Appendix A - Case studies

Private Rented Property licensing

London Borough of Enfield
Case Studies

1.1 These case studies are some examples which highlight the spread and severity of issues experienced in the proposed wards. They show some examples of the poor property conditions, poor management and anti-social behaviour in the borough. Property licensing would support the Council to deal with these by:

- Having licence conditions which will clearly show the landlord the required property standards within the private rented sector
- Making tenants more aware of their rights and what acceptable living conditions should be
- Enabling the Council to issue licences for shorter periods (e.g. one year only) where there are concerns about a property, which acts as an economic deterrent, encourages the landlord to more actively manage the property and would be quicker than prosecution action
- Providing the ability to revoke a licence where there are very serious concerns about the conditions of a property, so that it cannot be rented out
- Enabling the Council to more readily identify and investigate other properties owned by non-compliant landlords.

1.2 Many of these case studies are HMOs, which come to the Council’s attention for a number of reasons including complaints from neighbours and the tenants themselves. Officers often find that landlords are evading mandatory HMO licensing by temporarily reducing occupancy levels when inspections are due. Council officers often uncover poor and unsafe property conditions and poor standards of management. Additional licensing would assist by providing a regulatory framework to bring these smaller HMOs under a licensing framework. Complaints about single family homes are also received by the Council, and from the experience of other councils with selective licensing schemes, an inspection regime will reveal more issues in these properties as tenants often don’t realise their rights and the standard of living conditions that are required.
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Bowes – Poor property conditions

1.3 A multi-agency operation was carried out with Council officers, the police and the UK Border Agency at a suspected HMO above a commercial premises. A warrant to enter was obtained by the police as multiple suspected offences were connected to the address.

1.4 Officers found that the property was converted into five self-contained flats. It was occupied by single adults, with one room occupied by a young couple with a baby. There were serious fire and electrical safety hazards, which were categorised as Category 1 hazards.
**Bush Hill Park – Poor property conditions**

1.5 There was a joint investigation with the community safety team relating to the level of occupancy and poor property conditions. The property was found to be in disrepair - no hot water, leaking toilet, no electrical supply to first floor, loose electric sockets and exposed wiring. The premises was suspected as being occupied by two households including two young children.

**Chase – Illegal conversion**

1.6 Officers identified a three bedroom semi-detached house that had been illegally converted and was being occupied by six unrelated people. One of the ground floor sleeping rooms had a very small window and the means of escape was via the kitchen and no fire doors were fitted.
Cockfosters – Beds in sheds and electrical hazards

1.7 Officers carried out a targeted inspection of a suspected illegal HMO and outbuilding. The property was occupied by two households and the two outbuildings in the rear garden were also occupied by a further four people. There were seven major Category 1 hazards identified in the main building and outbuildings, including fire and electrical hazards; entry by intruders and excess cold.

Edmonton Green – Overcrowding and ASB

1.8 Complaints were received from neighbours about an overcrowded property in Edmonton Green. It was a two-storey house let to 12 people, including children. The cause of the complaints was an accumulation of waste and rubbish in the rear garden, a form of environmental ASB. On inspection the property was deemed overcrowded, had no fire detection and no fixed heating. It was in a state of disrepair, the worst of which was an ongoing leak causing the bathroom floor to rot. These issues are rated as HHSRS Category 1 and 2 hazards.
Enfield Highway – Poor property conditions

1.9 The Council received a complaint from a tenant about the partial collapse of a staircase. The property in Enfield Highway was occupied by a family with two young children. The tenants had already reported the problem to the landlord’s agent who had failed to carry out any repairs. Officers inspected the property and realised the staircase was at risk of total collapse. One of the staircase treads was being supported by an electric cable in the under-stairs cupboard, which, if the section of the stairs had collapsed, would have resulted in serious injury as well as risk of electrocution.

Enfield Lock – Damp and rodent infestation

1.10 A tenant complained about a rodent infestation in the house they were renting. It was a three bedroom semi-detached house with three young children living there.

1.11 Officers found multiple hazards in the property including extensive damp and mould, broken handles on the bedroom windows, broken floor tiles in the bathroom, a staircase balustrade with large gaps, defective door locks resulting in the property becoming insecure, and furniture left in the rear garden which was likely to attract vermin.
Grange – Illegal HMO with fire safety issues

1.12 A complaint was received about a house being used illegally as an HMO. Planning and Housing Enforcement officers found the property had been converted to provide six bedrooms over two floors with a further self-contained unit on the second floor. The property had been let to 10 people including couples and unrelated individuals. The property had insufficient fire safety measures in place; including a lack of fire doors and inadequate safe means of escape. The property was let and managed by a letting agent on behalf of a landlord who was living abroad.

Haselbury – Poor property conditions

1.13 The Council received a complaint from tenants in Haselbury ward that they were being harassed by their landlord. The house was being occupied by 12 adults and three children, in three households.

1.14 Officers inspected the property and found 12 serious hazards (HHSRS Category 1 and 2 hazards), including a lack of fire detection or fire doors, lack of fire separation (so fire would spread easily), electrical hazards, overcrowding and excess cold. The landlord had extended the first floor to create additional living accommodation but with no thermal insulation, heating, electrics, or water supply. The extension was also causing structural issues.
Jubilee – Overcrowding and poor property conditions

1.15 An extended three bedroom house was referred to the Council by the London Fire Authority. It was extremely overcrowded. Approximately 20 people were living there, including young children, with only 13 bed spaces seen.

1.16 There were a number of Category 1 and 2 hazards identified particularly fire and electrical safety hazards; the electrical intake had been illegally wired. The ceiling had partially collapsed in the kitchen and an inner room without any windows being used for sleeping accommodation. It was also operating without the required mandatory HMO licence.

Lower Edmonton – Poor property conditions and management

1.17 An illegal conversion of a two storey, three bedroom house into six self-contained flats was discovered by Council officers. The property had a large extension constructed at the rear to provide additional rooms. It had significant Cat 1 and 2 hazards, including electrical and fire safety hazards and no locks to the front entrance door allowing entry by intruders.

1.18 All rooms had fire and electrical hazards with trailing wires and excessive use of extension leads. There were also domestic hygiene hazards evident in all rooms with limited space for storage and preparation of food. The rear garden had waste pipes exposed and an illegally connected electrical supply servicing a washing machine. It was clear that the property was being managed poorly.
Palmers Green – Poor property conditions

1.19 The Council received a complaint from a tenant reporting that the property was being sub-let and was in poor condition. Officers carried out an unannounced visit and found the two storey house had been let as 5 rooms. Immediately following the Officer’s inspection the premises was emptied, and it is presumed that the occupiers were illegally evicted. One of the ground floor bedrooms had no separate means of escape with the only access through the kitchen. There was no fire separation and electrics were attached to the wood under the stairs. There were no fire doors or fire detection in the property and the cellar was full of household waste, creating a further fire hazard.

Ponders End – Beds in sheds and overcrowding

1.20 Complaints were received from neighbours about an overcrowded property and a garden shed being used for sleeping accommodation. Officers found an illegal conversion of a three bedroom terraced house which was housing 14 adults and children. The property was severely overcrowded and there were electrical and fire hazards. There was evidence that the garden shed was being used for sleeping accommodation and the illegal structure constructed to rear of premises was covering most of the rear garden. The property was not being managed by the landlord at all.
Southbury – Overcrowding and hazards

1.21 A three bedroom terraced house was found to have 13 people living there. This included two mattresses in a rear extension made of timber and plastic corrugated roofing that was not suitable for sleeping accommodation. The property was severely overcrowded and with significant Category 1 and 2 hazards including excess cold and electrical and fire safety hazards. The property was let to migrant workers who paid cash to multiple letting agents on a ‘rent to rent’ business model.

Southgate – Fire safety hazards

1.22 Officers carried out an inspection of two storey property which was a suspected HMO. They found that the house had been converted into six bedrooms housing seven tenants. One of the bedrooms could only be accessed via the kitchen. The property was fitted with battery smoke alarms on the ground floor but there were no fire doors and there was exposed wiring, causing an electrical hazard. Flammable items were found stored under the property. The rear garden was overgrown with an accumulation of household waste and discarded household items presenting a fire hazard.

Southgate Green – Anti-social behaviour

1.23 Complaints of ASB in a property elicited a joint investigation by the ASB team, Police and Housing officers. An extended family were living at the three bedroom house and were subletting rooms. There were a number of Category 1 and 2 hazards identified, including fire and electrical hazards, and excess cold. The boiler had not been working for several months and the family used a gas hob and oven to heat the property. A water heater connected via an electric cable and extension lead running from another room was used to provide hot water. There was a high risk of electrocution. No management of the property by the landlord was evident.
Town – Damp and mould

1.24 The Council received a complaint about an ongoing water leak which the landlord had failed to address. Officers inspected the property and found it was operating as an illegal HMO. In addition, there was damp and mould with damage to walls and ceilings as a direct result of the ongoing water leak. The landlord was failing to adequately manage the property.

Turkey Street – Poor property conditions

1.25 The Council received a complaint from a tenant reporting an ongoing leak from the bath that was causing water penetration to kitchen. The property was in disrepair; the external rendering had deteriorated exposing rotting woodwork and thermal blockwork; defective guttering causing penetrating damp; the kitchen roof was of inadequate construction (corrugated sheeting only covered in thin layer of felt) and was broken/missing in places; holes in bedrooms allowing mice to enter and defective drainage. The gas boiler had been condemned resulting in no heating and hot water for the tenant and family.
Upper Edmonton – Fire risk

1.26 A joint investigation with the London Fire Authority unearthed a three storey HMO above a food premises that was putting the lives of its 11 occupants at risk, including one couple with two young children. The property had a serious and imminent risk from fire due to electrical issues, a total lack of fire detection and the means of escape being through the kitchen. A cooker was fitted in the hallway and some rooms had bars fitted to the windows. In addition to the fire deficiencies, there were other serious hazards, including rooms with no windows, severe damp, inadequate heating in rooms and overcrowding.
**Winchmore Hill – Inadequate fire precautions**

1.27 A property in Winchmore Hill was inspected by officers with the London Fire Brigade. There was a resident landlord but the rest of the property was being let to multiple tenants. It was operating as an unlicensed HMO and had inadequate fire protection for the tenants including inadequate fire alarm system, inadequate emergency lighting and no fire doors to rooms.

**Highlands - Failure to manage the property**

1.28 A complaint was received from tenants of a property complaining of no heating or hot water due to a defective gas central heating system. The tenants had been without heating for a prolonged period of time during the winter months. The landlord failed to adequately address his repairing obligations.