

June 2019

Rented Property Licensing

Proposal report for consultation

Introduction

The London Borough of Havering (‘the council’), wants to ensure private rented properties offer residents a choice of safe, quality and well managed accommodation.

Decent housing is the foundation of people’s lives and a strong and cohesive local community. A more stable and high quality private rented sector (PRS), will lead to stronger communities.

The council’s Corporate Plan 2019/20 sets out how the council’s new vision, “*Cleaner, Safer, Prouder Together*”, will be accomplished through delivery of the four corporate priorities of Communities, Places, Opportunities and Connections. One of the key delivery areas under the communities section is to ensure zero tolerance against rogue landlords, to be achieved by licensing as well as enforcement of the legislation.

Stock condition

The council commissioned a PRS housing stock condition and stressors report in 2018. This has been developed using information from a number of sources that the council already holds in its data warehouse.

Data trends at the property level are analysed by mathematical algorithms to help predict the tenure of individual properties using factors such as occupant transience and housing benefit data.

The residential property data warehouse has included linking millions of data cells to 105,798 unique property references (UPRN). This data includes both council and externally held data.

Advanced mathematical modelling is used to make predictions for each for tenure type and property condition. Results are analysed to produce a summary of housing stock and predictions of Category 1 hazards (as outlined in the housing health and safety rating system - HHSRS).

Modelling has shown that the private rented sector in the borough is now 29% of the total housing stock- 30,125 properties. It is well documented (English House Condition Survey) that the worst housing conditions are seen in private rented properties as compared to social housing or owner-occupied properties.

Key Findings

- There are a total of 105,798 residential properties in Havering, 29% (30,125) of which are PRS; 54% are owner occupied and 17% socially rented.
- 7,480 PRS properties have category 1 HHSRS hazards. This represents 25% of the PRS stock, i.e. 1 in 4 rental properties have serious hazards.
- The highest concentration of PRS properties are located in Romford Town and Brooklands wards
- The data modelling predicts that Havering has 1,310 HMOs
- HMOs as a subset of the PRS in Havering, have high rates of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB), and category 1 (HHSRS) hazards
- The highest concentration of HMOs can be found in the Romford Town and Brooklands wards.

Most economic forecasts predict that the PRS is going to continue to grow for the foreseeable future; This has historically been at the expense of owner occupation in Havering. This growth is mainly due to buy -to- let investors who have replaced owner occupiers in the local area.

With a large PRS, there needs to be an effective way of regulating this sector. Although most landlords provide decent accommodation, as the numbers of PRS properties rise, so does the proportion of these properties that require regulation.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is one of the most important negative issues that local residents are experiencing and are concerned about. The summary data and graphs within this report clearly demonstrate the extent of ASB and its prevalence. There is a clear link between the PRS and ASB, including those houses in multiple occupation (HMO), which is mainly due to poor property management and the transient nature of this population within the sector.

For selective licensing the evidence shows that there are high levels of ASB in Romford Town and Brooklands in the PRS population. These are reported ASB incidents such as noise nuisance, rubbish accumulations etc.

Examples of common ASB related to the PRS are: rubbish in front gardens, fly tipping, overflowing domestic bins, abandoned mattresses and noise. Licensing these properties can help address this type of issue by requiring property managers to take an active role in reducing these nuisances.

To help deliver the council's corporate plan objectives, extending property licensing is being considered which will mean that more rental properties will need a licence.

There are two types of discretionary licensing schemes that can be introduced by the council. These are known as Selective Licensing and Additional Licensing. The difference between the two types of licensing relates to how a rented property is occupied.

Before a local authority can introduce a licensing scheme it must by law take reasonable steps to consult all persons who are likely to be affected by any licensing scheme and to consider any representations made.

The council wants to hear the views of its residents, businesses and landlords who rent properties in the borough to ensure that the areas identified for proposed selective and additional licensing are the most in need of intervention to reduce persistent anti-social behaviour and poor housing which can lead to social issues in the area.

The ways in which you can respond are set out at the end of this document.



The proposals

The London Borough of Havering is consulting on proposals to bring in property licensing schemes for privately rented accommodation.

This proposals are to;

Proposal One -Add to the existing HMO licensing scheme by introducing a further scheme to include the remaining 6 wards currently not covered: Cranham, Upminster, St Andrews, Emerson Park, Hacton and Hylands. This is also known as additional licensing.

Proposal Two - To introduce licensing of properties let to single households in Romford Town and Brooklands wards. This is known as selective licensing

The council's preferred course of action is to introduce both proposals

Proposal One - Additional licensing (HMO)

Under Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004 a local authority has the power to licence HMOs that are not covered by mandatory licensing if the local authority considers that a significant proportion of the HMOs in the area are being managed sufficiently ineffectively as to give rise to one or more particular problems either for those occupying the HMOs or for members of the public.

The council considers that this is the case in Cranham, Upminster, St Andrews, Emerson Park, Hacton and Hylands wards and the reasoning and evidence is set out in the evidence section below.

There is evidence that HMOs have a high proportion of properties which:

- are in a poor external condition with untidy yards and gardens, including rubbish
- have a poor standard of amenities (kitchen and bathrooms), often overcrowded, lack fire precautions and other management failures which adversely impact upon the health, safety and welfare of the occupiers
- have landlords who are failing to take appropriate steps to address issues
- have a high level of anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- are being poorly managed

Displacement of criminal landlords from licensed areas to non-licensed areas is also an issue. There are large licensing schemes in most of the boroughs neighbouring Havering, so licensing is required to offer Havering some protection. The flipping of single household properties into unlicensed HMOs by criminal landlords is common and does not require a purchase of a property.

Building converted into flats (Section 257 HMOs)

The proposals are also intended to cover some section 257 HMOs. A section 257 HMO is a building which is converted entirely into self-contained flats if the

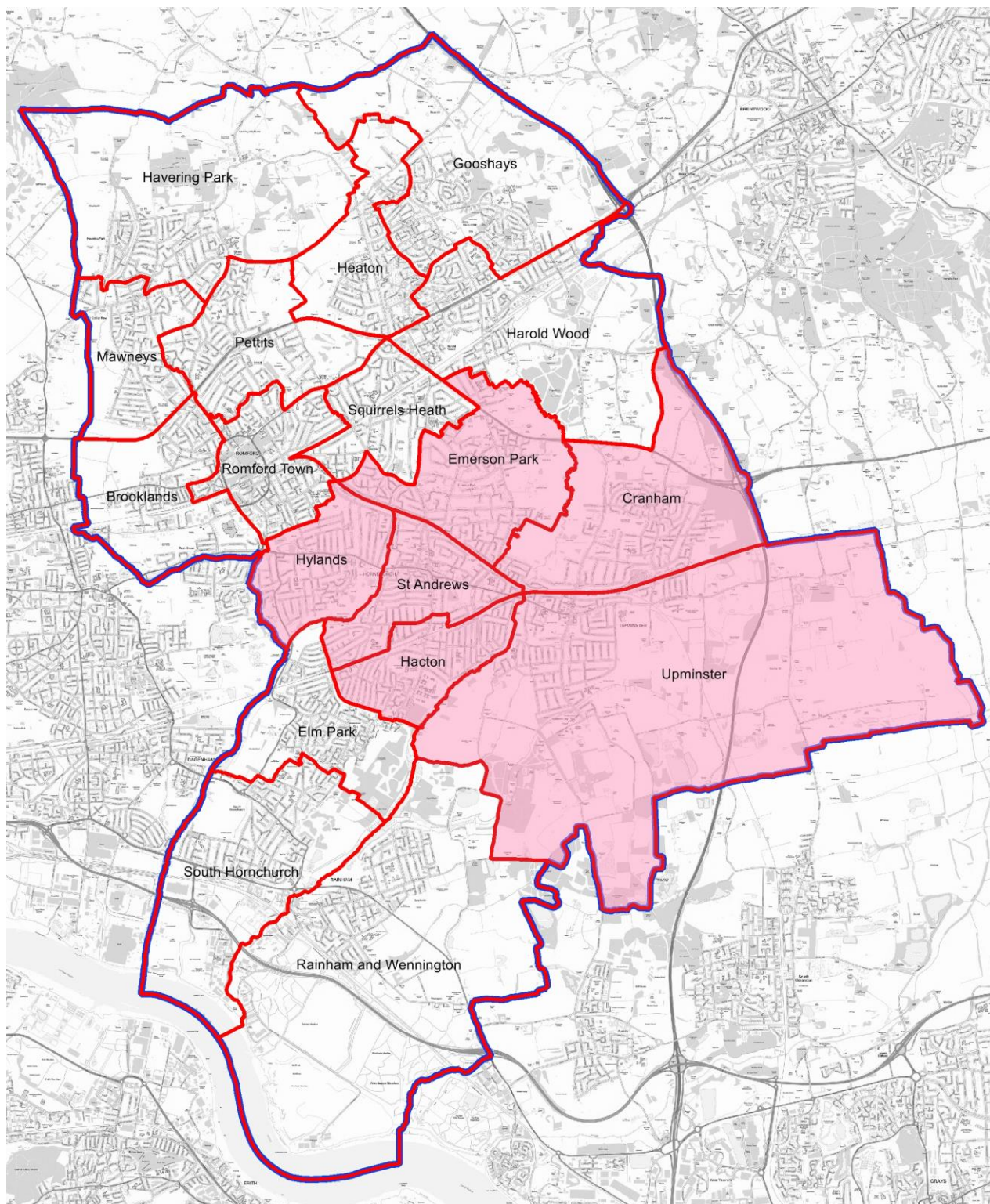
conversion did not meet the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations and more than one-third of the flats are let on short-term tenancies.

What area does the proposal cover?

The council is proposing to introduce a licensing designation for HMOs in Cranham, Upminster, St Andrews, Emerson Park, Hacton and Hylands wards to run in parallel with the existing HMO scheme. This is known as an additional licensing scheme.

This would mean that all landlords who let a property occupied by three or more non-related occupiers who share some basic facilities or amenities such as a kitchen or bathroom will be required to have a licence.

The proposed area is shown in the map below shaded in pink.



What does this mean?

If the scheme is introduced;

- private landlords will have to apply for a licence to rent HMOs in Cranham, Upminster, St Andrews, Emerson Park, Hacton and Hylands
- the council would need to determine the proposed licence holder is a 'fit and proper' person to manage their properties
- failure to licence a property would be a criminal offence and could result in prosecution and an unlimited fine or a financial penalty of up to £30,000
- landlords would need to meet the licence conditions, including a limit on how many people can live in a property, which is reasonable for the number of rooms and facilities.
- landlords would not be able to evict a tenant if they had not applied for a licence when required to do so.
- tenants could apply for a rent repayment order if a landlord did not licence their property when required to do so.

What does the council want to achieve from additional licensing (HMO)

The objective of the licensing schemes is to:

- reduce anti-social behaviour in the private rented sector
- improve property standards make sure more landlords manage their properties responsibly
- focus enforcement on landlords that provide below standard accommodation and have unlicensed properties
- provide a light touch solution for landlords who meet the requirements and already provide good quality accommodation and service.
- provide more protections for private rented tenants
- to be able to have a consistent approach to all HMOs as HMOs in 6 wards currently do not require a licence.

How long will the scheme run and when will it start

It is proposed that the schemes run for five years. If the scheme goes ahead as proposed it is intended to designate the area in the autumn of 2019 and would come into force in early 2020.

Proposal two-Targeted selective licensing scheme in Romford Town and Brooklands wards

A selective licensing designation may be made if the area to which it relates satisfies one or more of the following conditions.

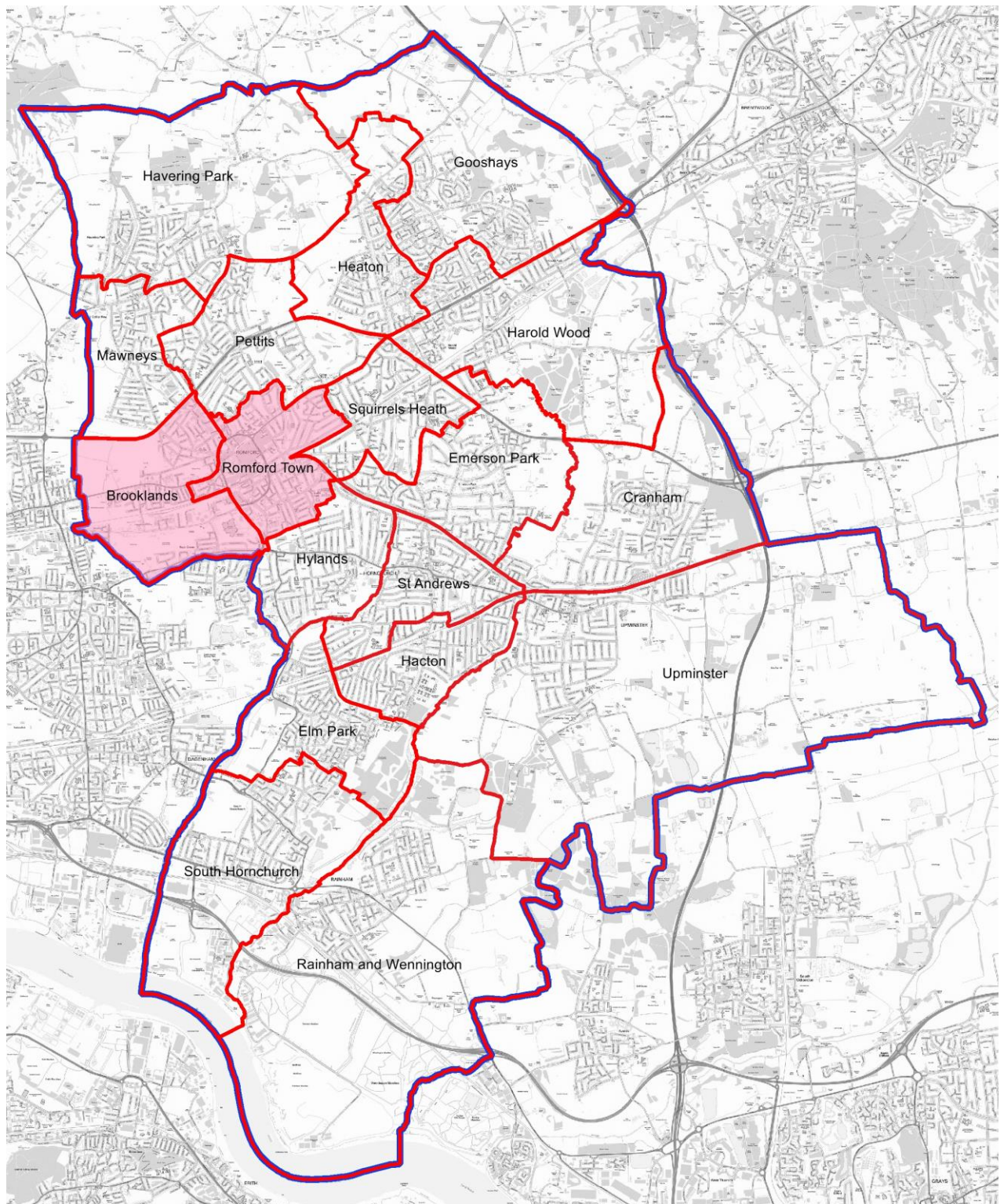
The area is one experiencing:

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

The council is proposing to introduce a targeted licensing designation that will require landlords who let all other residential accommodation (housing rented to a single family or household or two unrelated people) to have a licence. This will be focused on an area which the council has identified as;

- having particularly high levels of private rented properties
- poor housing conditions
- high rates of ASB.

This is known as a selective licensing scheme. The areas which are of concern are the **Romford Town and Brooklands** wards. The map below details the geographical areas to be covered by the proposed selective licensing designation.



What does this mean?

If the scheme is introduced;

- private landlords will have to apply for a licence to rent properties let to single households or two unrelated people in Romford Town and Brooklands wards.
- the council would need to determine the proposed licence holder is a 'fit and proper' person to manage their properties
- failure to licence a property would be a criminal offence and could result in prosecution and an unlimited fine or a financial penalty of up to £30,000
- landlords would need to meet the licence conditions, including tacking up tenant references and visiting the property at least twice a year.
- landlords would not be able to evict a tenant if they had not applied for a licence when required to do so.
- tenants could apply for a rent repayment order if a landlord did not licence their property when required to do so.

What does the council want to achieve from selective licensing in Romford Town and Brooklands wards

The objective of the licensing schemes is to:

- reduce anti-social behaviour in the private rented sector
- improve property standards make sure more landlords manage their properties responsibly
- focus enforcement on landlords that provide below standard accommodation and have unlicensed properties
- provide a light touch solution for landlords who meet the requirements and already provide good quality accommodation and service.
- provide more protections for private rented tenants

How long will the scheme run and when will it start

It is proposed that the scheme run for five years. If the schemes go ahead as proposed it is intended to designate the areas in the autumn of 2019 and, would come into force in early 2020.

Licence conditions

The Housing Act 2004 requires that every licence must include certain mandatory management conditions. The council also has the power to include other discretionary conditions which we consider appropriate for tackling the issues we identify as negatively affecting the private rented sector in the borough. The council will use these conditions to control a number of issues. These are:

- substandard living accommodation
- overcrowding
- anti-social behaviour (ASB) – by requiring landlords to take reasonable and practical steps to prevent or reduce ASB
- inadequate standards of property management.

Where appropriate, the licence conditions will allow the council to intervene early and work with landlords to help and support them to meet their responsibilities. Where landlords continue to not make improvements which negatively impacts on the local community, the council can use its enforcement powers and work with partner agencies to address the negative impact of the breaches.

The full list of the licence conditions that the council is proposing to apply can be found in **Appendix One and Appendix Two**. There are different set of licence conditions depending on whether it is a selective or additional licence. These are very similar. The main differences are a requirement for references for selective licences and some conditions related to fire precautions in HMOs.

Charges and fees

The council will set fees for licence applications taking into account all of the council's costs in administering and carrying out its licensing functions. These will consist of a split fee; Part A will cover processing of the application and Part B the enforcement and condition audits of properties during the life of the scheme.

We also know that Houses in Multiple Occupation (shared houses) are more expensive to administer, including compliance inspections. This is reflected in the level of the fee proposed.

The council is also considering offering a discount to applicants who apply early. The full proposed charges and fees policy can be seen below.

Table 1: Proposed charges and fees

Type of Licence	Part A	Part B	Total
Selective (early discount)	£450	£nil	£450
Selective (Full)	£450	£450	£900
Additional (early discount)	£550	£350	£900
Additional (full)	£550	£700	£1250

Licences will be granted for five years in most circumstances. Where there has been a history of non-compliance with housing regulations, the licence may be granted for a lesser term.

For a selective licence this equates to **£1.73** per week at discounted rate.

For an additional licence this equates to **£3.46** per week at discounted rate.

Supporting evidence

The following section sets out the main research findings and evidence which has been used to formulate the proposals now being consulted on.

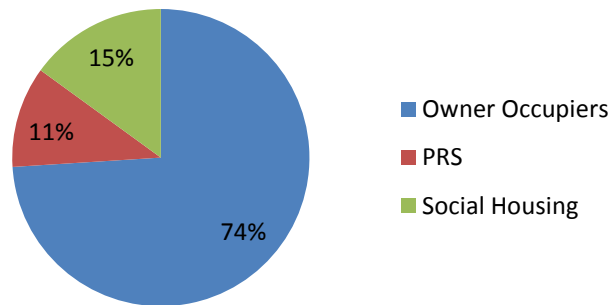
A high proportion of private rented property (selective)

A selective licensing scheme cannot be introduced unless there is a high proportion of private rented property in the borough. The government guidance (DCLG) states that nationally the private rented sector currently makes up 19% of the total housing stock in England. If the area has more than 19% of its stock in an area, privately rented, it can be considered as having a high proportion of privately rented properties.

In Havering the private rented sector makes up 29% of the housing stock which is above the average and therefore meets the criteria for a selective scheme to be considered.

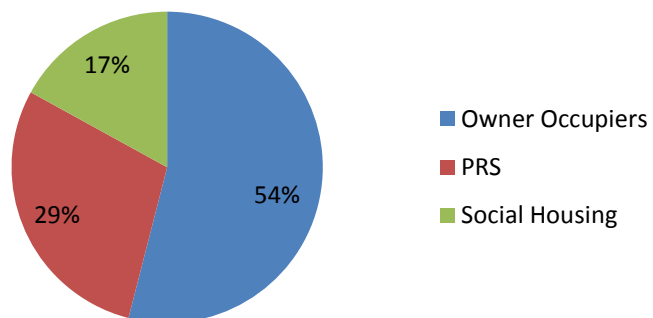
Census data published in 2011 is now quite dated and the trend in the South East has been a significant increase in the rental sector away from owner occupation since 2001. The two graphs below show tenure make up in 2001 (ONS) and 2011 (ONS) and modelling completed in 2018.

Chart 1: Tenure profile 2011



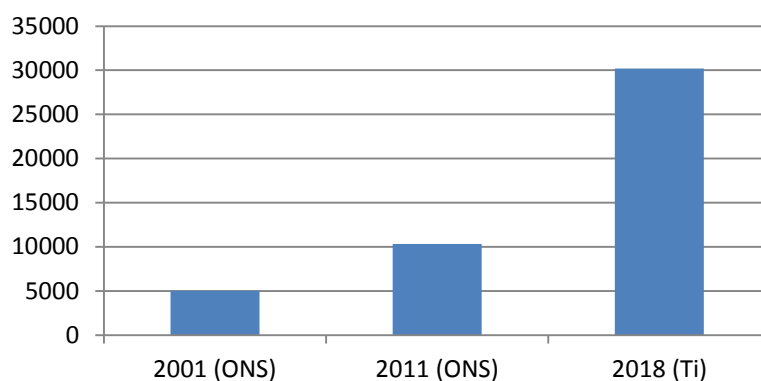
Source: ONS data

Chart 2: Modelled tenure profile 2018



Source: Metastreet 2018

Chart 3: Numbers of PRS in Havering since 2001 – 2018



Source: ONS and Metastreet 2018

The table displays the current populations of PRS by ward. Data shows that Romford Town (37.6%) and Brooklands (34.9%) wards have by far the highest proportion of PRS, which is one of the reasons they have been identified to benefit from selective licensing.

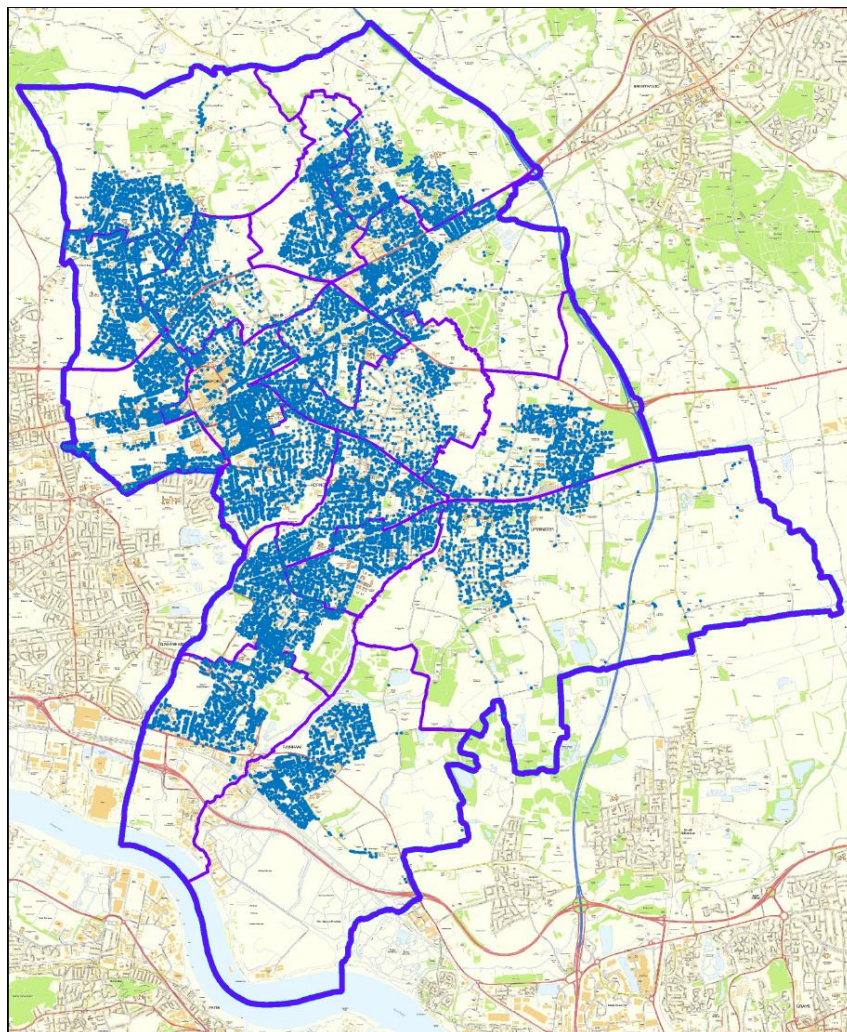
Table 1 – Percentage and number of PRS properties by ward

Ward	% of ward dwellings PRS	No. PRS dwellings per ward
Romford Town	37.6%	3117
Brooklands	34.9%	2674
Harold Wood	32.0%	2061
Squirrels Heath	31.3%	1884
Saint Andrews	30.2%	1821
Rainham & Wennington	31.6%	1692
Mawneys	30.1%	1676
South Hornchurch	27.2%	1599
Gooshays	23.4%	1575
Elm Park	28.0%	1525
Hacton	27.5%	1410

Hylands	26.0%	1386
Heaton	24.0%	1380
Havering Park	24.9%	1342
Pettits	24.3%	1291
Cranham	23.6%	1261
Upminster	22.3%	1204
Emerson Park	23.5%	1120
Total	28.4%	30018

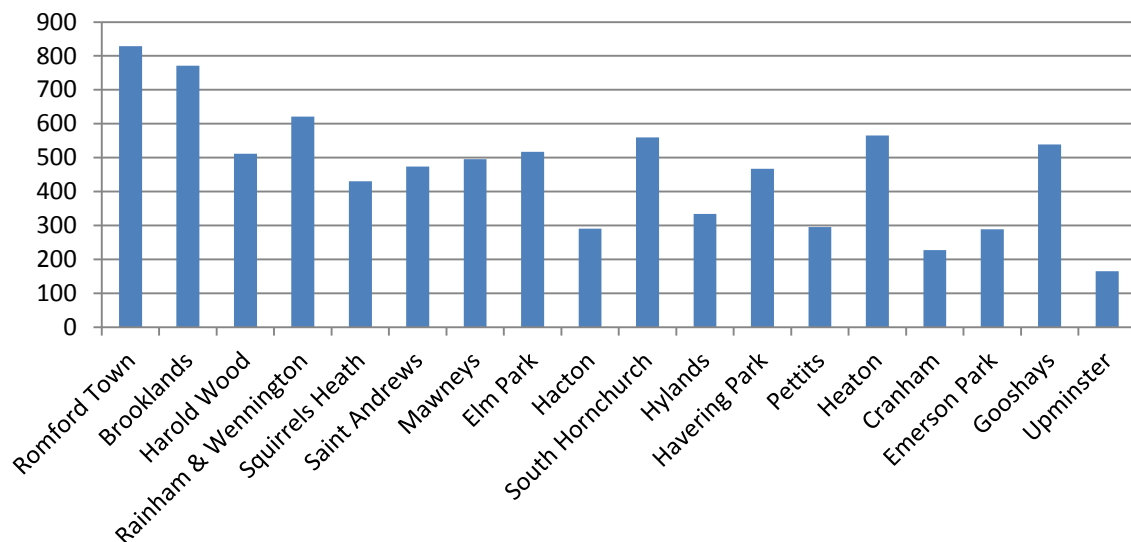
Source: Metastreet 2018

Map 3 Distribution of PRS properties in Havering



The concentration of PRS within Romford Town and Brooklands is also supported by housing benefit data, which confirms the high levels of rented accommodation.

Chart 4 Housing benefit paid to PRS properties



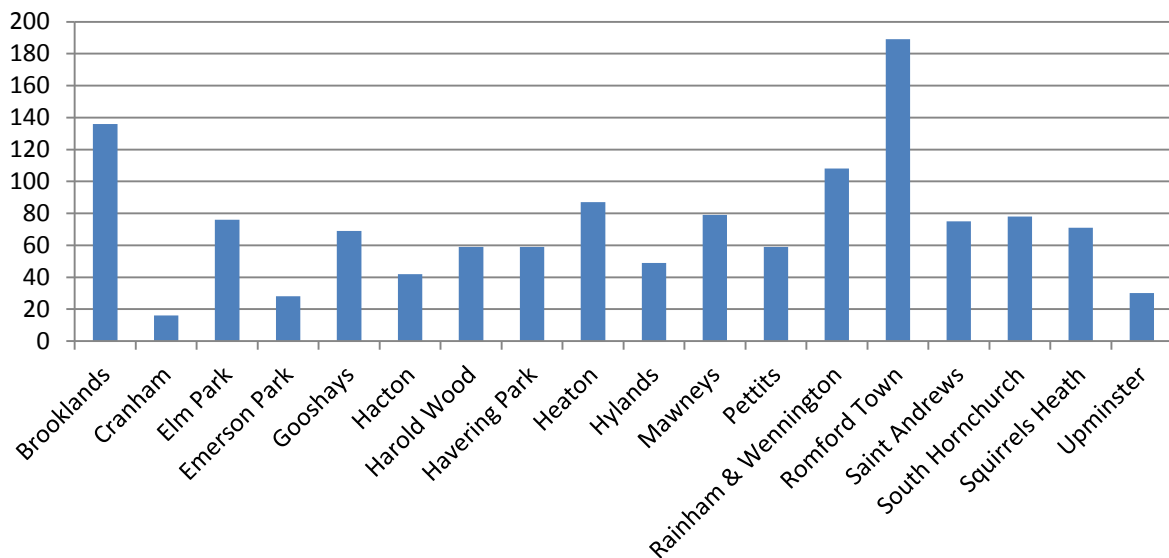
Source: Havering council data

Houses in Multiple Occupation (shared houses)

The numbers of HMOs have grown overall and are located throughout the borough. It is now estimated that there are up to 1310. This has led to the re-evaluation of the first scheme coverage as some of the wards were left out at that time as they had the least HMOs.

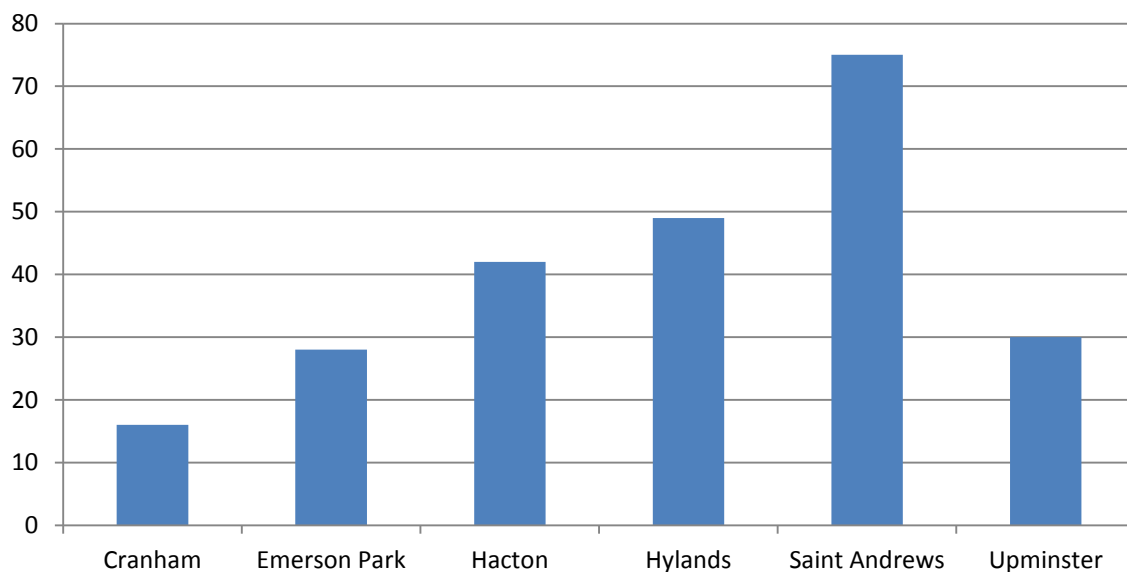
The graph below shows numbers of HMOs per ward.

Chart 5 Number of HMOs in each ward



Source: Metastreet 2018

Chart 6 Number of HMOs in the proposed Scheme

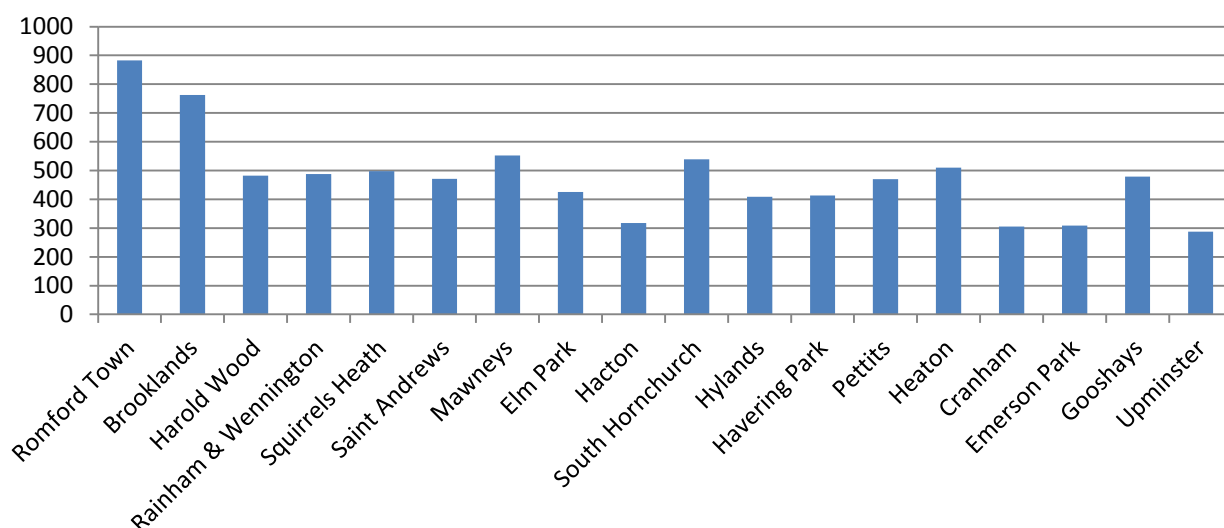


The impact of the HMOs is significant, although smaller numbers, as can be seen from the tables below; There is almost a 1:1 ratio of an HMO and an ASB incident in these areas.

Anti-social behaviour

Havering is encountering significantly higher rates of anti-social behaviour in the private rented sector compared to other tenure types.

Chart 7 Number of ASB incidents linked to PRS 2013-18



Source: Metastreet 2018

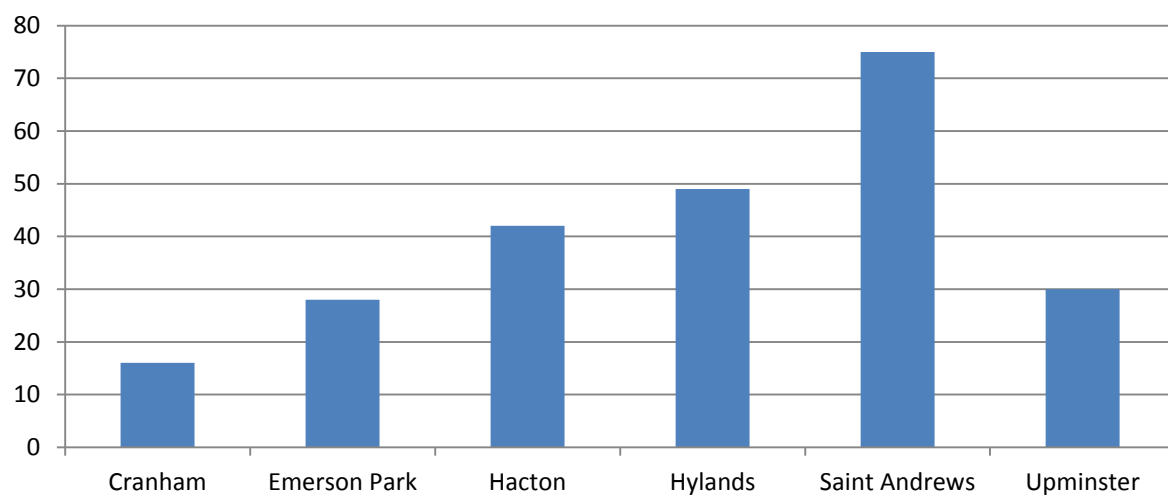
ASB in Romford Town and Brooklands wards (proposed selective)

As can be seen from the graph above ASB related to private rented properties is significantly higher in Romford Town and Brooklands wards. In five5 years there have been 883 ASB incidents/complaints in Romford Town and 762 in Brooklands, the next highest incidents levels were seen in Mawneys with 552 incidents.

HMOs and ASB

The number of ASB incidents shown above relate to ASB associated with residential premises only. Commercial and ASB incidents on the street are excluded from these figures. Across all wards the number of incidents is significant with almost a 1 to 1 ratio. The graph below shows the direct relationship between HMOs and ASB at ward level.

Chart 8 Number of ASB incidents linked to HMOs in the wards in the proposed scheme

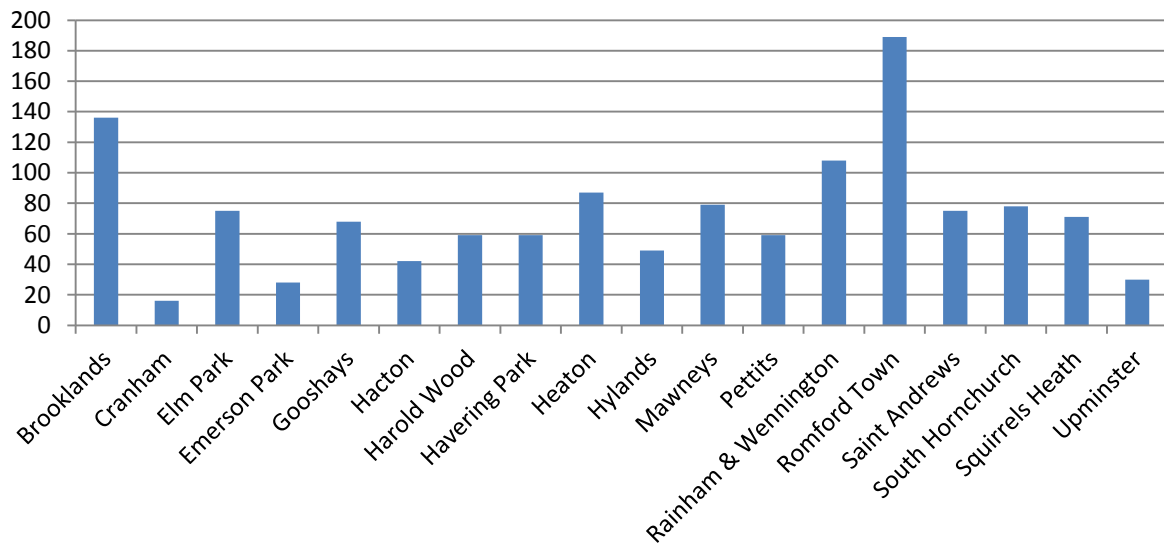


Source: Metastreet 2018

Even though the number of HMOs are less than in the other wards already covered by licensing it can be seen that ASB related to HMOs is still significantly high in the six wards included in the proposal.

The chart below shows number of ASB incidents linked to HMOs in all wards.

Chart 9 Number of ASB incidents linked to HMOs in all wards



Source: Metastreet 2018

These types of properties also take longer for the council to deal with as they are more complex.

How does licensing help?

Licensing provides the council with extra powers to require landlords to take steps to address ASB with tenants and provide adequate arrangements for the disposal of rubbish. Properties with high levels of anti-social behaviour can be targeted by enforcement officers, and landlords are required to take responsibility for any problems with the properties they rent.

Poor housing conditions for selective licensing

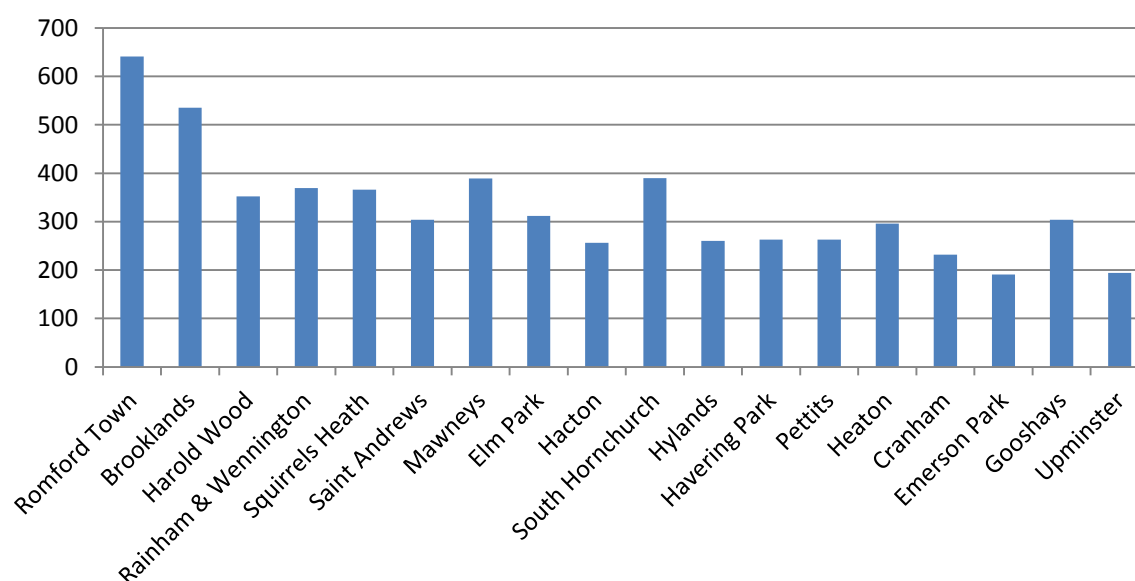
Housing conditions are affected by the level of maintenance and quality of repair, the age of the property and type of construction. HHSRS assessment was introduced in the Housing Act 2004 and hazards are categorised as either category 1 or 2 hazards. Category 1 hazards have a physiological or psychological impact on the

occupant and may result in medical treatment. The negative impact of poor housing on health is well understood. Further details of which can be found in the housing health and safety rating system operating guidance. [HHSRS Operating Guidance](#).

The council has traditionally made use of all its housing powers to improve housing conditions. These include Housing Act 2004 improvement notices, prohibition notices, Environmental Protection Act 1990 powers, Building Act 1984 and Public Health Acts.

The figure below summarises council interventions in the private rented sector. These are often as a result of a complaint being made by a tenant about their accommodation and a result of other nuisances. Romford Town and Brooklands have required more resources than other wards in Havering.

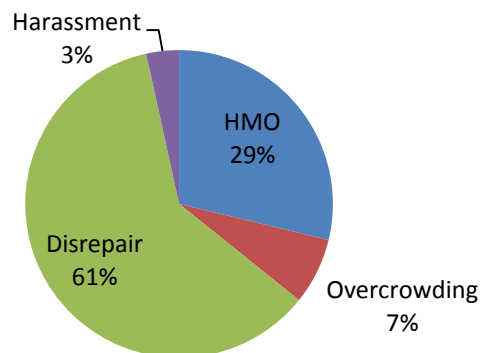
Chart 10 The number of councils PRS interventions by ward 2013-18



Source: Metastreet 2018

The council receives a range of complaint from tenants regarding PRS properties, the majority relating to disrepair in rental properties and HMOs.

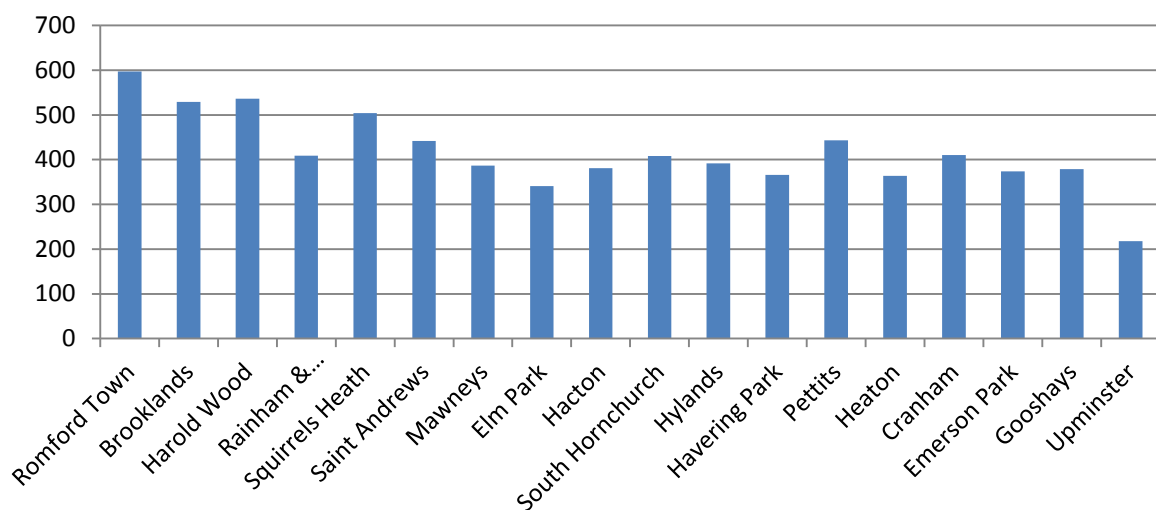
Chart 11 Types of complaints to the council about PRS properties



Source: Havering Council data

The table below shows the spread of serious hazards identified in the PRS for each ward. Romford Town and Brooklands wards have the most serious hazards.

Chart 12 Predicted number of Category 1 hazards by ward



Source: Metastreet 2018

Modelling predicts there are 7,480 rental properties in Havering that have a category 1 hazard. Romford Town ward is predicted to have the largest number of properties

followed closely by Harold Wood and Brooklands. All other wards also show consistently high levels of category 1 hazards (HHSRS).

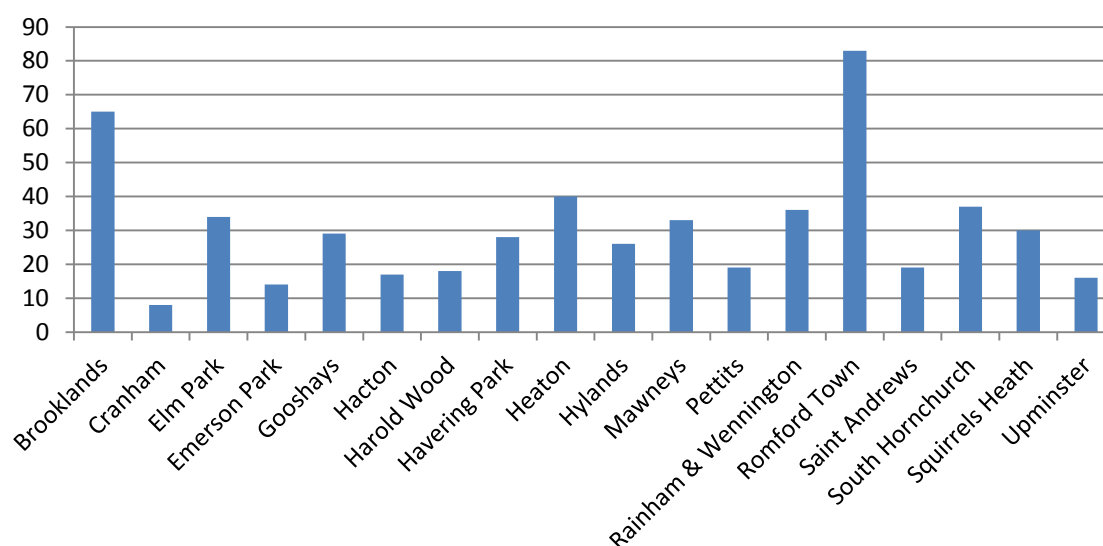
The council interventions and category 1 predictions correlate, and when taken together clearly identifies the area which would benefit for a targeted intervention as being Brooklands and Romford Town.

HMOs and Housing conditions

HMOs have the some of the poorest housing conditions of any tenure. Analysis shows that 553 of 1,312 (42%) HMOs in Havering are predicted to have serious hazards (Category 1, HHSRS).

All wards have HMOs with Category 1 hazards.

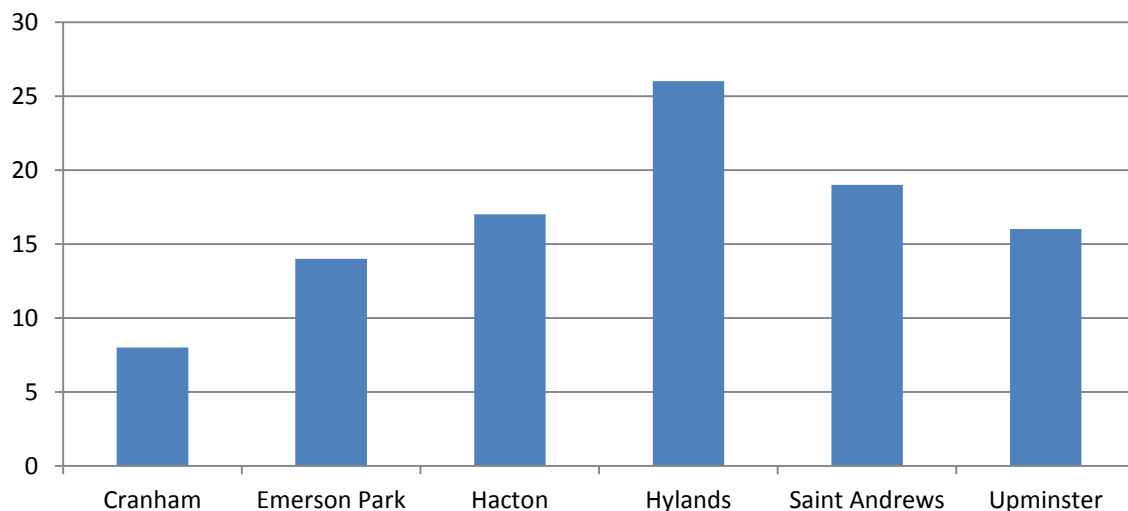
Chart 13 Predicted number of serious hazards in HMO by ward



Source: Metastreet 2018

The graph below shows the property conditions in HMOs in the proposed additional licensing area. Although smaller numbers there is still a significant problem with poor property conditions in HMOs these wards.

Chart 14 Predicted number of serious hazards in HMO in the six proposed wards



Source: Metastreet 2018

How does landlord licensing help?

Licensing provides an important framework to help in driving housing standards up in the private rented sector and helps both tenants and landlords manage rented properties to a higher standard. Every licence issued can clearly show the permitted number of occupants that can occupy the property; this is determined by the size of the rooms and available amenities (e.g. bathrooms and kitchens). Licensing shows clearly who is responsible for management and standards in the property, as this can often be obscured in current circumstances.

What are the benefits of having a licensing scheme?

In the council's view, landlord licensing can provide a light touch for the vast majority of professional landlords. However, successful licensing schemes can force criminal

landlords out into the open, demand that basic housing standards are met and take enforcement action against those that do not improve their practices. This approach has enabled councils to have a tangible impact on poor housing conditions, anti-social behaviour and crime.

The specific benefits a targeted licensing scheme offers are as follows.

Housing conditions and safety

- Preventing overcrowding by specifying the number of people and households permitted in the property.
- Ensuring gas and electrical safety by requiring the landlord to have a valid gas safety certificate and provide an electrical appliance test report to the council.
- Ensuring fire safety by ensuring that the landlord tests all smoke alarms and fire equipment. The licence requires the landlord to provide a copy of test certificates/reports to the council.
- Ensuring the good condition of the property by requiring the landlord to inspect the property at least every six months.

Anti-social behaviour


Licensing offers information and extra powers covering a range of common ASB issues, including:

- requiring the landlord to take steps to address anti-social behaviour with tenants
- requiring the landlord to ensure there are formal arrangements for the disposal of rubbish and bulky waste
- working in partnership with landlords to reduce and prevent ASB at an early stage.

General

- Improved management and conditions of privately rented accommodation and significantly increased identification and level of enforcement against criminal landlords.
- Allows a framework for councils to be proactive and not just reacting to complaints.

- Provides a quicker response and resolution rate by landlords to tenant complaints about repairs.
- Licensing will require absentee or unprofessional landlords to employ a professional property management approach to actively manage their properties and make sure suitable arrangements are in place to deal with any problems that arise.
- Promotion of landlord accreditation and encouraging landlords to let property to a higher standard and to act in a professional manner.
- Improvement of the image and desirability of the borough.



Existing scheme and enforcement

In 2018 Havering introduced a scheme requiring smaller HMOs to be licensed in 12 of the 18 wards in the Borough. The council is successfully delivering this scheme operationally;

Since March 2018 the service has;

- Carried out **25** Multi-agency operations focusing on unlicensed properties
- Issued **23** legal notices requiring improvements related to poor conditions
- Issued **131** financial penalties for failing to licence and breaches in conditions
- Sent **1,449** letters to owners of unlicensed properties warning them to licence their property.

Unfortunately, what has been found through this experience is that the conditions in the private rented sector were worse than predicted. This can be seen from the enforcement action that has been required to improve conditions and management of the properties. In addition, where we have received complaints about HMOs in the wards not covered by licensing it has been apparent that the lack of licensing has hampered effective resolution of some of these complaints.

The London Borough of Havering Council's Priorities

The council's Corporate Plan 2019/20 sets out how the council's new vision, "*Cleaner, Safer, Prouder Together*", will be accomplished through delivery of the four corporate priorities of Communities, Places, Opportunities and Connections. One of the key delivery areas under the Communities section is ensuring zero tolerance against rogue landlords which is to be achieved by licensing as well as enforcement of the legislation.

The council's Housing Strategy for 2013-2016 (currently being revised) identified the following priorities for the PRS.

Our key priorities are to:

- improve our understanding of the local private rented sector;
- continue to improve access to the private rented sector to tackle increasing housing demand;
- improve private rental property standards and management practices;
- examine the potential of developing new, private rented accommodation;
- help older and vulnerable people to remain safe and independent in their own homes;
- identify and target poor conditions and inadequate energy efficiency in the private housing sector; and
- bring empty homes in the private sector back into use.

The proposed licensing schemes will support the council's strategy and deliver on its priorities. Havering has already shown that it can successfully implement a licensing scheme and deliver the appropriate enforcement focussed on rogue landlords who have failed to licence or are providing sub-standard accommodation.


The proposed schemes will enable the council to target an area of particular concern and to bring a consistent approach to enforcement of HMOs.

Property licensing will facilitate greater interaction with private sector landlords, a landlord forum has met and more engagement with landlords will lead to an improved understanding of the current PRS market. Licence conditions and increased support packages will ensure properties are effectively managed and prevent long term problems associated with antisocial behaviour caused by private sector tenants.

The licensing inspection will also ensure that poor property conditions and inadequate energy efficiency are identified and acted upon, which will serve to improve living standards for tenants.

It is well documented (HHSRS operating guidance) that overcrowding has a serious and lasting impact on health and the psychological wellbeing of families, especially

young people which negatively affects their life chances. Licensing can improve the overall condition of properties and controls the number of permitted persons allowed to occupy a licensed property.



Other alternatives to licensing

The London Borough of Havering has strong partnership working in place to try to reduce crime. Joint operations are regularly carried out with the police, council enforcement officers and fire service. The success of this approach is evident in the number of unlicensed HMOs that have been identified through implementing the current scheme.

Alternatives to licensing such as Housing Act 2004 improvement notices, other legislation related to controlling housing standards such as Environmental Protection Act 1990, Building Act, planning enforcement and compulsory purchase powers are all being used extensively.

Havering is part of the London landlord accreditation scheme and promotes the scheme to its landlords. Landlord accreditation is considered to be an effective tool in improving the management of privately rented dwellings. The council has previously encouraged voluntary accreditation among its landlords but the uptake has been poor, with only the most co-operative and professional landlords choosing to undertake accreditation training. Just prior to introducing the additional licensing scheme in 2018 Havering had just 205 landlords registered with the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme, fewer than most other London boroughs; the most recent report identifies 572 landlords are now accredited, this increase in membership is positive and as there has been no other change in this period, it could be concluded to be linked to the introduction of licensing.

The recent establishment of a landlords' forum in Havering will hopefully encourage more landlords to become accredited or at least have access to some best practice through these events.

The council recently gave formal planning directions (Article 4 Directions) removing the conversion of single household accommodation into small HMOs from the scheme of permitted development, and making them, instead, the subject of planning permission. This enables the Council's planning department to control the development of new HMOs. The directions do not apply retrospectively, however, to existing HMOs.

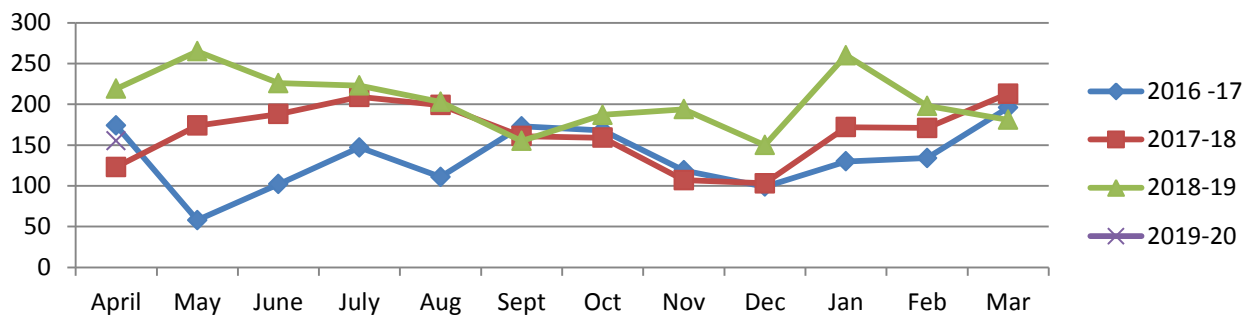
Homelessness – the context

The Council implemented the Homeless Reduction Act from 3rd April 2018. The Act aims to tackle all forms of homelessness and reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation or sleeping rough. Primarily, this is achieved by supporting households to remain in their accommodation or find somewhere to live before they are in a crisis and at risk of homelessness. They are provided financial support, debt advice or signposted to other statutory and voluntary agencies for assistance. This is known as prevention and is one of the most important themes and priorities of the Act

The level of statutory homeless in Havering is lower than in London and the East London sub-region, but higher than in England. Data from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) - 2017-2018 shows that per 1,000 households, in Havering only 3.2% of households were homeless and in priority need. This is lower than the figure for London (4.2%) but higher than the overall percentage for England (2.4%).

Following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, there has been a slight increase in homelessness demand, compared to the previous years, as shown in the chart below.

Chart 15 Households seeking help due to threat of homelessness



Source: Havering Data 2018-19

Although there has been an increase in homeless demand since 2016/17, this trend is similar to the general national picture. While the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act saw an initial surge in demand at the beginning of the last financial year, this has reduced and the current average increase change compared to 2017/18 is 38 per month.

Havering's response to the Homelessness Reduction Act

1. **Effective prevention** – we have stepped up our prevention activities by intervening at the earliest possible stage to help people at risk of homelessness. As a result of improved prevention outcomes, we have dramatically reduced people getting to the stage of being accepted as homeless. Acceptances reduced to 27 households in 2018/19 compared to 330 in 2017/18 and 317 in 2016/17. Havering's fall in acceptances from 2017/18 is 91.82%.
2. **Supporting vulnerable residents** –developing personalised support plans around vulnerable individuals, and clear pathways for recognised vulnerable groups, such as those coming out prison with serious addictions or care leavers with limited support networks.
3. **Tackling rough sleeping** – we have worked with a host of agencies to identify and implement effective support mechanisms for those sleeping rough or at risk of living on the streets. As a result, rough sleeping has reduced by 91% in the borough.
4. **Improved partnership working** – we have established the Havering Homelessness Forum comprising around 25 local agencies who together

make a key difference in preventing and tackling homelessness in the Borough. In addition, we work closely with social care and health partners, both statutory and non statutory, to support vulnerable households at risk of homelessness.

Increasing affordable housing options for Havering residents

It is self evident that even the most effective prevention and support will not be enough to eradicate homelessness if housing supply continues to lag behind ever increasing demand for affordable housing options. Havering faces the same considerable challenges as other local authorities across the country, and London in particular is impacted by the lack of available affordable homes for local people. The Council continues to work closely with the private sector to ensure a continuing supply of local accommodation.

At the same time, private sector rents have become prohibitively expensive for an increasing number of tenants, as the rent gap (the monetary difference between current market rents and housing benefit allowance) widens. For residents in receipt of benefit, changes to the welfare benefit system - such as the Benefits Cap, the introduction of Universal Credit and the freeze on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates - have significantly reduced the number of properties within reach.

Havering Council is committed to exploring all possible alternative sources of accommodation to improve the housing options of people living in the Borough. This includes:

- An ambitious estate Regeneration programme which will yield in excess of 3,000 new homes
- Making more effective use of vacant Council premises for short term housing. For example, properties that have become vacant as a result of tenants moving out of estates due for regeneration could be used to provide short-term accommodation for others.

- Bringing empty properties back into use. Empty properties could include houses, flats (including those above retail outlets), and potentially commercial properties such as offices and warehouses.

The Council has a legal duty to take steps and help in improving the access to decent housing. We believe these proposals will help deliver considerably more good standard, affordable homes for families in housing need who approach the Council.

The current licensing scheme has not led to an increase in homeless presentations. The benefits of licensing in providing a framework to better protect tenants from eviction and improving tenancy management practices will assist in reducing the number of private renters presenting as homeless due to s.21 eviction notices. The engagement with the landlord community, that licensing enables, will provide an opportunity for early intervention to assist in tenancy sustainment in the private rented sector.

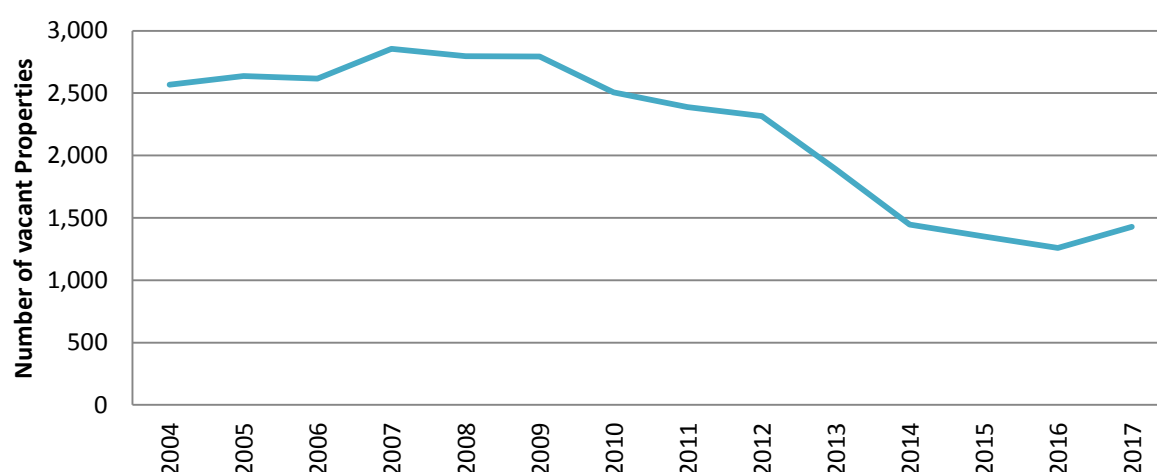
Empty homes

The need to bring empty private sector dwellings back into use when there are considerable shortages in housing, especially in greater London should be a consideration for most councils and part of a local housing strategy.

There will always be some stock that is empty for a short period of time i.e. for refurbishment, sales, probate etc. The only dwellings that tend to come to the attention of councils are those that are centres for nuisance, anti-social behaviour etc and are long-term empty properties.

The graph below shows the number of vacant properties from 2004 to 2017, the most recent figure available is in 2017 there were 1,427 vacant properties. The total in London in 2017 was 62,366.

Chart 16: Number of vacant properties in Havering 2004- 2017



Source: MHCLG Table 615 Vacant dwellings by Local Authority district

Regeneration

Havering is going through a period of significant regeneration with the redevelopment of the town centre and the arrival of Crossrail/Elizabeth line in 2020. Making Havering more desirable as a place to live, work and invest in. We aim for a careful balance of new development with maximum benefit for residents and minimum impact on the environment.

How to respond to this consultation:

To respond to our questionnaire, please visit

www.havering.gov.uk/landlordlicenceconsultation

The consultation closes on 20 September 2019

All responses must be received by this date.