
Wirral Selective Licensing Application

Supporting Evidence
and Rationale

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Section 1: Introduction

The private rented sector is the only housing option available to some of the most vulnerable people in society [1]. However, in some areas, properties in the private rented sector suffer from poor conditions and anti-social behaviour, which are both a consequence and a cause of low demand [1].

The Housing Act 2004 attempted to counter this by introducing the concept of Selective Licensing for privately rented properties in designated areas in order to improve both the lives of tenants and communities.

Local authorities are permitted to apply for selective licensing of privately rented properties in areas experiencing factors such as low housing demand and anti-social behaviour (ASB) to ensure a minimum standard of management is undertaken by landlords.

What is Selective Licensing?

In areas subject to selective licensing, all private landlords must obtain a licence and if they fail to do so, or fail to achieve acceptable management standards, the Local Authority can take enforcement action - e.g., issuing a fine of up to £20,000 or in some cases, assuming management control of the property [2]. The London Borough of Newham introduced a selective licensing scheme covering *all* private rented properties in the borough in January 2013 – and a number of authorities (including Liverpool City Council) are now looking at this option of introducing Selective Licensing in the entire area under their jurisdiction, rather than in selected neighbourhoods). In Wirral however, it has been decided to introduce it in up to four carefully chosen small areas, in order to monitor its impact and ensure it is overseen appropriately.

There are however, number of criteria must be met before an area can be declared an area of Selective Licensing, including evidence that the area has low housing demand or high levels of antisocial behaviour and in addition, the LA must gain the consent of the Secretary of State.

What can Selective Licensing achieve?

If implemented effectively, selective licensing can increase the professionalism and quality of the private rented sector in an area by ensuring:

- That landlords are 'fit and proper persons'
- Good and fair management of tenancy relations
- Support for landlords to participate in regeneration and tackle antisocial behaviour effectively
- Protection for vulnerable tenants from the worst housing conditions and from bad landlords
- Strategic knowledge to support Local Authorities in targeting health and safety inspections
- Support for landlords to improve the worst properties by helping them to achieve decent minimum standards in housing conditions and management
- Successful schemes may also increase the supply and choice of housing stock and reverse housing market decline in housing market renewal areas when used in conjunction with other measures

Benefits of Selective Licensing

Benefits to neighbourhoods and communities

- Increasing housing demand and reducing antisocial behaviour will improve problem areas, making these safer, more desirable places to live
- Reducing environmental costs and costs of crime, such as street cleaning and tackling fly tipping
- Making it easier to involve all landlords in wider strategies including crime reduction initiatives, local spatial strategies and other countywide plans
- Protecting vulnerable groups, who are often occupiers of privately rented accommodation which is poorly managed and maintained

Benefits to tenants

- More professional landlords should bring improvements to the quality and management of properties
- Potential economic benefits, for example in reduced heating costs and improved likelihood of regaining deposits
- Improvements to neighbourhoods will also benefit private tenants sense of security and community and improve social capital
- Better management practices should help to increase length of tenure and reduced incidence of unplanned moves or homelessness

Benefits to landlords:

- Responsible landlords will receive improved information and support
- A level playing field, where decent landlords are not undercut by an unscrupulous minority
- Poorly performing/inexperienced landlords will receive extra support to improve
- Improved rental incomes as areas improve
- Improvement in the reputation of all private landlords
- Shorter void periods and reduced tenant turnover
- The option to join the accredited scheme for additional support and advice
- A discounted selective licensing fee for landlord who already have their properties accredited within the selective licensing areas.

Benefits to Wirral Council:

- Landlords who have not responded to previous voluntary measures (such as Wirral's property accreditation scheme) will be forced to engage with the Local Authority. Bad landlords will be forced to improve their practices or leave the market
- Schemes should be easy to administer and explain, as all private landlords in the designated areas will now be covered by licensing of some kind
- Wirral will gain more knowledge about private renting in particular area, enabling the Council to target support, information and enforcement more effectively, and to better understand the root of the problems the areas face
- Selective licensing is not however, a panacea and benefits should be expected to be realised in the longer term, rather than straight away

A wide range of evidence from a variety of relevant data sources, including low demand and ASB has been compiled in this document to help identify potentially up to four Wirral LSOAs which would be most appropriate to become areas of Selective Licensing.

Data on all of the indicators (summarised in Figure 1 below) are detailed in the following sections. All LSOAs in Wirral were ranked based on these indicators and the top/bottom ten in every case (e.g the ten LSOAs with the highest rates of criminal damage) were entered onto a master matrix document. This number of LSOAs (10) was decided upon, as it represents the top or bottom 5% of all the LSOAs in Wirral and other targeted community projects/initiatives in Wirral have also chosen to operate in the 5% most deprived of Wirral LSOAs (e.g the Health Action Area initiative).

*Figure 1.1:
Evidence used to
determine the
appropriate
LSOAs for
Selective
Licensing in
Wirral*



Each of the indicators scored between one and three points depending on their specific relevance to low demand as this is one of the main issues for which Local Authorities can apply for Selective Licensing. Consequently, all of the measures used as indicators for low demand were awarded the highest score (3 points). The exception was low demand in the social rented sector, which only scored 1 point because Selective Licensing applies to private properties only.

Rates of Housing Benefit claimants (who are renting from private landlords only) was an indicator which also scored 2 points and this was because a recent Stock Condition Survey carried out in Wirral found that amongst households in receipt of benefits and living in the private rented sector, 36% of homes failed the Decent Homes Standard (compared to just 23% of private sector dwellings).

As Selective Licensing aims to tackle privately rented properties in poor condition, decisions to enforce remedial action is an extremely relevant indicator, and so also scored 2 points. Decisions to intervene are not undertaken lightly and are a good indicator of the areas in which housing in a poor state of repair are concentrated.

Social capital also scored as 2 points, as the data for this indicator reflects the views of local people themselves. Data originated from a large survey carried out in Wirral in 2013 which asked people a range of questions about their neighbourhood and how it made them feel (e.g unsafe at night).

The remaining indicators were scored 1 point, because although they provide a comprehensive overview of how areas fare on wide-ranging list of other issues relevant to Selective Licensing (such as deprivation, educational attainment, benefit claimants and injuries sustained in the home environment), they were not quite as relevant as the other issues listed above.

Table 1.1 below shows the list of indicators and points awarded for each in the matrix (see end of this document for matrix).

Table 1.1: Matrix points awarded per indicator

1 point	2 points	3 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deprivation (overall and living) • Out of work and disability benefits • Educational attainment • Injuries (sustained in the home) • Mosaic Public Sector • Low demand of socially rented property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal damage • Properties in poor condition • Housing benefit paid to private landlords • Social capital 	<p>Low demand (private sector only) made up of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of privately rented properties • House sales • House prices • Long term empty properties • Length of time empty properties are left empty • Lettings turnover • Time taken for private rented to let

Section 2: Privately rented properties in Wirral

Only privately rented properties are subject to Selective Licensing, therefore, those LSOAs in Wirral with the highest concentrations of this kind of housing are likely to be candidates for the scheme. The ten LSOAs with the highest concentrations are shown in the table below.

Table 2.1: Ten LSOAs with highest percentage of privately rented properties in Wirral (2014)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	% private rented	No. private rented
E01007240	Oxton North	Oxton	40.9%	352
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	38.8%	278
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	38.4%	335
E01007179	Egerton North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	37.7%	231
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Cloughton	37.7%	287
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	37.4%	293
E01007244	Oxton East	Birkenhead & Tranmere	37.1%	339
E01007218	Egremont North	Liscard	36.2%	237
E01007217	Liscard Central	Liscard	35.9%	284
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	35.7%	235
Wirral average			15.8%	112

Source: Census, 2011

As the table shows, just 15.8% of housing stock in Wirral is privately rented (Census 2011), with an average per LSOA of 112 privately rented properties. All of the LSOAs shown here however, have rates of privately rented properties which are more than double this figure, with more than one in three of all the properties in the LSOAs shown, privately rented.

Section 3: Low demand

There is no official measure of ‘low demand’ in the privately rented sector (see further down for Wirral Council definition of low demand in the social rented sector). Other Local Authorities applying for Selective Licensing have therefore used a number of related indicators which are good proxies for low demand, such as: long-term empty properties; length of time empty properties are left empty; house sales and house prices. All of these indicators are examined in more detail below.

Long term empty properties

Long-term empty properties are those which have been empty for longer than 6 months. The data presented here is from April 2014 and refers to privately owned empty property only. It shows that although *overall* Wirral has a lower proportion of long term empty homes (privately owned) compared to England [2], there are still many LSOAs with a much higher proportion of empties than average. Within Merseyside, Wirral’s long term vacant property rate of 1.56% (of the **total** stock) is higher than the sub-regional average.

Tackling empty homes and bringing them back into use can help tackle homelessness, prevent neighbourhood decline and regenerate areas. It can also contribute to meeting the local need for housing and is an important part of the Governments Housing Strategy (2011) [3]. The table below shows the ten LSOAs in Wirral with the highest proportion of private empty property in Wirral as of April 2014.

Table 3.1: Ten LSOAs with highest percentage of empty properties in Wirral (2014)

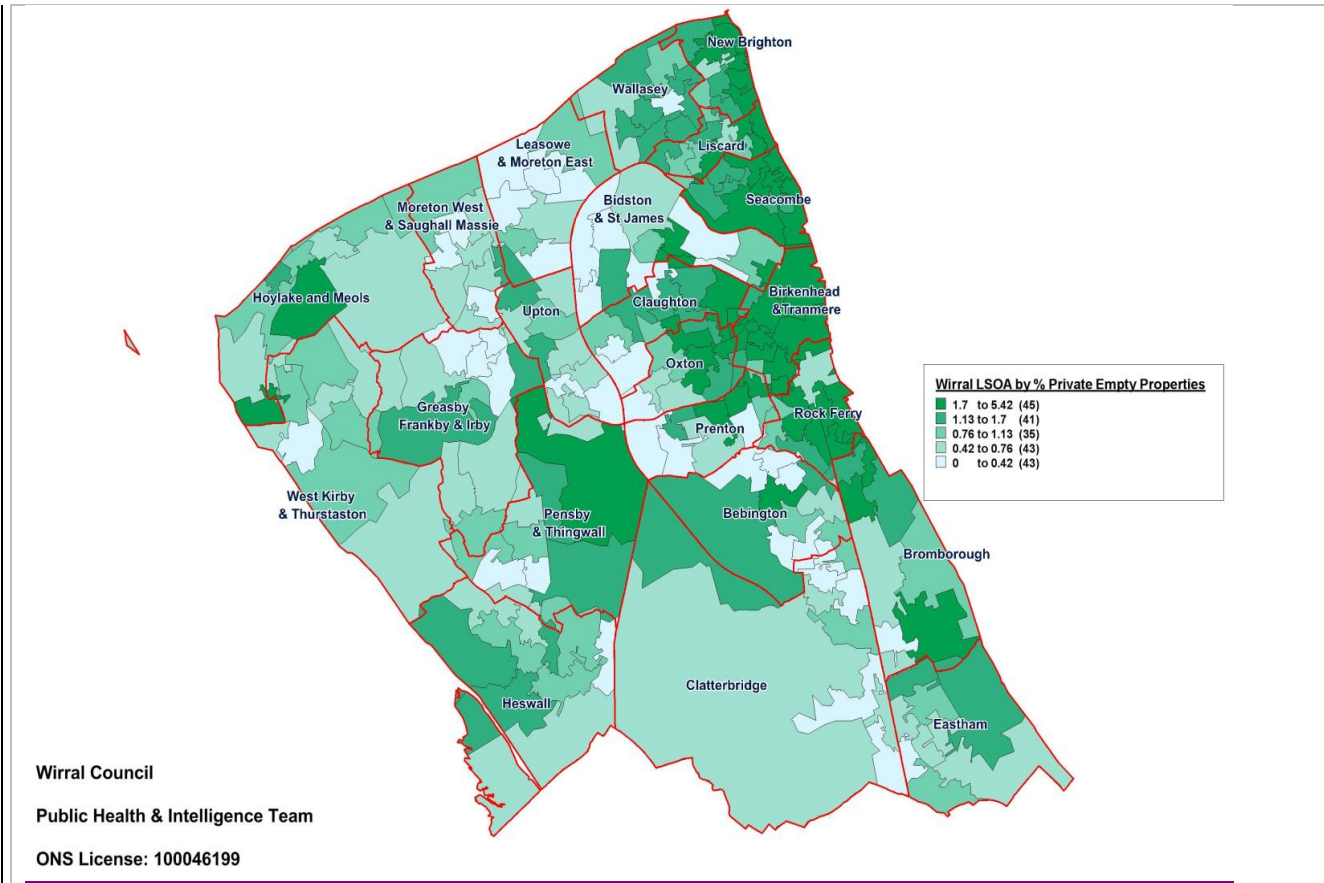
LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Percentage empty*
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	5.42%
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	4.38%
E01007289	Tranmere Woodward	Rock Ferry	4.05%
E01007131	West Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	3.91%
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	3.78%
E01007272	Seacombe West	Seacombe	3.12%
E01007202	Hoylake East	Hoylake and Meols	3.02%
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	2.93%
E01007175	Egerton Park	Rock Ferry	2.93%
E01007269	Seacombe Docks	Seacombe	2.88%
Wirral average (private stock only)			1.41%

*Percentage of privately owned stock empty for >6months

As the table shows, those LSOAs with the highest proportion of empty properties, tend to be in the more deprived, eastern wards in Wirral, likely to be suffering from a number of other disadvantages.

Map 3.1 below shows the extent of empty properties in Wirral overall.

Map 3.1: Percentage of privately owned, long-term empty* property as a % of housing stock (2014)



*housing stock empty for >6months

Length of time empty properties remained empty

As mentioned above, long term empty properties are those which have been empty for 6 months or longer. The table and map above showed properties which fell into this category as a percentage of all privately owned properties in Wirral (by LSOA). The measure shown in the table below shows the length of time that long term empty, privately owned property remained empty (in days), by LSOA during the 10 years to 31st March 2014.

Table 3.2: Length of time (in days) long term empty properties (privately owned) were empty, by LSOA during the previous 10 years up to 31st March 2014

LSOA Code	LSOA Name	Ward	No. empty private properties (in LSOA)	Total days empty
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	40	46,548
E01007175	Egerton Park	Rock Ferry	24	43,827
E01007255	Landican	Pensby & Thingwall	20	42,253
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	32	37,754
E01007141	Port Sunlight North	Bromborough	24	32,624
E01007239	Oxton North East	Birkenhead & Tranmere	24	31,947
E01007198	West Kirby Central	Hoylelake & Meols	23	30,453
E01007242	Oxton Central	Oxton	25	29,607
E01032903	new LSOA*	Bidston & St James	23	29,210
E01007231	New Brighton Central	New Brighton	22	26,803

*New LSOA (unnamed) created by merger of two LSOA's (E01007134 Birkenhead Park North & E01007132 Birkenhead West Float)

House sales

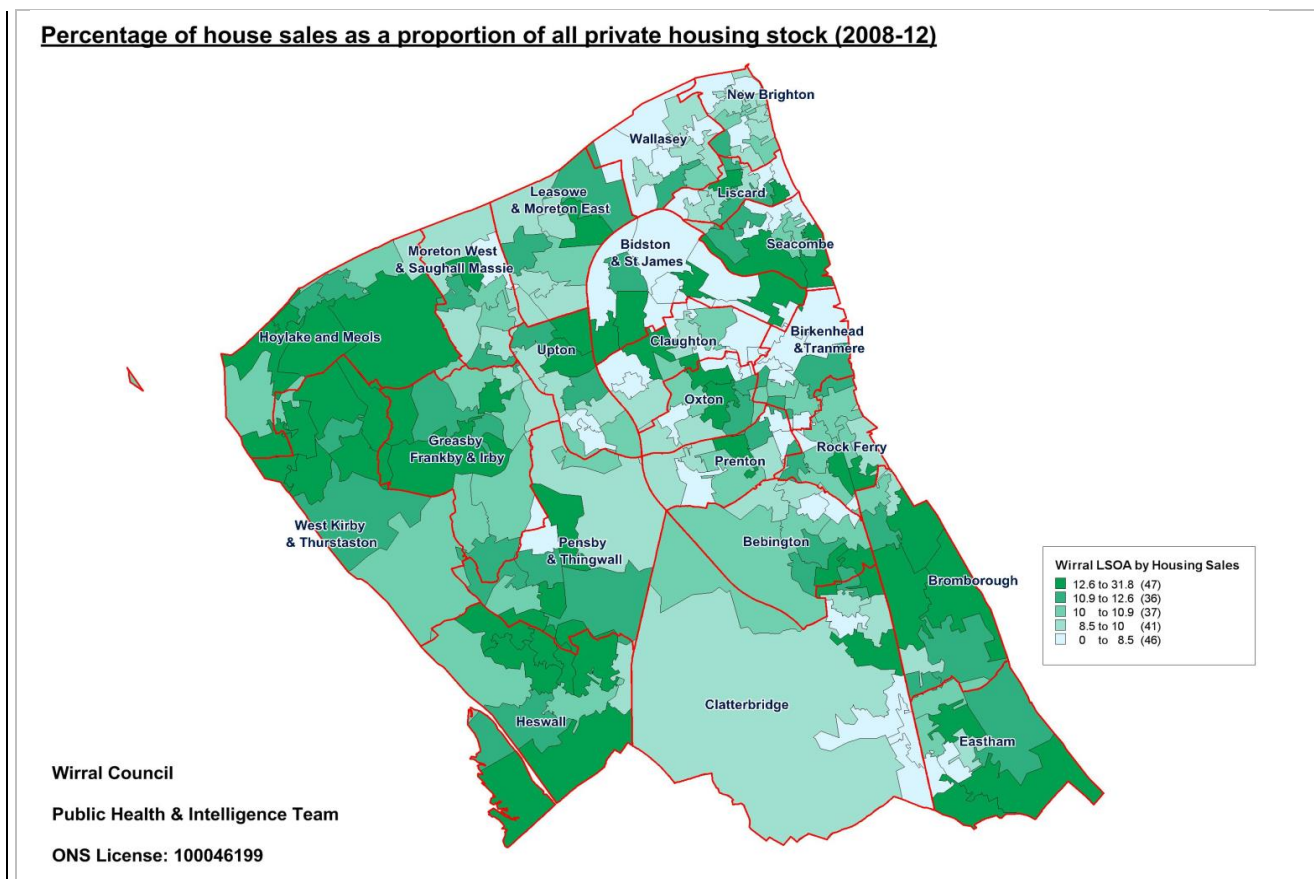
The data in Table 3.3 below refers to the total number of house sales per LSOA, compared to the total amount of private housing stock in that LSOA. The Wirral average was 10.90%, but as the table shows, many LSOAs in Wirral had rates significantly lower than this. The ten with the lowest number of house sales per total number of private housing stock, for the five pooled years of 2008 to 2012 are shown in the table below and were entered onto the overall matrix (see end). Map 3.2 shows information for Wirral overall.

Table 3.3: LSOAs with the lowest rate of house sales as a proportion of private housing stock (2008-2012)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Percentage (%)
E01007124	Beechwood North	Bidston and St James	3.42%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Claughton	4.62%
E01007246	Oxton West	Oxton	5.45%
E01007249	Woodchurch Central	Upton	5.53%
E01007174	Egerton Central	Prenton	5.68%
E01007162	Noctorum Central	Claughton	5.71%
E01007157	Claughton North	Claughton	5.85%
E01007309	Wallasey Green Lane	Wallasey	6.01%
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	6.03%
E01007286	Irby East	Pensby and Thingwall	6.22%
Wirral average			10.90%

Source: Wirral Council Housing Strategy Team, 2014

Map 3.2: Percentage of house sales as a proportion of all private housing stock, by Wirral LSOA (2008-2012)



There were a total of 3,511 house sales in Wirral in 2013-14, an average of 17 sales per LSOA (sales were up 17% on 2012-13, when they numbered 2,985 and averaged 14 per LSOA).

House prices

The average house price in Wirral in 2013-14 was £161,200 (median value £134,650), but this figure hides large variations between Wirral LSOAs. For example, the average price in Caldy South was over £500,000, compared to less than a tenth of that in Bidston Moss where the average was £43,000. Table 3.4 below shows the ten LSOAs with the lowest average sale prices in Wirral in 2013-14. These ten were entered onto the matrix document at the end of this briefing.

Table 3.4: Ten LSOAs with lowest average sold prices in Wirral in 2013-14

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	No. Sales	Average house price
E01007121	Bidston Moss	Bidston and St James	6	£43,000
E01007122	Bidston St James East	Bidston and St James	4	£49,440
E01007133	Birkenhead East Float	Bidston and St James	2	£50,000
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	11	£50,310
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	7	£52,570
E01007274	Seacombe Ferry	Seacombe	5	£54,800
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	7	£55,140
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	8	£56,190
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	6	£56,580
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	16	£58,460
	Wirral LSOA (average)		17	£161,200
	Wirral LSOA (median)		17	£134,650

Source: Wirral Council Housing Strategy Team, 2014

As the table also shows, the numbers of sales were low in the most of the LSOAs, with only Tranmere Well Lane even approaching the average for Wirral overall (average of 17 per LSOA per annum in 2013/14).

Time taken for private rented property to let

Table 3.5 shows the 10 LSOAs with the longest times (total weeks) that private rental property was advertised before being let. This information is from Zoopla, which is used by some of the largest private landlords and managing agents in Wirral to advertise their property. The total number of weeks that properties were available before being let was summed for all properties by LSOA. Longer times to let a property, or a large number of properties to let can indicate low demand. The average number of empty weeks for privately let properties in Wirral for 2013/14 was 72 weeks per LSOA.

Table 3.5: Ten LSOAs with highest number of empty weeks before being let (2013-14)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Empty weeks	Private rented stock
E01007175	Egerton Park	Rock Ferry	566	224
E01007269	Seacombe Docks	Seacombe	377	204
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	308	231
E01007146	Spital West	Clatterbridge	287	105
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	283	335
E01007164	Eastham Woods	Eastham	266	99
E01007239	Oxton North East	Birkenhead and Tranmere	237	233
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	236	235
E01007140	New Ferry South	Bromborough	235	160
E01007294	Tranmere Parklands	Birkenhead and Tranmere	214	238
	Wirral LSOA average		72	112

Source: Zoopla, 2014 (empty weeks) and Census 2011 (private rented stock)

The data used to construct the above table (Zoopla data), was considered and analysed in a number of different ways, before it was decided that total empty weeks, from all properties in the LSOA was the most valid and reasonable indicator of low demand in an area. *Average* number of weeks empty for example, was considered, as was weeks empty per number of private rented units in the LSOA. Both of these ways of examining the data however, resulted in a top ten with few privately rented properties at all (but high ratios or average weeks, because both the average weeks figure and the ratio of weeks/private rented stock, take no account of the total number of private rented housing in the LSOA). Consequently, many fairly affluent LSOAs, with high rental prices and low numbers of private stock were emerging. This is clearly not an indicator of low demand, merely the result of fewer people being able to afford properties in these price ranges.

Lettings turnover

The same Zoopla data was also the source for the information contained within Table 3.6 below. This shows those Wirral LSOAs with the *highest* number of private lettings. This indicator was used because high turnover of lettings in the private rented sector can indicate instability and/or poor quality accommodation in an area.

Table 3.6: Ten LSOAs with highest rate of turnover (of private rented stock) in 2013/14

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	No. lettings in LSOA	Private rented stock
E01007269	Seacombe Docks	Seacombe	43	204
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	28	335
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	25	235
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	23	231
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	22	253
E01007175	Egerton Park	Rock Ferry	21	224
E01007244	Oxton East	Oxton	20	339
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	18	245
E01007294	Tranmere Parklands	Birkenhead & Tranmere	17	238
E01007176	Rock Ferry West	Rock Ferry	17	167
	Wirral Average		7	109

Source: Zoopla, 2014 (no. lettings in LSOA) and Census 2011 (private rented stock)

As the table shows, all of the LSOAs in the top ten had at least double the number of lettings than was the average for Wirral in 2013/14 - and in some cases, four and five times more.

Low demand (social housing sector)

The definition of low demand in the social rented sector used by Wirral Council is; housing in blocks or management patches of at least 50 dwellings, which have one or more of the following issues:

- Small or non-existent waiting list
- Tenancy offers that are frequently refused
- High rates of voids available for letting
- High rates or tenancy turnover

- Where there are relaxed housing points/housing needs thresholds to counter low demand/unpopularity

The proportion of the total housing stock (in the hands of registered providers/social landlords) which was classed as being in low demand, was calculated by LSOA and ranked. The ten LSOAs with the highest percentage of properties classed as being in low demand are shown in the table below and were entered onto the overall matrix document.

Table 3.7: Ten LSOAs where low demand for social housing was most prevalent (2013)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Percentage in low demand
E01007114	Higher Bebington North East	Bebington	92.4%
E01007112	Higher Bebington East	Bebington	77.6%
E01007301	Upton Central	Greasby, Frankby and Irby	55.4%
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston and St James	46.3%
E01007297	Upton North	Upton	30.3%
E01007133	Birkenhead East Float	Bidston and St James	29.2%
E01007168	Eastham South	Eastham	24.8%
E01007289	Tranmere Woodward	Rock Ferry	23.0%
E01007122	Bidston St James East	Bidston and St James	21.4%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead and Tranmere	17.0%
Wirral average			2.3%

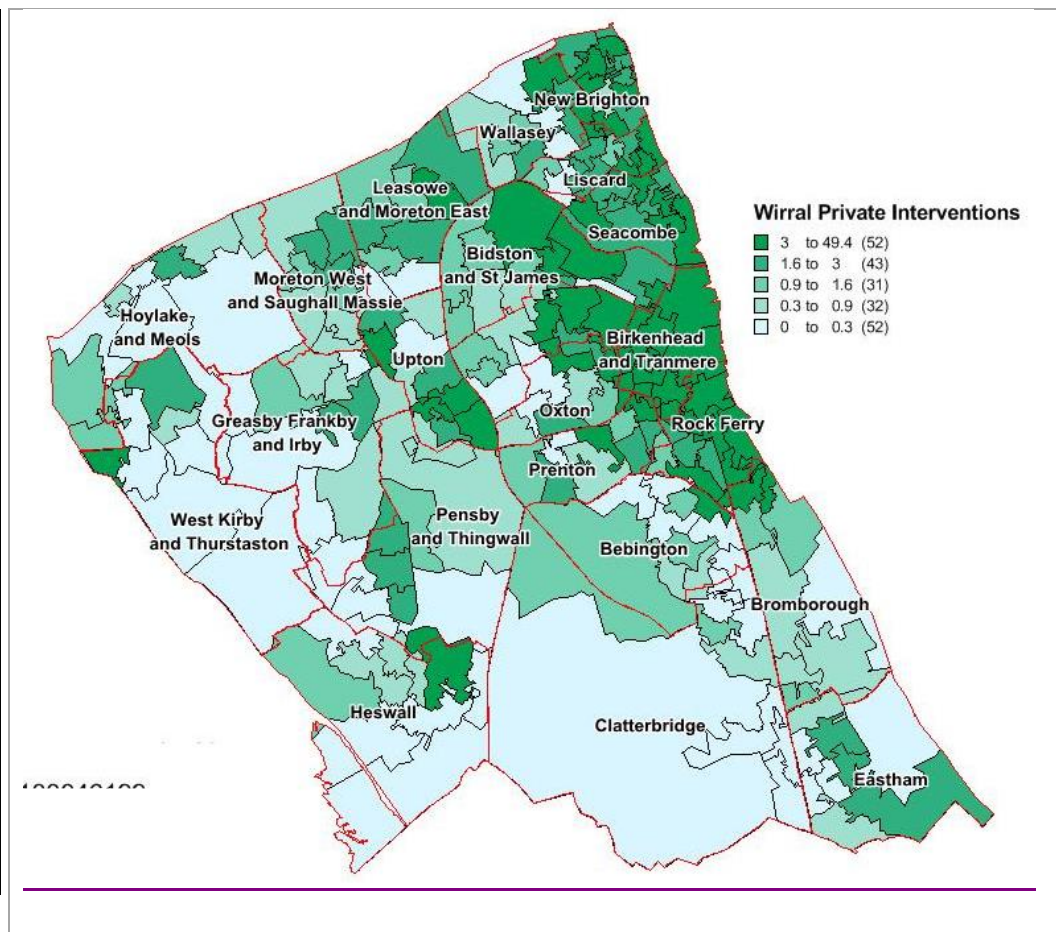
Source: Wirral Area Mapping Project 2013

Section 4: Properties in poor condition

In order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of local residents, Local Authorities have the duty to ensure that remedial action is taken on private properties where there are serious hazards that affect the health, safety and wellbeing of the occupiers. They carry out this duty using the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) during inspections, a risk-based evaluation tool to help identify and protect against potential risks and hazards from deficiencies in residential properties. This was introduced under the Housing Act 2004 [5]. The underlying principle of the HHSRS is that, “any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor” [5]. There are two categories of hazards in the HHSRS with category 1 hazards being the most severe. (see the [Housing, Health & Safety Guidance](#) for more information on what these categories refer to).

Given that a decision to enforce remedial action has financial implications for both the owner and the occupier (and such decisions may be challenged and could be the subject of scrutiny by the courts), inspections clearly record information and are robust enough to provide supporting evidence for decisions made. Each decision taken to intervene is consequently, significant and not undertaken lightly. The 2,716 interventions (shown in Map 4.1 below) undertaken by Wirral Council in 2012-14 therefore, are a good indicator of the areas in which housing in a poor state of repair are concentrated. In addition to the enforcement approach, interventions may be informal such as a Healthy Homes visit or request for help with heating via a Cosyhomes heating grant. These measures are also an indicator of poor property condition in the private rented sector.

Map 4.1: Private sector housing interventions as a percentage of all private housing stock (2012-14)



The map shows interventions as a percentage of all private housing stock in Wirral by LSOA. The total number of interventions undertaken between 2012-14 was 2,716. Interventions occur when an inspection identifies; Category I hazards; Category II hazards; referrals to the Healthy Homes Team or referrals to the Cosy Homes Scheme (see Appendices for explanation of hazard categories).

Source: Wirral Council Housing Strategy Team, 2014

The ten LSOAs with the highest percentage of interventions as a percentage of all private housing stock, are show in the table below.

Table 4.1: LSOAs with the highest number of interventions due to poor condition (private housing, 2012-14)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	No. of interventions	Interventions as a % of all private stock
E01007274	Seacombe Ferry	Seacombe	112	49.34%
E01007231	New Brighton Central	New Brighton	102	13.56%
E01007289	Tranmere Woodward	Rock Ferry	26	12.75%
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	88	12.17%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	66	10.89%
E01007156	Birkenhead Park West	Claughton	50	8.28%
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	59	8.27%
E01032903	New LSOA*	Bidston & St James	52	8.10%
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	43	7.53%
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	39	7.29%
Wirral average per LSOA			13	2.20%

*This LSOA was created two LSOA's (E01007134 Birkenhead Park North and E01007132 Birkenhead West Float) were merged to form a new LSOA which is as yet unnamed.

As the table above shows, Seacombe Ferry was the LSOA with the largest number of interventions due to poor condition in 2012-14, with 112. This is despite the fact that less than one-third of all the properties in Seacombe Ferry LSOA are in private hands (just 227 out of total of 718 properties or 31%). The low number of private dwellings partly explains why the percentage of interventions *as a proportion of all private stock* is so high, but does also indicate an area of poor private housing condition, to have attracted so many interventions (almost one intervention for every two properties in the area and a rate of 25 times the Wirral average).

Section 5: Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (IMD) is a measure of relative deprivation at a small area level, important in identifying disadvantaged areas so that limited resources can be targeted where they are most needed.

The IMD covers a broad range of issues and refers to unmet need caused by a lack of resources of all kinds, not just financial resources. The IMD attempts to capture deprivation in its broadest sense, using seven distinct ‘domains’ (which together form the overall IMD).

Wirral’s 2013 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey reported that the highest rates of poor housing conditions were in the geographical areas with there are also the highest levels of deprivation.

Overall Indices of Deprivation (2010)

Table 5.1 below pinpoints the 10 most deprived LSOAs in Wirral by name and ward they fall within. These ten LSOAs were entered onto the overall matrix.

Table 5.1: Ten LSOAs with most acute needs according to the *overall* IMD (2010)

LSOA	LSOA Name	Ward	IMD Score
E01007122	Bidston St James East	Bidston & St James	79.87
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Bidston & St James	73.04
E01007133	Birkenhead East Float	Bidston & St James	72.75
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	72.71
E01007121	Bidston Moss	Bidston & St James	72.35
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	71.79
E01007274	Seacombe Ferry	Seacombe	71.12
E01007204	Leasowe Central	Leasowe & Moreton East	70.23
E01007124	Beechwood North	Bidston & St James	69.78
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	67.13
Wirral average			27.59

*higher score indicates greater deprivation

Living Environment deprivation

One of the seven individual ‘domains’ (or different dimensions of deprivation) which together make up the overall IMD includes ‘Living Environment’ and this measures the quality of individuals immediate surroundings, including housing quality. There is a domain titled, ‘Barriers to housing and services’, but this is a less appropriate indicator for this work, since it deals primarily with distance and accessibility to local services.

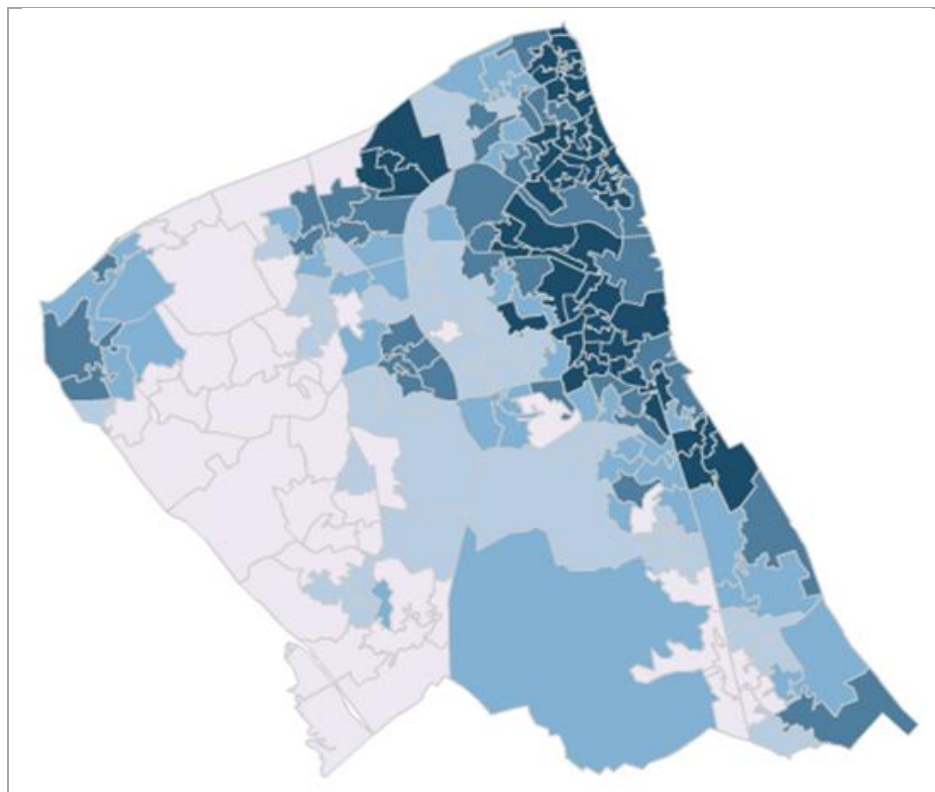
The IMD Living Environment domain is therefore a relevant and appropriate measure to use when considering areas for Selective Licensing. See Map 5.1 and Table 5.2 below for information on where the most areas of most acute need in Wirral are according to this measure.

Table 5.2: Ten LSOAs with most acute needs according to the IMD Living Environment domain

LSOA	LSOA Name	Ward	IMD Living Domain Score
E01007217	Liscard Central	Liscard	67.30
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	65.25
E01007271	Poulton East	Seacombe	64.82
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	61.83
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	61.71
E01007218	Egremont North	Liscard	59.74
E01007277	Town Hall	Seacombe	59.08
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	67.30
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	58.15
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead and Tranmere	58.03
Wirral average			23.24

*higher score indicates greater deprivation

Map 5.1: IMD (2010) Living Environment domain by LSOAs in Wirral



Map 5.1 shows the 52 LSOAs which ranked in the bottom 20% of areas in England on this domain in the darkest shade of blue. All were in the east of the borough and interestingly, the areas immediately to the north and south of Birkenhead (e.g Liscard, Seacombe, Egremont and Tranmere) all ranked more poorly than Birkenhead and Bidston (a slight difference compared to the other aspects of deprivation on the IMD, where Bidston and Birkenhead generally emerge as most deprived). Areas of Leasowe and New Ferry also scored very poorly on this domain.

Key

■	0.0 - 6,496.0
■	6,496.1 - 12,993.0
■	12,993.1 - 19,489.0
■	19,489.1 - 25,986.0
■	25,986.1 - 32,482.0

Notes

This domain uses as indicators; *Housing in poor condition* (proportion of social and private homes failing to meet the decent homes standard); *Houses without central heating*; *Air quality* (measure based on emissions rates for four major pollutants) and *Road traffic accidents* (measure of road traffic accidents involving injury to pedestrians and cyclists in the resident and workplace population)

Section 6: Geo-demographic data (Mosaic Public Sector)

Mosaic is a geo-demographic population classification tool used to segment the population according to the type of neighbourhood in which they live. It is constructed from a range of data sources including the Census, consumer behaviour and lifestyle factors and is a useful tool for gaining more in-depth population insight. Mosaic segments the population into 15 Groups and 69 Types based on postcode and can indicate areas where certain issues are more prevalent.

Mosaic contains a number of indicators relevant to Selective Licensing (listed below). Those Mosaic Groups which score highly on all the indicators shown are likely to be those where Selective Licensing would be most beneficial. The LSOAs with the largest numbers of these specific Mosaic Groups are likely to therefore be the most appropriate areas in which to initiative Selective Licensing. The table below shows the indicators used (which were all answers to the, 'Does your accommodation have any of the following problems?' (from the British Household Panel Survey).

- Shortage of space
- Noise from neighbours
- Street noise
- Lack of heating
- Vandalism or crime
- Condensation
- Leaky roof
- Damp walls, floors etc
- Rot in windows, floors

Source: Mosaic Public Sector (British Household Panel Survey)

Further responses (again from the most recent British Household Panel Survey) to questions about whether residents, if they had the choice, would choose to stay in their present home, or move somewhere else, and overall, whether they liked living in their current neighbourhood. Other questions asked whether neighbours looked out for each other and whether it was felt anti-social behaviour (ASB) had worsened over the last 2 years.

Responses to the above questions suggest that those most likely to want to move somewhere else or least likely to be happy where they were currently living were those from Mosaic Groups I, N and O. Groups I, N and O were also the least likely to agree that neighbours looked out for each other in their neighbourhoods and most likely to think that anti-social behaviour had got worse in the last 2 years. These were also the same groups likely to report their housing had the kinds of problems listed above (see Appendices for full rationale and Mosaic analysis).

Each Mosaic group can be broken down into more Mosaic Types (smaller groups which enable more targeted work). The Mosaic Types most likely to report the above issues with their neighbourhoods or housing were G33, N60, N61, N66 and O69. For more detail on these Mosaic groups and the methods which have been summarised here, please see the Appendices.

These five Mosaic Types (G33, N60, N61, N66 and O69) were only found in 40 of the 207 LSOAs in Wirral and only make up 8.7% of the overall population of Wirral. Excel and Mosaic were used to determine the ten LSOAs which had the highest prevalence of these Mosaic Types and which were entered onto the overall matrix (shown in the table below).

Table 6.1: Ten LSOAs with the highest prevalence of Mosaic Types likely to experience housing and/or neighbourhood issues in Wirral

LSOA	LSOA Name	Ward	% of LSOA population made up of 5 target Mosaic Types	% of privately owned housing stock
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	78.5%	56.1%
E01007289	Tranmere Woodward	Rock Ferry	75.6%	29.5%
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	74.1%	34.6%
E01007204	Leasowe Central	Leasowe & Moreton East	73.7%	27.3%
E01007124	Beechwood North	Bidston & St James	72.8%	23.0%
E01007121	Bidston Moss	Bidston & St James	70.8%	35.7%
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	70.5%	52.3%
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	70.1%	46.1%
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	65.3%	61.1%
E01007274	Seacombe Ferry	Seacombe	55.0%	31.6%
Wirral			8.7%	84.3%

Table 6.1 shows that the ten LSOAs with the highest prevalence of Mosaic Types likely to experience housing and/or neighbourhood issues in Wirral (Mosaic Types G33, N60, N61, N66 and O69), are exclusively in the most deprived areas of Wirral. These five Mosaic groups make up just 8.7% of the overall population of Wirral, yet in the ten LSOAs shown (which were entered onto the matrix), they made up the majority of the population in these areas.

Section 7: Housing benefits data

As Selective Licensing aims to tackle properties which are privately rented and in poor condition, rates of Housing Benefit claimants (who are renting from private landlords only), is likely to be an important indicator of where problems may be most acute. This is because tenants claiming Housing Benefit often don't have the choice to move to better accommodation due to the number of private landlords who exclude tenants in receipt of benefits. A recent Stock Condition Survey carried out in Wirral found that whereas 23% of private sector dwellings failed the Decent Homes Standard, amongst households in receipt of benefits and living in the private rented sector, 36% of homes failed the standard.

Data for this indicator relates to claimants of Housing Benefit (renting from private landlords only, those renting from social landlords were excluded from this analysis) in Wirral as of February 2013. The data was collated, sorted into LSOA, and expressed as a percentage of the total LSOA population.

Table 7.1: Wirral LSOAs with the highest percentage of Housing Benefit claimants (renting privately)

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	Claimants	% LSOA population
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	293	18.75
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	253	15.85
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	204	15.79
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	214	14.50
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	224	14.34
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	216	13.94
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	244	13.75
E01007271	Poulton East	Seacombe	228	13.65
E01007131	West Tranmere	Birkenhead & Tranmere	217	13.69
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	178	13.59
Wirral Average				4.55

Note: The true percentage of the population living in privately rented accommodation which is paid for by Housing Benefit is likely to be higher than these figures suggest, as many claimants will be families rather than individuals.

The ten LSOAs with the highest percentage of housing benefit claimants (renting from private landlords only) are shown in the table above. As the table shows, all of the LSOAs shown had rates that were more than three times the Wirral average of 4.55%, whilst in the LSOA with the highest rates (Birkenhead South LSOA, in Cloughton Ward), almost one in five of the population of the LSOA was a Housing Benefit Claimant. These ten LSOAs were the areas entered into the overall matrix.

8. Out of work benefits

Those receiving out of work benefits appear to be particularly vulnerable to experiencing poor housing conditions. As previously mentioned, the recent Stock Condition Survey carried out in Wirral found that whereas 23% of private sector dwellings failed the Decent Homes Standard, amongst households in receipt of benefits and living in the private rented sector, this rose to 36% of homes failing to meet the standard.

The main out of work benefits are Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and the ten LSOA's with the highest proportions of people of working age in receipt of these benefits (as of August 2013) are shown in the tables below (and have been entered onto the overall Matrix in Section 14).

Table 8.1: Wirral LSOAs with the highest percentage of Job Seekers Allowance benefit claimants (2013)

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	Claimants	% LSOA population*
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	115	11.0%
E01007289	Tranmere Woodward	Rock Ferry	110	10.8%
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	145	10.6%
E01007133	Birkenhead East Float	Bidston and St James	75	10.4%
E01007274	Seacombe Ferry	Seacombe	85	10.2%
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	85	9.6%
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	110	9.4%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	95	9.1%
E01007124	Beechwood North	Bidston and St James	85	9.1%
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston and St James	100	9.1%
Wirral average				3.5%

*of working age (16-64). Numbers rounded to nearest 5.

Table 8.2: Wirral LSOAs with the highest percentage of Employment Support Allowance claimants (2013)

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	Claimants	% LSOA population*
E01007133	Birkenhead East Float	Bidston and St James	210	29.2%
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	210	23.8%
E01007122	Bidston St James East	Bidston and St James	200	23.0%
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	315	22.9%
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	235	22.4%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	225	21.6%
E01007274	Seacombe Ferry	Seacombe	180	21.6%
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	170	20.0%
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	190	18.9%
E01007289	Tranmere Woodward	Rock Ferry	190	18.6%
Wirral average				7.6%

*of working age (16-64). Numbers rounded to nearest 5.

9. Social capital

Definitions of social capital vary, but the main aspects include citizenship, neighbourliness, social networks and civic participation. The definition used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) [6], is taken from the Office for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and is, “*networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups*”. Research has shown that higher levels of social capital are associated with better health, higher educational achievement, better employment outcomes and lower crime rates.

The measure of social capital used in this briefing has been calculated using the responses of Wirral residents to the North-West Mental Health Survey 2013 carried out by Liverpool John Moores University (commissioned by Wirral Public Health Department). The survey was designed to provide information on the mental wellbeing of Wirral residents and had a sample size of 1,000 respondents, living mainly in the more deprived areas of Wirral. Many of the questions asked related to the lived environment, satisfaction with housing and feelings of safety when at home at night. Responses to several questions were grouped together (by Liverpool John Moores analysts) to form a composite measure of social capital. The questions grouped to form the composite measure of social capital were those which asked residents for their views on:

1. Social participation (variety and breadth of participation in community organisations)
2. Social networks (frequency of contact with friends, relatives or neighbours, social support)
3. Social cohesion (length of residence in local area, sense of belonging to neighbourhood and trust)
4. Civic participation and control (perception of local influence and life satisfaction)
5. Local area views (satisfaction with local area and perception of safety in local area)

The combined scores by LSOA were then ranked (lowest social capital to highest) to identify the LSOAs which could most benefit from the introduction of Selective Licensing. The ten areas with the lowest social capital in Wirral are shown in the table below and were entered onto the overall matrix.

Table 9.1: Ten LSOAs with the lowest social capital scores in Wirral in 2013

LSOA	LSOA Name	Ward	Social Capital Score
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	25.54
E01007207	Moreton North	Leasowe and Moreton East	25.68
E01007124	Beechwood North	Bidston and St James	27.42
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead and Tranmere	27.47
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	27.62
E01007228	Lingham Park West	Moreton West and Saughall Massie	27.64
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead and Tranmere	27.81
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	27.83
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead and Tranmere	27.85
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	27.86
Wirral average			29.48

Section 10: Criminal damage

Anti-social behaviour results in unsettled communities, undermines efforts to regenerate areas and is associated with other social and economic problems. It is a key component of making the case for Selective Licensing, but many of the elements which make up ASB data can be a little misleading, as it can often be skewed toward areas with high concentrations of pubs and clubs. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, it was deemed more appropriate to focus on the criminal damage element of ASB. Criminal damage is also a more reliable indicator as it is mostly reported, unlike ASB which can be under-reported in areas due to differing tolerance levels. The table and figure below show the LSOAs with the highest rates of recorded criminal damage in 2013-14.

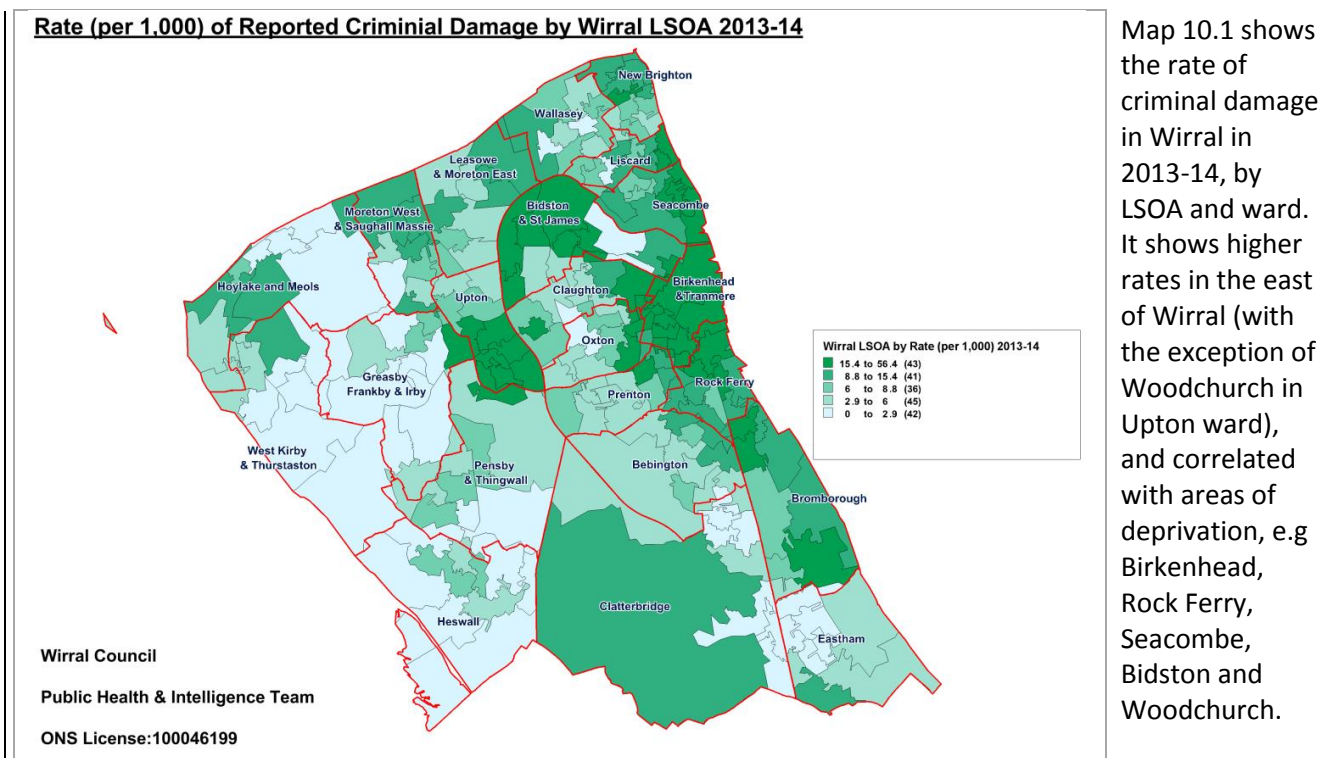
Table 10.1: Rate of reported criminal damage by LSOA in Wirral in 2013-14: top 10 LSOAs (rate per 1,000)

LSOAs	LSOA Name	Ward	Rate (per 1,000) 2013-14
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead and Tranmere	56.3
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead and Tranmere	45.2
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	41.8
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead and Tranmere	39.0
E01007274	Seacombe Ferry	Seacombe	38.0
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	37.8
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead and Tranmere	37.1
E01007122	Bidston St James East	Bidston and St James	34.8
E01007141	Port Sunlight North	Bromborough	34.5
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	33.4
Wirral Average			10.4

Source: Wirral Community Safety Team, 2014

All of the ten LSOAs shown in the figure and table (and entered into the Matrix) have rates of criminal damage which are more than three times the Wirral average.

Map 10.1: Rate of criminal damage by LSOA in Wirral in 2013-14



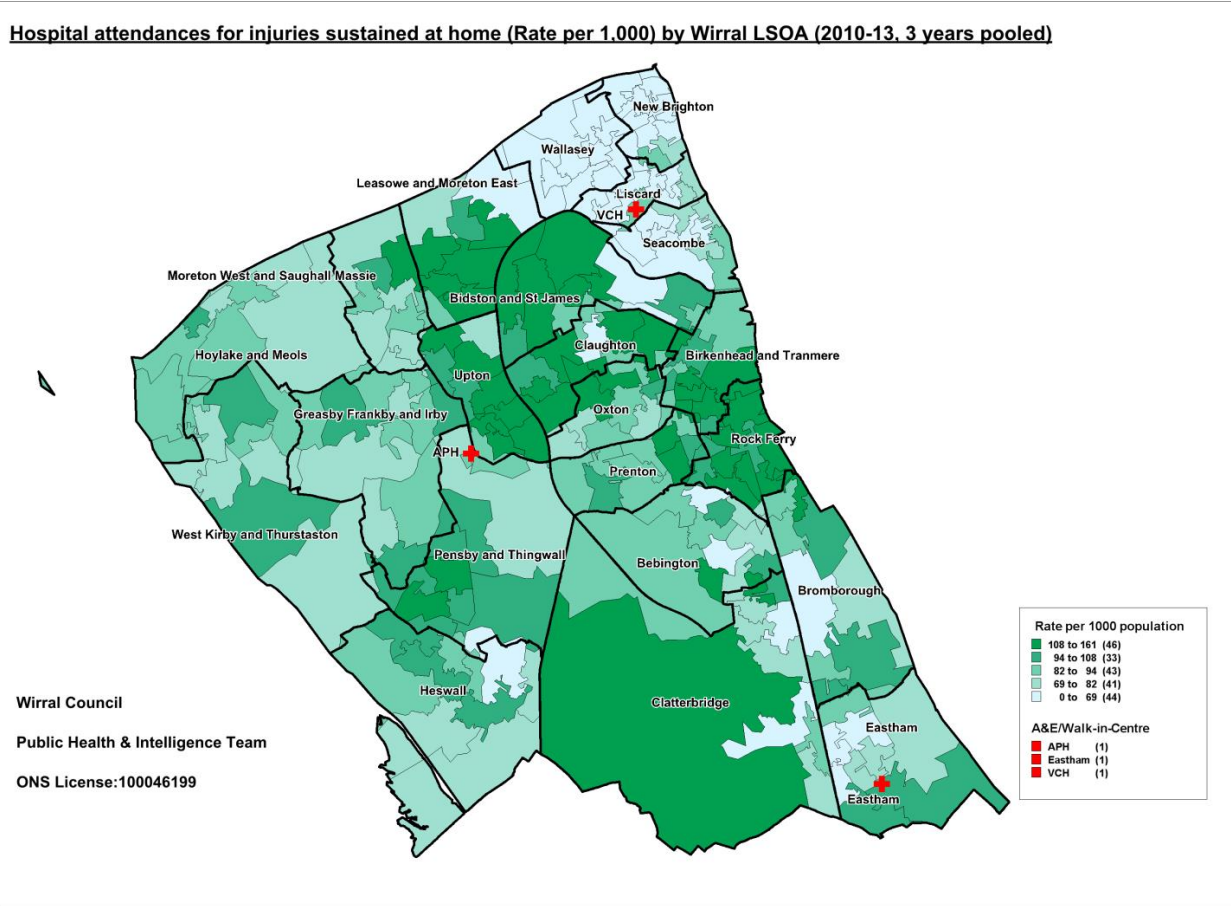
Source: Wirral Council Community Safety Team, 2014

Section 11: Injuries (sustained in the home environment)

Data on injuries sustained in the home environment were provided by the [Trauma, Injury Intelligence Group \(TIIG\)](#) who compile and collate A&E injury data across the North-West of England. Obviously, not all injuries sustained at home will be due to people living in non-decent, dilapidated homes. Home condition is however, a contributory factor in a large proportion of home injuries. A correlation analysis examining the presence or otherwise of a relationship between household health / health service contact and housing conditions was carried out as part of Wirral's 2013 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey; this confirmed a statistically significant correlation. It is therefore appropriate to include this indicator as part of the rationale for selective licensing in Wirral.

Data on Wirral residents who attended Arrowe Park A&E for all injuries sustained at home, by LSOA, for 3-pooled years (2010-13) is presented in the map and table below.

Map 11.1: Rate of A&E attendances for home injuries by LSOA of residence, 2010-13 (3 pooled years)



Source: TIIG ([Trauma, Injury & Intelligence Group](#)) 2014

As the map shows, attendances for home injuries are broadly related to deprivation in Wirral, with higher rates in the areas of deprivation (with the Clatterbridge area being a notable exception). It is also clear that the presence of the long established Walk-In Centre at Victoria Central Hospital in Wallasey prevents a large number of attendances at A&E (these figures are for Arrowe Park A&E only) and that the estate situated next to Arrowe Park (Woodchurch) is over-represented due to its proximity to A&E. It can also be seen that Birkenhead & Tranmere and Rock Ferry have high rates of attendance, despite not being at all close to A&E at Arrowe Park. The table below identifies the ten LSOAs with the highest rates of home injuries in Wirral in 2010-13 (3 pooled years).

Table 11.1: Rate of A&E attendances for home injuries by LSOA of residence, 2010-13 (3 pooled years)

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	No. home injuries	Rate per 1,000
E01007303	Woodchurch Leisure Centre	Upton	231	160.64
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	232	156.44
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	269	153.89
E01007207	Moreton North	Leasowe & Moreton East	205	151.74
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Claughton	271	148.09
E01007118	Higher Bebington South	Bebington	228	146.34
E01007304	Woodchurch East	Upton	229	145.95
E01007175	Egerton Park	Rock Ferry	266	144.10
E01007257	Woodchurch North	Upton	187	143.96
E01007300	Woodchurch North East	Upton	273	142.63
	Wirral average			88.88

Source: TIIG ([Trauma, Injury & Intelligence Group](#)), 2014

As mentioned above, we know that many people use A&E due to living nearby which introduces an element of proximity bias into the data. Nevertheless, the ten LSOAs with the highest rate of attendance for home injuries at A&E are the ones which have been entered onto the overall matrix document to identify the priority areas for Selective Licensing in Wirral.

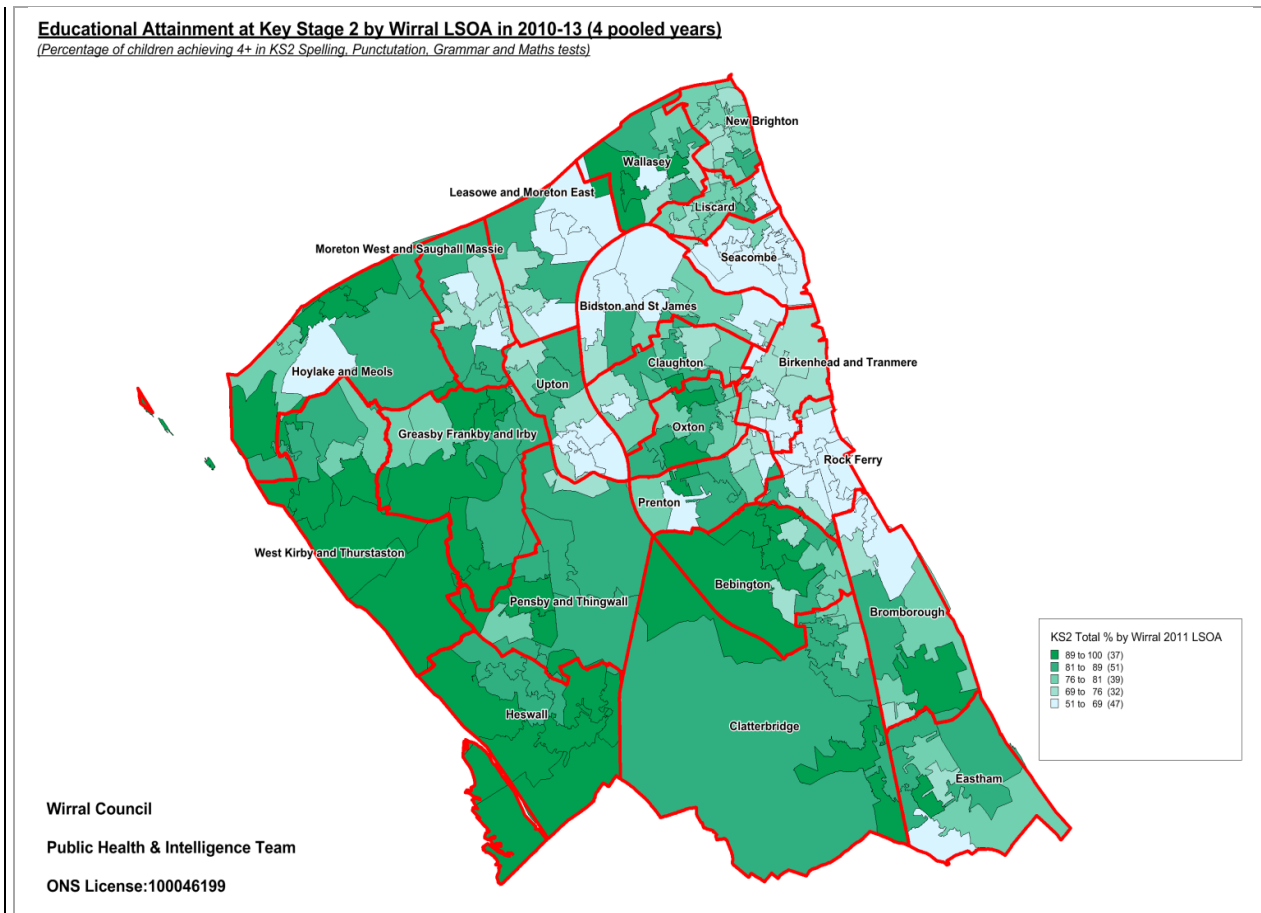
Section 12: Educational Attainment

It is well acknowledged that children growing up in poorer families emerge from school with substantially lower levels of educational attainment than children from more affluent background and the attainment gap is a major contributing factor to poor employment opportunities and social mobility (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010). The gap between children from richer and poorer backgrounds widens especially quickly during primary school. The wider home learning environment is very important for children’s educational development and although under-achievement is influenced by many factors, the home environment is a key factor (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010), hence its inclusion in this supporting evidence for Selective Licensing. Attainment (low) is also strongly linked to anti-social behaviour, another important element of the Selective Licensing agenda, and another reason for its inclusion as an indicator.

The maps below show educational attainment (at Key Stages 2 and 4) in Wirral by LSOA, over 4 pooled years from 2010 to 2013. Specifically each map shows:

- Percentage of children achieving 4+ in Spelling, Punctuation, Grammar & Maths tests (KS2)
- Percentage of children achieving 5+ GCSE’s at grades A*-C, including English & Maths (KS4)

Map 12.1: Educational Attainment at Key Stage 2 by Wirral LSOA in 2010-13 (4 pooled years)
(Percentage of children achieving 4+ in KS2 Spelling, Punctuation, Grammar & Maths tests)



Source: Wirral Council Children & Young People’s Department, 2014

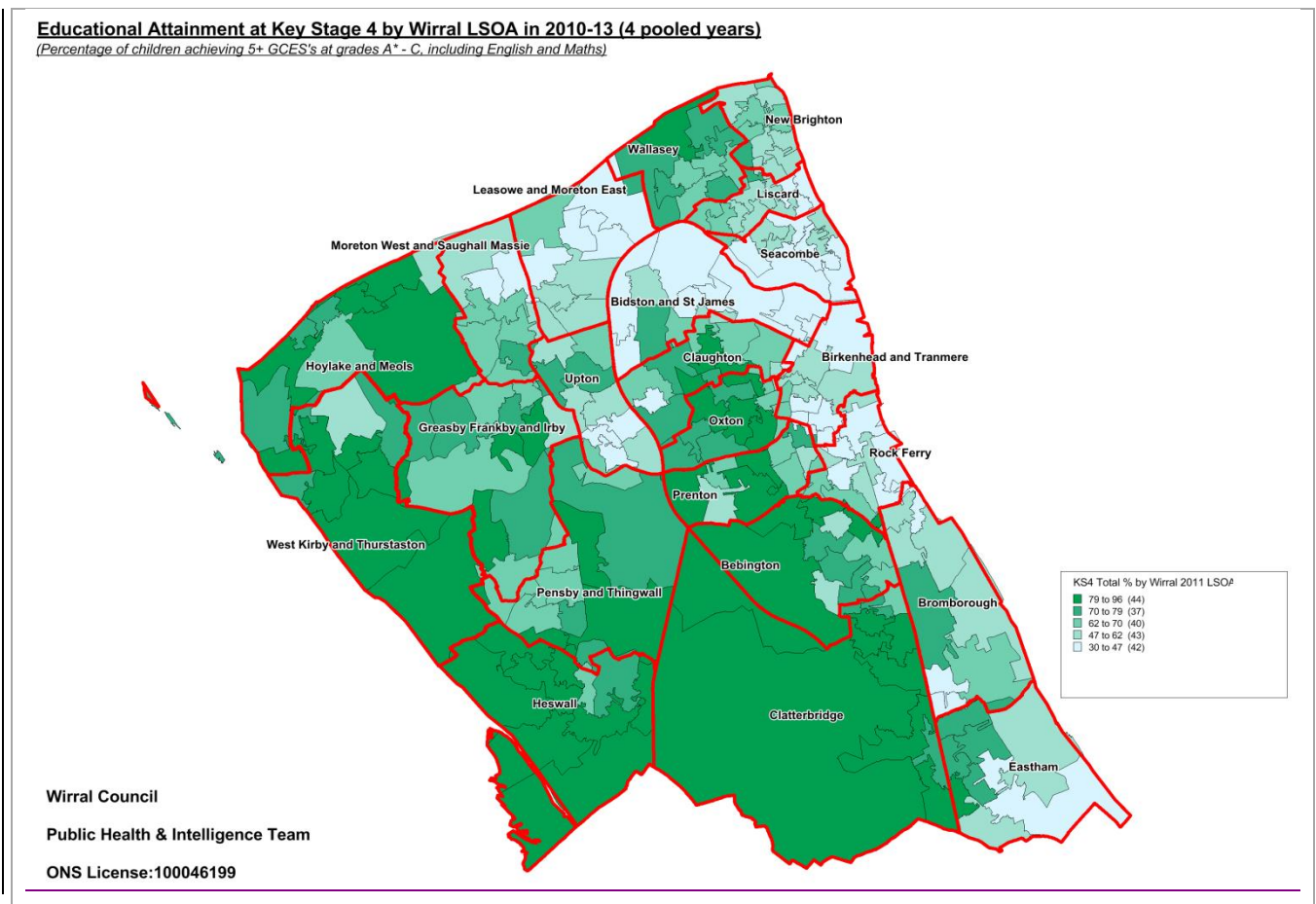
As the maps shows, LSOAs in the wards of Rock Ferry, Bidston & St. James, Seacombe, Leasowe & Moreton East and Upton have the lowest levels of educational attainment in Wirral. These correspond with the areas

of highest deprivation in Wirral according to the IMD (2010). The ten LSOAs with the lowest percentage of pupils achieving the desired standard at Key Stage 2 (a score of 4+ in spelling, punctuation, grammar & maths) are shown in the table below. These were the LSOAs entered onto the overall matrix document.

Table 12.1: Ten Wirral LSOAs with lowest educational attainment at Key Stage 2, 2010-13 (4 pooled years)

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	% achieving KS2 standard
E01007270	Poulton South	Seacombe	51%
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	51%
E01007269	Seacombe Docks	Seacombe	53%
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	56%
E01007138	New Ferry East	Bromborough	56%
E01007209	Moreton Sandbrook	Leasowe & Moreton East	58%
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	58%
E01007304	Woodchurch East	Upton	59%
E01007204	Leasowe Central	Leasowe & Moreton East	59%
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	59%
	Wirral average		78%

Map 12.2: Educational Attainment at Key Stage 4 by Wirral LSOA in 2010-13 (4 pooled years)
(Percentage of children achieving 5+ GCSE's at grades A*-C, including English & Maths)



As the map shows, the wards with low levels of achievement at Key Stage 4 were very similar to those with low levels of achievement at Key Stage 2 – namely - Bidston & St. James, Rock Ferry and Seacombe, which are also the three most deprived wards in Wirral. In some of these wards, there were LSOAs where less than one in three of the pupils resident there achieved 5 good GCSE's which included English and Maths.

The ten LSOAs with the lowest percentage of pupils achieving the desired standard at Key Stage 4 (achievement of 5+ GCSE's at grades A*-C, including English & Maths) are shown in Table 13.2 below. These were the LSOAs entered onto the overall matrix document.

Table 12.2: Ten Wirral LSOAs with lowest educational attainment at Key Stage 4, 2010-13 (4 pooled years)

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	% achieving Key Stage 4 standard
E01007289	Tranmere Woodward	Rock Ferry	30%
E01007133	Birkenhead East Float	Bidston & St James	31%
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	32%
E01007122	Bidston St James East	Bidston & St James	32%
E01032903	new LSOA (no name)	Bidston & St James	34%
E01007175	Egerton Park	Rock Ferry	34%
E01007124	Beechwood North	Bidston & St James	35%
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	35%
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	36%
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	36%
	Wirral average		62%

Section 14: Conclusions

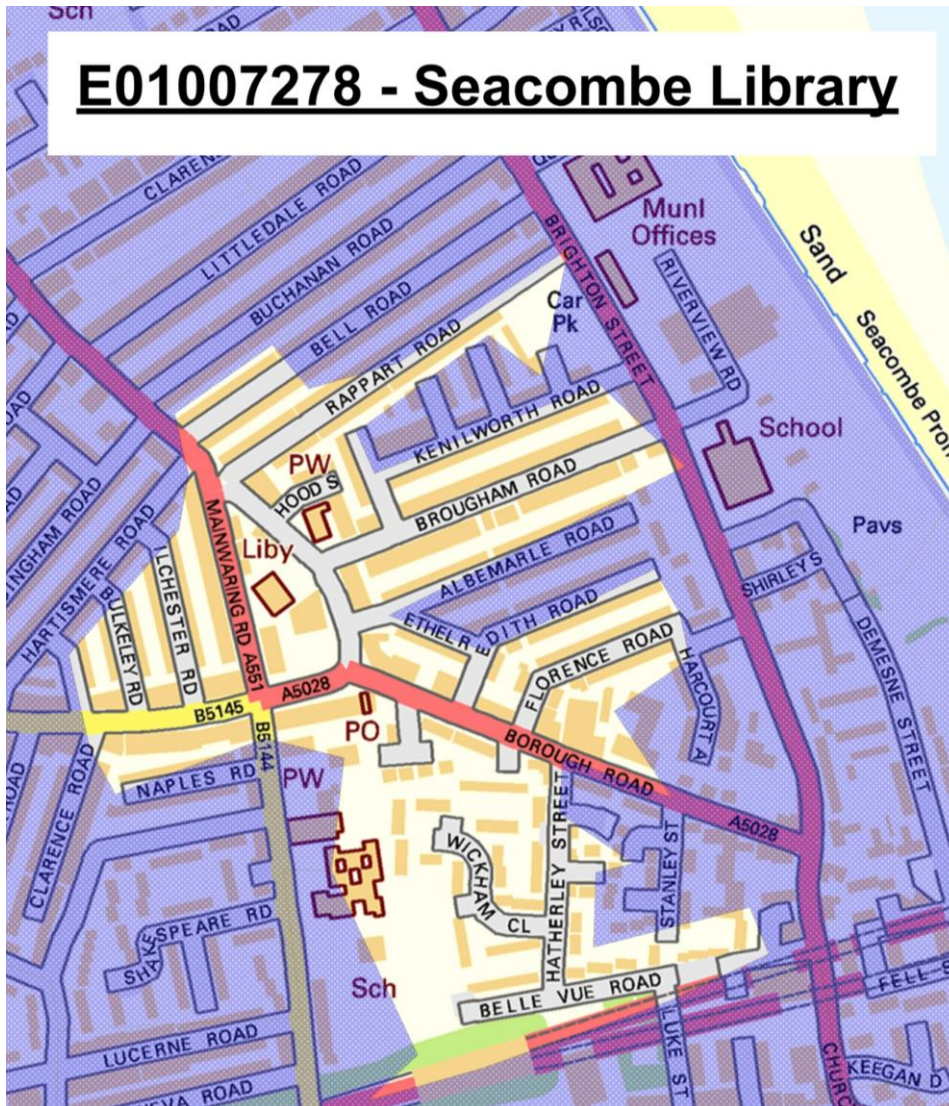
The overwhelming majority of LSOAs which appeared in the Matrix (see previous Section), were in the two Constituencies of Birkenhead and Wallasey. Three out of four of all the LSOAs which featured (75%), were in one of these two constituencies, with Wirral West and South accounting for only 25% of LSOAs identified. In addition, those LSOAs identified in West and South Wirral, scored very few points and so are unlikely to be good candidates for Selective Licensing. See Table 14.1 below.

Table 14.1: Overview of identified LSOAs by Constituency

Constituency	Total number of LSOAs in Constituency	Total number of LSOAs identified in Matrix	% of LSOAs identified in Matrix
Birkenhead	56	32	46%
Wallasey	58	19	27%
Wirral South	48	9	13%
Wirral West	44	10	14%
Total	206	70	100%

The four LSOAs which scored the highest number of points in the Matrix are detailed below in Maps 14.1, 14.2, 14.3 and 14.4. Maps detailing the four LSOAs with the highest scores are shown below.

Map 14.1: Seacombe Library



E01007278 - Seacombe Library

LSOA Code: E01007278

Ward: Seacombe

Parliamentary
Constituency: Wallasey

LSOA population: 1,416

LSOA households: 658

Private rented
households: 235

Map 14.2: Egremont Promenade South



LSOA Code: E01007215

Ward: Liscard

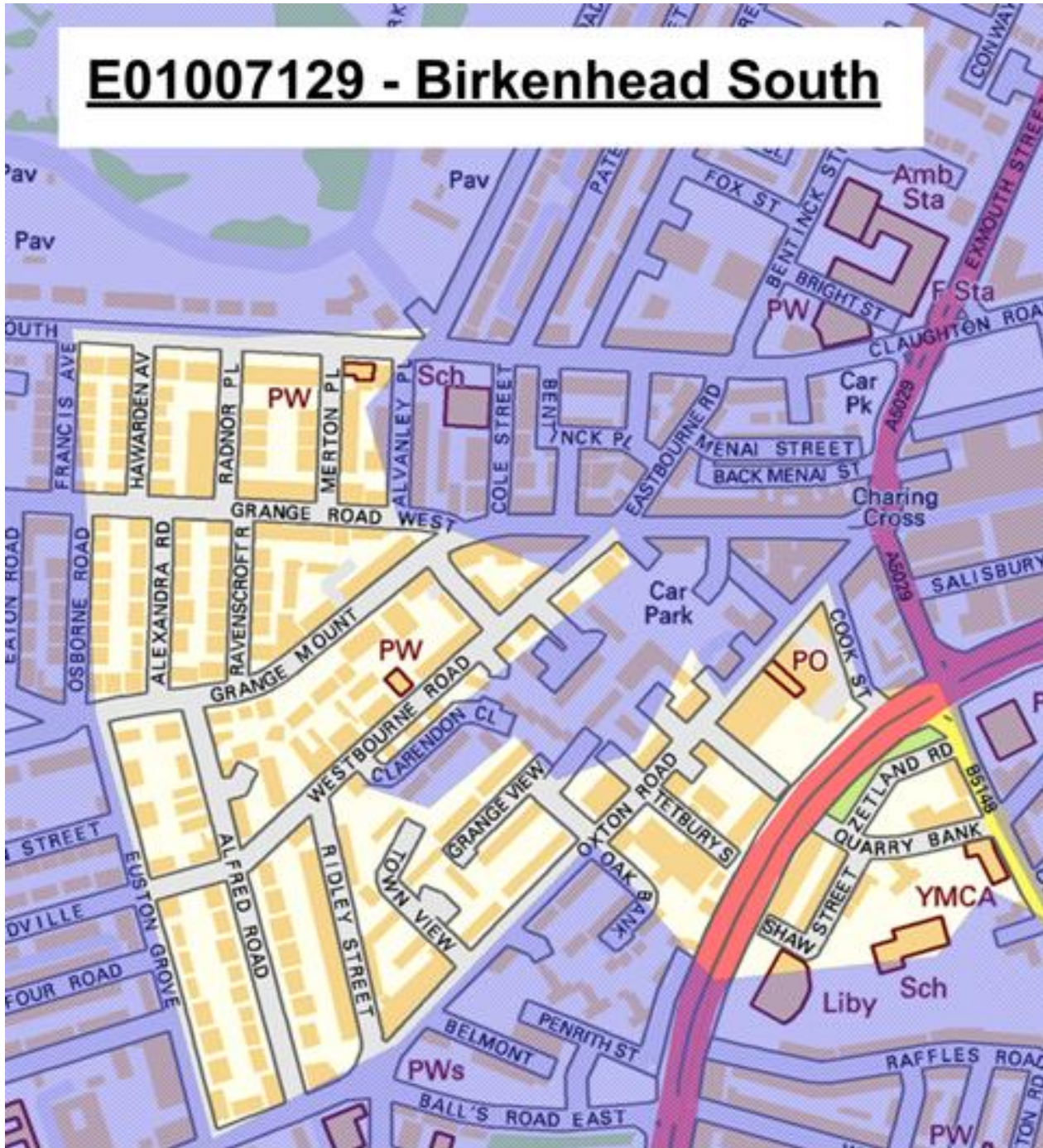
Parliamentary Constituency: Wallasey

Total LSOA population: 1,093

LSOA households: 549

Private rented households: 293

Map 14.3: Birkenhead South



LSOA Code: E01007129

Ward: Claughton

Parliamentary Constituency: Birkenhead

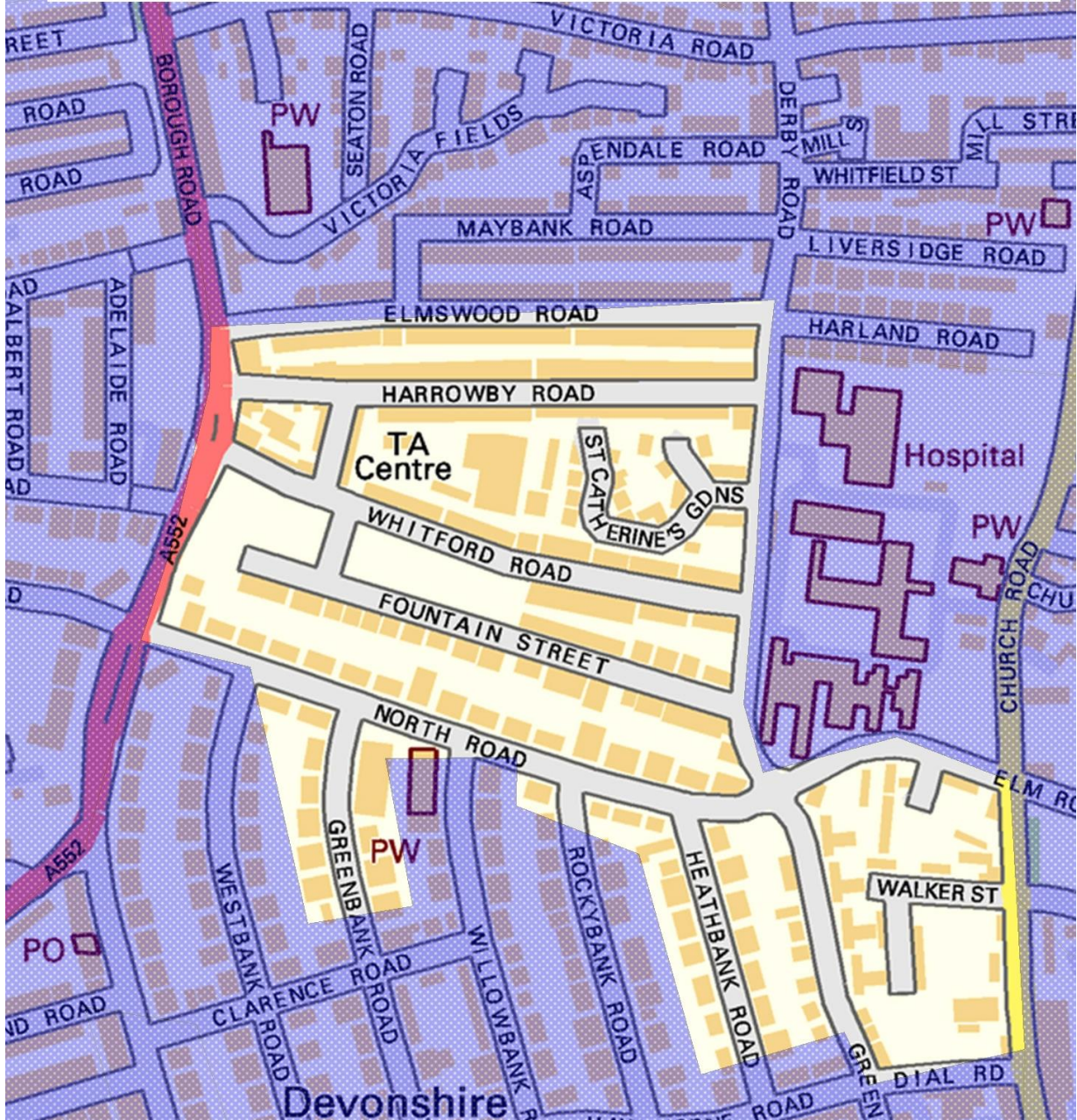
LSOA population: 1,677

LSOA households: 761

LSOA private rented households: 287

Map 14.4: Egerton North

E01007179 - Egerton North



LSOA Code: E01007179

Ward: Birkenhead & Tranmere

Parliamentary Constituency: Birkenhead

Total LSOA population: 1,303

Total LSOA households: 612

Total private rented households: 231

Section 15: References

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Section 16: Glossary

Lower Super Output Area or LSOA: Small geographical areas with an average population of 1,500. There are 206 LSOAs in Wirral.

Decent Homes Standard:

The Decent Homes Standard is a national standard against which all homes can be measured. There are four criteria that a home is required to meet before being classified as 'decent'. These are: it meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing (currently the Housing Health & Safety Rating System); it is in a reasonable state of repair; it has reasonable modern facilities and service, and; it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. In Wirral, 23% of private sector dwellings fail the Decent Homes Standard, compared to 32% in the private rented sector. Where a household is on welfare benefits and living in the private rented sector, this rises to 36%.

Category 1 Hazard: The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) outlines potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in homes. There are 29 hazards assessed within the HHSRS, arranged in 4 main groups reflecting the basic health requirements of living in a safe home. Once these hazards have been scored in a home, they are grouped into categories, with "Category 1" hazards being the most serious, for example, the hazard could lead to death, permanent paralysis, permanent loss of consciousness, loss of a limb or serious fractures. The Housing Act 2004 puts local authorities under a general duty to take appropriate action in relation to Category 1 hazards. In Wirral, 10% of private sector dwellings have Category 1 hazards, compared to 20% in the private rented sector.

Housing Disrepair: To meet the Decent Homes Standard, dwellings are required to be in a reasonable state of repair. Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those where either: One or more of the key building components are old and because of their condition, need replacing or major repair, or; Two or more of the other building components are old and because of their condition need replacing or major repair. Across Wirral, 13% of private sector dwellings fail the repair requirements of the Decent Homes Standard, compared to 17% in the private rented sector.