

Briefing Note – Wealdstone Selective Licensing Renewal

Part 3 of the Housing Act 2004 allows Local Authorities to introduce a Selective Licensing Scheme if certain conditions are met for the area. The Department for Communities and Local Government “Selective Licensing in the Private Rented Sector” Guide for Local Authorities states that the area must have one or more of the following conditions being experienced in order for a selective licensing designation to be made:

- i. low housing demand (not applicable in Wealdstone),
- ii. significant and persistent problem caused by anti-social behaviour (ASB),
- iii. poor property conditions,
- iv. high levels of migration,
- v. high level of deprivation
- vi. high levels of crime

Since June 2016, the Council has sought to licence all rented accommodation in the designated area to ensure they are all subject to conditions specific to ensuring safety, addressing the issues found in the area (e.g. waste disposal condition aimed at reducing fly tipping) and carrying out inspections to ensure the premises are fit for habitation and safe.

To give a context as to the number of properties licensed in this period, the 2013 census of Wealdstone showed there were 1045 rented premises in the ward. Since 2016, 774 (74%) rented premises have been licensed under the Selective Licensing Scheme, and 331 (31%) Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) under appropriate scheme for those premises. In total 1105 premises have been licensed. This is 60 (5%) more premises than were captured in the original census, and is a result of premises changing use as well as some premises moving from a selective licence requirement (e.g. a single family rented property) to a HMO requirement (e.g. multiple households moving in).

The 2019 vitality profile¹ does shows a clear reduction of these areas with fly tipping clearly reduced in Edgware (Selective Licensing introduced in 2015) and Wealdstone (2016) and it is in this area in particular that further attention will be given.

The evidence does show that Wealdstone is getting better in the areas that Selective Licensing directly impacts. But it also shows that, combined with the deprivation and ASB aspects, there is still more work to be done. And it is likely that this is more around those premises that have remained under the radar and now need to be tackled directly. Over the last 5 years, there have been 126 reports of premises that should be subject to selective licensing in Wealdstone, with 101 of these in the last 2 years as awareness increases including the register of licensed premises on the Council’s website.

It should also be noted that fly tipping has reduced on council (public) land but does not take into account the issues still faced on private or orphaned land. An example is the service road stretching behind Costa Coffee to Mir Supermarket, which continues to be plagued by waste from both the rented flats above the premises and others but unfortunately the land is orphaned (no owner). It is these areas that Selective must do more now to address.

Assessing the consultation comments, the main criticism from landlords in particular is the view that such a scheme is put in place as a money making process. It is understood though how, particularly for landlords, another fee is see as a burden though its impact is limited (£550 per 5 years in the main, £110 per year, less than £10 per month).

¹ [environment \(harrow.gov.uk\)](http://environment.harrow.gov.uk)

Additionally, comments centred on more to be done with tenants, who are perceived as the “culprits” of a lot of issues. But by working with landlords, a lot of this can be addressed through clear ASB action plans and tenancy agreements.

In an ideal world licensing of this nature would not be needed, but as can be seen it has led to improvements and consistency of approach that the next 5 years will build upon. While the Council understands the burdens landlords are faced with, such a scheme has led to improvements and a standardised playing field for all. By targeting those that have gone under the radar previously, through use of intelligence and complaints, further improvements will be seen