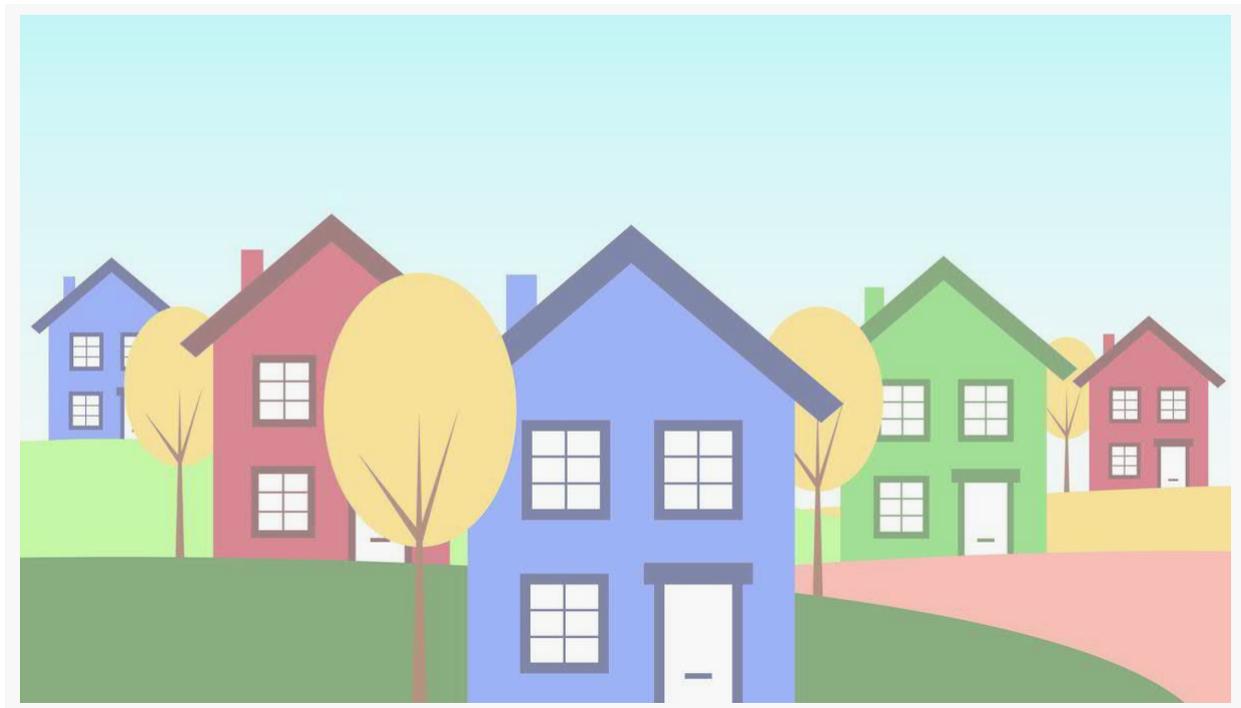


Selective Licensing in West Lindsey

Evidence for consultation 2022



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1. Glossary

Term	Meaning
Socially rented	Homes rented from a housing association
Privately rented	Homes rented from a private landlord
Private rented sector (PRS)	The portion of housing in the district that is rented from private landlords
Category 1 hazard (Cat 1 hazard)	A serious or immediate risk to a person's health and safety that is related to housing
Category 2 hazard	A less serious or less urgent risk that can still be regarded as placing the occupiers' health, safety and welfare at risk
Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)	A government prescribed system that rates housing hazards based on their risk to occupiers' health, safety and welfare
Designation	A geographical area chosen for licensing based on evidence
Deprivation	Living on low income and not having the money to pay for some basic requirements.
Indices of Multiple Deprivation	A dataset produced by the government to give a relative value to how deprived an area is, compared to the rest of the country.
Barriers to housing and services	One of the government's measures of deprivation. It combines elements relating to housing affordability, overcrowding and homelessness.
Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	Behaviour related to a rented property that causes annoyance and irritation to neighbours and the community. Most commonly noise, litter and waste.
Selective Licensing	A local scheme which requires landlords to have a licence to legally let their property to a family or two sharers
Mandatory HMO Licensing	A national scheme which requires landlords to have a licence to legally let their property to five or more unrelated sharers.

2. Executive Summary

West Lindsey is a rural district which covers the area immediately north of Lincoln. It has a diverse housing market with significantly higher levels of housing demand in villages closer to Lincoln, compared to the main market town of Gainsborough. This is also reflected in the levels of deprivation and unemployment across the district. In addition, there are former Ministry of Defence villages, rural villages and market towns within the district that each present very different housing challenges.

Even well-meaning landlords may not always be up to date with the latest legal and safety requirements. Properties rented out by these landlords may not only endanger the health, safety and wellbeing of tenants, but cause issues with neighbours and end up requiring many interventions from already stretched council teams. The council needs to use all the tools it has to improve the situation for tenants renting properties in this sector. Licensing is a vital part of this.

The previous scheme, which operated in a small area of Gainsborough South West ward, was extremely successful in getting landlords to comply with both the licensing process and the licence conditions. 98% of eligible properties were licensed, 249 properties were improved and there were 40 successful prosecutions for non-compliance. At the same time, ASB complaints and Police records of ASB were dramatically reduced.

However, that doesn't mean that the problems in this area have been completely resolved. Due to the high levels of deprivation seen in this area, coupled with the extremely high levels of private renting, the council needs licensing to prevent a decline in the living conditions of tenants. The council would like to continue and expand the work it has started in Gainsborough South West ward. The designation of the entire ward can be agreed by the council's committee and, if implemented, allow the housing team to continue to improve property conditions in this area.

In addition to this, there is evidence that poor property conditions are blighting the life of tenants in other parts of the district. There are four wards; Gainsborough North, Hemswell, Market Rasen and Wold View, where there is enough evidence of housing hazards to implement a further licensing designation. This would give the council the resources required to prioritise enforcement action, whilst ensuring, through licence conditions, that the properties are properly managed to prevent further deterioration. This designation allows for the inclusion of two of the district's ex-MOD villages; Hemswell Cliff and Brookenby, which have been a particular concern to the council for a number of years. Due to its size, this larger area would need to be confirmed by the Secretary of State at the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, as it covers over 20% of the privately rented homes in the district.

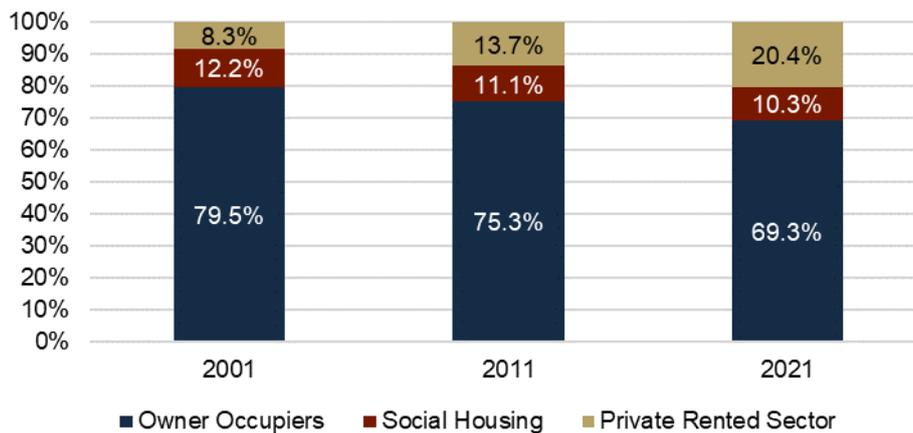
The phasing of these two separate designations will allow the council to build up its team and activities to effectively support the scheme.

We welcome your thoughts and views on the proposed selective licensing scheme and will carefully consider any representations and suggestions when coming to a final decision on the scheme.

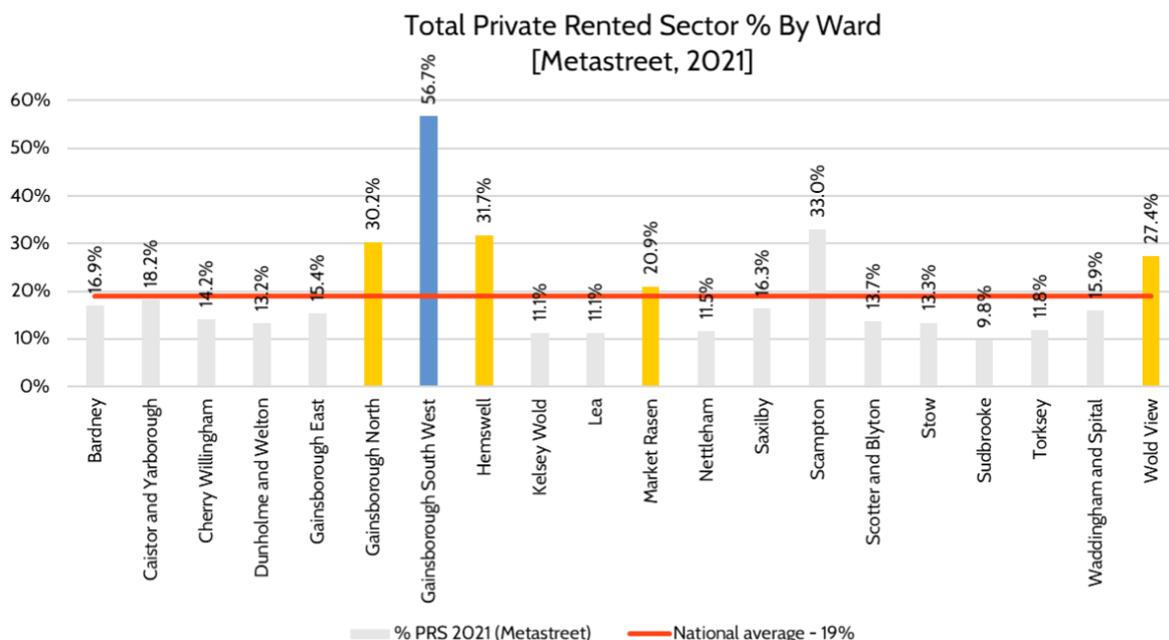
3. The private rented sector in West Lindsey

The property rental market in West Lindsey has changed considerably over the last 10 years. Since the 2001 census, the percentage of rented properties compared to owner occupied and socially rented has risen from 8.3% to 20.4%.

Total dwellings by tenure, 2001, 2011 & 2020
(Source: ONS & Ti 2022).



However, that figure varies considerably across the district with the lowest levels of rented properties seen in Sudbrooke ward (9.8%) compared to the highest levels in Gainsborough South West ward (56.7%).



The last selective licence scheme covered a section of Gainsborough South West ward. Since its implementation in 2016, the scheme has provided information about the rental practices in the area and has supported the idea that licensing could bring about positive change in the sector.

Whilst the district is mainly rural, there are pockets of housing reflecting the areas highly industrial past, growing market towns, villages that have moved from MOD ownership into the hands of private landlords, plus areas of new development and regeneration. Each of these presents a different type of housing challenge.

A recent independent survey has provided some much-needed insights about the presence and distribution of a range of these housing challenges in the area¹. The main finding is that poor housing conditions in privately rented properties are widespread but patchy. 2,413 privately rented properties in the district are predicted to have at least one serious housing hazard. Housing hazards are rated by severity. A category 1 hazard is a serious or immediate risk to a person's health and safety². The level of hazards (% of properties with at least one hazard) varies from ward to ward and is greatest in Gainsborough South West and Wold View wards. The type of common hazards that officers have found, based on the previous scheme, are excess cold, fire & electrical issues, damp and mould.

¹ Housing Stock Condition and Stressors Report, Metastreet, 2022

² [Housing Health and Safety Rating System \(HHSRS\)](#)

4. Property licensing in West Lindsey

Property licensing allows the council to improve the condition and management of privately rented properties. This helps to make renting in the private rented sector safer and fairer for tenants.

There are two types of property licensing schemes that are applicable to West Lindsey:

Selective Licensing

- Applies to all properties let to families or sharers under a single tenancy
- Area designated by the council
- Large schemes need approval by the Secretary of State



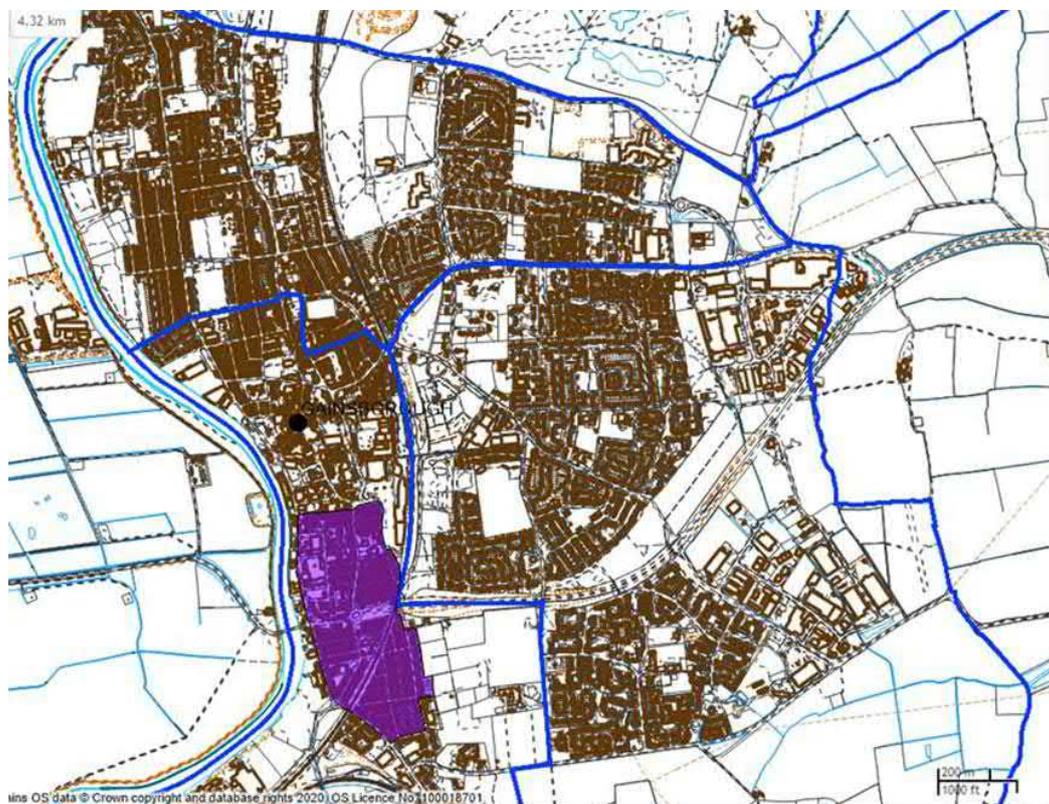
Mandatory HMO Licensing

- Applies to large HMOs, let to 5 or more unrelated people, forming 2 or more households who share amenities such as a kitchen or bathroom.
- National scheme



4.1 Selective licensing in West Lindsey

West Lindsey's previous selective licensing scheme ran for five years from 2016 to July 2021. It covered a small sub-section of Gainsborough South West ward (see purple section in Map 1 below).



Map 1: Gainsborough South West ward showing the previous selective licensing designation in purple

The selective licensing scheme has required landlords letting privately rented properties in the area to hold a licence and comply with the licence conditions. The aims of the scheme were to:

- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Take steps to tackle low housing demand
- Be proactive
- Improve standards of housing management
- Ensure accountability of landlords
- Identify rogue and criminal landlords and enforce against them
- Target the most at-risk properties and identify the most vulnerable people.

The council has worked collaboratively with landlords to improve standards but has also carried out enforcement action when needed. The scheme has been successful in improving property standards, tackling ASB and reducing empty properties in the private rented sector.

4.2 HMO licensing in West Lindsey

The council is required to run a mandatory HMO licensing scheme for larger 'Houses in Multiple Occupation'. This has been in operation since April 2006 but there are currently only seven licensed properties operating as mandatory HMOs in the area.

4.3 Results of the previous selective licensing scheme

Compliance with licensing

The selective licensing scheme covered 46 streets in the ward. It was a relatively small scheme with 809 licences granted over the five years. This represented 98% of eligible properties. This level of compliance with becoming licensed is extremely high compared to many other councils. Blackpool, for example, has a scheme covering three wards where 2,702 properties are eligible for licensing. Two years into the scheme they had only licensed 1,712 properties (63%).

The scheme has enabled officers to focus on those properties that present the highest risk. Properties which were found to be rented but unlicensed had the poorest property conditions. The experience of running the scheme has highlighted that the issues in this small section of the ward are more widespread across the whole of Gainsborough South West ward and in other wards in the district.

Improvement in the standard of rented properties

The comparison between the licensing area and the rest of the district clearly shows how licensing has been effective in improving the standard of rented properties in the area.

	Activities carried out	In the selective licensing area in Gainsborough SW ward	In the rest of the district
Licensing and inspections	Licences issued	809	N/A
	Property inspections carried out	2,196	384
	Number of property issues identified (high to low priority)	3,839	
	Number of properties improved	249	272
Enforcement activity	Formal Notices served	107	71
	Cautions	2	N/A
	Civil penalties	30	2
	Prosecutions	8	1
	Compliance Notices served for Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards to bring properties up to an E Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)	23 with 95% compliance	N/A

The selective licensing scheme had a set of licence conditions attached to the issuing of the licence. The licence conditions focused on property management, including conditions to deal with ASB, tenant references and other matters that affect the health and welfare of the tenant. All properties were inspected at least once during the scheme to ensure compliance with these conditions. Properties that presented a higher risk may have been inspected multiple times.

The council also carried out targeted inspections based on intelligence and complaints to ensure ongoing compliance and to check that landlords were making the necessary improvements to property conditions.

Case study: improving property conditions through licensing

All properties in the last scheme were inspected as part of the licensing process. This property was found to be in poor condition, with rotten windows and doors, and no heating system. An informal schedule of works was issued which the landlord needed to undertake to improve the property. Unfortunately, the landlord did not comply, so a formal Service Improvement Notice was served, which has a fee of £250. As a result, the landlord fitted new doors, windows and a gas central heating system.



Before: Rotten doors and windows



Before: Rotten door



After: New doors, windows and tidier exterior

Reducing anti-social behaviour

One of the focuses of the scheme was to reduce anti-social behaviour. Where ASB was directly related to a private rented property, the council used the licence conditions to ensure the landlord took reasonable steps to deal with it. Overall, there was a significant reduction in ASB during the scheme. This was due to a project early in the life of the scheme to identify ASB in the area, which led to a reporting increase during 2017. However, since then the number of reports has steadily decreased. The only change to this downturn was in 2020 when, most likely due to the lockdown, there was an increase in ASB reports. This increase was also seen in other areas of the council's work.

Volume of received ASB complaints

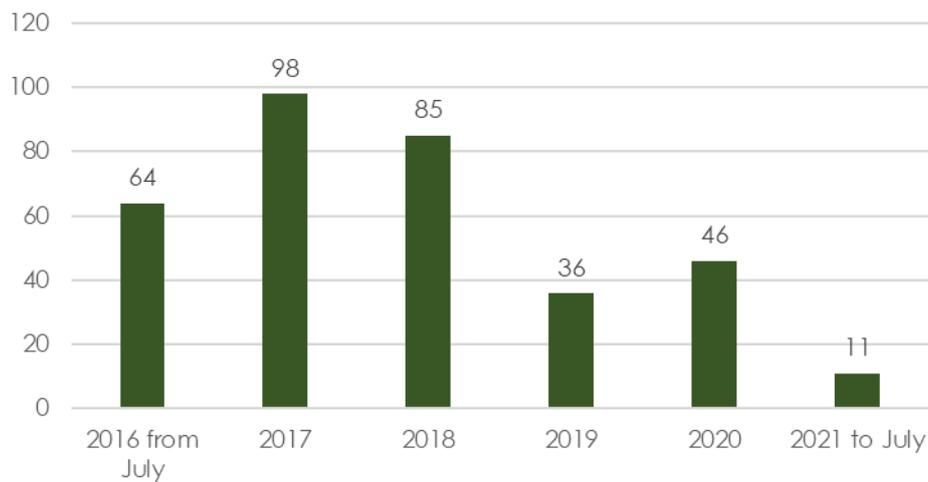


Figure 1 ASB complaints (relating to the PRS) received by the council 2016-21

This change in ASB reported to the council has been mirrored in the Police ASB reports. Over the same period, the incidents of ASB within the NC03 policing area for Gainsborough, which includes the selective licensing area went down from 686 complaints at its peak to 172 at the end of the scheme.

ASB Incidents - Lincolnshire Police

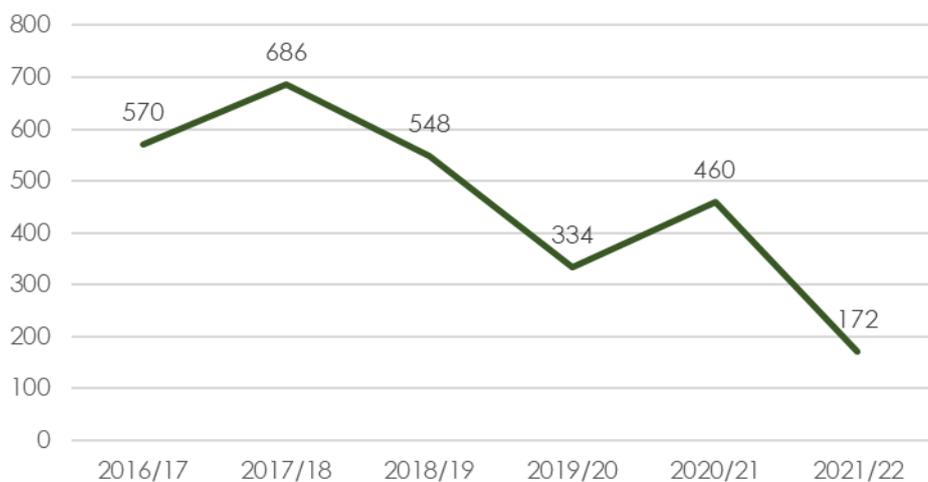


Figure 2 ASB incidents (relating to the PRS) reported to the Police 2016 - 2021

Case study: dealing with antisocial behaviour

Numerous reports of antisocial behaviour (ASB) about tenants in properties in one particular street in Gainsborough South West were received by both the council and Lincolnshire Police. When the details were checked against the selective licensing database, it became clear that a number of the problematic properties were owned by the same landlords.

A multi-agency meeting was arranged between the council, Lincolnshire Police and the landlords of the properties. The landlords were informed of the issues that were being reported on the street, and advice was given about their obligations as licence holders under the scheme. The council

requested that action was taken to address the ASB issues in line with the selective licensing scheme conditions. Failure to do so could result in enforcement action against the landlord.

Several of the tenants, who were identified as the perpetrators of the ASB, were evicted following due process. The issues in the street were improved with the relocation of the problematic households. The tenants were easier to manage in their new locations as they were no longer in close proximity to each other.

Reduction in empty properties

The scheme also had an impact on the number of empty properties in the area. Empty properties are a symptom of low housing demand, one of the reasons for the original designation. Over the life of the scheme there was a 32% decrease in the number of empty properties, from 96 to 55. The licensing scheme enabled the council to identify properties more quickly and provide additional capacity to monitor any issues they were causing. In tandem, there was a capital scheme to help owners bring them back into use.

The rest of the district saw only a 3% decrease in its empty properties, from 444 to 429. This comparison clearly shows the positive effect that licensing had on this issue.

Case study: identifying and dealing with empty properties

A landlord owned two properties within the designated licensing area, one empty and one without the necessary selective licence. These were identified through a proactive identification project which cross referenced records held by Council Tax, land registry and housing benefit to find properties that might be rented. The empty property had extensive internal fire damage and was an eyesore for the street. The council imposed a Civil Penalty with a large fine for failure to license. This was not paid, so the council undertook debt recovery measures, applying for a court order to sell the offenders empty property to recover the money.



Before: Disrepair and unkempt exterior



Before: Severe fire damage



After: Renovated and tidy

5. Proposed selective licensing scheme

The council has been truly selective in proposing the areas for this licensing scheme.

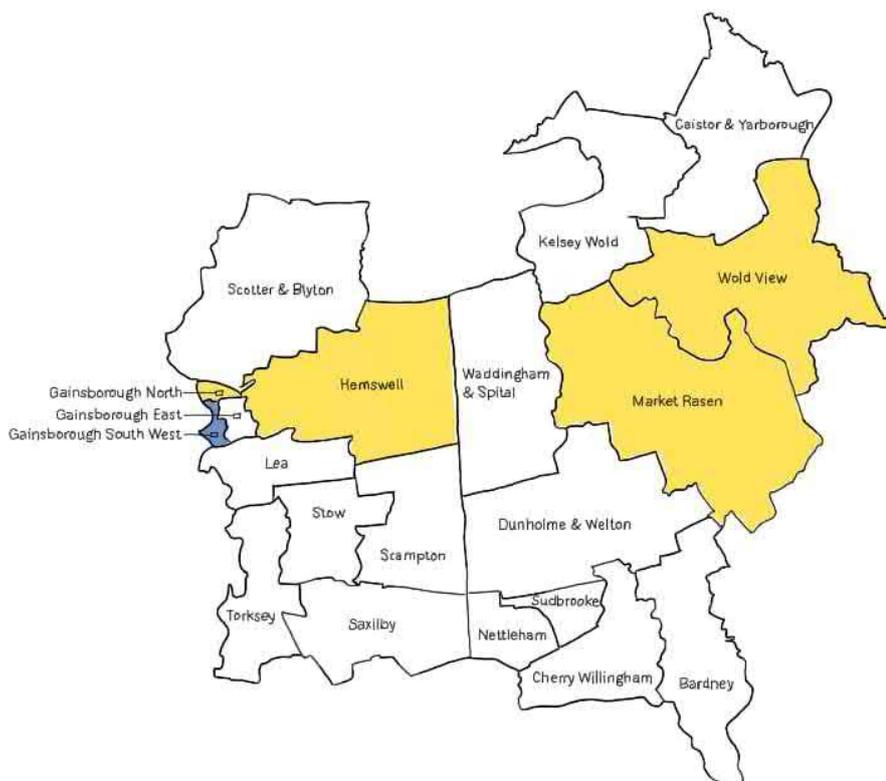
The previous scheme has provided a number of insights into the area of Gainsborough South West ward, which are not available across the rest of the district. This, coupled with nationally held data on deprivation, has provided a solid evidence base for the council's proposal to designate the whole ward on the grounds of poor property conditions, significant and persistent ASB, and deprivation. The size of this designation means it can be agreed locally by the council's committee and could be brought in as early as September 2022. This allows the council to continue and expand its work to deal with the poor property conditions and high levels of ASB in the ward.

The second designation recognises the levels of poor property conditions in the rest of the district. The council instructed a specialist consultancy to carry out a review of the housing conditions in the area, as required by the Housing Act 2004, in order to identify any action that may need to be taken. This review revealed that there is evidence of poor property conditions in the private rented sector in all but one ward across the district. The levels of poor property conditions are worse than the national average. However, in order to designate the area as subject to selective licensing under this criterion, there must also be evidence that the area contains a high proportion of properties in the private rented sector, in relation to the total number of properties in the area. This is only the case in four wards in the district; Gainsborough North, Hemswell, Market Rasen and Wold View.

Due to the size of this designation, if agreed by the council's committee, it must be confirmed by the Secretary of State at the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). If confirmed, the earliest this designation could be implemented is 2023.

These designations are subject to change as a result of this consultation and the council welcomes all input into the scheme.

Map of the selective licence scheme designations



Map 2 Showing all the affected wards in the designations

Phase	Designation 1	Designation 2
Wards/areas included	Gainsborough South West	Gainsborough North Ward
		Hemswell Ward: Blyborough, Corringham, Glentworth, Grayingham, Harpswell, Heapham, Hemswell, Hemswell Cliff, Springthorpe, Willoughton
		Market Rasen Ward: Legsby, Linwood, Market Rasen1 & 2, Middle Rasen 1 & 2, North Willingham, Osgodby, Owersby, Sixhills, Tealby, Walesby, West Rasen
		Wold View Ward: Brookenby, Claxby, Holton-Le-Moor, Kirmind-Le-Mire, Nettleton, Normanby-Le-Wold, Rothwell, Stainton-Le-Vale, Swallow, Swinthorpe, Thoresway, Thorganby
Selective licensing criteria	Poor property conditions ASB Deprivation	Poor property conditions
Date of proposed implementation	September 2022	2023

5.1 Designation 1 – Gainsborough South West ward

This proposed designation covers the ward of Gainsborough South West under the criteria of poor property conditions, significant and persistent ASB and high levels of deprivation.



Map 3 Showing Gainsborough South West Ward

Poor property conditions

Firstly, the ward has extremely high levels of PRS at 56.7%, compared to all other wards in the area and a national average of 17% for areas outside London. Secondly, the housing stock review shows that the rented properties in this ward have very high levels of category 1 hazards. 45.2% of the rented properties may have serious hazards. This is over three times the national average of 13%³. This is backed up by the results of the property inspections carried out in the previous licensing scheme. This revealed 1,686 high priority issues identified during inspections. There were also 469 housing complaints during the five-year period.

Deprivation

In addition, the ward is in the bottom 15% of deprived wards in the country. The government uses a range of measures to produce an Indices of Multiple Deprivation. This allows areas to be ranked nationally between 0.1 as the most deprived and 10.0 as the least deprived. The national average is 5.0. Gainsborough South West ward is at 1.3 on the scale and is the most deprived ward in West Lindsey. Other measures of deprivation support this statistic. The ward has the highest unemployment rate. In the district, 6.8% compared to a national average of 4.4%. It also has the highest level of Housing Benefit claims, with 1,893 people needing support to pay for their housing, compared with the lowest level in the district of 34 in the ward of Torksey. The council knows that poor property conditions make deprivation worse. People living in deprived areas have fewer choices about where they can live and are often stuck in poorly maintained, poorly managed accommodation.

³ English Housing Survey, Headline Report 2019-20

Antisocial behaviour

The spotlight on Gainsborough South West from the previous scheme has revealed more ASB (inconsiderate behaviour), repeat ASB and envirocrime than any other wards. This is partly due to better recording of incidents in the area but is also a reflection of the challenges in the ward. The level of ASB incidents in the area is extremely high, but the rate of incidents, which is the number adjusted for the level of PRS, is also significantly higher than the rest of the district. Of the 340 repeat ASB incidents across the whole district, 240 of them were in Gainsborough South West ward.

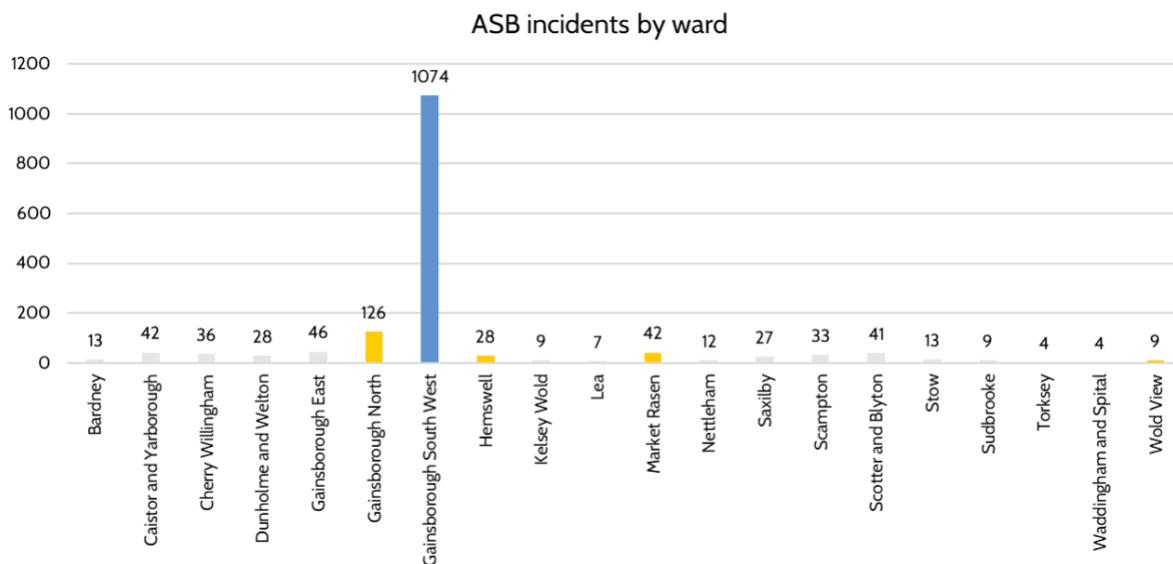
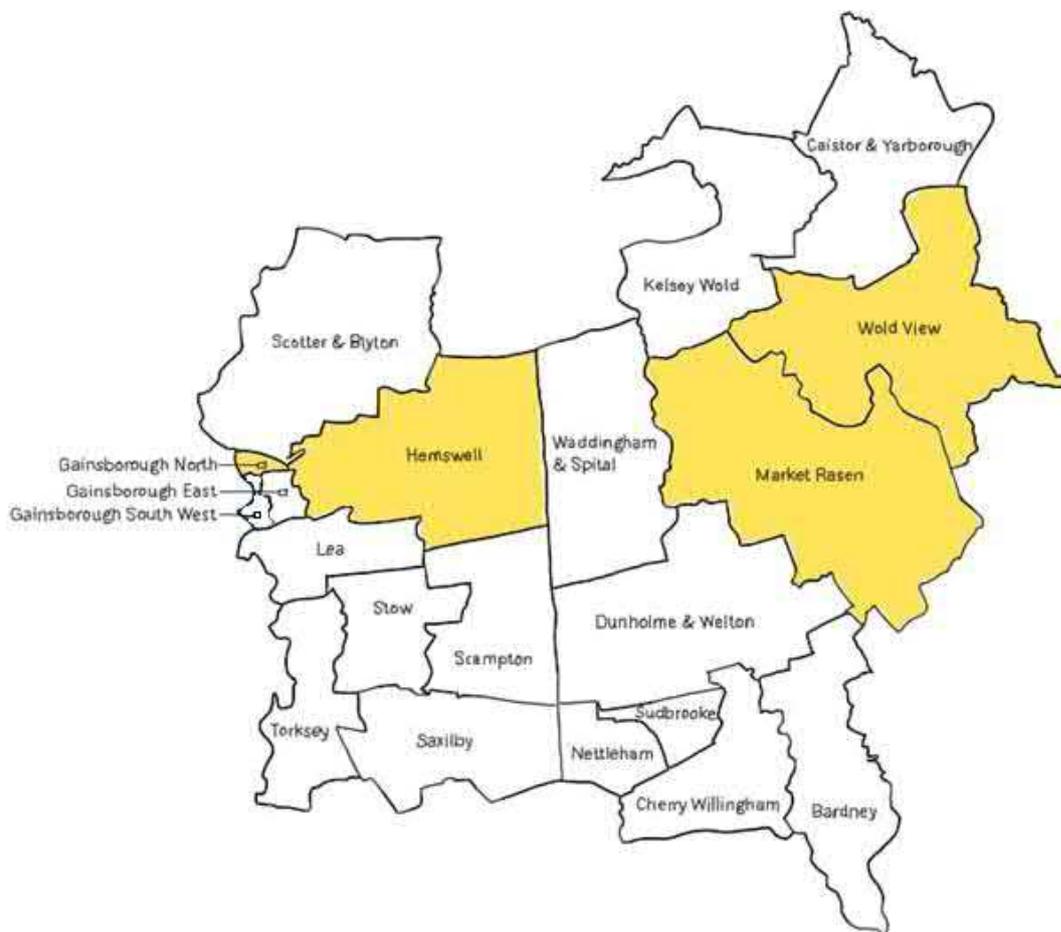


Figure 3 Graph showing the variation in ASB across wards

5.2 Designation 2 – Gainsborough North, Hemswell, Market Rasen and Wold View wards

This proposed designation covers four wards under the criterion of poor property conditions. The wards of Gainsborough North, Hemswell, Market Rasen and Wold View have levels of PRS above the national average. The housing stock review shows that the rented properties in these wards have very high levels of category 1 hazards, ranging from 23% to 37.3%. This is compared to the national average of 13%⁴. Overall, in these four wards, there are 759 properties in the PRS that are predicted to have at least one category 1 hazard. A significant number of these would need to be inspected to ensure tenant safety.

This designation also includes the ex-MOD villages of Hemswell Cliff and Brookenby. These villages have been areas of concern for the council for a number of years, due to the fact the properties were not built to be long term residences and have poor infrastructure.



Map 4 Showing the wards in designation 2

⁴ [English Housing Survey, Headline Report 2019-20](#)

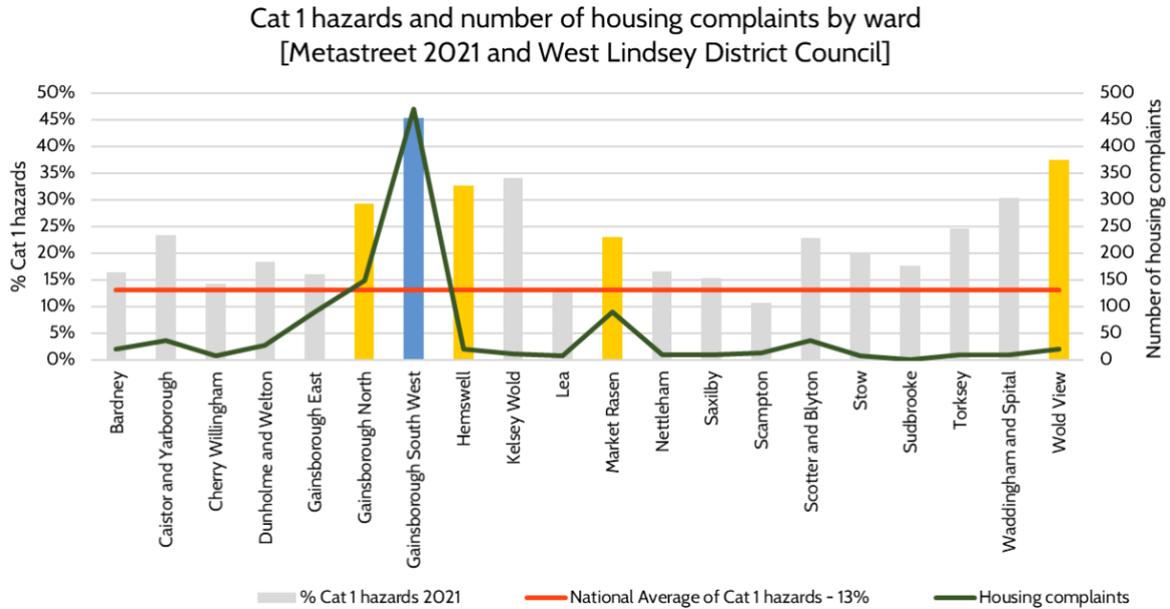


Figure 4 Showing the % of housing hazards and housing complaints by ward

5.3 How will the council use licensing to deal with these issues?

Poor property conditions

Both designations aim to improve the condition and management of rented properties in the area. The designations will allow the council to start dealing with some of the worst property conditions in the district.

There will be clear licence conditions relating to the standard and management of rented properties in the area. Higher risk properties will be prioritised for inspection by officers to check for hazards and compliance with licence conditions. The council will take enforcement action (under Part 1 of the Housing Act), where necessary, to improve poor property conditions and use the licence conditions to proactively prevent properties from getting worse.

The council will expect property condition issues identified during an inspection to be resolved within a reasonable period, depending on the severity of the issue. Improvement Notices and Prohibition Orders are formal notices that may be issued to bring about improvements in properties. The council charges the landlord if a formal notice is issued.

It is much easier to rectify property issues under the legal framework of the licensing scheme and when the landlord and other property management companies are known to the council. Landlords who fail to license their properties could receive a civil penalty for failure to licence.

Information and support on the professional management of properties will be available to landlords through the council's web site and landlord forums (in person and online). The licence conditions relating to the management of properties will help ensure that properties are effectively managed to prevent any further deterioration.

The combination of licence conditions, a risk-assessed inspection regime and education for landlords on management of their properties should contribute to an improvement in general housing conditions in the area.

Deprivation

The designation of Gainsborough South West ward will help the council to deal with the poor property conditions and issues that make deprivation worse. One of these issues is fuel poverty caused by poor thermal efficiency of properties and inadequate or old-fashioned heating.

A current energy performance certificate (EPC) must be supplied when a licensing application is made. For a property that is lower than an E rating, the licence holder must take steps to improve the energy efficiency (unless an exemption applies). Grant funding, administered by the Midlands Energy Hub, will be available to ensure the minimum energy efficiency standard (MEES) in private rented properties.

The combination of licence conditions, a risk-assessed inspection regime and guidance on improving the thermal efficiency of properties will contribute to a reduction in the level of deprivation in the area.

ASB

The council has been using the selective licence conditions to deal with ASB in privately rented properties in Gainsborough South West ward. This has included writing to landlords to inform them of the behaviour of their tenants and working with landlords to resolve the issues. Landlords are required to take reasonable steps to address ASB caused by their tenants in and around their properties.

A further designation in this ward will allow the council to continue to work proactively with the landlords and owners of the properties to prevent ASB and, where necessary, support them to deal with ASB in their properties. The scheme will provide the council with the means to dedicate staff to dealing with ASB. The licence conditions will clearly state the responsibilities of landlords to prevent and deal with any ASB that arises. There will also be information for tenants about their responsibilities about preventing ASB.

These combined measures should lead to a further reduction in ASB in the area.

Case study in achieving licensing compliance

A property was identified as being rented but operating without the required selective licence. The tenants/landlords were contacted, and a full inspection was carried out. The property was found to be in extremely poor condition, with several serious housing hazards. The council undertook emergency action, initially to get an electrician out to look at the installation to see if it could be made safe. However, the deficiencies were too extensive and a full rewire was required. A prohibition order was served which acts to immediately prevent the property being used for human habitation. An improvement notice was also served requiring them to undertake significant improvements before the house could be re-let.

In addition, a civil penalty was issued against the landlord, for failure to apply for a selective licence.



Damp, mould and disrepair



Dangerous electrical hazard and disrepair

Licensing compliance

The council has a strong track record of ensuring that licensable properties are licensed, using enforcement action against landlords who fail or refuse to license their properties. The next scheme is larger and more geographically diverse, which creates a different set of challenges for officers. The council will use data and technology to identify and target licensable properties across the district. The Housing Stock review used Tenure Intelligence modelling to identify privately rented properties in the designated areas. The data can then be used to check for compliance with licensing. Applications received can be monitored against this database to pinpoint areas which need improvement. A combination of targeted street by street communication will be implemented, followed by door-to-door visits in unlicensed hot spots to ensure tenants and landlords know their licensing obligations.

In addition, intelligence-led 'compliance days' involving concentrated enforcement activity in discrete areas will help to identify unlicensed addresses and to ensure compliance with licence conditions.

5.4 Why are some wards not included in the selective licensing scheme?

Despite evidence of poor property conditions across a number of wards in the district, if the level of PRS is not greater than 17%, the area cannot be considered to contain a high proportion of properties in the private rented sector. The legislation states that these areas cannot be considered for selective licensing⁵.

6. Proposed selective licensing scheme conditions

There are two types of conditions that can be applied to a selective licensing scheme: mandatory and discretionary. The mandatory conditions are required by Schedule 4 of the Housing Act 2004 and these do not form part of the consultation.

The discretionary conditions are part of the consultation, and the council can decide on these in order to deal with the management, use, occupation, condition and some of the contents of the property, for example, carbon monoxide detectors, carpets and electrical appliances.

In some circumstances, for a particular property, where the council believes there are specific issues not being covered by the discretionary conditions, additional or more specific conditions can be added.

The proposed licence conditions for designations 1 and 2 form part of the consultation, and the council welcomes any views on them. They can be found on the licensing consultation page.

Selective licence exemptions

There are a number of exemptions to the selective licensing scheme including:

- properties licensable as an HMOs under mandatory HMO licensing;
- properties let by a local authority or a Registered Provider (RP), traditionally known as a not-for-profit Housing Association;
- properties already subject to a management order or empty dwelling management order;
- properties subject to a temporary exemption notice.
- owners who reside in the property they own as their main residence (owner-occupiers).
- holiday lets; and tenancies under a long lease and business tenancies.
- Any building which is occupied principally for the purposes of a religious community whose principal occupation is prayer, contemplation, education or the relief of suffering.
- Student accommodation directly managed by educational institutions, e.g. halls of residence.
- properties managed by a charity registered under the Charities Act 2011 and which—
 - is a night shelter, or
 - consists of temporary accommodation for persons suffering or recovering from drug or alcohol abuse or a mental disorder.

⁵ [The Selective Licensing of Houses \(Additional Conditions\) \(England\) Order 2015](#)

7. Proposed selective licensing fee

The proposed selective licence fee is £675.

The council is required to split the fee into two payments. The initial part of the fee is charged to cover the processing of the application. If the application for a licence is successful, a further fee will be charged before the full licence is issued. This second fee is to cover the cost to the council for enforcement of the licence.

Part 1 of the fee will be £418.50

Part 2 of the fee will be £256.50

7.1 Proposed licence fee discounts

Early bird discount

A **15% early bird discount** will be applied to the proposed selective licence fee. This will operate for a period of 3 months from the point the scheme starts.

Discount for previously licensed landlords

A discounted rate of £375 will be offered for properties owned by landlords who were licensed under the previous scheme. This is to recognise that the work already done by this group of landlords, and that properties licensed under the previous scheme have been inspected relatively recently and therefore represent less of a risk than properties and landlords previously unknown to the council.

The discount only applies to properties in Gainsborough South West ward licensed under the previous scheme. If a property is owned by a previously licensed landlord, but is in a newly designated area, the full fee will still be due.

Landlords eligible for the 'previous landlord discount' would not be able to also access the early bird 15% discount on affected properties.

8. Alternatives to licensing that have been considered

Before deciding whether to consult upon and designate a selective licensing scheme the council must consider whether there are other courses of action available that might provide an effective means of dealing with the issues which the scheme is intended to address. Then whether the scheme will significantly help them in dealing with those issues. The options considered are shown below;

Alternative Measure	Strengths	Weaknesses
Voluntary landlord accreditation schemes	For those landlords who take part, accreditation can improve the ability to effectively manage a property.	Landlord accreditation is a measure that is largely a voluntary measure delivered by various national agencies. West Lindsey District Council has been a member of DASH Landlord Accreditation since 2010, which provides an opportunity for its landlords to be accredited free of charge within the scheme. Prior to the previous selective licensing scheme there were 19 accredited landlords managing a total of 83 properties within the district. As of January 2022, there were 7 landlords with 28 properties. Alongside this there are various national accreditation schemes. However, the voluntary nature of these schemes means they are unlikely to ensure that the required objectives of a Selective Licensing scheme can be delivered.
Use of existing legislation, including Part 1 Housing Act 2004 enforcement powers [HHSRS] and Public Health powers	Formal notices can be served that require improvements to be carried out. Councils can carry out work in default if a notice is not complied with. Landlords risk being prosecuted if they do not comply with the notice.	The council has an existing statutory power across various areas of legislation. Whilst these powers can be effective, there is not provision or resource to utilise them on a widespread scale in the way that they can be should a Selective Licensing scheme be designated. The council's previous Selective Licensing scheme demonstrated that when a scheme is in place, it enables additional resources to be focussed in key areas and for additional outcomes to be delivered. The higher than national average Category 1 Hazard levels across all but 1 ward of the district highlights the scale of the challenge facing the district, which cannot be met using existing powers only. In addition, the existing powers do not place any obligation on landlords to be proactive in improving conditions. Formal action is generally slow, with appeal provisions against most types of notices served. This can significantly delay the time period for compliance. Work in default can be effective but it is expensive and time consuming to the council, with the risk that not all costs are recovered. Successful prosecutions do not in themselves secure improvements in property conditions and the council's prosecution costs are often not met in full.
Rely on prosecutions and civil penalties for housing offences	Provides a disincentive to keep properties in poor conditions.	These powers do not place any obligation on landlords to be proactive in improving conditions. Successful prosecutions, or the imposition of civil penalties, do not in themselves secure improvements in property conditions. The absence of licensing significantly reduces the scope of the council to impose civil penalties in respect of identified housing breaches.
Improvement grants to improve sub-standard properties	Grants subsidise improvement works, improving standards and giving benefits for landlords	Generally, there are few grants available, and the council has very limited scope to offer grants through successful external funding bids. In the most part, grant awards would fund improvements that the landlord should be carrying out to meet their legal obligations. Any grant scheme would be discretionary and would rely on voluntary landlord engagement or tenants on low incomes being willing to apply for the grants themselves.

	and tenants. These can be accessed more easily by those on low incomes.	
ASB powers	Formal notices can be served at addresses identified as having ASB issues. This can resolve ASB at the particular address.	Action would generally be taken against the tenant in occupation. The powers do not place any obligations on landlords to be proactive in managing their properties to prevent or reduce the likelihood of ASB occurring.

9. Proposed scheme objectives

Licensing is part of an overall approach to help improve privately rented properties in West Lindsey. As such, any outcomes will be as a result of a range of initiatives and methods that the council can use. However, licensing is an important element and will be assessed against the following scheme objectives:

- Improve property standards in the private sector 
- Maximise the number of properties that are licensed 
- Ensure compliance with licence conditions 
- Improve the management of properties and compliance rates through robust enforcement 
- Improve tenant responsibility 
- Reduce ASB and repeat ASB incidents in PRS properties 

10. Licensing and wider council strategies

The council can only implement a selective licensing designation if it is consistent with the council's overall housing strategy. There must also be a co-ordinated approach between licensing and dealing with homelessness, empty properties, and anti-social behaviour. Licensing is an extremely useful tool in dealing with these issues, but the council also works with other parties using a variety of tools and approaches to get the required results.

10.1 Housing Strategy

West Lindsey District Council's Housing Strategy has been recently refreshed to cover the period from 2022-2024. Selective Licensing sits under the second key theme; Improving homes and transforming places. The strategy recognises that the quality of housing in the sector has not always kept pace with the demands of the market.

"We want private landlords to improve their offering and in doing so provide homes and the residential environments that meet aspirations. Where private landlords either cannot or choose not to respond to these challenges, we will provide advice, assistance and where necessary utilise our statutory powers to ensure standards are improved."

The expansion of the selective licensing scheme to cover a broader area of the district is seen as a key tool in achieving the council's vision.

"West Lindsey aims to expand Selective Licensing to some of the other challenging areas across the wider district to tackle issues that are associated with a growing private rented sector, within which property conditions are poor in comparison to the national average."

10.2 Homelessness strategy

West Lindsey is part of the Lincolnshire-wide homelessness strategy, which deals with the challenge of homelessness across the Lincolnshire region. Lincolnshire has pioneered a countywide solution to enable public bodies, as well as existing referral partners, to be able to refer relevant cases to the local authority. The strategy represents a partnership response to preventing and tackling homelessness, backed up by a delivery plan to ensure that the strategy stays relevant. Lincolnshire has recently experienced both an increase in homelessness, alongside an increase in the complexity of the needs of individuals and households affected by homelessness. The strategy identifies Gainsborough South West ward as having particular challenges due to the high level of deprivation there:

"This area is characterised by a dense private rented sector requiring a number of council initiatives to improve housing standards and reduce vulnerability. The council is working hard to tackle empty homes and has recently introduced a selective licensing scheme to improve the standards and management of private sector properties. A number of successful multi-agency approaches to tackling the wider issues that contribute to deprivation and vulnerability across the district are underway."

By improving the management of private rented properties, selective licensing helps to prevent homelessness by improving the management of private rented properties.

10.3 Empty properties

Long term empty properties can have a detrimental impact on the local community, increasing the risk of vandalism, fly tipping and vermin at the property. West Lindsey District Council strongly encourages owners of empty properties to either sell them or bring them back in to use. During the last selective licensing scheme, the council successfully brought 31 empty properties back in to use in the designated area. This was a 32% reduction in empty properties compared to the district level of 3%.

Selective licensing allowed the council to identify empty properties more easily in the area. In tandem, there was a capital scheme which enabled the council to develop a viable housing solution project. This provided grant funding to a registered provider to purchase and renovate long-term empty properties. It is intended to expand this model, if needed, across the broader licensing area if the proposed scheme is approved.

10.4 ASB

The council works with both internal departments and external agencies, such as the Police, to deal with ASB. Regular multi-agency meetings are held to share intelligence and agree a coordinated approach to individual cases that are high risk or where the specific issue presents a risk to the sustainment of the tenancy for the individual/s involved. The council works with landlords to try and proactively prevent ASB, and will offer advice and support on the correct processes to follow when ASB is becoming an issue at a property. Alongside the tools that selective licensing provides, the council also has other regulatory powers that can be used alongside these to assist in resolving complaints.

11. Further information

The council welcomes views from all West Lindsey residents, especially private tenants. The views of landlords and managing agents with properties in the district and anyone or any organisation with an interest in the private rented sector, are also welcomed.

The consultation will run from 17 January 2022 for at least 12 weeks. The consultation survey and other supporting documentation is available on the council web site.

A number of forums and workshops will be held during the consultation. If you are interested in sharing your experiences and views, please email selectivelicensing@west-lindsey.gov.uk. Due to the pandemic, these will all be held online.

Once the consultation has closed the council will review the replies. A full consultation report, including the council's response to any alternatives suggested, will be published on the property licensing pages of the web site.