

Selective Licensing Consultation 2021: Burnley Wood with Healey Wood and the Leyland Road area

Why is the council proposing to introduce selective licensing in these areas?

Selective licensing can be introduced where there is evidence that an area is suffering from low demand for housing. The council believes that there is sufficient evidence of low demand in both of the proposed areas.

The council has operated selective licensing in these areas since 2016. The schemes were brought in to improve standards in the private rented sector; in order to operate in these areas landlords and managing agents have to apply for a licence. As part of this they have had to prove that they are managing their properties properly, that they are meeting all their legal obligations, and that they have appropriate management in place. Once the licence is granted, landlords and agents are bound by a number of conditions related to how they manage the property. Operating without a licence is a criminal offence.

Throughout the current schemes, we have seen improvements in these areas. House values have risen, and fuel poverty, empty homes and environmental crime have all decreased since the start of the schemes. However, when compared to other parts of the borough, these areas are still suffering from low demand; house values are lower, and empty homes, environmental crime and antisocial behaviour, despite showing an improving picture, are still more of a problem here than in other areas.

The current schemes in Burnley Wood with Healey Wood and the Leyland Road area come to an end in November 2021; the council believes that both areas would benefit from licensing for a further five years to build upon and embed the progress already made.

You can read more about the evidence that these proposals are based on in our “Statement of Case” document, available on our website.

Are there any other options?

It is true that the council does already have some powers to tackle poor properties. Before introducing selective licensing, we considered all of these, to determine if they alone would be sufficient to tackle the problems facing the area. Below are the main alternatives to licensing (further detail can be found in the Statement of Case on our website).

- Accreditation

The council runs a voluntary accreditation scheme for landlords and managing agents, allowing them to demonstrate that they meet or exceed the required standard. However, this is a voluntary scheme, and we cannot compel poor landlords and agents to join and be bound by the scheme.

- Enforce Housing Standards

The council can inspect poor properties, and legally require landlords to bring them up to standard. However this is a reactive service, which largely requires tenants/residents to come forward with complaints. Many residents do not know they can do this, or are too concerned about reprisals to come forward. It also means tackling just one property at a time, and does not improve wider management standards.

- Management Orders

The council can step in and remove properties from irresponsible landlords who are not operating properly, bring the property up to standard and manage it correctly. This is a resource intensive way to tackle the management at one property, and does not improve wider management standards across an area.

None of the above options allow the council to tackle a whole area at once; selective licensing gives the council tools to proactively examine properties and management arrangements, and take action where these fall short of the required standard.

What else are we doing in these areas?

Selective licensing currently runs alongside a number of other services and programmes, as part of the council's wider housing strategy for the borough. The council recognises the importance of providing good quality housing to residents of the borough, and we believe that a thriving private rented sector is a key part of this.

- Empty Homes Programme

Concentrations of empty homes are a clear indicator of low housing demand. The current and proposed selective licensing areas suffer disproportionately from empty homes, which can blight a neighbourhood, attracting vandalism and antisocial behaviour. The Empty Homes programme has been operating since 2002, working with landlords to bring empty properties back into use. The council also purchases and refurbishes empty properties which are then sold on the open market. Interest free loans of up to £20,000 are available to landlords in licensing areas to bring empty homes back into use, and we will also pay the licensing fee of landlords who do this work through the programme. The programme has had a notable effect in the Burnley Wood area, including working with the social housing provider Calico to turn more empty houses into homes. Further designations will allow us to continue supporting the Empty Homes team with this work.

- Housing Enforcement

Selective licensing allows us to undertake proactive property checks at rented homes, to ensure that they are safe. Where officers have concerns, they work with the housing enforcement team to ensure a full inspection is completed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. The licensing team also work closely with the Housing Enforcement team to ensure that all rented properties are appropriately protected with smoke and carbon monoxide detection; protecting tenants and their neighbours.

- Accreditation, Training and Support

Accreditation under our Good Landlord and Agent Scheme (GLAS) is a mark of a good quality landlord or agent. As such, the council rewards qualifying members of the scheme with a 30% reduction in their licensing fees, in recognition of this. The council continues to encourage landlords to join the scheme and in doing so, meet our Code of Practice. We also host free, in person and online training days led by

qualified trainers from the National Residential Landlords Association, covering all aspects of letting, for landlords and agents operating in the licensing areas.

- Preventing Homelessness

The council recognises that the private rented sector plays a crucial role in the prevention of homelessness, and we are clear that private renting needs to offer a decent alternative to owner occupation and social housing. Selective licensing has helped us to strengthen partnerships with landlords to ensure they are managing things like antisocial behaviour and rent arrears promptly and appropriately, helping to stabilise tenancies and providing housing options for vulnerable tenants. Officers from licensing also work with the Housing Advice team to investigate illegal evictions, and assist with rehoming tenants where their existing home is not suitable.

- Crime and ASB

The licensing team work closely with neighbourhood police teams and the council's Community Safety Team to tackle instances of crime and antisocial behaviour. The extra tools given to us by licensing allow us to ensure that landlords are taking appropriate steps to prevent ASB from happening (e.g. appropriate referencing) and dealing with it if it occurs (e.g. issuing warnings, escalating to eviction where serious enough). Without the licensing conditions, the council would have fewer tools available to tackle ASB at rented properties.

- Environmental Crime

The licensing team support the work of Streetscene, by undertaking proactive audits to identify instances of fly-tipping and dirty back yards. Licensing conditions allow us to ensure that landlords are providing adequate bins, and making tenants aware of their responsibilities.

If the proposed schemes are designated, it will allow us to continue to work proactively with the above teams to further reduce empty homes, crime and dirty backyards, and raising management standards across the private rented sector.

What will the scheme achieve?

The ideal outcomes of the selective licensing areas are to:

- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Reduce dirty backyards and fly-tipping
- Bring empty homes back into use by working in partnership with the empty homes team and property owners
- Improve the management of private rented houses through training, advice and support to landlords. Where necessary the council will enforce the licence conditions
- Improve the condition of private rented houses through training, advice and inspections.

Want to know more?

You can read more about why we are proposing to introduce the schemes in the Statement of Case document on our website. Visit www.burnley.gov.uk/selective-licensing and follow

the links to the consultation page. Here you will also find the proposed fee structure, and proposed licence conditions, as well as Frequently Asked Questions.

Talk to Us

You have until the 24th October 2021 to let us know what you think about the proposed schemes. Visit our website for details on how you can be part of the consultation.