly dissatisfied
 Very dissatisfied
 Don't know

11. What is the main reason why you are satisfied or dissatisfied with your landlord?

.....

.....

.....

.....

12. Thinking about your home, do you agree or disagree...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
That it is safe (e.g. safe electricity and gas)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
That I know who to report problems to (e.g. property/or wider area)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
That my home isn't having a bad impact on my health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Do you have any other comments about selective licensing or suggestions for what might improve privately rented houses or improve the area generally?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Selective Licensing in your area

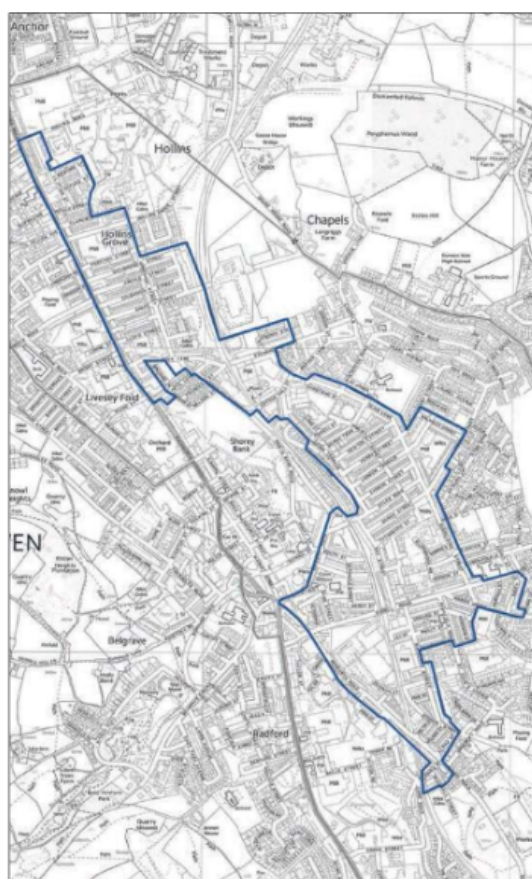
Come along to one of our drop in sessions at Darwen Valley Community Centre, Sudellside, Darwen BB3 3DL on Tuesday 20th September and Wednesday 5th October between 2pm and 7pm.

Find out about Selective Licensing and how the proposed scheme would affect the Darwen Area. For more information go to www.blackburn.gov.uk/selective-licensing-consultation

Introduction

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is considering re-introducing and expanding the area of a Selective Licensing Scheme in Darwen (see map).

If you would like to discuss how Selective Licensing will affect you please contact the Housing Standards Team on 01254 585457.



What Is selective licensing?

Part 3 of the Housing Act 2004 provides powers for local authorities to introduce Selective Licensing of privately rented houses in designated areas suffering from:

- low housing demand and/or
- significant and persistent problems caused by anti-social behaviour

The aim of Licensing is to reduce anti social behavior ensuring that all rented properties are well managed and stopping decline in the designated area.

How does selective licensing work?

Private landlords or their managing agents will be required to obtain a licence from the Council in order to let or manage each property they have in the designated selective licensing area

A licence fee is payable and a licence lasts for a maximum of 5 years.

Letting a licensable house without a licence, without a reasonable excuse, will be a criminal offence, subject to an unlimited fine. In addition, if found guilty a rent repayment order may be applied for requiring repayment of the previous 12 months' rent. A person will not be guilty of such an offence if there is a full application outstanding with the Council for the grant of a licence or if there is a Temporary Exemption Notice in place.

How is the proposed area chosen?

The scheme may be introduced if the area meets the following conditions:

The area has or is likely to have low demand for housing (or is likely to become such an area) with a significant number of privately owned houses let on short term arrangements and the Council is satisfied the introduction of licensing would lead to an improvement in the social or economic conditions of the area.

The benefits

The Council believes that Selective Licensing will ensure that:

- Privately rented properties will be well managed
- Anti social behaviour will reduce
- Demand for properties will increase, leading to the area becoming a more attractive place to live
- In turn this should mean increases in rental values and property prices

Our vision is to build safer and stronger communities and improve people's health and well being, we believe Selective Licensing can help us to achieve that.

Licence fees and duration

A licence will normally last for a maximum of 5 years and carry a fee of **£750** per property. Landlords may be able to choose to pay this fee by direct debit annual instalments of £150 per year dependent on circumstances and previous history.

Consideration will be given to an early payment discount and/or a late application charge.

How do landlords obtain a licence?

Landlords apply to the Council for a property licence and if the Council is satisfied the licence holder and the person managing the property are 'fit and proper' persons a licence will be granted. In deciding this, the Council must have regard to, amongst other matters:

- Any previous convictions relating to violence, drugs, sexual offences or fraud; and
- Whether the proposed licence holder has contravened any laws relating to housing or landlord and tenant issues; and
- Whether the person had been found guilty of unlawful discrimination practices.

What requirements must the landlord fulfil?

The licence must include certain mandatory conditions relating to the management of the house, requiring the licence holder to;

- Present a gas safety record annually to the Council (if there is gas supplied to the house)
- Keep any electrical appliances and furniture (supplied under the tenancy agreement) in a safe condition
- Fit smoke detectors and maintain them in proper working order
- Fit a carbon monoxide detector in any room containing a solid fuel appliance

- Provide the occupier with a written statement of the terms of the occupation (tenancy agreement)
- Demand references from any prospective tenants

Additional conditions will also be included which relate to the use and occupancy of the house and its contents and physical condition.

Consultation

We must consult on the proposed Darwen area scheme with those persons likely to be affected by it including; landlords, tenants, local residents and businesses. The consultation period will run for a minimum of ten weeks to give everyone time to consider our proposals and respond fully.

We intend to consult with you using the following methods:

- Consultation events
- Questionnaires
- Council website
- Local press
- Newsletters

Have your say

Your views are important to us and we are seeking to obtain the views of all those who could be affected by the proposed Darwen Selective Licensing Scheme. A questionnaire is attached to this newsletter. It will also be available at the drop in sessions, on-line or by request. Alternatively you can contact us by e-mail at housingstandards@blackburn.gov.uk direct with your views as soon as you have had time to consider the proposals.

Please note the consultation period ends on Friday 25th November 2016.

In addition there will be two opportunities for you to attend drop-in consultation events where you can come along and learn more about the proposed scheme. You will have an opportunity to speak to us informally and ask any questions, raise any concerns or make any comments in relation to the scheme.

What happens next?

At the end of the consultation period the Council will consider any representations that have been made by the local residents, landlords and businesses before deciding whether or not to re-introduce and expand Selective Licensing in Darwen. The Council will publish the results of consultation and details of the scheme within 6 weeks of the end of the consultation period.

If Selective Licensing is re-introduced there will be a minimum 3 month notification period before the scheme will come into force.



Selective Licensing Consultation

Landlord's views

A selective licensing scheme has been running in Central Darwen for five years and finished recently. We want to hear your views about the area and the scheme. The information you tell us will be treated confidentially and only be used in the analysis of this consultation and in providing feedback to you.

Questionnaires can be returned to 'SL Consultation, Housing Standards Team, N Floor, Tower Block, Blackburn Town Hall, Blackburn BB1 7DY'. Thank you for sending us your views. We need to have questionnaires sent back to us by **Friday 25th November 2016**.

About you

1. Are you a...

- Landlord Letting agent Managing agent
 Other please state.....

2. How many properties do you own or manage in the Darwen area

.....

3. Have you had problems with any of the following? (tick all that apply)

- Difficulty finding tenants
 Problems getting references from potential tenants
 Tenants behaving anti-socially
 Tenants being victims of anti-social behaviour
 Problems in other properties affecting your property/tenants
 Other please state.....
 I have not experienced any problems

About selective licensing

4. Should a discount be available for landlords who submit their applications in the first six months of a scheme starting?

- Yes No Don't know

5. Should landlords be charged an additional fee for not applying to the scheme promptly?

- Yes, if they apply 6 months after the scheme started Yes, if they apply a year after the scheme started Yes, if they apply two years after the scheme started No Don't know

6. Should landlords be able to spread their scheme payment in instalments?

- Over 12 months Over 24 months Over the whole 5 years No Don't know

7. Would you support the reintroduction of selective licensing in the Darwen area?

- Yes No Don't know

About the area

8. Has the period of selective licensing in Darwen made the area more attractive to tenants?

Yes No Don't know

9. Again, thinking about the Darwen area, have there been any changes in the following over the last 5 years?

	Improved	Stayed the same	Got worse	Don't know/haven't lived here that long
Demand for housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The number of long term tenants (staying for 1 year or more)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Level of anti-social behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The condition of properties in the area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The number of empty properties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Return from rental properties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perception of the area as a place to rent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Further information

10. Would you be interested in being part of a Landlords Forum where landlords can meet, providing a platform for discussion, problem solving and sharing of good practice?

Yes No Don't know

11. Do you have any other comments about selective licensing in the Darwen area or any suggestions as to conditions that should be included under the scheme?

.....

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.....

.....

12. Your contact details?

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Email:

Appendix 5: Responses to consultation from residents and landlords/managing agents

DARWEN SELECTIVE LICENSING CONSULTATION - RESIDENTS VIEWS

202 Households responded to the questionnaire

1. Before you received this questionnaire, had you heard about the Selective Licensing scheme?

27 residents were aware there was one in this area
23 residents had heard of it but not aware of one in this area
149 residents were not aware

2. Does your household own or rent this address?

Own outright / mortgage or loan	-	156
Part owns (Shared Ownership)	-	1
Rent from Housing Association	-	27
Rents from Private LL	-	18

3. Approximately, how long have you lived at this address?

Less than a year	-	5
One to two years	-	14
Three to five years	-	22
Five years and over	-	161

4. Overall, how satisfied are you with your home as a place to live?

Very satisfied	-	68
Fairly satisfied	-	101
Neither	-	9
Fairly dissatisfied	-	8
Very dissatisfied	-	16

5. Overall, how satisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?

Very satisfied	-	35
Fairly satisfied	-	76
Neither	-	15
Fairly dissatisfied	-	40
Very dissatisfied	-	32
Don't know	-	4

6. Thinking about your local area – in the last year, how much of a problem have the following been?

	A major problem	A big problem	A minor problem	Not a problem	Don't know	Blank
Verbal abuse	18	15	40	116	0	13
Nuisance neighbours (including intimidation and harassment)	25	22	37	107	1	10
Rubbish dumping	59	50	46	38	6	3
People being drunk or rowdy	20	29	70	67	6	10
People using or dealing drugs	27	27	40	75	27	6
People not treating others with respect and consideration	30	37	57	65	9	4

7. What is your postcode? (This will help us to identify issues relevant to your area?)

Out of 202 households 174 provided their postcode .

BB3 0 - 24

BB3 1 - 57

BB3 2 – 35

BB3 3 - 58

Blank - 28

8. If you have any problems with anti-social behaviour or crime in your area, is it local residents causing these or people from outside your area?

People from outside my area - 16

Local residents - 30

Both people from outside the area and local residents - 65

I don't know - 40

I don't have any problems with anti-social behaviour or crime - 49

Blank - 2

9. Again thinking about your local area, have there been any changes in the following over the last 5 years?

	Improved	Stayed the same	Got worse	Don't know/haven't lived here that long	Blank

The way the area looks	19	71	102	5	5
Feelings of safety	10	111	68	6	7
Friendliness/knowing your neighbours	23	135	32	7	5
The condition of houses in the area	21	92	78	6	5
The number of empty properties	16	107	57	16	6

Questions 10, 11 and 12 are only for people who rent their homes

10. How satisfied are you with your landlord?

Very satisfied	-	25
Fairly satisfied	-	14
Neither	-	1
Fairly dissatisfied	-	1
Very dissatisfied	-	3
Did not answer	-	1
Total answers from tenants	-	45

11. What is the main reasons why you are satisfied or dissatisfied with your landlord?

Satisfied - LL deals with problems immediately and calls regularly
 LL carried out regular maintenance
 LL patient when I got into rent arrears

Dissatisfied Most LL do not care about the tenants, the more money they receive the better.
 LL has not addressed issues of severe dampness

12. Thinking about your home, do you agree or disagree?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Did Not answer
That it is safe e.g. electricity safe and	27	15	0	1	0	1	1

gas							
That I know who to report problems to (e.g. property/or wider area)	21	21	1	0	0	1	1
That my home isn't having a bad impact on my health	19	17	0	2	3	3	1

13. Do you have any other comments about selective licensing or suggestions for what might improve privately rented houses or improve the area generally?

68 out of 202 residents did not provide any comments

A summary of the comments made by residents are broken down into several main areas as follows:-

1. ASB, drug dealing, litter and dog fouling

Many of those commenting stated that the main issues in the area were litter and rubbish, contaminated bins especially in the gated back streets. The alley gates had clearly not worked. As the privately rented sector has increased so have the problems with dumping. A recommendation was that instead of tenants being fined they should be made to do community clean-ups or there should be spot checks and fines. Most of the respondents laid the blame on the privately rented properties, both tenants and landlords. They felt that the tenants did not have any respect for the area and suggested that tenants should be offered longer tenancies so they have a stake in the area and incentive to have a pride in their surroundings.

They also felt tenants needed to have respect for their neighbours.

Some felt tenants should be made responsible for the appearance of their homes outside at the front and rear, others stated that the landlords should maintain the gardens and deal with broken windows. A number mentioned drug dealing and anti-social behaviour on the streets becoming an increasing issue. Noise from younger tenants was also an increasing problem as were taxi drivers.

A number went as far as claiming that some streets looked sleazy and are privately rented ghettos and it is frightening to go past them especially in the summer when all the issues spread out onto the streets, alcohol misuse and open drug dealing. Dog fouling was also stated to be an issue.

The conditions have been changed to reflect the issues concerning refuse and to ensure tenants are provided with the correct bins at the beginning of their tenancy and are aware of the way to deal with their refuse.

Noise complaints continue to be dealt with by the Public Protection team who will respond direct to complainants.

The neighbourhood policing team deal with complaints about drug dealing or other illegal activities.

2. Landlords

A number felt that the landlords should be more thorough when seeking references for the tenants they choose in relation to antisocial behaviour, debt, previous rent arrears and evictions. They felt that many landlords were irresponsible and only interested in profit and needed to carry out proper screening of prospective tenants and visit the properties on a regular basis. If the houses were let to decent people they would get looked after. They also felt that landlords needed to inspect their houses on a regular basis, check with the neighbours and carry out maintenance as run-down properties were attracting drug users. A number felt the council should increase its enforcement, needed more control over the privately rented sector, and there should be stricter policing of the sector. Some felt that the landlords needed to take more responsibility for the behaviour of their tenants, ensuring the tenants deal with their refuse and recycling properly and taking action to deal with troublesome or noisy tenants. Landlords should attend residents' meeting so they understand the impact of a high turnover of tenants.

They also felt a public register of landlords was helpful so they can identify the landlord.

There was a suggestion that if the landlords charged lower rents, working people could afford them and they would be kept in a better condition. Also terraced houses needed to be kept as family houses not be used as houses in multiple occupation. Some also suggested that landlords should not let to young adults due to their anti-social behaviour.

One tenant said their landlord was excellent

The conditions have been changed to reflect some of these concerns. Landlords will be required to inspect their properties at regular intervals to ensure they are aware of the conditions of their properties and can take appropriate action.

All the privately rented properties will be inspected to ensure they meet licensing conditions

In an area covered by selective licensing the local authority is required to hold a public register of licensed landlords which residents' associations can access to invite landlords to their meetings.

Where an area is covered by selective licensing, the landlords will be required to obtain references for their tenants.

An Article 4 direction, which controls the change of use from a family dwelling to a house in multiple occupation (HMO) in certain wards, came into force in February 2013. The affected wards in Darwen are Sudell and Sunnyhurst.

.3. General

Some commented that certain terraces need clearing especially those with a high level of privately rented stock which were in disrepair. Another suggested that all empty properties should be brought back into use and the empty commercial properties should be demolished.

A large number stated that the area needed selective licensing some saying it is a good thing for the community and for vulnerable people as it keeps the landlord and tenant in order and it needed to be re-instated and without it things would be a lot worse. The privately rented sector is bringing the area down, putting owner/occupiers off and values are decreasing. Some suggested the licence fee should be increased to stop landlords outbidding young owner-occupiers.

They also suggested specific areas where more community police were needed as it was frightening to walk around the area.

There were a number of comments about the general environment including issues about dog fouling, roaming poultry, slowing down of traffic, blocked culverts, litter, high levels of crime, the trees in the area needing cutting back, the dead trees replacing and the planters on Industry Street should be removed,. A free monthly bulky waste collection in key areas of the town was suggested.

There is a need for appropriate places and activities for children of all ages to stop them.

Unfortunately the funding that was received annually for many years from the Government to pay for clearance is no longer provided. In addition due to the poor condition of many of the older terraced properties the Council received housing market renewal monies however these are no longer available and owners are expected to take responsibility for their own properties. In addition the funding that is available to compulsorily purchase empty properties is limited however long term empty properties are prioritised.

One of the large empty commercial properties has been sold and the other one was recently the subject of a planning application that was refused.

The comments about neighbourhood policing and other issues will be passed onto the police and the relevant departments of the Council.

DARWEN SELECTIVE LICENSING CONSULTATION - LANDLORD VIEWS

1. Are you a

Landlord	64	Letting Agent	3
Managing Agent	1		
Other	4 (3 former landlord's, 1 prospective landlord)		

4 Landlords sent in letters and did not complete questionnaires

2. How many properties do you own or manage in the Darwen area?

As there was a typographical error on this question on some of the questionnaires some Landlords chose not to answer this question. Others corrected it.

From the replies

Most owned 1 or 2 properties

4 landlords have 4 properties in the area,

1 Landlord with 7 properties, said he would sell them if the scheme was introduced

3 Landlords said they had already sold or were in the process of selling all their properties in the proposed licensing area

1 Landlord has 29 properties.

3. Have you had problems with any of the following?

	<u>Yes</u>
Difficulty finding tenants	6
Problems getting references from potential tenants	4
Tenants behaving anti-socially	3
Tenants being victims of anti-social behaviour	2
Problems in other properties affecting your property/tenants	11
Other – Tenants not paying rent in full on time	5
Tenant not paying any rent	1
Inappropriate use of property	1
I have not experienced any problems	43
Blank	6

4. Should a discount be available for landlords who submit their applications in the first six months of a scheme starting?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Not answered</u>
61	1	6	4

5. Should landlords be charged an additional fee for not applying to the scheme promptly?

<u>Yes if apply after 6 months 2 years</u>	<u>Yes if apply after 1 year</u>	<u>Yes if apply after</u>
--	----------------------------------	---------------------------

5	14	3
<u>No</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Not Answered</u>
37	10	3

6. Should landlords be able to spread their scheme payment in instalments?

<u>Over 12 months</u>	<u>Over 24 months</u>	<u>Over 5 years</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Blank</u>
2	2	62	1	2	3

7. Would you support the reintroduction of selective licensing in the Darwen area?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't know</u>
11	55	6

8. Has the period of selective licensing in Darwen made the area more attractive to tenants?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Not answered</u>
2	46	23	1

9. Again, thinking about the Darwen area, have there been any changes in the following over the last 5 years?

	Improved	Stayed the same	Got worse	Don't know/not had properties in area for long	No Answer
Demand for housing	11	37	3	16	5
The number of long term tenants (staying for 1 year or more)	10	35	9	14	4
Level of anti-social behaviour	9	36	4	19	4
The condition of properties in the area	12	37	4	14	5
The number of empty properties	8	38	4	18	4
Return from rental properties	6	38	14	10	4
Perception of the area as a place to rent	8	42	7	11	4

10. Would you be interested in being part of a Landlords Forum where landlords can meet, providing a platform for discussion, problem solving and sharing of good practice?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Not answered</u>
23	38	10	1

11. Do you have any comments about selective licensing in the Darwen area or any suggestions as to conditions that should be included under the scheme?

The comments made by the landlords in response to the consultation can be broken down into six main areas:

- 1) Criticism of review of previous area and of consultation
- 2) Comments on the proposed area
- 3) Fees
- 4) What benefits do Landlords receive
- 5) Alternatives or improvements suggested
- 6) Effect of selective licensing

A summary of the responses in each area are set out in italics below and the Council's response follows.

Criticism of review of previous area and of consultation

A couple of landlords criticised the previous area saying it was not successful as they claim there was no improved behaviour, no increase in desirability of area, rents were reduced to attract tenants and there were no improvements to the area around properties. Two also criticised the review report stating there was no mention of other initiatives and one asked what other initiatives were linked to the new scheme. One asked why the data at the drop-in was from 2011. One asked what evidence there was that the resident's questionnaires were completed by residents. Some landlords pointed out the typographical error on Q2 and said this invalidated the questionnaire. Others corrected the error and answered the question.

The data at the drop-in from 2011 which was referred to, is the census data. When looking at the size of the privately rented sector (PRS) in the licensing areas and comparing it to the PRS in the Borough the legislation requires the Council to use the latest Census data. This is from 2011 which is why the information at the drop in sessions referred to 2011.

The Government has recognised that selective licensing in some areas is a long term strategy and the effects will take time to be seen. As the numbers of privately rented properties has increased in this area it has not discouraged landlords from purchasing properties in the area. A number of landlords said they had not increased the tenant's rent as they needed to keep it the same to remain competitive.

There are a number of other initiatives in the area including the new 119 home development on Shorey Bank and the development of the site of former Elizabeth House on Sudellside.

Comments on the proposed area

There are a number of comments about the boundary of the proposed area. Some are suggesting the area should include Housing Association estates such as St James, Anchor Estate and Birch Hall. Others asked to exclude specific areas or include others.

Properties managed by Housing Associations are specifically excluded from Selective Licensing by the legislation. Each other suggestion has been looked at and it has been decided to change the boundary as requested to exclude Hodgson Street and the Norfolk St area as the properties in this area are generally in better condition and the Housing Standards team have not received complaints about them for a number of years. The new estate under construction at Orchard Park has also been excluded as the boundary cut through it. It is also to be changed to include Elswick Street and Ellison Fold following requests to include it due to problems with the private tenants in these areas and a block on Greenway Street where the boundary cut through the middle of it.

Fees

A number of landlords made representations about the proposed level of fees, the fact that they are higher than previously. They do not think there should be a fee and feel it is a tax burden on landlords. They also feel the good landlords are being penalised and that good landlords should pay less and the fines for bad landlords should be higher. A number said that they could not afford the fee as they had mortgages to pay and they were in negative equity. Some said they needed to be able to pay in instalments. One owner said he owned 29 houses and could not afford it. A couple of landlords claimed they had had bad tenants in arrears and vandalism. Two landlords said they would sell up. Two landlords said they had paid before and the council had stopped the scheme. One landlord said the cost will be passed onto the tenants, this would cause arrears and the Council will have to rehouse them. One landlord stated we should enforce the Residential Tenancies Act. this is not a piece of English legislation

The fees are based on the cost of providing the licence. The reason for the increase in the cost of the licence is that the fees charged previously did not cover the costs of the scheme. The condition of the properties within the scheme was a lot worse than anticipated and resulted in more complaints and visits than originally anticipated. Identification and communication with those landlords who have not submitted applications was time consuming. Chasing of documentation has also been costly. These costs have had to be taken into account when deciding the new charge for the area. When the area was first declared as a selective licensing area it was a pilot scheme and lessons have been learnt about the need to improve the conditions relating to management.

Landlords are able to claim the licence fees as part of their expenses for tax purposes.

Unfortunately the legislation does not allow the Council to differentiate between so called 'good' landlords and bad landlords however the Council has successfully

prosecuted landlords in other Selective Licensing Areas for failure to submit a complete application for a licence and in addition has applied for Rent repayment orders against them resulting in them being required to repay the previous 12 months Housing Benefit for the unlicensed properties.

The Council has normally allowed landlords to pay in instalments unless they have failed to make the payments in previous schemes.

Selective Licensing Schemes last for a maximum of 5 years. The Council did not stop the previous scheme- it finished after the 5 years.

There is no obligation on the Council to permanently rehouse tenants who are intentionally homeless due to arrears.

The Residential Tenancies Act is not English legislation. There is such an act in Ireland.

What benefits do landlords receive?

Questions were asked about how the Council were to help landlords saying they needed help with rent arrears and bad tenants. Tenants needed to be held to account not given assistance.

Selective Licensing is primarily to assist tenants not landlords however the Council has written the conditions to assist small landlords in their management of their properties. In addition landlords are advised to look at the How to Rent booklet on the Gov.uk website which gives detailed advice to landlords and tenants. In areas where Selective Licensing has been successful, landlords have found it easier to obtain and retain tenants thus reducing their costs. They have also found by obtaining good references and following good practice during the term of letting, they are less likely to be left with damaged property and large rent arrears.

All landlords will receive advice, support and assistance to manage their tenants, involving a multi-agency approach where required.

Alternatives or improvements suggested

Landlords suggested various alternatives and questions including

- *.Need to penalise LL where asb or illegal behaviour by tenants*
- *Registered tenant's list*
- *Housing association to manage properties*
- *Grants or loans should be given to the landlords to renovate their properties*
- *Use of Section 215 Town and Country Planning Act powers eg rubbish issues or antisocial behaviour powers for fly tipping.*
- *Why do LL not get a free key for back street where there are alley gates?*
- *Benefit should not start at a new property until confirmation of no arrears at previous property*

The way the scheme is administered is set out in the legislation however Licence holders and their managers are required to be 'fit and proper' persons

The Council will take into account, amongst other things:

- Any previous convictions for violence, sex offences, drugs and fraud;

- Whether the proposed licence holder has broken any laws relating to housing or landlord and tenant issues;
- Whether the person has been found guilty of unlawful discrimination; and,
- Whether the person has previously managed HMOs or properties that have broken any approved code of practice.

The provision of a tenant's list has been investigated and legal advice is not in support of the provision of such a list by the Council.

Housing Associations have not been interested in taking over the management of houses in the privately rented sector nor would the Council be able to insist that landlords use a housing association to manage their properties.

Unfortunately the funding that was received annually for many years from the Government to pay for housing renewal in the form of improvement grants, clearance, group repair and facelift schemes is no longer provided. In addition due to the poor condition of many of the older terraced properties the Council received housing market renewal monies however this is no longer available and owners are expected to take responsibility for their own properties.

Owners and residents of properties with an alley gate were provided with one free key on request. Owners were given one key per scheme not per property..

Provision of Housing Benefit is governed by legislation which does not allow for suspension until any previous arrears at a previous property have been cleared.

The suggestion of the use of other legislation has been referred to the relevant departments.

Effect of SL

Landlords stated that selective licensing creates a type of segregation. They did not feel that anti- social behaviour had anything to do with them and blamed others for not taking action. Some stated that the only ASB was in Council owned properties. Some stated that the worst landlords served a purpose in providing accommodation for the homeless.

Some felt that there was less demand for houses in selective licensing area creating a spiral of decline resulting in lower house prices however two landlords felt that Selective licensing had no effect on the area.

A number of landlords said they agreed with what the scheme is trying to achieve and it will improve living standards and that landlords should only be able to obtain a licence if the property is up to a good standard.

One landlord said the scheme was based on misinformation as, due to the type of houses they are unpopular, so inherently they are low demand and of lower value than other terraced housing.

Most residents of the area want the landlords to take responsibility for the tenants they put in their property. This can be done initially by obtaining and checking

references and subsequently by taking steps to deal with complaints about their tenants.

All privately rented properties should meet the required standards and less desirable tenants do not 'deserve' accommodation that does not meet these standards.

There are no council owned properties as the council stock was transferred to a housing association more than 10 years ago. The larger Housing Associations employ their own anti-social behaviour officers.

Most landlords prefer to own properties in a better area so they can attract and retain decent tenants as high tenant turnover is expensive. The benefits to the landlord are that licensing creates a level playing field, so the better landlords will not be undercut by those who do not carry out repairs or manage their properties. All landlords will receive advice, support and assistance to manage their tenants, involving a multi-agency approach where required. There should be improved rental income and capital value as areas improve and an improvement in the reputation of private landlords. All the privately rented properties will be inspected to ensure they meet licensing conditions. As properties are better managed the houses will be in better condition both internally and externally making them more attractive to tenants resulting in shorter void periods and reduced tenant turnover.

Landlords are required to provide safety certification before the property is licensed, then an inspection is carried out to ensure they are compliant with the licence conditions.

One landlord has stated that the area is low demand which agrees with the Council's statement.

Landlord Associations

One landlord association also responded to the consultation. They raised a number of issues which were also raised by landlords and have been responded to in the responses above. In addition they stated that they support a system of self-regulation for landlords where landlords join a co-regulation scheme. They also stated that the Council should await the impact of the new powers in Housing and Planning Act 2016 before designating the area. They say there is little evidence that licensing schemes improve standards. The introduction of licensing will blight the area.

They also state that they support the use of the council tax registration process to identify privately rented properties.

When landlords were offered the chance to join the accreditation scheme without a fee most of the landlords within this area chose not to become accredited. A minority of landlords within the Borough are members of a landlord association and there is no evidence that many would pay to become a member to be part of a co-regulation scheme.

There is no commencement date set for the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and it would take more time to assess the impact. Residents would like selective licensing re-introduced now and the introduction of the legislation would complement the designation.

Evidence from the review of the Central Darwen and the previous Infirmity schemes showed that licensing schemes improve safety standards. In addition landlords have learnt from the previous schemes about legal requirements when letting property. However it has been found that without the monitoring of a licensing scheme landlords have a tendency not to continue to comply with their legal requirements. Some landlords and residents are attracted to a selective licensing area as they know that if there are problems with other tenants their landlords will be required to take action to deal with it. There is evidence that during the lifetime of the previous selective licensing area a number of properties have changed hands and landlords have purchased them therefore there does not appear to be a disincentive to landlords to own properties in selective licensing areas. We also support the use of the council tax registration process to identify privately rented properties

Appendix 6: Fit and proper person definition and conditions

Fit and proper person definition

In deciding for the purposes of whether a person (“P”) is a fit and proper person to be the licence holder

Or

(As the case may be) the manager of the house, the local housing authority must have regard (among other things) to any evidence below:

Evidence is within this subsection if it shows that P has:

- (a) committed any offence involving fraud or other dishonesty, or violence or drugs, or any offence listed in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (c. 42) (offences attracting notification requirements);
- (b) practised unlawful discrimination on grounds of sex, colour, race, ethnic or national origins or disability in, or in connection with, the carrying on of any business; or
- (c) Contravened any provision of the law relating to housing or of landlord and tenant law.

Appendix 7: Selective licensing mandatory and additional conditions

Selective Licensing Mandatory Conditions

The licence holder must:

- 1) If gas is supplied to the house, produce to the local housing authority annually for their inspection a gas safety certificate obtained in respect of the house within the last 12 months.
- 2) Keep electrical appliances and furniture made available by him in the house in a safe condition
- 3) Supply the authority, on demand, with a declaration by him as to the safety of such appliances and furniture
- 4) Ensure that smoke alarms are installed on each storey in the house on which there is a room used wholly or partly as living accommodation and to keep each such alarm in proper working order.
- 5) Supply the authority, on demand, with a declaration by him as to the condition and positioning of such alarms.
- 6) Ensure that a carbon monoxide alarm is installed in any room of the house which is used wholly or partly as living accommodation and contains a solid fuel burning combustion appliance and to keep any such alarm in proper working order.
- 7) Supply the authority, on demand, with a declaration by him as to the condition and positioning of any such alarms.
- 8) Supply to the occupiers of the house a written statement of the terms on which they occupy it.
- 9) Demand references from persons who wish to occupy the house.

Additional Conditions

Delete if not applicable

- 1) If the property is a HMO the licence holder must not permit the house to be occupied by more than x persons and must ensure that the kitchens and hallways of the house are not used for sleeping purposes either by their tenants or their guests.
- 2) The licence holder should ensure the property is compliant with all current housing legislation.
- 3) The licence holder must ensure all amenities; facilities and equipment provided for occupants are adequately maintained and remain available for use at all times.

Delete if not applicable

- 4) The electrical installation condition report is unsatisfactory. The licence holder must ensure that the remedial works are completed no later than 1 month following the date of the licence and must provide the Housing Standards team with written confirmation of this from a competent electrician.
- 5) Where the electrical installation condition report or the electrical installation report expires during the term of the licence, an up to date electrical installation condition report must be provided to the Housing Standards team within 28 days of the expiry date.
- 6) The licence holder must act lawfully and reasonably in requiring any advance payments, handling rents, taking and returning deposits and making deductions from deposits.
- 7) The licence holder must provide the tenants of the licensed property with the following:
 - a. Name of the licence holder or managing agent
 - b. A contact address, daytime telephone number
 - c. A telephone number to contact in case of emergency
- 8) In circumstances where the licence holder seeks repossession of the property, this must be done using lawful means.
- 9) Each new tenant will require sight of a valid Energy Performance Certificate.
- 10) Before a new tenancy is issued the licence holder/agent should carry out an inventory and document it with additional photographs. Both licence holder and tenant shall date and sign said inventory and each retain a copy.
- 11) At the beginning of each tenancy the landlord shall inform the Housing Standards team of the date of commencement and the tenant's name.

- 12) Where there are key locks for the windows, a key shall be provided to the tenant at the beginning of the tenancy.
- 13) Where alley gates are in place the licence holder shall provide a key to the tenant at the beginning of the tenancy.
- 14) The licence holder must provide arrangements for disposal of refuse and ensure that there are adequate facilities for the storage of household refuse between collections, such that unauthorised bags or loose refuse are not put out for collection and bins are not put out for a period longer than 12 hours prior to their collection.
- 15) The licence holder must outline to the tenants their responsibilities in respect of refuse storage and disposal. This is to include details of what day refuse collections take place and what type of bins to use for household waste and recycling waste.
- 16) At the beginning of each tenancy the licence holder shall provide the tenant with a grey and a burgundy refuse bin, permanently labelled with the property address and include a photograph of these on the signed inventory.
- 17) Antisocial behaviour within the premises must be dealt with under the terms of the tenancy agreement. The licence holder and their nominated managing agent must take reasonable and practicable steps to prevent or where appropriate reduce anti-social behaviour by persons occupying or visiting the house. They must also reasonably co-operate with the local authority over any action being taken in respect of the same. Further help and advice can be sought from the Shared Neighbourhood Teams
- 18) The licence holder and their nominated managing agent must recognise the importance of tackling anti-social behaviour in order to ensure that communities are safe and that areas do not decline because of a failure to act. The licence holder and/or their nominated agent must have the facilities to receive and respond to initial complaints about their tenants' behaviour.
- 19) The licence holder and/or their nominated managing agent are required to take reasonable and effective steps to deal with any complaints which have been made either directly to them, or via the local authority, regarding their tenants. Written records of these may be required.
- 20) The licence holder must ensure that they are familiar and compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- 21) The licence holder must allow officers of the local authority access to the licensed property for the purpose of carrying out inspections where this request has been made in writing with reasonable notice.
- 22) The licence holder must co-operate with licensing staff in circumstances where complaints of alleged breaches of licence conditions have been made in respect of the licensed property.

- 23) The licence holder must ensure that all licence fees are paid to the local authority. If payments are being made by instalments, each payment must be made no later than the due date.
- 24) Where the property is sold, the licence holder is responsible for notifying the Housing Standards team and paying the licence fee in full.
- 25) The licence holder must provide the Housing Standards team with a 24-hour emergency contact telephone number for the licence holder and/or managing agent.
- 26) The licence holder and/or their nominated managing agent must, if required by the local authority, attend training in property management and adult safeguarding.
- 27) The licence holder and their managing agent must inform the Housing Standards team of any relevant changes in their circumstances including:
 - a. Any new convictions/cautions which may be deemed relevant to the fit & proper person test
 - b. Change of ownership and or managing agent of the licensed property
 - c. Any substantial works to the property
 - d. Any change of address, e-mail address or telephone number.
- 28) If the property is a House in Multiple Occupation it must conform to all the relevant legislation and the Council's standards.
- 29) There must be suitable and sufficient buildings insurance. This should cover re-housing in the event of there being a need.
- 30) The Licence holder must ensure that at all times it is in force, a copy of the licence and its conditions is displayed in a prominent position within the property where it can be viewed by all occupants.
- 31) The licence holder should carry out a check on the property at least every 6 months and these should be documented and provided should the Authority require them.
- 32) If the person identified as manager of the property is unable to be contacted for any reason or is out of the country for longer than 15 days then a temporary manager must be appointed for the time that they are away/ unable to be contacted. Any proposed manager must be a fit and proper person under the Housing Act 2004 and be acceptable to the authority before they can take charge of the property. The licence holder must provide the licensing authority written notification of any proposed person and provide a valid original Basic Disclosure Scotland certificate for the proposed person prior to the person taking charge of the property. The temporary manager can only be in place for a maximum of 3 months within any 12 month period.

Appendix 8: Selective Licensing Fees

Fees for period designation date (..... to 5 years after designation comes into force. (.....)..

Applicants will be charged the full amount to accompany the application form. At the Council's discretion a payment plan or direct debit may be established to agree to payments being made over an agreed period of time.

Fee Discounts

A discount of £150 will be applied to the overall cost of the fee if the applicant submits a fully completed application form and all requested documentation within 3 months of the designation area coming into force. Payment must be received in full or a direct debit payment plan agreed. Failure to continue to make the annual direct debit payment will result in prosecution for a breach of the licence conditions.. Landlords of the licensing schemes that have now been completed, who have failed to pay their previous licensing costs in full will not be eligible for the discount or to pay in instalments

Reduced Fees

Applications for licences in the last six months of the designation will be eligible for a reduced fee of 50%, this is where properties have not been licensable prior to the 6 month deadline.

Fees for applications for a property during the designation will be based on the agreed fee structure.

Applications resulting from a change in licence holder of a licensed property will be charged the full fee applicable at the date of application. The new licence holder will not incur the £150 additional charge as long as the application form, fees and all documentation are received within three months of the change of ownership/manager.

Fee Reimbursements

Applications will be charged the full amount to accompany the application form. At the Council's discretion a payment plan may be established to agree to payments to be made over an agreed period of time any such plan/agreement can only be repaid by direct debit.

Where a licence is refused or revoked, the applicant or licence holder will not be entitled to any refund of fees and will still be required to pay any outstanding charges.

Payment Methods

Payment in full should be made with the application documents. Payment can be made by cheque, cash or card payment. Cheques should be made payable to Blackburn with Darwen B.C.

Where the applicant experiences difficulty in paying the full amount, a payment plan may be agreed, enabling the full amounts to be paid in instalments, at the Council's discretion any such plan/agreement can only be paid by direct debit

Single occupancy households.	Fee	Annual Payment
Each unit of accommodation.	£750	£150
Early response discount of £150 (Application form and all requested documentation must be received fully completed by Blackburn with Darwen Council by 6 months after designation date) .	£600	£120
Additional charge of £150 (Application form received after 12 months after designation date)	£900	£180

Multiple occupancy households.	Standard fee	Annual payment
Fee for property up to and including 10 units.	£900	£180
Fee for each additional unit over 10 units.	£50 per unit	£10 per unit
Early response discount of £150 (Application form and all requested documentation must be received fully completed by Blackburn with Darwen Council by 6 months after designation date)	£750	£150
Additional charge of £150 (Application form received after 12 months after designation date).	£1050	£210

Note:- Owners should give careful consideration to the person designated as Licence holder as licences run for a maximum of 5 years and are non-transferable. If the licence holder changes for any reason, the full licence fee is payable by the first licence holder and the new licence holder will also need to pay the full fee.

Appendix 9: Map of the selective licensing area

