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# **Wirral Selective Licensing Application: Supporting Evidence and Rational**

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**Co-produced by Wirral  
Intelligence Service and  
Wirral Housing Services**

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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 condition and poor management, which are both a consequence and a cause of low demand [1]. The proportion of private rented properties in Wirral increased significantly between the 2001 Census and 2021 Census, from 11% to 19%. Nationally, it stood at 20% at the 2021 Census and 18% in the 2021-22 English Housing Survey.

The Housing Act 2004 enabled local authorities to introduce selective licensing, if deemed appropriate, for privately rented properties in designated areas as an additional tool to improve both the lives of tenants and communities.

Local authorities are permitted introduce 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. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 the Selective Licensing of Housing (Additional Conditions) (England) Order 2015 was made law which allowed local authorities to introduce selective licensing based on further factors including poor property conditions, high levels of migration, high level of deprivation and high levels of crime. Any new schemes can now only be introduced where the proportion of private rented properties in the designated area is above the national average of 19%<sup>1</sup>. The Order also makes local authorities seek confirmation from the Secretary of State for any selective licensing scheme covering more than 20% of their geographical area, or affecting more than 20% of privately rented homes in the local authority area.

Wirral introduced its first Selective Licensing Scheme in the Borough on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015 into four designated areas in Birkenhead, Tranmere, Seacombe and Egremont. Following a refresh of the evidence and MCDA (Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis) process in 2017, a further four LSOAs in Wirral were designated in April 2019 and operate until March 2024.

After five years of operation, the first scheme was reviewed and evidence showed Selective Licensing should be continued in the four LSOAs and introduced in a further two. Selective Licensing therefore currently operates across 10 LSOAs.

To 2022, just under 2,400 licence applications have been granted for the 2019-24 and 2020-25 schemes. Informal action on non-compliance with licenses were issued on around 170 properties and improvement notices issued on 33 properties. Property inspections ramped up in 2022 following a reduced service in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and these figures will increase when next reported later in 2023.

The second scheme (2019-24) will shortly be up for review. This Supporting Evidence and Rationale will form part of that review process.

## 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 an unlimited fine or in some cases, assuming management control of the property. The London Borough of Newham introduced a selective licensing scheme covering *all* private rented properties in the borough in January 2013 and since this time a number of authorities have also introduced this option of introducing Selective Licensing in the entire area under their jurisdiction, rather than in selected neighbourhoods. Since the 2015 Order referred to above, it now much more challenging to do this. It is currently unknown how many local authorities have introduced selective licensing generally as the information is not held centrally. In the Liverpool City Region, Liverpool City Council, Sefton Council and Wirral Council have introduced schemes.

## 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

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<sup>1</sup> English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022: headline report, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, December 2022

- 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 by improving property condition 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 training, 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/fewer voids as areas improve
- Improvement in the reputation of all private landlords
- Shorter void periods and reduced tenant turnover

### Benefits to Wirral Council

- Increased supply of good quality homes
- Landlords who have not responded to previous voluntary measures (such as Wirral's former property accreditation scheme) will be forced to engage with the Local Authority. Landlords not meeting housing and management standards will be forced to improve their practices or leave the market
- Wirral will gain more knowledge about private renting in particular areas, 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 has been compiled in this document to help identify potential areas which would be most appropriate to become areas of Selective Licensing. Evidence must demonstrate that an area is experiencing one or more of the following factors:

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

The evidence sought by Wirral Council has concentrated on indicators which together can demonstrate low housing demand and poor property conditions, which are heavily interlinked. Some of the other factors can be demonstrated by local indicators, however making a case that selective licensing will positively contribute towards these factors, or that the private rented sector could at the moment be a negative contributor to these, is more challenging. Supporting evidence related to deprivation, anti-social behaviour and crime have however been used as secondary indicators.

All data used is the most recent available for each individual indicator. Some data is provided as a snapshot at a moment in time, other data is provided by financial year or calendar year and some indicators span more than one 12 month period to provide a fuller dataset.

Data on all of the indicators (summarised in Figure 1 below) is detailed in the following sections. The data is analysed on small geographic areas known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). LSOAs are used as they are the lowest level of geographic data for which indicators are generally produced by central Government and other agencies and allow Wirral Council to produce a more localised picture of the different areas within the Borough. All LSOAs in Wirral were ranked based on these indicators and the 10 worst performing areas for every indicator were entered onto a master matrix document. This number of LSOAs (10) was decided upon, as it represents the 5% worst performing LSOAs in Wirral. Other targeted community projects and initiatives in Wirral have also chosen to operate in the 5% worst performing Wirral LSOAs (e.g. the Health Action Area initiative).

No LSOA where the proportion of private rented properties was below the national average reported in the most recent English Housing Survey was included in the tables in the following sections, complying with the Selective Licensing of Housing (Additional Conditions) (England) Order 2015 – Article 3 (1) (a) as Wirral Council is proposing to introduce selective licensing on the grounds of property conditions (as well as low housing demand). The 2021-22 English Housing Survey Headline Report released in December 2022 stated the national average was 18%.

Each of the indicators shown in Figure 1.1 scored either one or two points. Those indicators which according to Government guidance [2] demonstrate low housing demand and poor property condition scored two points. Supporting indicators (e.g. which demonstrate deprivation) scored one point. The indicators and scoring differ slightly from that used in the 2015, 2017 and 2019 Selective Licensing scheme's Supporting Evidence and Rationale due to the availability to the Council of certain data sources. The combined data sources and weightings applied remain a strong method for indicating of low demand and property condition within LSOAs.

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



**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

<b>2 points</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House sales</li> <li>• House prices</li> <li>• Long Term Empty property</li> <li>• Time property spent empty</li> <li>• Private rented property (%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Health &amp; Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Category 1 hazards (%) &amp; interventions</li> <li>• Deliberately started fires</li> <li>• Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)</li> <li>• Environmental Health Complaints</li> </ul>
<b>1 point</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Benefit rates</li> <li>• Criminal damage</li> <li>• Educational Attainment (KS4)</li> <li>• Workless benefits (combination)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deprivation (overall 2019 IMD)</li> <li>• Deprivation (Living domain 2019 IMD)</li> <li>• Injuries (sustained in the home)</li> </ul>

## 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 (using the 2021 Census information on Tenure). The ten LSOAs with the highest concentrations are shown in the table below.

**Table 2.1:** Ten LSOAs with highest proportion (%) of privately rented properties in Wirral (2021)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	% private rented	No. private rented
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	48.5%	348
E01007244	Oxton East	Oxton	44.0%	414
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	42.8%	361
E01007240	Oxton North	Oxton	42.0%	376
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	41.8%	269
E01007217	Liscard Central	Liscard	41.4%	351
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	41.4%	270
E01007294	Tranmere Parklands	Birkenhead & Tranmere	41.1%	279
E01007218	Egremont North	Liscard	40.7%	277
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Claughton	40.7%	403
<b>Wirral average</b>			<b>18.9%</b>	<b>130</b>

Source: Census, 2021

As the table shows, 18.9% of housing stock in Wirral is privately rented (Census 2021), with an average per LSOA of 130 privately rented properties per LSOA. All of the LSOAs shown here however, have rates of privately rented properties which are more than double this figure. In the LSOA with the highest proportion of privately rented properties, the figure is almost half of all properties (48.5% of all properties in Tranmere North).

According to the Council's Housing Stock Modelling produced by BRE (2018), private rented property in the Borough is more likely to contain Category 1 hazards (the worst rating under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System) than the owner occupied sector. High levels of private rented properties, when combined with other evidence, can therefore also indicate greater levels of poor property condition in an area.

## Section 3: Low housing demand

The 2015 Government guidance on Selective Licensing recommended local authorities consider the following factors when deciding if an area is suffering from, or likely to become, an area of low housing demand:

- The value of residential premises in the area, in comparison to the value of similar premises in other areas which the authority considers to be comparable (whether in terms of type of housing, local amenities, availability of transport);
- The turnover of occupiers of residential premises (in both rented and owner occupied properties);
- The number of residential premises which are available to buy or rent, and the length of time for which they remain unoccupied;
- The general appearance of the locality and the number of boarded up shops and properties.

The indicators available to the local authority to LSOA level which can demonstrate the above and which have been used in the indicator matrix are described in more detail below.

## Long term empty properties

Long-term empty properties are defined as those which have been empty for longer than 6 months. The data presented here is a snapshot as of October 2022 and refers to privately owned empty property only. It shows that although *overall* Wirral has a low proportion of long term empty homes – just 0.9% of stock (which are privately owned), there are still many LSOAs with a much higher proportion of long term empties than the Borough average. For example, in Seacombe St. Pauls LSOA, the proportion of private stock which was long term empty was more than 10 times the Wirral average (9.9% versus 0.9% in Wirral overall).

Wirral’s average long term vacant privately owned property rate (of 0.9% of all privately owned stock) has decreased compared to previous analysis conducted (from 1.5% in 2019, 1.7% in 2017 and 1.6% in 2014). In 2014 Wirral Council introduced the “empty property premium” which increased Council Tax by 50% for those properties empty for more than two years in order to encourage landlords to bring empty properties back into use. In April 2019 the premium was increased to 100%.

Tackling empty homes and bringing them back into use can help tackle homelessness, prevent neighbourhood decline, improve the local economy and regenerate areas. It can also contribute to providing wider housing choice and is an important part of the Government’s Housing Strategy (2011) [3]. It is also seen as one of the priorities within the Government’s housing White Paper, “Fixing our broken housing market” (February 2017) [4].

The table below shows the ten LSOAs in Wirral with the highest proportion of private empty property in Wirral as of October 2022.

**Table 3.1:** Ten LSOAs with highest percentage of long-term empty properties in Wirral (2022)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Proportion (%) empty*
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	9.9%
E01007138	New Ferry East	Bromborough	9.4%
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	7.7%
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Cloughton	6.9%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	6.0%
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	5.2%
E01007179	Egerton North	Liscard	5.0%
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	4.9%
E01007237	New Brighton North	New Brighton	4.5%
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	4.3%
<b>Wirral average (private stock only)</b>			<b>0.9%</b>

**Source:** Wirral Council Tax data, Wirral Council Housing Services, 2022

**Note:** Only those LSOAs where the proportion of private rented accommodation is in excess of 20% of all housing stock were included, as per governmental guidance on areas appropriate for Selective Licensing Schemes. Proportion refers to the percentage of privately owned 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 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 (in days) that long term empty, privately owned property had been empty. The ten LSOAs with the largest number of empty days (to October 2022) are shown in Table 3.2 below and were entered onto the matrix.

**Table 3.2:** Length of time (in days) long term empty properties (privately owned) were empty, by LSOA to October 2022

LSOA Code	LSOA Name	Ward	Total days empty
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	31,433
E01007138	New Ferry East	Bromborough	28,769
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Cloughton	24,470
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	20,995
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	20,749
E01007198	West Kirby Central	Hoyle & Meols	18,824
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	18,696
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	17,757
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead and Tranmere	17,392
E01007141	Port Sunlight North	Bromborough	16,107
<b>Wirral LSOA Average</b>			<b>2,684</b>

**Source:** Wirral Council Tax data, Wirral Council Housing Services, 2022

**Note:** Only those LSOAs where the proportion of private rented accommodation is in excess of 20% of all housing stock were included, as per governmental guidance on areas appropriate for Selective Licensing Schemes

## House sales

The data in Table 3.3 below shows the total number of house sales per LSOA, and the ratio of sales compared to the total amount of private housing stock in that LSOA (higher ratios indicates low demand/turnover, as it is a measure of the number of sales per unit of private housing). This data is for the period 1 September 2020 to 31 October 2022. The ten LSOAs with the highest ratio of sales compared to the total number of private housing stock are shown in the table below and were entered onto the overall matrix (see end).

**Table 3.3:** LSOAs with the highest ratio of house sales as a proportion of private housing stock (2020-22)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Sales	Ratio
E01007295	Tranmere Urban Village	Rock Ferry	26	20.7
E01007231	New Brighton Central	New Brighton	44	16.1
E01007144	Clatterbridge West	Clatterbridge	39	13.9
E01007139	New Ferry West	Bromborough	44	13.9
E01007219	Egremont West	Liscard	43	13.6
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	43	13.2
E01007218	Egremont North	Liscard	48	13.1
E01007234	Magazine Promenade	New Brighton	49	13.1
E01007156	Birkenhead Park West	Cloughton	47	12.9
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	38	12.8
<b>Wirral average</b>			<b>112</b>	<b>10.8</b>

Source: HM Land Registry, 2022

There were a total of 23,234 house sales in Wirral between September 2020 and October 2022, an average of 112 sales per LSOA over this period. As the table shows, all of the LSOAs in the table, had fewer than half that number. They also had much higher ratios of sales to private housing stock. So for example, in Wirral overall, in this period, there was 1 sale for every 10.8 units of private housing stock. In the first LSOAs in the table however, sales were more infrequent than this, with just 1 sale for every 20.7 units of private rented stock, indicating lower demand and turnover in the areas in the table compared to Wirral overall. In the LSOAs with the highest level of demand/turnover for example, there was 1 sale for every 5.6 units of private housing in those area.

## House prices

The average house price in Wirral between 2020 and 2022 (2 years pooled) was £225,957 (median value £196,087), but this figure hides large variations between Wirral LSOAs. For example, the average price in Caldy South was £1,031,532.26 – which was 15 times higher than prices in Lower Tranmere. The ten LSOAs with the lowest average sale prices in Wirral between 2020 and 2022 are shown in the table below. 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 between 2020 and 2022 (2 years pooled)

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Average house price
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	£66,360.29
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	£80,148.11
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead and Tranmere	£85,969.09
E01007270	Poulton South	Seacombe	£91,973.13
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead and Tranmere	£92,482.69
E01007272	Seacombe West	Seacombe	£94,666.65
E01007294	Tranmere Parklands	Birkenhead and Tranmere	£94,811.13
E01007269	Seacombe Docks	Seacombe	£95,006.71
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead and Tranmere	£96,665.38
E01007271	Poulton East	Seacombe	£97,026.58
<b>Wirral LSOA (average)</b>			<b>£225,957</b>

Source: HM Land Registry, 2022

## Deliberately Set Waste Fires

Deliberately set small waste fires involve wheelie-bins and fly-tipped waste. They can destroy property and be a threat to life as well as being another indicator of the poor appearance of an area due to the fly-tipping. There were a total of 492 deliberately started fires between January 2021 and December 2022. This is an average of 2.3 per LSOA in Wirral, but as the table shows, the top LSOAs have more than ten times this number, with the highest LSOA having almost 12 times the Wirral average.

**Table 3.5:** Number of deliberately set reported fires by LSOA in Wirral, 2021-22 (2 calendar years): top 10 LSOAs

LSOAs	LSOA Name	Ward	Number (both years)
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead and Tranmere	27
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	24
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	21
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	16
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	13
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	13
E01007270	Poulton South	Seacombe	13
E01007139	New Ferry West	Bromborough	12
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	12
E01007295	Tranmere Urban Village	Rock Ferry	11
<b>Wirral average per LSOA</b>			<b>2.3</b>
<b>Wirral Total</b>			<b>492</b>

Source: Business Intelligence, Merseyside Fire & Rescue, 2023

## Environmental Health Complaints

Wirral Council's Environmental Health Team receives complaints on a range of subjects, much of which can indicate an area having a poor quality environment or poor housing conditions. The type of complaints used to compile the

data include complaints against private landlords, low level private rented housing repair complaints, vermin, odour, domestic bonfires and noise. The data analysed comprised 2 full years worth of complaints data from 01/08/2020 to 31/07/2022.

**Table 3.6:** LSOAs with the highest ratio of environmental health complaints per number privately owned properties (proportion of complaints to privately rented properties), 01/08/2020 to 31/07/2022

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	No. of complaints	Ratio of complaints per property
E01007277	Town Hall	Seacombe	149	1.5
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	188	2.1
E01007198	West Kirby Central	Hoylake & Meols	97	2.4
E01007143	Bromborough North	Bromborough	54	3.0
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	54	3.1
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	92	3.2
E01007139	New Ferry West	Bromborough	67	3.3
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Cloughton	78	3.3
E01007185	Heswall East	Heswall	45	3.4
E01007214	Liscard Mill Lane	Liscard	51	3.4
<b>Wirral average per LSOA</b>			<b>27</b>	<b>5.8</b>

**Source:** Wirral Council, Housing Services, 2022

**Note:** Includes multiple complaints against the same property over the time period in some instances. Denominator is number of private rented properties in the LSOA only.

The ratio of complaints per private rented units takes into account the amount of private rented accommodation in the LSOA, so allowing for differences in the housing composition, a true comparison is possible. As Table 3.6 shows, the average number of complaints per Wirral LSOA between 01/08/2020 and 31/07/2022, was 27 and the average ratio was 5.8. The ratio means that in Wirral, on average, there was 1 complaint for every 5.8 privately rented properties. In the worst LSOA in Wirral (Town Hall, Seacombe), there was one complaint for every 1.5 (privately rented) properties in that LSOA.

## 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).

### Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Category 1 Hazards

The Building Research Establishment has produced an Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling & Database for Wirral Council. This provides an overview of house condition at various levels of geography, including to LSOA level, for the different housing tenure types. Although the database is produced on modelled data, it provides a relatively accurate picture of the geographic and tenure differences for house condition. Amongst the

indicators, the database provides the rate of those homes with hazards classed as Category 1 under the HHSRS. The highest rates amongst private rented sector stock within LSOAs is shown below.

**Table 4.1:** LSOAs with the highest rates of HHSRS Category 1 hazards in privately rented properties

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Percentage (%)
E01007141	Port Sunlight North	Bromborough	27
E01007217	Liscard Central	Liscard	27
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	26
E01007216	Liscard South	Liscard	24
E01007234	Magazine Promenade	New Brighton	24
E01007219	Egremont West	Liscard	23
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	23
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	22
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	22
E01007218	Egremont North	Liscard	21
<b>Wirral average</b>			<b>15</b>

Note: Only those LSOAs where the proportion of private rented accommodation is in excess of 20% of all housing stock were included

Source: Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling & Database for Wirral Council, BRE, 2018

## Housing with an EPC rating of E, F or G

Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are required whenever a property is rented or sold. An EPC rates a property from Band A (lowest energy consumption) to Band G (highest energy consumption). Not all properties have EPCs and so in order to obtain a better understanding of the performance of the entire housing stock within the Wirral Council area, Wirral's Zero Carbon Taskforce commissioned the Energy Saving Trust's Home Analytics to provide modelled data for those properties without EPCs.

Properties in Bands E to G are the worst performing in terms of energy efficiency and are often targeted for financial assistance in government funding streams above properties in other EPC Bands. They can also indicate a higher likelihood of the presence of a Category 1 hazard for Excess Cold.

**Table 4.2:** LSOAs with the highest proportion of privately rented housing classified as E, F or G, as of April 2020

LSOA code	LSOA Name	Ward	Percentage (%)
E01007234	Magazine Promenade	New Brighton	71.5%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	59.3%
E01007141	Port Sunlight North	Bromborough	56.4%
E01007144	Clatterbridge West	Clatterbridge	47.9%
E01007231	New Brighton Central	New Brighton	47.1%
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	38.3%
E01007198	West Kirby Central	Hoylake & Meols	35.8%
E01007282	West Kirby South	West Kirby & Thurstaston	34.3%
E01007272	Seacombe West	Seacombe	33.8%
E01007218	Egremont North	Liscard	31.0%
<b>Wirral average</b>			<b>22.4%</b>

Source: Energy Saving Trust Home Analytics, 2020

Note: Includes only those LSOAs where the proportion of private rented accommodation is in excess of 20% of all housing stock

As the table above shows, the average proportion of privately rented housing stock in Wirral, which has an EPC of E, F or G in 2020 was just under 1 in 4, at 22.4%. All of the LSOAs highlighted in the table above however, have proportions which are considerably higher than this, with one in particular having rates which are almost 3 times higher than the Wirral average (Magazine Promenade).

## Section 5: Supporting indicators

Supporting indicators have been identified which help provide a wider picture of areas that might additionally be experiencing three of the alternative factors which the Government stipulate can be used to introduce selective licensing: deprivation, anti-social behaviour and crime. Wirral Council however is not specifically introducing selective licensing to tackle any of these factors but a by-product of the scheme will be to have a positive impact on them.

### Overall Indices of Deprivation (2019)

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (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). Table 5.1 shows 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 levels of deprivation according to the *overall* IMD (2019)

LSOA	LSOA Name	Ward	IMD Rank*
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	26
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	80
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Claughton	84
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	95
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	200
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	215
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston and St James	233
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	273
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead & Tranmere	444
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	456

**Note:** LSOAs are ranked from 1 - most deprived to 32,844 being the least deprived (in England)

As the table shows, Wirral had some of the most deprived LSOAs in England, with 8 out of the 10 shown in the table above ranking among the 1% most deprived of areas in England. A rank of 26 means that Birkenhead West, is the 26<sup>th</sup> most deprived LSOA in England.

### Living Environment deprivation (2019)

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 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 (2019) Living Environment domain

LSOA	LSOA Name	Ward	IMD Living Domain Rank
E01007217	Liscard Central	Liscard	582
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	718
E01007216	Liscard South	Liscard	787
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Claughton	985
E01007276	Poulton North	Seacombe	1,006
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	1,044
E01007234	Magazine Promenade	New Brighton	1,101
E01007277	Town Hall	Seacombe	1,443
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead and Tranmere	1,605
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead and Tranmere	1,639

**Note:** LSOAs are ranked from 1 - most deprived on living environment domain, to 32,844 being the least deprived

As Table 5.2 above shows, all of the LSOAs which were the top 10 most deprived in Wirral (on the living environment domain), are in the most deprived 5% of areas nationally, as their ranking shows.

## Housing benefits

As Selective Licensing aims to tackle properties which are privately rented and in poor condition, rates of Housing Benefit claimants (renting privately) is likely to be an important indicator of where problems may be most acute. Housing Benefit data for this indicator is sourced from the DWP's own data tool (Stat-Xplore) and is a snapshot as of February 2022.

**Table 5.3:** Wirral LSOAs with the highest proportion private rented households claiming Housing Benefit, February 2022

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	% Households
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead and Tranmere	37.6%
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	36.4%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Claughton	29.7%
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead and Tranmere	29.5%
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	29.0%
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Claughton	27.6%
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	26.8%
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	26.7%
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	26.7%
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead and Tranmere	25.8%
<b>Wirral Average</b>			<b>10.6%</b>

**Source:** Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) Stat-Xplore tool, December 2022

The ten LSOAs with the highest percentage of housing benefit claimants (renting privately) are shown in the table above. As the table shows, all of the LSOAs shown had rates that were more than double the Wirral average of 10.6%, whilst in the LSOA with the highest rates (Birkenhead Central, in Birkenhead & Tranmere Ward), more than one in three households in the LSOA (37.6%) claimed Housing Benefit. These ten LSOAs were the areas entered into the overall matrix.

## Out of work benefits (combination)

Those receiving out of work benefits are particularly vulnerable to poor housing conditions. The ten LSOA's with the highest proportions of people of working age in receipt of any combination of out of work benefits (see Note below table for specific benefits included) are shown Table 5.4 below (and have been entered onto the overall Matrix in Section 14). As the table shows, all of the LSOAs listed have more than double the proportion of residents on any of the out of work benefits included compared to Wirral overall (which at 17.0%, is already higher than the England rate of 12.6% on any form of out of work benefit).

**Table 5.4:** Wirral LSOAs with the highest percentage of Out of Work (combined), as of May 2022

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	% LSOA population*
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	46.3%
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	45.8%
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	45.7%
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	45.2%
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	42.1%
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	37.4%
E01007131	West Tranmere	Birkenhead & Tranmere	37.3%
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	36.5%
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	34.9%
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	34.7%
<b>Wirral average</b>			<b>17.0%</b>

Source: Local Insight, January 2023.

**Note:** Indicator name: Claiming out of work benefits (Benefit Combinations). Out of work benefits included in this combined benefits indicator are defined as being on at least one of the following benefits: Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA), Income Support (IS) where Carers Allowance (CA) not also in payment, Pension Credit (PC) where Carers Allowance (CA) and Universal Credit (UC) conditionality regime is one of Searching for Work, Preparing for Work or Planning for Work. The categories of this field are mutually exclusive and therefore can be summed without double counting. Claimants may or may not be additionally in receipt of other benefits not listed here. Rates were calculated as = (Benefit Combinations (Out of Work))/(Total population aged 16-64)\*100. Numbers rounded to nearest 10.

## Criminal damage

Crime results in unsettled communities, undermines efforts to regenerate areas and is associated with other social and economic problems including deprivation. Criminal damage was chosen as an indicator to demonstrate crime levels due to its overlap with anti-social behaviour, both of which are further factors in considering whether or not to introduce selective licensing into an area. The table below shows the 10 LSOAs with the highest rates of recorded criminal damage in 2021-22 (April 2021 to March 2022).

**Table 5.6:** Rate of reported criminal damage and arson by LSOA in Wirral in 2021-22: top 10 LSOAs (rate per 1,000 population)

LSOAs	LSOA Name	Ward	Rate (per 1,000) 2018-19
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	54.8
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	45.7
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	38.3
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	35.1
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	32.6
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	31.8
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	29.0
E01007218	Egremont North	Liscard	27.7

E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead and Tranmere	25.2
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	25.2
<b>Wirral Average</b>			<b>10.5</b>

Source: <https://data.police.uk>

All of the ten LSOAs in the table have rates of criminal damage which are more than double the Wirral average of 10.5 per 1,000 – and one, Birkenhead Central, has a rate which is more than five times the Wirral average.

## Injuries (sustained in the home environment)

Data on injuries sustained in the home environment were provided by the [Trauma, Injury Intelligence Group \(TIIG\)](#). Clearly, not all home injuries are due to people living in non-decent, dilapidated homes. It is however, a contributory factor. It is therefore appropriate to include this indicator as part of the rationale for selective licensing in Wirral. Rates were calculated for the previous 2 years (2020/21 to 2021/22) and the table shows the ten LSOAs with the highest rates of home injuries in Wirral (which also met the minimum threshold for Selective Licensing of 20% or more of housing stock being private rented).

**Table 5.7:** Rate of A&E attendances for home injuries by LSOA, 2020/21 to 2021/22 (2 pooled years)

LSOA	LSOA name	Ward	No. home injuries	Rate per 1,000
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	138	31.0
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead & Tranmere	150	28.6
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	157	27.0
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Claughton	135	26.9
E01007295	Tranmere Urban Village	Rock Ferry	124	26.6
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead & Tranmere	125	26.2
E01007175	Egerton Park	Rock Ferry	138	25.3
E01007257	Woodchurch North	Upton	103	25.0
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	127	24.9
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	154	24.7
<b>Wirral average (per LSOA)</b>			<b>86</b>	<b>18.2</b>

Source: TIIG ([Trauma, Injury & Intelligence Group](#)), 2022

## Section 6: Matrix

All of the criteria examined in this briefing are shown in Table 6.1 below and indicate (via highest scores), those areas which are the most suitable locations for Selective Licensing in Wirral.

**Table 6.1:** Highest scoring LSOAs in Wirral (indicating low demand and poor condition)

LSOA code	LSOA name	Ward	Constituency	1 point							2 points							Total
				Injuries (occurring at home)	Deprivation (living)	Deprivation (overall)	Educational attainment (KS4)	Workless benefits (combination)	Housing Benefit	Criminal damage	Environmental Health complaints	HHSRS Cat 1	EPC rating of E,F or G	Deliberate fires	House sales	House prices	Long-term empty property	
E01007129	Birkenhead South	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead		1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2			12	
E01007127	Birkenhead West	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead		1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2			12	
E01007291	Tranmere Lairds	Birkenhead and Tranmere	Birkenhead	1		1	1	1	1			2	2	2			11	
E01007273	Seacombe St Pauls	Seacombe	Wallasey			1	1	1	1				2	2	2		10	
E01007215	Egremont Promenade South	Liscard	Wallasey					1		2	2			2	2		9	
E01007278	Seacombe Library	Seacombe	Wallasey		1	1	1			2				2	2		9	
E01007123	Bidston St James West	Bidston & St James	Birkenhead			1	1			1	2		2		2		9	
E01007218	Egremont North	Liscard	Wallasey							1	2	2		2		2	9	
E01007126	Hamilton Square	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead	1		1	1			1	2		2				8	
E01007179	Egerton North	Prenton	Birkenhead								2				2	2	2	8
E01007155	Birkenhead Park East	Claughton	Birkenhead	1					1						2	2	2	8
E01007293	Lower Tranmere	Rock Ferry	Birkenhead	1				1	1	1			2	2			8	
E01007128	Birkenhead Central	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead	1		1		1	1	1			2				7	
E01007275	Egremont South	Seacombe	Wallasey		1						2	2				2	7	
E01007292	Higher Tranmere	Birkenhead and Tranmere	Birkenhead	1		1	1		1	1			2				7	
E01007130	Tranmere North	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead		1									2	2	2	7	
E01007234	Magazine Promenade	New Brighton	Wallasey		1						2	2		2			7	
E01007139	New Ferry West	Bromborough	Wirral South								2		2	2			6	
E01007198	West Kirby Central	Hoylake & Meols	Wirral West								2	2			2		6	
E01007141	Port Sunlight North	Bromborough	Wirral South								2	2			2		6	
E01007295	Tranmere Urban Village	Rock Ferry	Birkenhead	1									2	2			5	
E01007290	Tranmere Esplanade	Rock Ferry	Birkenhead	1				1	1					2			5	
E01007294	Tranmere Parklands	Birkenhead and Tranmere	Birkenhead				1							2		2	5	
E01007217	Liscard Central	Liscard	Wallasey		1						2					2	5	
E01007138	New Ferry East	Bromborough	Wirral South												2	2	4	
E01007270	Poulton South	Seacombe	Wallasey									2		2			4	
E01007144	Clatterbridge West	Clatterbridge	Wirral South									2		2			4	
E01007231	New Brighton Central	New Brighton	Wallasey									2		2			4	
E01007272	Seacombe West	Seacombe	Wallasey								2			2			4	
E01007219	Egremont West	Liscard	Wallasey								2			2			4	
E01007277	Town Hall	Seacombe	Wallasey	1						2							3	
E01007296	Tranmere Well Lane	Rock Ferry	Birkenhead					1								2	3	
E01007238	Victoria Parade	New Brighton	Wallasey				1		1	1							3	
E01007269	Seacombe Docks	Seacombe	Wallasey				1							2			3	
E01007216	Liscard South	Liscard	Wallasey	1							2						3	
E01007220	Egremont Central	Liscard	Wallasey			1		1									2	
E01007240	Oxton North	Oxton	Birkenhead													2	2	
E01007244	Oxton East	Oxton	Birkenhead													2	2	
E01007237	New Brighton North	New Brighton	Wallasey												2		2	
E01007156	Birkenhead Park West	Claughton	Birkenhead										2				2	
E01007271	Poulton East	Seacombe	Wallasey											2			2	
E01007143	Bromborough North	Bromborough	Wirral South								2						2	
E01007185	Heswall East	Heswall	Wirral South								2						2	
E01007214	Liscard Mill Lane	Liscard	Wallasey								2						2	
E01007282	West Kirby South	West Kirby & Thurstaston	Wirral West									2					2	
E01032903	Birkenhead North	Bidston and St James	Birkenhead				1										1	
E01007276	Poulton North	Seacombe	Wallasey		1												1	
E01007131	West Tranmere	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead					1									1	
E01007175	Egerton Park	Rock Ferry	Birkenhead	1													1	
E01007257	Woodchurch North	Upton	Wirral West	1													1	

**Note:** LSOAs highlighted yellow in the table denote the six LSOAs which were the most recently designated areas of selective licensing. Those in blue are the four LSOAs in which Selective Licensing is currently due to end in 2024.

The recommendation is therefore that excluding the current 6 LSOAs which are already areas of Selective Licensing (in yellow), the top 4 LSOAs should be selected. The top 4 includes 2 areas which ARE current Selective Licensing areas (but which are due to end in 2024 – these are Birkenhead West and Seacombe St. Pauls) plus 2 areas which are NOT currently areas of Selective Licensing – these are Bidston St. James West and Egremont North.

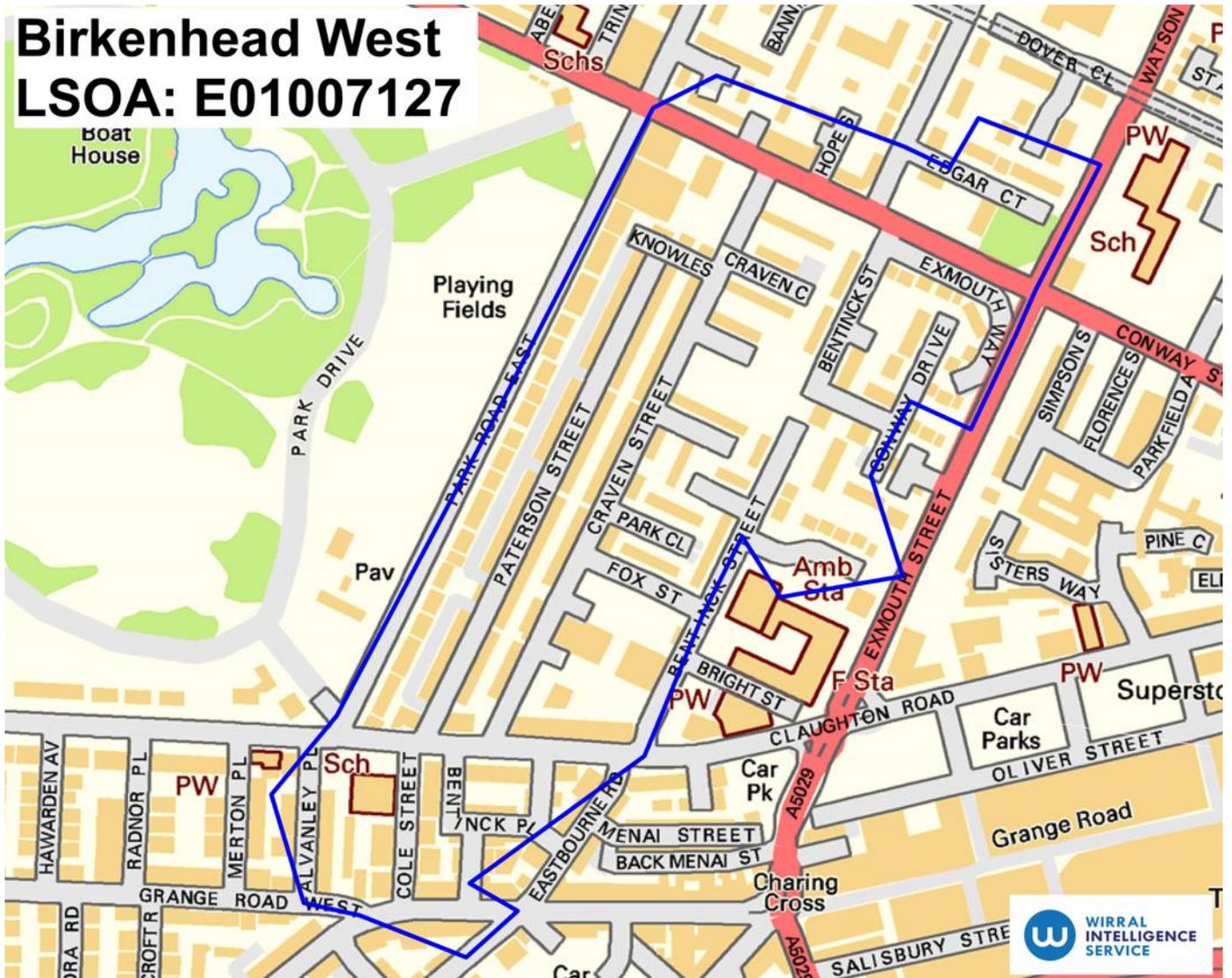
## Section 7: Conclusions & Maps

As **Table 6.1** shows, excluding the 6 LSOAs marked in yellow (selective licensing areas not currently due for review), there are a further 4 LSOAs which are either:

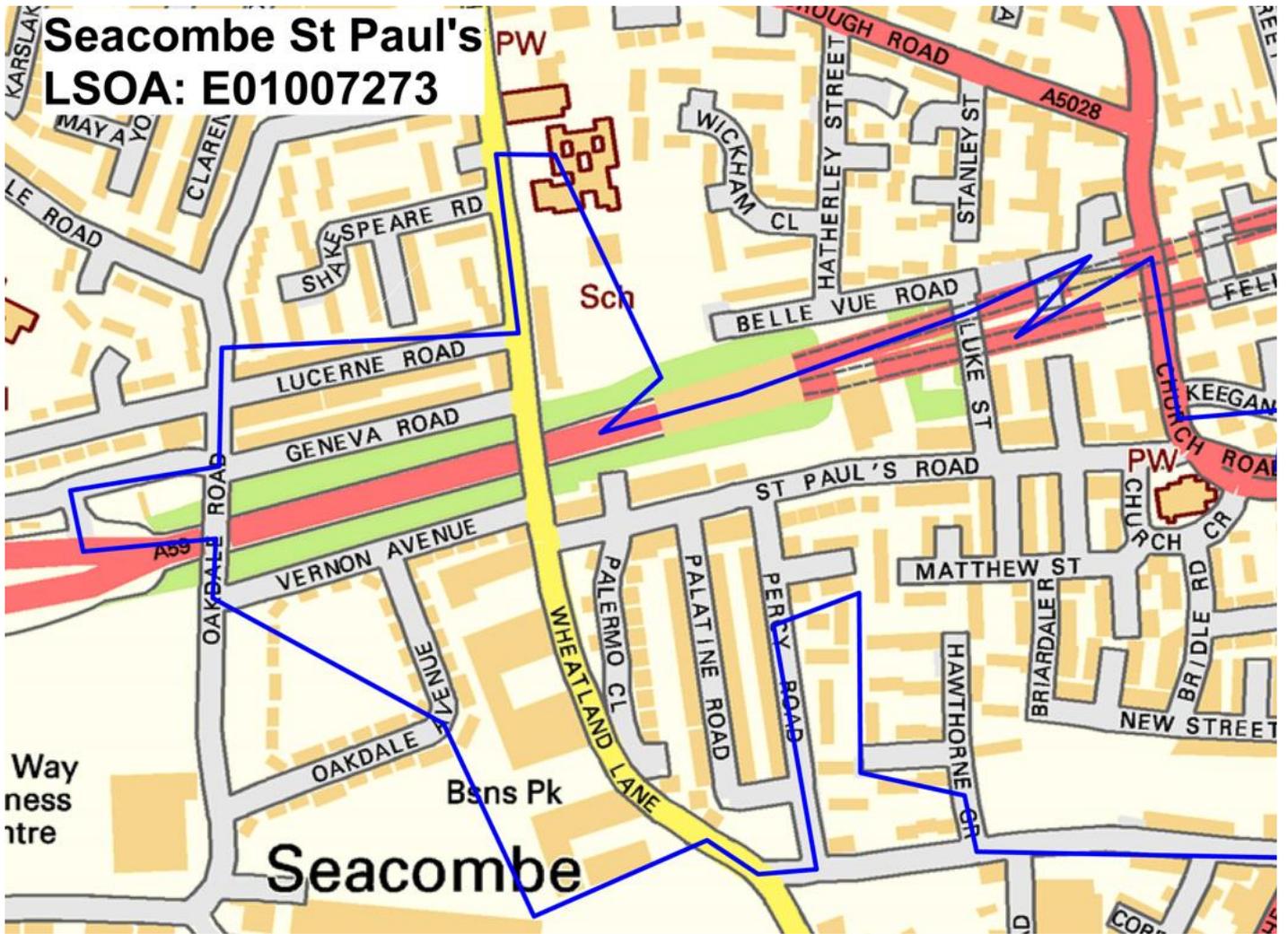
- Areas of selective licensing (first wave) now coming up for review (n=2, Birkenhead West and Seacombe St. Pauls)
- New LSOAs which have never before been areas of selective licensing (n=2, Bidston St. James West and Egremont North)

These 4 LSOAs are shown in further detail in the following maps 7.1 to 7.4.

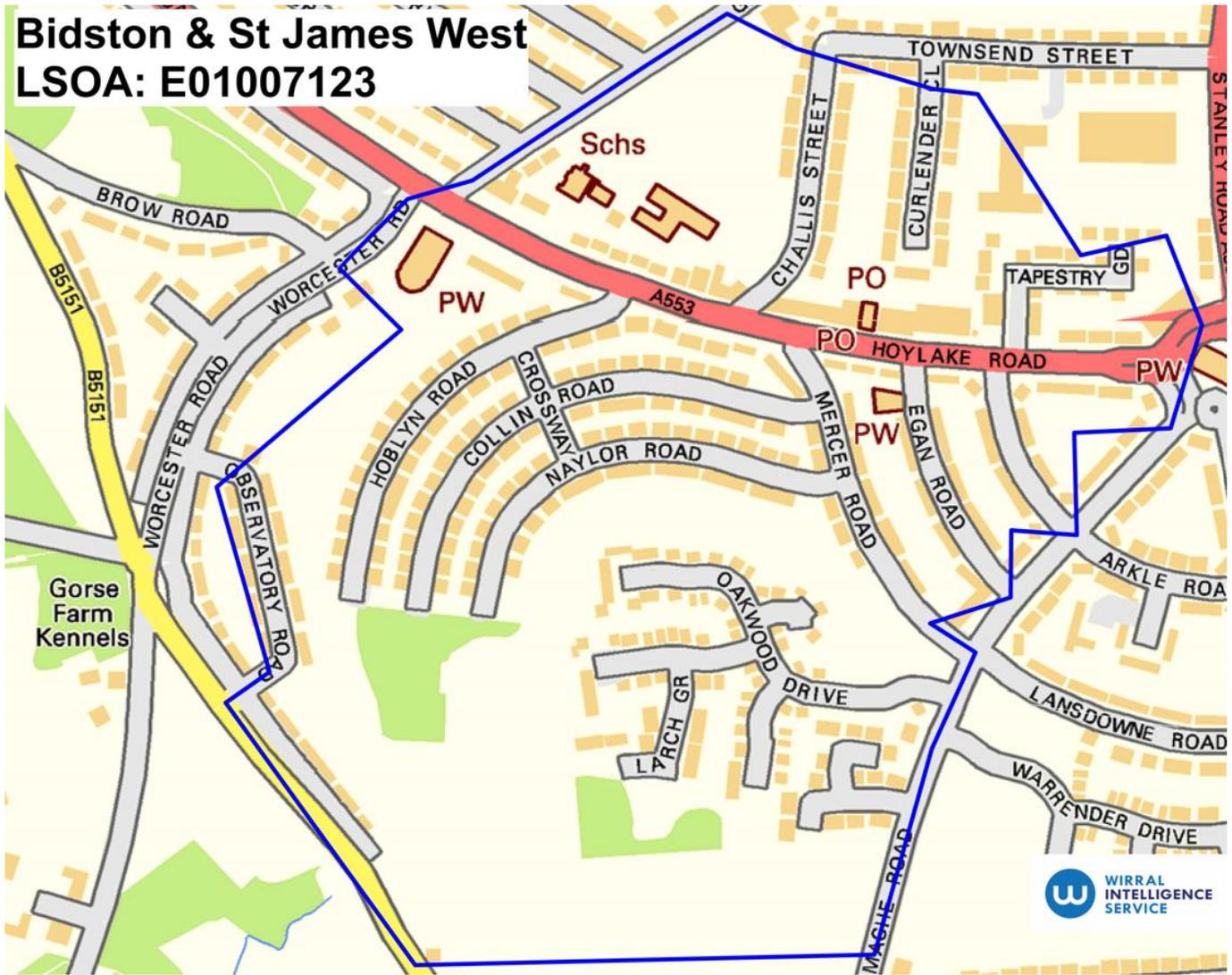
**Map 7.1:** Birkenhead West Lower Super Output Area (E01007127)



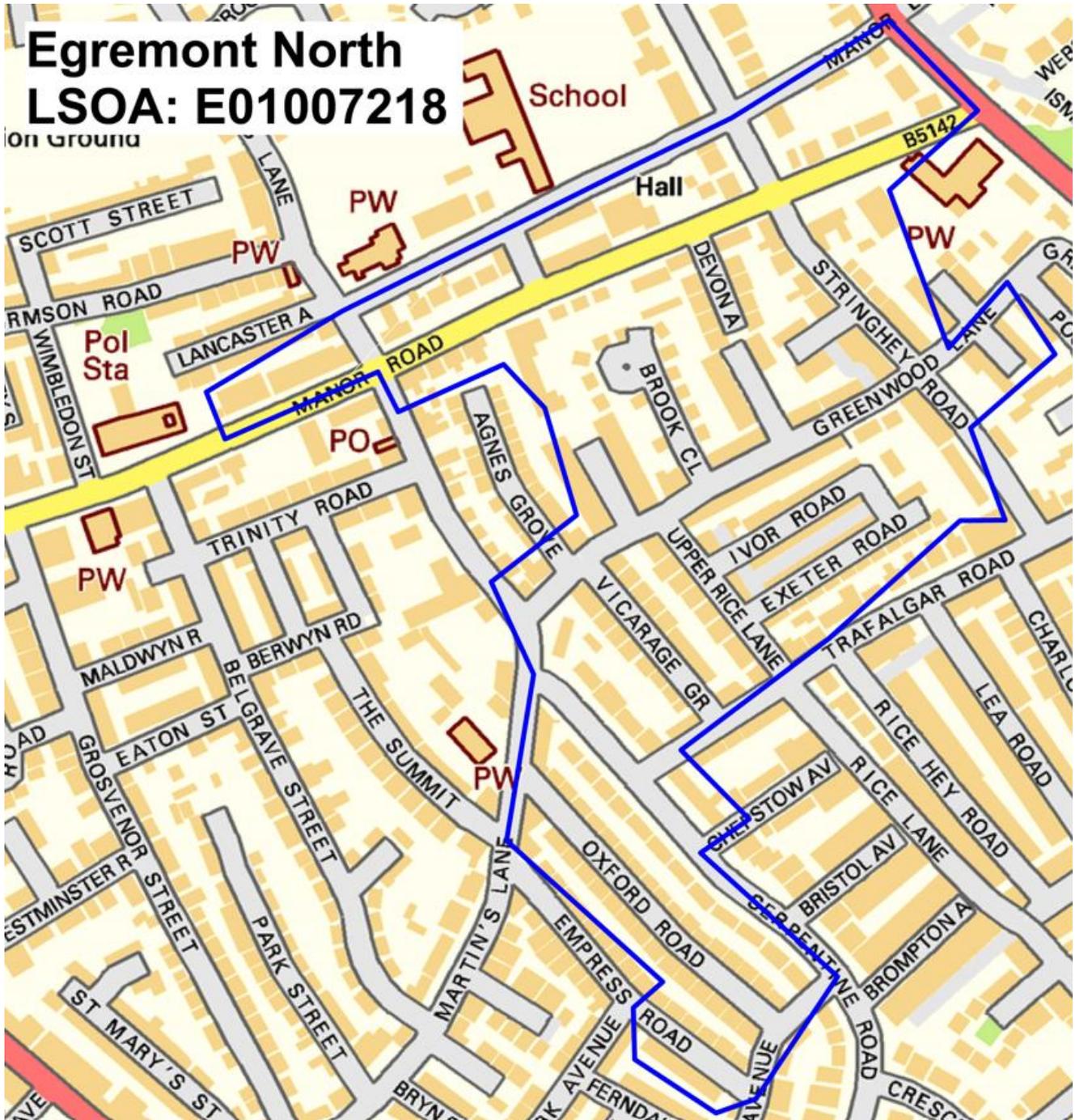
Map 7.2: Seacombe St. Pauls Lower Super Output Area (E01007273)



Map 7.3: Bidston St. James West Lower Super Output Area (E01007123)



Map 7.4: Egremont North Lower Super Output Area (E0107218)



## Section 8: References

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## Section 9: Glossary

### **Lower Super Output Area or LSOA:**

Small geographical areas with an average population of 1,500. There are 209 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 services, and; it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

**Category 1 and Category 2 Hazards:** 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. Category 2 hazards a less serious or less urgent. The Housing Act 2004 puts local authorities under a general duty to take appropriate action in relation to Category 1 hazards. In Wirral, 12% of private sector dwellings have Category 1 hazards, compared to 15% 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, 5% of private sector dwellings fail the repair requirements of the Decent Homes Standard, compared to 7% in the private rented sector.

## Contact details

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