Appendix 2



Creating a Fairer Private Rented Sector

Report on Westminster City Council's consultation on selective licensing proposals

March 2025

CADENCE INNOVA

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1. Executive Summary

Westminster City Council is committed to improving the standard of privately rented property in the city and creating a fair environment for both tenants and responsible landlords, targeting rogue operators and those letting unsuitable properties, driving up standards to the benefit of all.

In order to build on the successes of its current mandatory Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and additional HMO licensing schemes and widen the range of properties that will be eligible for licensing, the council is proposing to introduce a further property licensing scheme.

A selective licensing scheme is proposed for all privately rented homes (excluding HMOs) within 15 out of 18 wards to address the prevalence of poor housing conditions. It is a requirement of the scheme that all properties in the designated areas that are rented to a single household (e.g., a family) or two unrelated sharers (e.g., two friends living together) will need to have a licence to be legally let. If the proposed scheme is approved, it would consist of two designations. Designation 1 includes eight wards experiencing high levels of poor housing conditions. Designation 2 includes a further seven wards experiencing both high levels of poor housing conditions and significant and persistent problems caused by anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The wards included in each proposed designation are as follows:

Designation 1:

- Abbey Road
- Church Street
- Harrow Road
- Knightsbridge and Belgravia
- Little Venice
- Maida Vale
- Queen's Park
- Westbourne.

Designation 2:

- Bayswater
- Hyde Park
- Lancaster Gate
- Marylebone
- Pimlico North
- Regent's Park
- West End.

When proposing to introduce discretionary property licensing schemes, the Housing Act 2004 requires councils to take reasonable steps to consult with all persons likely to be affected by the proposed designation(s). Westminster City Council commissioned Cadence Innova, an independent consultancy, specialising in collaborating with local authorities, to deliver public consultations to undertake an extensive programme of consultation activities and report independently on the findings.

To help inform all stakeholders, a consultation evidence pack was developed by Cadence Innova in conjunction with Westminster City Council, and this, along with other relevant documents, was available for the duration of the consultation on the council's website. The council also had a dedicated phoneline and email inbox specifically to receive comments and submissions and to communicate with stakeholders for the duration of the consultation.

The consultation ran for 12 weeks from 28 October 2024 until 19 January 2025 and utilised a variety of methods to reach and seek opinions from all those likely to be affected by the council's proposals, both within and outside the city.

These methods included:

- an online survey
- one in-person meeting with landlords and landlord groups
- two virtual public meetings with landlords, tenants, residents, and landlord groups
- 18 in-person community drop-in sessions across the city.

124 stakeholders were directly contacted and asked for their response to the consultation. Stakeholders included:

- local councillors
- voluntary community sector organisations
- tenant support organisations and housing charities
- emergency service commanders
- all London borough councils.

The council advertised the consultation through digital and print media, as well as in-person methods.

A total of 715 survey responses were received. The survey incorporated a quantitative approach and qualitative responses through free text boxes. Qualitative feedback outside of the survey was also received at two virtual public meetings (attended by 146 people total) and from 5 written representations from interested parties.

The consultation looked at the level of support for introducing a selective licensing scheme. The consultation also sought views on the proposed licence conditions, associated fees, potential discounts, scheme objectives and the respondents' perceptions of the issues of poor property conditions and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the city.

The results of the consultation survey and the views of stakeholders gathered during the consultation are analysed fully in this report.

1.1 Key Findings

The following analysis is based on definitive responses. Where a set of responses totals less than 100%, the remaining proportion of respondents answered, 'neither agree nor disagree' or 'don't know'.

Selective Overall		Landlords, letting or managing agents	Private tenants	Owner-occupiers	Other / Multiple stakeholder groups*
Total consultation survey responses	**715 responses**	225 responses	78 responses	137 responses	275 responses

Responses to the question	**688 responses**	217 responses	76 responses	132 responses	263 responses
Agree with selective licensing proposal for designation 1	**30%**	12%	57%	46%	29%
Disagree with selective licensing proposal for designation 1	**52%**	67%	25%	38%	45%

Responses to the question	**688 responses**	217 responses	76 responses	132 responses	263 responses
Agree with selective licensing proposal for designation 2	**30%**	12%	52%	47%	30%
Disagree with selective licensing proposal for designation 2	**54%**	70%	32%	41%	56%

Responses to the question	**689 responses**	214 responses	77 responses	133 responses	265 responses
Agree with proposed selective licensing conditions	**34%**	18%	62%	56%	29%
Disagree with proposed selective licensing conditions	**57%**	76%	31%	37%	58%

Responses to the question	**633 responses**	202 responses	74 responses	124 responses	233 responses
Selective licensing fee is about right	**16%**	4%	26%	30%	15%

Selective Overall		Landlords, letting or managing agents	Private tenants	Owner-occupiers	Other / Multiple stakeholder groups*
Selective licensing fee is too high	**75%**	93%	57%	57%	74%
Selective licensing fee is too low	**4%**	0%	4%	8%	6%

Scheme Objectives		Landlords, letting or managing agents	Private tenants	Owner-occupiers	Other / Multiple stakeholder groups
Responses to the question	**681 responses**	212 responses	75 responses	128 responses	266 responses
Agree with scheme objectives	**37%**	22%	64%	55%	31%
Disagree with scheme objectives	**49%**	60%	32%	32%	52%

** "Multiple stakeholder groups" denotes where respondents selected more than one stakeholder group, for example they said they were both a landlord and an owner occupier, or were responding as a local business owner and a landlord.*

1.2 Conclusions

As well as the quantitative data from the online survey, respondents had the opportunity to provide their views in free-text form in relation to several questions. The aggregate online analysis therefore offers only a partial view. The survey data, along with the free-form text responses, virtual public meetings, and other written representation received provide vital insights.

There was a degree of uncertainty or neutrality among respondents, suggesting that many may not have strong opinions or find the issues complex. The proportion of responses classified as 'neither agree or disagree' and 'don't know/not applicable' is, in some cases, up to 34%, though generally between 10% to 20%. In the case that respondents were unsure about any aspect of the proposed scheme or consultation, the council invited questions and comments through a dedicated phone line, email inbox, public forums and community drop-in sessions.

It is important to note there was a stark contrast in views about the proposals among different stakeholder groups. While private tenants and owner-occupiers generally support the council's proposals, "other / multiple stakeholder groups" and landlords, lettings and managing agents, and their representative bodies were generally opposed.

The aggregate online survey data does not show overall support for the council's proposals, however, views expressed in the free-text responses ranged from positivity that the council is

actively tackling issues prevalent in the private rented sector (PRS) such as poor housing conditions, ASB and overcrowding to concerns that the scheme is unnecessary, burdensome, a way for the council to generate revenue and the cost of the licence fee would be passed on to tenants.

A significant number of the attendees at the public online forums were landlords and managing/letting agents who held strong views and were negative to property licensing schemes in general. In particular, they perceived unfairness of the scheme in targeting good landlords and were concerned about the effectiveness of property licensing schemes and the council's own ability to achieve its objectives. The main objections, however, were to the economic costs of licensing schemes on landlords, which they felt would inevitably be passed onto tenants.

The council received a number of written responses from various stakeholders, both supporting and opposing the council's proposals. Another London borough with a current selective licensing scheme wrote to express their support, recognising the challenges in the PRS and expressed the positive outcomes from implementing their own property licensing schemes. In contrast, landlord representative organisations such as Safeagent and Propertymark objected to the proposals. They argued that the council should utilise existing enforcement powers to address issues in the PRS.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

Between 28 October 2024 and 19 January 2025, Westminster City Council consulted on new licensing proposals for the PRS in the city. Property licensing is a way of ensuring safer and better standards in private rented properties.

In 2021, the council implemented a borough-wide additional HMO licensing scheme to ensure safety standards for tenants living in small houses in multiple occupation (HMO) The scheme has significantly improved property conditions and management standards in HMOs. however, poor housing conditions are not limited to HMOs and are prevalent across the PRS.

Westminster is consistent with the rest of London in that it has a shortage of affordable housing[1], with house prices remaining out of reach for many. The demand for social housing far outstrips the supply. As a result, private rented property is increasingly becoming the only viable option for many Westminster residents, including those who are vulnerable and on low incomes. Currently, 43% of Westminster's housing stock is in the PRS, and this is expected to continue to rise in the future.

While the majority of properties in the PRS are well maintained and safe, there is a growing number of properties that are substandard and potentially dangerous. Even landlords with good intentions may not always be aware of the latest legal and safety requirements. These properties pose a risk to the health, safety, and wellbeing of tenants, cause issues with neighbours, and require numerous interventions from council teams that are already under pressure. It is crucial for the council to utilise all available tools to improve the situation for tenants renting properties in this sector. Licensing plays a key role in this effort.

2.2 Proposals

The PRS in Westminster is affected by various housing issues. 14 out of 18 wards have predicted poor housing conditions similar to or above the national average while persistent ASB is spread across all wards, these are worsened by other issues such as poverty, high rents, fuel poverty and homelessness.

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

Thorough evidence gathering and research has been carefully carried out to ensure that the most severe problems in each ward can be dealt with. All properties in the designated areas that are

[1] Look Back at - View consultation documents before completing the survey - Selective Licensing Consultation (Selective Licensing Consultation Evidence Pack)

rented to a single household (e.g., a family) or two unrelated sharers (e.g., two friends living together) would need to have a licence to be legally let.

We are therefore proposing, subject to consultation, to introduce a selective licensing scheme consisting of two designations, for five years.

Designation 1 includes the eight wards of:

- Abbey Road
- Church Street
- Harrow Road
- Knightsbridge and Belgravia
- Little Venice
- Maida Vale
- Queen's Park
- Westbourne.

These eight wards are experiencing high levels of poor property conditions.

Designation 2 includes the seven wards of:

- Bayswater
- Hyde Park
- Lancaster Gate
- Marylebone
- Pimlico North
- Regent's Park
- West End.

These seven wards are experiencing both high levels of poor property conditions and significant and persistent problems caused by ASB.

With effect from 23 December 2024 a new General Approval came into force and local housing authorities in England are no longer required to obtain confirmation from the Secretary of State before implementing a selective licensing scheme of any size. Therefore, dependent upon Cabinet approval, the scheme could be implemented late 2025.

2.3 Public consultation

The consultation ran for 12 weeks from 28 October 2024 until 19 January 2025. In order to gather as much feedback as possible from landlords, tenants, residents and other stakeholders, the council used several strategies to promote the consultation.

The consultation focused on the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with the council's proposal to introduce the selective licensing scheme. The consultation also looked at views on the proposed licence conditions, associated fees, proposed discounts, scheme objectives, and the respondents' perceptions of ASB, poor property conditions and other issues in the city.

Working alongside Cadence Innova, an independent consulting firm, specialising in collaborating with local authorities to deliver public consultations, the council launched a comprehensive communications and marketing campaign to inform all stakeholders about the council's ongoing consultation on the proposed introduction of the selective licensing scheme, with the aim of encouraging active participation.

The communications strategy was designed to inform and educate all stakeholders about the proposed licensing scheme and its potential benefits. The marketing approach was primarily focused on digital activities and online events. However, to meet the needs of the digitally excluded, physical hard copy communications were also made available.

Communications channels

The council used a wide range of communication channels to promote the consultation and make stakeholders aware of the proposals.

The council undertook various activities to engage all stakeholder groups, both within and outside the city, and to raise their awareness about the consultation. These activities included:

- Updating the council website homepage with a news article and a link to the consultation on 28 October 2024 and then again on 7 January 2025
- A link to the consultation was placed on the Private Sector Housing landing web page
- A press release to announce the start of the consultation was published on 28 October 2024 and disseminated via the Westminster City Council press office
- A press release to announce the consultation would soon close was published on 7 January 2025 via the PA Media platform and Westminster City Council's press office
- A direct email was sent to 24 minority ethnic support organisations
- A direct email was sent to eight older persons support networks
- A direct email was sent to five young person's support networks
- A direct email was sent to seven educational providers
- A direct email was sent to 37 community support organisations

- A direct email was sent to six faith groups
- A direct email was sent to nine medical support organisations
- A direct email was sent to 20 housing support organisations, homelessness charities and tenants/residents associations
- A direct email was sent to two LGBTQIA+ support organisations
- A direct email was sent to six food banks and baby banks
- Direct emails were sent to recipients who subscribe to hear about consultations on Commonplace, the platform used to host the online questionnaire. The details are:
    - 2252 on 28 October 2024
    - 258 on 14 November 2024
    - 515 on 16 December 2024
    - 591 on 6 January 2025
- A direct email was sent to all London councils, landlord accreditation and membership organisations and housing charities on 20 December 2024
- A direct email was sent to emergency service commanders on 3 January 2025.
- A direct email to 95 tenants with open service requests on 25 November 2024
- A direct email to 146 tenants with open service requests on 27 November 2024

Using the council's social media

- Three X (formerly known as Twitter) posts with a total of 3,841 impressions, 124 clicks, 156 total engagements, 13 shares (re-tweets), 22 comments and 1,200 video views
- 20 Facebook posts with a total of 3,277 impressions, 153.6 people reached, 69 total engagements, 16 likes, 43 clicks, 6 shares and 249 video views
- 13 LinkedIn posts with a total of 6,059 impressions, 269 total engagements, 226 clicks, two shares, 40 likes and 1,555 video views
- Three Instagram posts with a total of 978 impressions, 251 people reached, 12 total engagements, 10 likes and 595 video views
- In addition to static organic social media posts containing advertisements to promote the consultation, a video featuring Councillor Matt Noble, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Renters was shared across social media channels. The video included information on why the consultation was being held, the ambitions the council held in relation to the PRS in Westminster and informed audiences on how to take part in the consultation.

Activities to reach out to Westminster tenants and residents included:

- Information about the consultation was included within three issues of the resident e-newsletter, YourHome to 10,500 subscribers generating a total of 163 clicks
- Information about the consultation was included within seven issues of the MyWestminster e-newsletter, to 89,000 subscribers, generating a total of 892 clicks
- Information about the consultation was included within the YourWestminster magazine, directly mailed to 120,000 residents

- Information about the consultation was included within the YourHome magazine, directly mailed to 19,500 residents
- An out of home campaign ran with adverts added to Ten JC Decaux sites and two Global Media sites across the city. The out of home campaign ran from 30 December 2024 to10 January 2025
- A leaflet drop to all 139,000 Westminster households was completed on 9 December 2024
- News about the consultation was included in the City of Westminster Schools Bulletin on 11 November 2024 to 377 people on the mailing list consisting of school staff and local authority officers.

- Pull up banners, leaflets and posters were displayed at:
    - City of Westminster Archives Centre
    - Charing Cross Library
    - Church Street Library
    - Maida Vale Library
    - Marylebone Library
    - Mayfair Library
    - Paddington's Children's Library
    - Pimlico Library
    - Queen's Park Library
    - St. John's Wood Library
    - Victoria Library.
- Leaflets and posters were sent to:
    - Five community centres
    - 20 housing support and homelessness prevention services
    - One youth support service
    - Nine sports and leisure centres
    - Seven Westminster City Council Housing Service Centres
    - 40 NHS providers
    - Two faith groups
    - Three children's centres.

- Leaflets were sent to six launderettes across the city.

Activities to reach out to landlords included direct emails to known landlords, agents and leaseholders. The details are:

- 541 on 7 November 2024
- 7,205 between 11 and 13 November 2024
- 7,057 on 13 November 2024.

Activities to reach out to landlords outside of the city included:

An out of home campaign with adverts added to JC Decaux and Global media sites ran from 30 December 2024 to10 January 2025. The sites were in the following neighbouring boroughs:

- Five sites in Camden
- Five sites in Kensington & Chelsea
- Four sites in Lambeth
- Four sites in Wandsworth
- Five sites in Brent.

In addition, the Chief Executives of the of the following organisations were written to directly:

- National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA)
- British Landlords Association (BLA)
- iHowz
- Safeagent
- UK Association of Letting Agents.

The Accreditation Officer at the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) was also directly contacted.

The following organisations were included on the press release distribution list:

- NRLA
- Arla Propertymark
- Safeagents
- LLAS
- iHowz
- Letting Agent Today
- London Property Licensing website
- British Landlords Association
- Guild of Letting & Management.

A digital campaign with London Property Licensing (LPL) ran between 29 October 2024 to 19 January 2025. LPL is the award winning, leading website for informing private landlords in the UK. It is the only website dedicated to providing simple, impartial and expert advice on property licensing and explaining the licensing requirements across every London borough. The website reaches out to landlords based throughout the UK and those based abroad. Since launching in April 2015, the website has received more than 2 million views. The Westminster campaign included:

- From 29 October 2024 to 19 January 2025, a pixel banner advert promoting the licensing consultation was placed on the LPL homepage and 16 London borough pages:
    - Barnet
    - Brent
    - Camden
    - City of London

    - Hackney
    - Hammersmith & Fulham
    - Haringey
    - Harrow
    - Islington
    - Kensington & Chelsea
    - Lambeth
    - Merton
    - Southwark
    - Tower Hamlets
    - Wandsworth
    - Westminster

- Anyone clicking on the advert was taken directly to the council's consultation webpage
- On 29 October 2024, the LPL Westminster webpage was updated with information about the licensing consultation and a direct link to the council's consultation webpage in the orange 'At a Glance' box to encourage people to find out more and take part in the consultation. This is an additional feature added during the promotional period.
- From 30 October 2024 to 19 January 2025, a Westminster licensing consultation listing was displayed on the LPL website and promoted on the home page, the licensing consultations page and on the same 16 London borough pages listed above. The listing summarised the purpose of the consultation and explained how to take part. The consultation webpage promoted consultation events taking place on 28 November 2024, 9 December 2024 and 8 January 2025.
- From 30 October 2024 to 19 January 2025, high profile scheme promotion was achieved by inserting a banner headline, which remained one of the top four rotating landscape images at the top of the LPL home page. The banner headline contained a hyperlink to the LPL Westminster consultation page.
- The Westminster consultation listing was displayed on the LPL website and promoted on the home page, the licensing consultation page and the LPL Westminster page.
- Two news articles about the consultation were published on 3 November 2024 and 13 January 2025 and promoted via social media and the LPL newsletter.
- The Westminster consultation was promoted in newsletters distributed on 8 November 2024, 11 December 2024 and 17 January 2025. The newsletter is widely distributed to landlords, letting agents, organisations, local authority officers and government officials and sent to at least 3,700 people who have requested updates on housing regulation and property licensing schemes in London. The newsletters also displayed the Westminster banner advert with a direct link to the consultation page on the council's website.
- The LPL LinkedIn page and LPL Facebook page carried news of the consultation on 31 October 2024, 9 December 2024 and 14 January 2025.
- Posts about the licensing consultation were published on the LPL X (formerly known as Twitter) feed (@lplicensing) every 9 to 11 days, timed to cover a variety of morning, afternoon and evening posts, throughout the length of the consultation period. During

this period the @lplicensing X feed had more than 2,300 followers, generating impressions, likes, reposts and comments.

A programmatic digital campaign ran from 25 November to 10 December 2024 and 29 December 2024 to 18 January 2025. Digital adverts were placed using Google Display advertising and social media channels. The adverts were strategically placed to engage with the following stakeholders:

- Landlords
- Tenants
- Arabic, French, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and Bengali speaking and communities.

This was achieved by:

- targeting people who have searched for landlord insurance, legislation, guidance and property letting on the Google advertising platform
- targeting people with an interest in property development across news and social media platforms.

Analytics from the campaign are summarised below:

- 729,045 impressions
- 3,510 clicks
- 3,791 interactions
- 225,080 maximum reached.

Activities to make digitally excluded and vulnerable stakeholders aware of the consultation included:

Reaching out to the following foodbanks and baby banks:

- FoodCycle Marylebone
- Harrow Road Soup Kitchen
- Little Village
- North Paddington Foodbank
- Pimlico Toy Library
- Westminster Foodbank

Paper copies of the consultation were available at the following locations within the city from 30th October 2024:

- Church Street Library
- Maida Vale Library
- Mayfair Library
- Charing Cross Library
- Little Venice Sports Centre Library
- Marylebone Library
- Paddington Library

- Pimlico Library
- Queen's Park Library
- St John's Wood Library
- Victoria Library
- Westminster Business Library
- Westminster Chinese Library
- Westminster Music Library
- Westminster Reference Library.

Direct emails were sent to all of the Leader's offices, Chief Executives, Regulatory and Housing services at all boroughs across London on 20 December 2024.

Activities to make digitally excluded and vulnerable stakeholders aware of the consultation included:

Posters and leaflets were provided to the following local community and outreach groups:

- Beethoven Centre
- Cardinal Hume Centre
- Greenside Community Centre
- Abbey Community Centre
- Amberley Millenium Centre
- The Stowe Centre
- Seymour Leisure Centre
- Queen Mother Sports Centre
- Active Westminster
- Academy Sport
- Westminster Boating Base
- Marshall Street Leisure Centre
- Little Venice Sports Centre
- Westminster Adult Education Service
- All Westminster Housing Service centres
- All Westminster Family Hubs
- All Westminster mental health supported housing hubs
- Passage House Assessment Centre
- The Passage Day Centre
- Turning Point
- Changing Lives (Bruce House)
- Wytham Hall
- SHP (King Georges Hostel)
- Chinese Community Centre
- The Connection At St Martin's.

The following organisations were included on the press release distribution list:

- Generation Rent
- Justice for Tenants
- Flat Justice
- Cambridge House
- Age UK Westminster

- Reform
- Crisis
- Forward Trust
- Shelter
- Renters Rights London
- Refugee Council
- Central YMCA.

Activities to make stakeholders within the council aware of the consultation included:

- A notice was placed on the internal channel, The Wire on 28 October 2024 and was viewed 277 times
- Updating the council website corporate homepage carousel to include the consultation
- Posting a news article about the consultation on the council website during the first week of the consultation
- A notice within the staff bulletin was published on 19 September 2024
- All Councillors and MPs were sent a direct email on 3 October 2024 and asked to share details of the consultation on social media platforms and at public meetings.

Using the council's social media:

- Three X (formerly known as Twitter) posts with a total of 3,841 impressions, 124 clicks, 156 total engagements, 13 shares (re-tweets), 22 comments and 1,200 video views
- 20 Facebook posts with a total of 3,277 impressions, 153.6 people reached, 69 total engagements, 16 likes, 43 clicks, 6 shares and 249 video views
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- In addition to static organic social media posts containing advertisements to promote the consultation, a video featuring Councillor Matt Noble, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Renters was shared across social media channels. The video included information on why the consultation was being held, the ambitions the council held in relation to the PRS in Westminster and informed audiences on how to take part in the consultation.

2.4 Consultation methods

The council used several methods to gather feedback from stakeholders about the council's proposals.

Online survey

An online survey was open to the general public. Respondents could also request a paper version of the survey. A total of 715 survey responses were received. The consultation survey was the main method of gathering feedback during the consultation. Respondents were asked their views on selective licensing, the proposed fees, discounts, licence conditions, scheme objectives and their

views on issues within the city. Their responses are analysed and broken down by stakeholder type below. A copy of the survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3.

Public forums

The council held two virtual public forums to provide more information about the proposed scheme and to gather feedback from landlords, residents and other stakeholders who would be impacted by licensing. The virtual public meetings were held over Microsoft Teams and were facilitated by Cadence Innova. This included a presentation of the council's proposals followed by a question-and-answer session with council officers. These events are summarised below:

- 9 December 2024
- 8 January 2025

The above meetings were widely publicised. 72 people registered for the first event with 35 actual attendees. 189 people registered for the second event with 111 actual attendees.

The council held an in-person Landlord Forum on 28 November 2024 at the council offices. The event was open to all landlords and agents operating in the city to learn more about the council's proposals and to share views. 60 people registered for this event and 34 attended.

The council also held 20 in-person drop-in sessions (which required no pre-registration) to help stakeholders understand the proposals and to signpost them towards the questionnaire or the dedicated email address to express their views. These were publicised on the Commonplace landing page, email campaigns and social media posts. A total of 125 attended.

Drop-in sessions		
Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday 12 November 2024	1pm – 3pm	St John's Wood Library, 20-24 Circus Road, NW8 6PD
Wednesday 13 November 2024	11am – 1pm	London Chinese Community Centre
Tuesday 19 November 2024	11am – 2pm	Pimlico Library, Lupus St, Pimlico, London SW1V 3AT
Tuesday 26 November 2024	11:30am – 1:30pm	Beethoven Centre, Third Avenue, London W10 4JL
Wednesday 27 November 2024	12:30p, - 2pm	Church Street Network Lunch
Wednesday 27 November 2024	12pm – 2pm	Housing Service Centre, 24 Lilestone Street, Lisson Green Estate, NW8 8SR
Monday 2 December 2024	11am – 2pm	Westbourne Park Baptiste Church, Corner of Porchester Road & Westbourne Park Villas, London W2 5DX
Monday 2 December 2024	11am – 2pm	University of Westminster-Marylebone Campus
Thursday 5 December 2024	11:30am – 1:30pm	Beethoven Centre, Third Avenue, London W10 4JL
Monday 9 December 2024	11:30am – 1:30pm	Amberley Clubroom, Clearwell Drive, London W9 2JX
Thursday 12 December 2024	11am – 2pm	Charing Cross Library-drop 4-6 Charing Cross Rd, London WC2H 0HF
Monday 9 – Friday 13 December 2024 (4 sessions)	10:30am – 12:30pm	Waste Action Squad/Selective Licensing-joint street project
Monday 16 December 2024	10am – 11:30am	Parent-Carer Panel-North West of Westminster
Tuesday 17 December	10am – 11:30am	Parent-Carer Panel-South Westminster
Thursday 19 December 2024	10:30am – 12:30pm	Church Street Library
Thursday 9 January 2025	11am – 12:30pm	Age Concern-coffee morning
Thursday 16 January 2025	10am – 11am	Marylebone Library-coffee morning

Other written feedback

The council accepted feedback on the proposed licensing scheme by email or written response. The feedback in the emails received and written responses has been analysed below. The council received 54 email responses regarding the consultation. This included four written responses received from stakeholder organisations, found in full at Appendix 4.

A letter of support for the scheme, received from another London borough council with a current selective licensing scheme, can be found in full in Appendix 5.

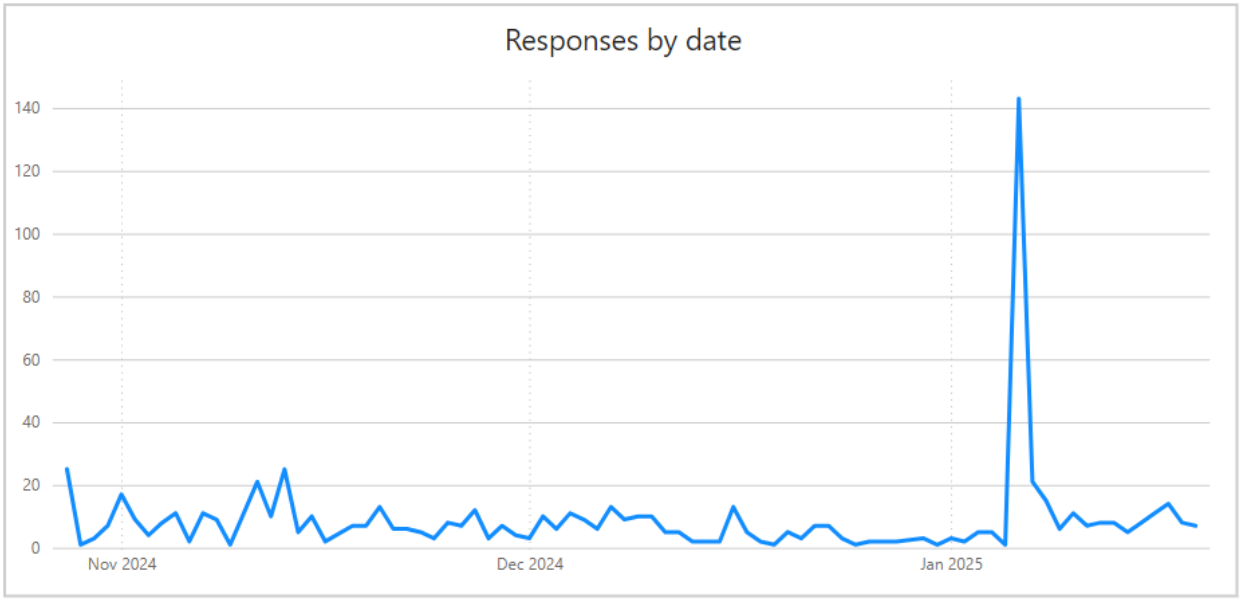
3. Consultation survey results

This section of the report presents the results from the consultation survey. There were **715** responses to the consultation survey.

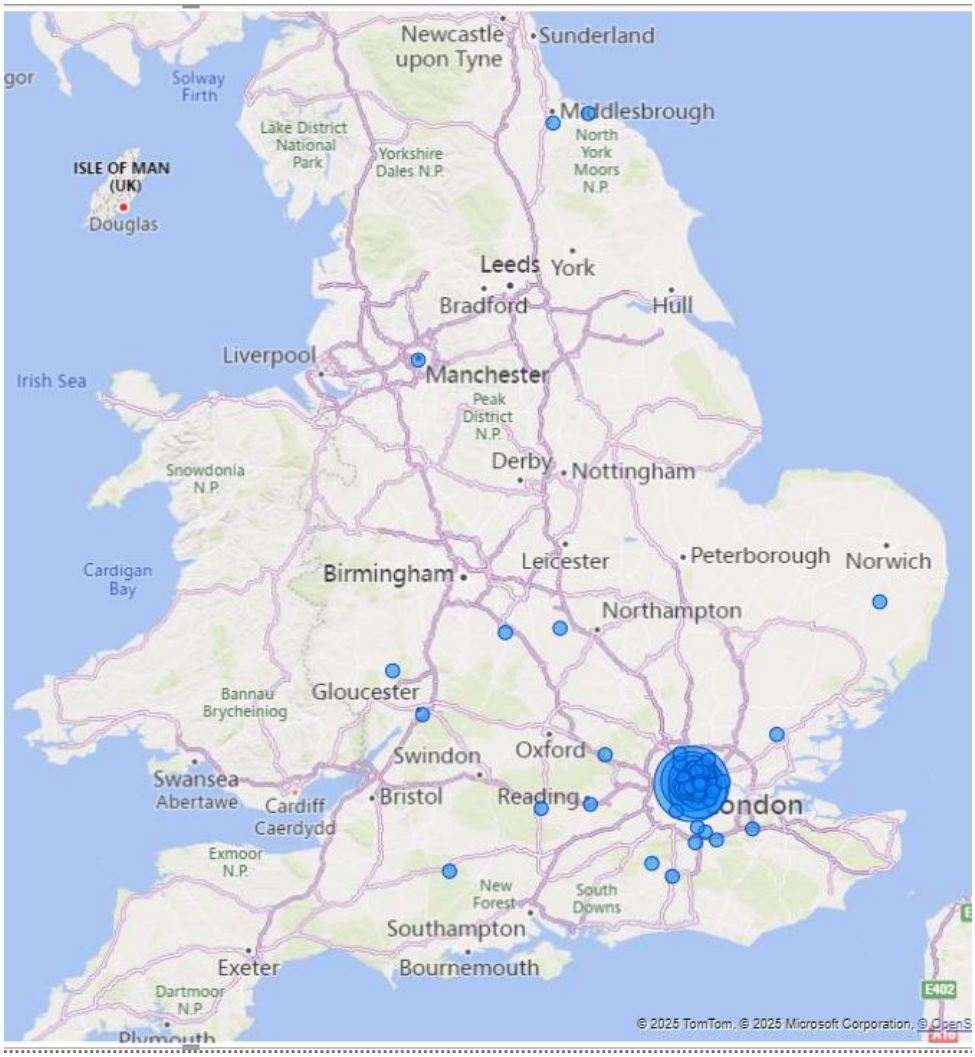
In the following analysis, the percentages are based on the answers to the question and will state where fewer than the total 715 respondents answered the question.

3.1 Overall consultation response

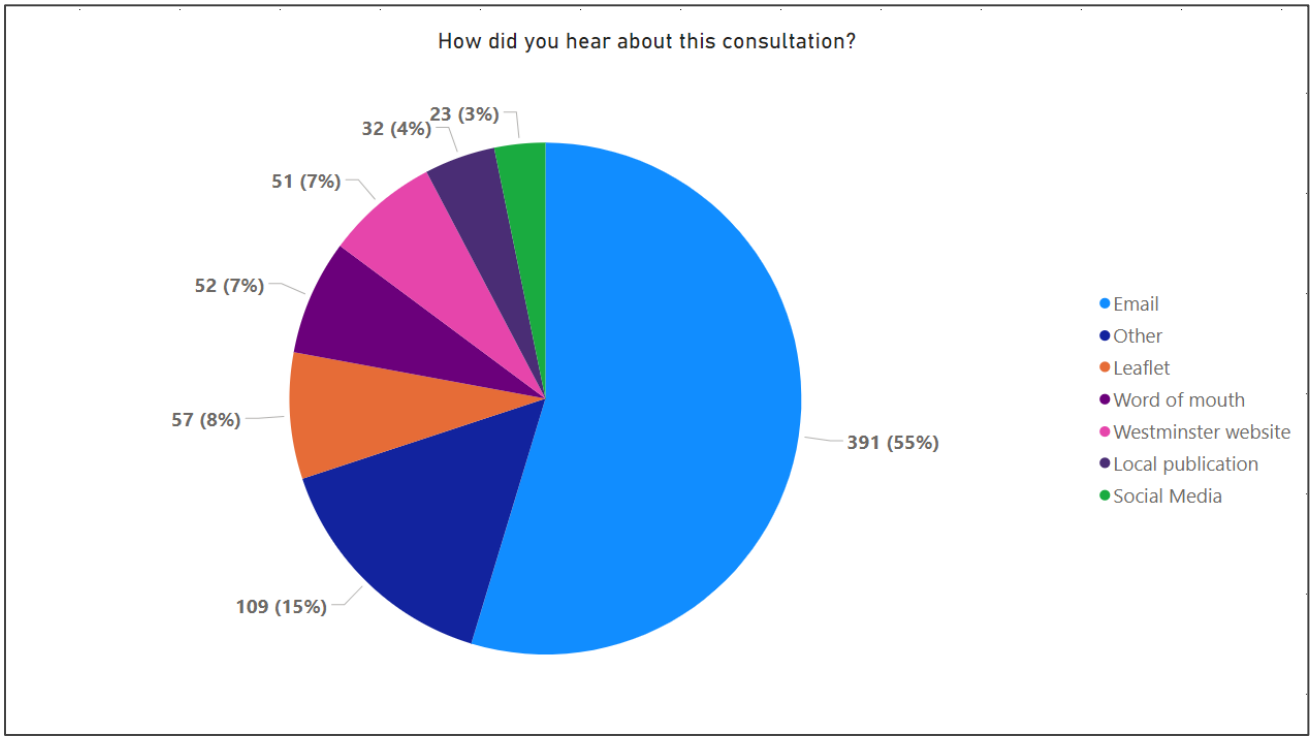
The consultation ran from **28 October to 19 January**, during which time, different stakeholder groups were engaged in myriad ways. The timeline of responses is shown below:



Respondents could optionally give information on the first part of their postcode, allowing for geographic analysis of responses. Of the **564** respondents who provided this information, the vast majority were Westminster/London residents, though some responses came from further afield, including the North East, North West, West Midlands, South West and East Anglia.



Respondents were also asked to give information about how they heard about the consultation. Of the **648** respondents who chose to answer this question, 55% said they heard about the consultation by email, 8% by leaflet and 7% by word of mouth and another 7% through the Westminster website. The remaining 23% came from other channels such as social media (including Instagram, Facebook and X [formally Twitter]), Landlord forums / drop-in sessions and local newspapers / publications.



3.2 Stakeholders

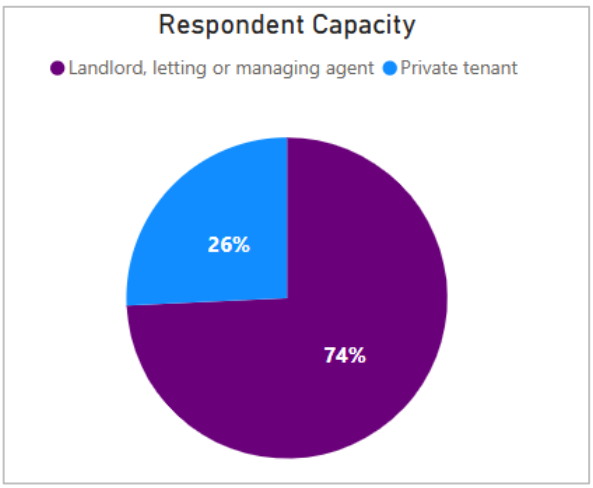
All respondents to the consultation were categorised into the following stakeholder groups:

In what capacity are you responding to this survey?

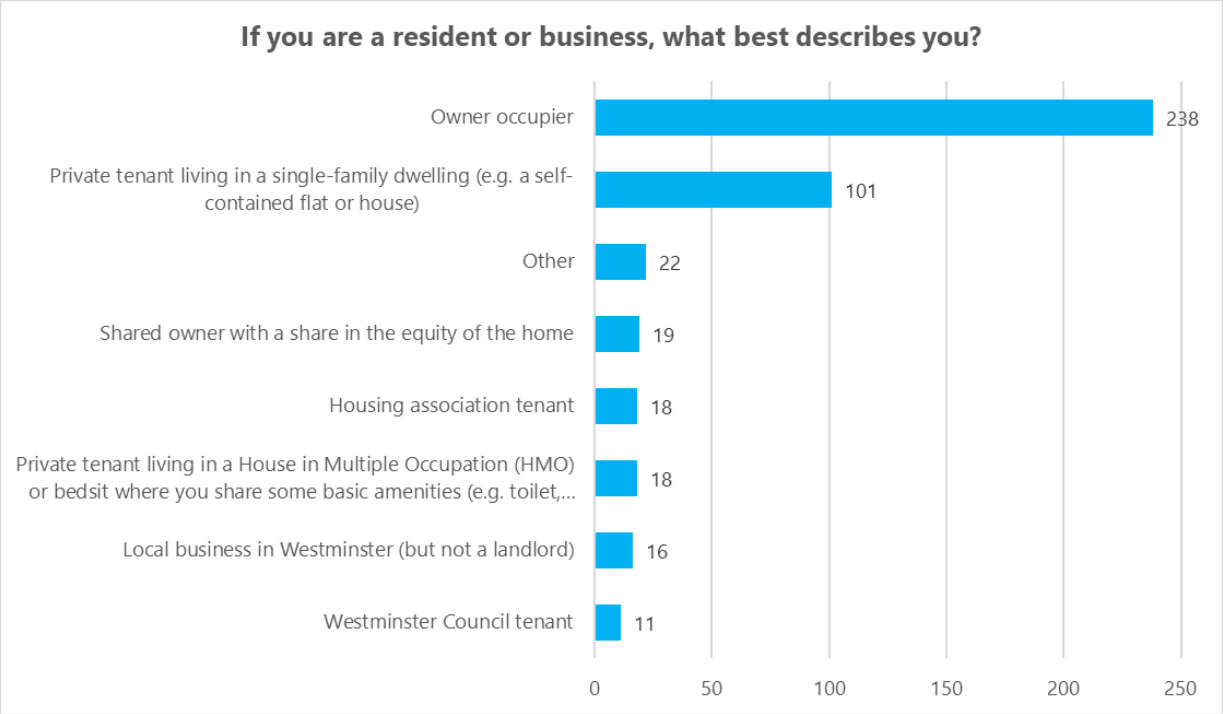
- As a Westminster resident or local business
- As a landlord, letting or managing agent with properties in Westminster.

Respondents who stated they were a Westminster resident or local business, or a landlord, letting or managing agent were then asked which description would best describe them.

The below chart shows the proportion of landlords, letting or managing agencies relative to private sector tenants.



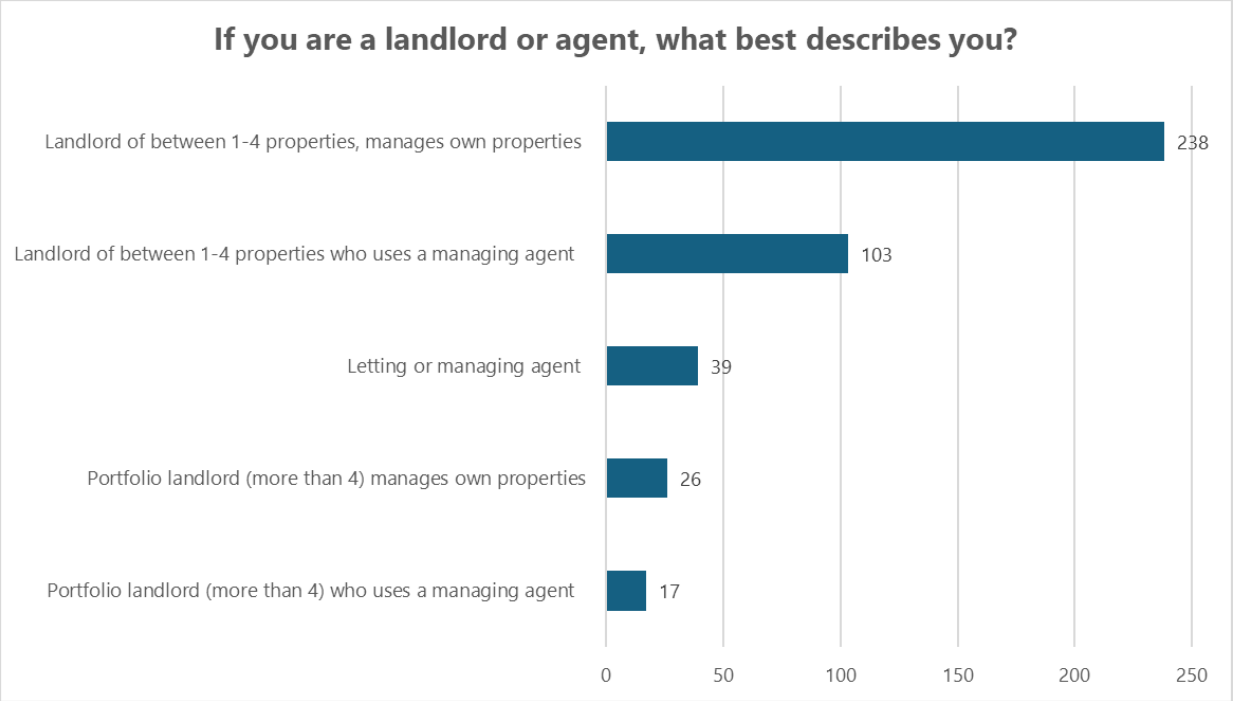
Of the **433** residents and local businesses who responded to this question, **257 (58%)** said they were an owner occupier or shared owner, **119 (27%)** said they were private tenants and **67 (15%)** said they were another type of resident or local business.



The **22** respondents who classified themselves as 'Other' included:

- Local charities
- Tenant advice service
- Housing Association tenants
- Family of Westminster residents.

Of the **423** landlords, letting or managing agents who responded to this question**, 264 (62%)** said they were a landlord who manages their own property, and **120 (28%)** said they were a landlord who uses a managing agent.

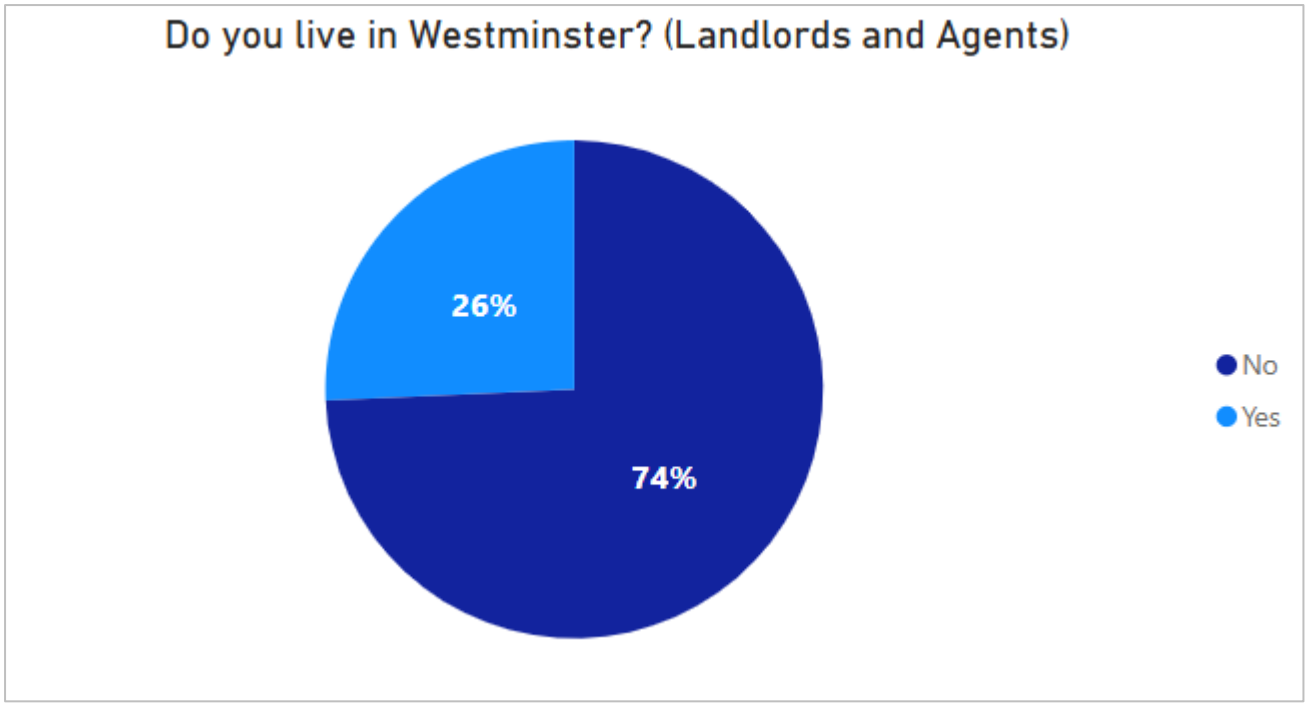


The sum of the resident capacities and landlord capacities exceeds the total number of responses, this is because some respondents have responded as both a landlord and a resident in the same submission.

The range of respondents to the consultation shows a good representation of views from different stakeholder groups.

Landlords' relationship to Westminster

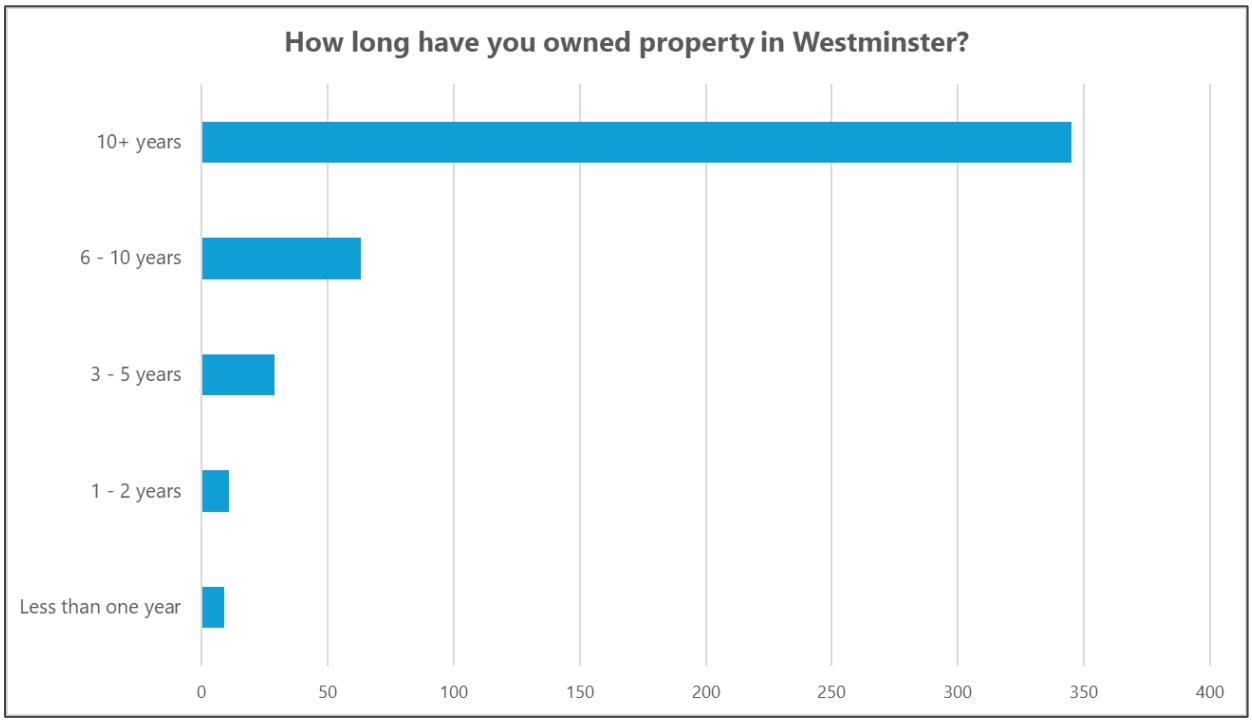
Landlords, letting or managing agents who responded to the consultation were asked if they lived in the City of Westminster. Of the **210** landlords, letting or managing agents who responded to this question, **54 (26%)** said they lived in Westminster, and **156 (74%)** said they lived outside of Westminster.



These results clearly indicate that the consultation reached landlords both within and outside of the city.

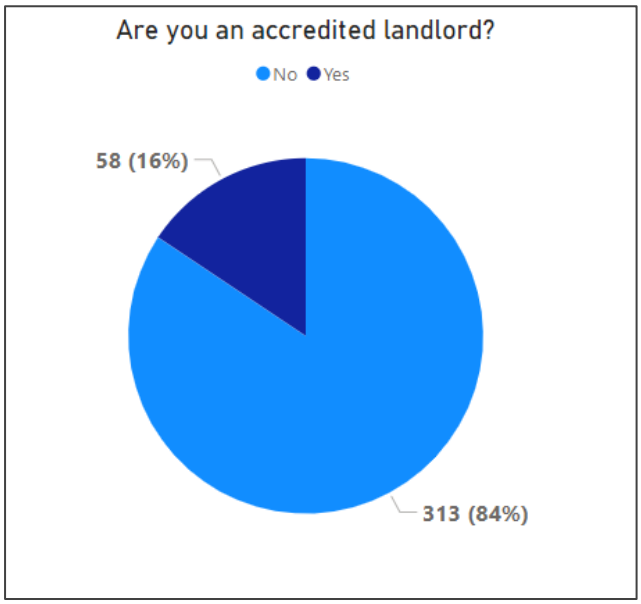
Length of ownership

Landlords, letting or managing agents were also asked about how long they had owned property in Westminster. The majority of landlords have owned property for more than 10 years.



Accreditation

Landlords, letting or managing agents were additionally asked whether they belonged to any accredited landlord schemes. Of the landlords who responded to this question (**371**), the majority (**84%**) were not accredited with any of the listed schemes (NRLA, LLAS, UKALA, Safeagent, ARLA Propertymark, RICS).

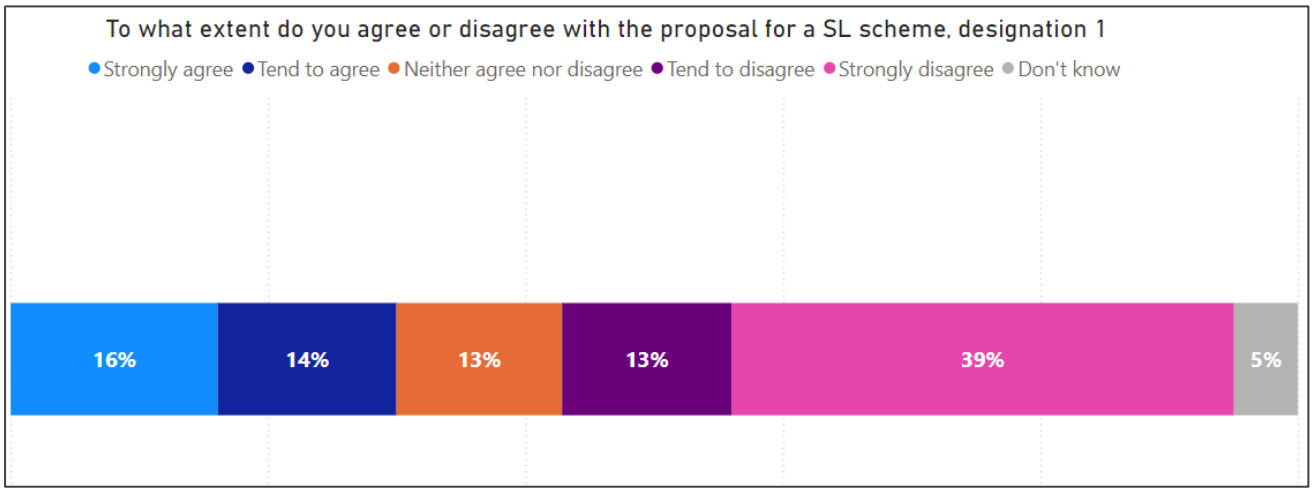


3.3 Views on the proposed selective licensing scheme designation 1

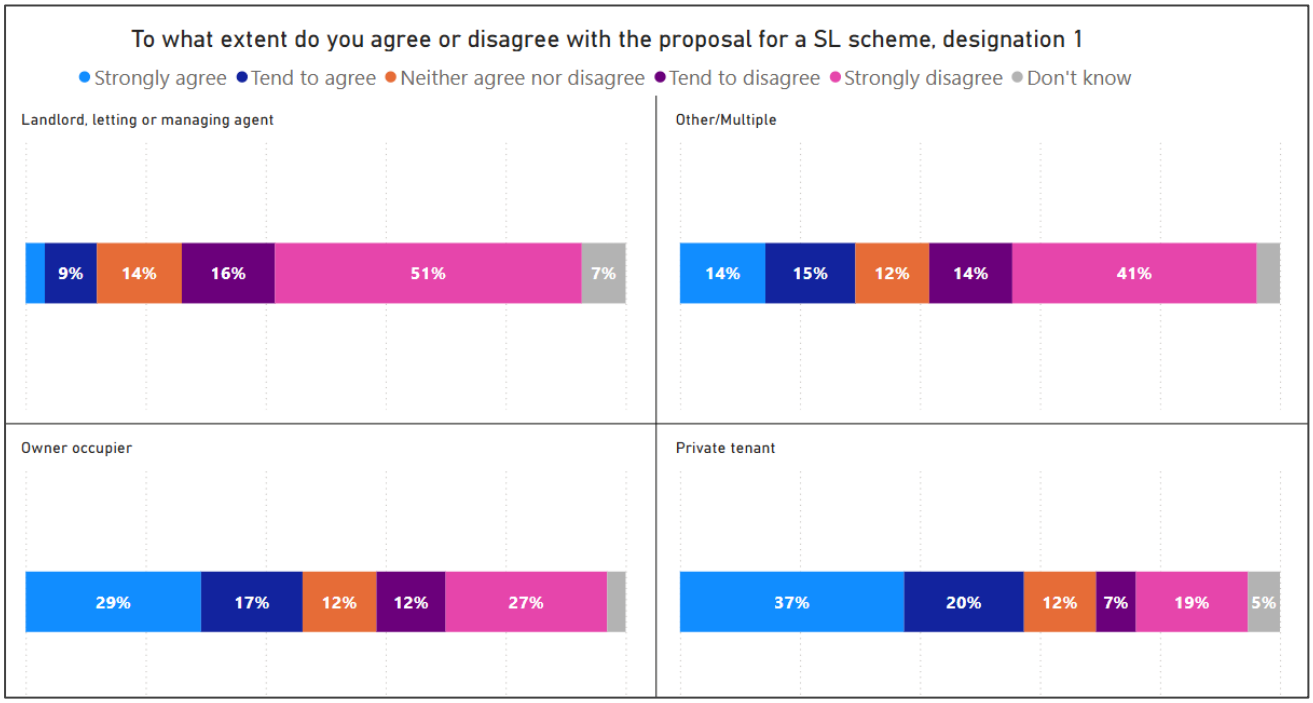
The council is proposing to introduce a selective licensing scheme consisting of two designations which would apply to privately rented homes across 15 wards. To understand the views on the proposed designations, respondents were asked about the two designations separately. This section covers the responses regarding the proposed designation 1, which would apply to the following eight wards based on the criteria of poor housing conditions:

- Abbey Road
- Church Street
- Harrow Road
- Knightsbridge and Belgravia
- Little Venice
- Maida Vale
- Queen's Park
- Westbourne.

Of the **684** respondents who answered this question, a minority, **30%**, agree with the proposal for selective licensing in designation 1 and **52%** disagree.



Looking at the responses by group, landlords, letting and managing agents (217 responses) and "Other/ Multiple" stakeholders (263 responses) are opposed to the proposal with approximately **67%** and **55%** respectively disagreeing. In contrast private tenants and owner occupiers are generally in favour of the proposal, with **57%** of private tenants (76 responses) agreeing, and **48%** of owner-occupiers (132 responses) agreeing with the proposal.

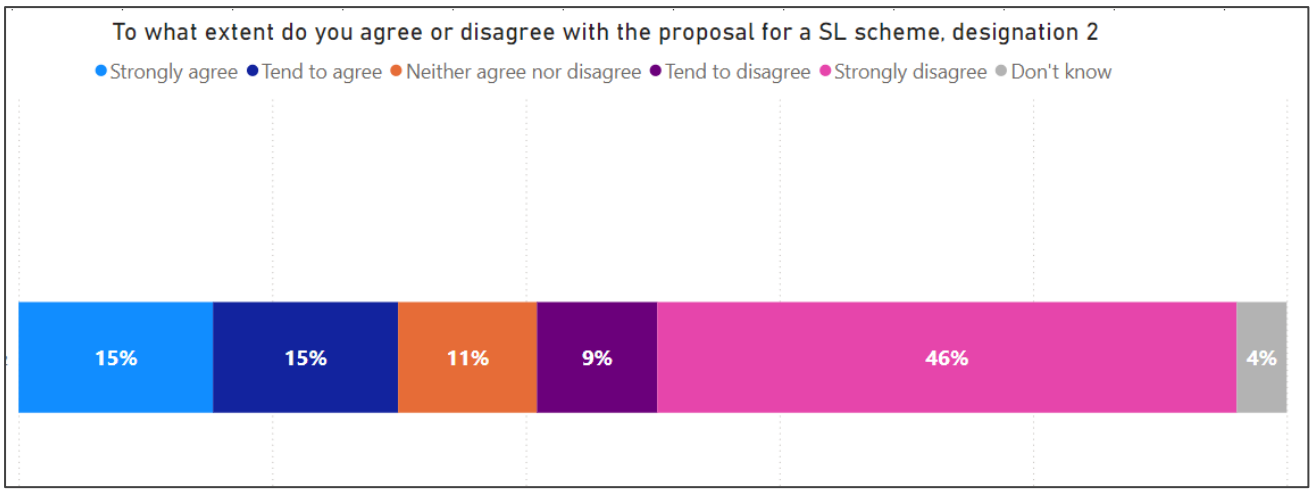


3.4 Views on the proposed selective licensing scheme designation 2

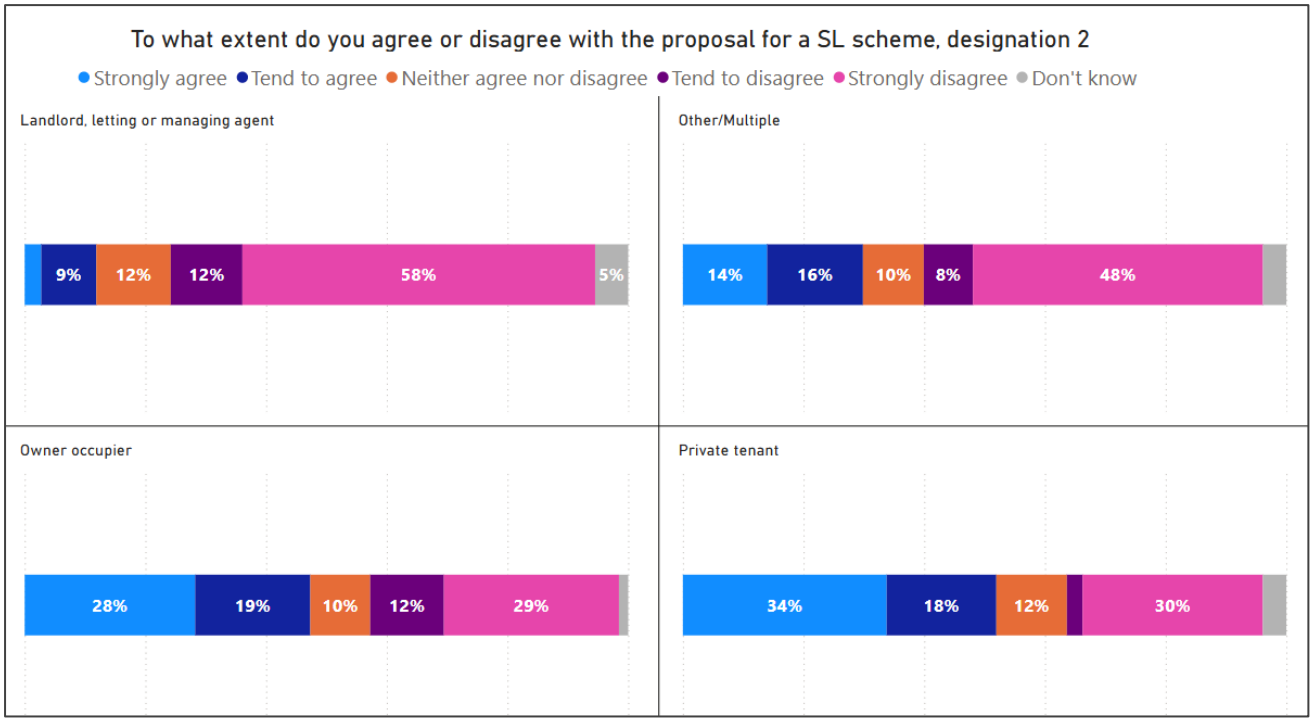
The council is proposing to introduce a second designation, which would apply to privately rented homes across seven further wards. This section covers the responses regarding the proposed designation 2, which would apply to the following seven wards based on the criteria of poor housing conditions **and** anti-social behaviour:

- Bayswater
- Hyde Park
- Lancaster Gate
- Marylebone
- Pimlico North
- Regent's Park
- West End

Of the **685** respondents who answered this question, a minority, around **30%** of respondents, agree with the proposal for selective licensing in designation 2 and around **55%** disagree.



Looking at the responses by group, landlords, letting and managing agents (217 responses) and "Other/ Multiple" stakeholders (263 responses) are opposed to the proposal with approximately **70%** and **56%** respectively disagreeing. In contrast, private tenants are generally in favour of the proposal, with **52%** of private tenants (76 responses) agreeing; the response from owner-occupiers (132 responses) was more mixed, with **47%** agreeing and **43%** disagreeing.



3.5 Free text comments on the proposed schemes (for those in disagreement)

The free text comments for the questions asking respondents to explain why they disagreed with the proposed licensing scheme and if they had any further comments/considerations were analysed. The analysis looked at the responses by stakeholder type.

Landlords/agents

For landlords/agents, five major themes can be drawn out from the responses:

1. Opposition to the scheme as a whole: Many landlords and agents expressed strong disagreement with the proposed selective licensing scheme, viewing them as unnecessary, burdensome, and a way for the council to generate revenue. They argued that existing laws and regulations are sufficient to address any issues with the property conditions and that the scheme unfairly penalises responsible landlords and will fail to remedy problems with rogue landlords.

> *"All of the schemes objectives can be made by selective "targeting" of properties with known physical issues and ASB problems through complaint. To create a top heavy, fee driven, monitoring hierarchy that from previous experience will be overbearing and ineffective is a waste of time and energy."*
>
> *"Too administrative. waste of government money. too much council control over personal property. Alternative can be regular building inspections by council to ensure buildings meet the necessary regulations, and portal for tenants to lodge complaints about individual properties should there be an issue."*
>
> *"Please do not progress with this awful scheme; it is massive overeach by the council, which instead should focus on building more affordable housing and improve enforcement of existing regulations. Implementation of this scheme will make everything worse in Westmsinter"*

2. Concerns about increased costs and rents: Many landlords and agents expressed concerns that the licensing scheme will lead to increased costs, which will ultimately be passed on to tenants in the form of higher rents. They argued that this will exacerbate the already difficult housing shortage and make it more difficult for tenants to afford rental properties.

> "*The added bureaucracy and thereby financial burden to the landlords will have to be passed onto tenants in the form of higher rents. This is not desirable. The issue is not poorly maintained properties, the issue is no choice. If there were more properties available there would be a natural selection. This is an issue created by the planning system.*"
>
> *"As for many properties in Westminster having such a scheme will not help but only add costs to private landlords and increase the rental cost for those privately renting."*

3. Focus on targeting rogue landlords: landlords suggested that instead of implementing a blanket licensing scheme, the council should focus on targeting and penalising rogue landlords who are not complying with existing regulations. They argued that this would be a more effective approach to improving property conditions and protecting tenants and not penalise landlords who already have properties that meet high standards.

> *"80% or so of PRS landlords in Westminster and its constituent wards are good landlords by your own admission, and selective licensing is a hammer, both bureaucratically and*

in terms of cost, to crack a nut. The Council would do better to continue to rely on Part i of the 2004 Housing Act and to apply selective licensing to the minority of rogue landlords"

"Legislation to protect tenants is almost invariably ineffective as "rogue landlords" simply ignore any restrictions designed to improve the situation through legislation, and this ends up penalising "good landlords""

4. Utilise existing powers/legislation to target issues within the PRS: some landlords and agents expressed that the current powers the council has to tackle problems with poor property conditions and ASB are sufficient.

"Other regulation such as the checking of tenants' properties every six months is patronising to tenants, infringes on their privacy and will create unnecessary worry on both sides. Existing regulation such as the Housing Act 2004 is quite sufficient and can be used to enforce standards. This may be more inconvenient for the council, however, is proportionate to the issues you are reporting. Doubled up regulation is unnecessary and burdens all compliant landlords in a disproportionate manner.."

"More regulation is not a good thing. WCC needs to be properly resourced to enforce existing regulations."

5. Lack of faith in effectiveness of schemes and council management: some landlords and agents expressed scepticism about the council's ability to effectively manage and enforce the licensing scheme. They cited examples of poor management of existing licensing schemes (both in Westminster and other boroughs) and lack of inspections as evidence that the scheme may not achieve its intended goals.

"The properties that you intend to enforce often sit outside of the normal methods used to market between landlords and tenants and there are likely not to have tenancy agreements in place or a clear way to identify the locations of these homes."

"How will the council enforce the licensing scheme on the numerous foreign landlords who are resident overseas and shell companies?"

"These objectives sound great but in practice how will they be enforced, licensing is just another way to make money and exploit people. There is no study of evidence to suggest that this has previously been successful and is likely to work in terms of enforcement or achievement of objectives."

Residents/local businesses

For residents/local businesses, similar themes were evidenced, with a greater emphasis on increased costs for tenants:

1. Concerns about increased costs: many respondents expressed concerns that the proposed licensing scheme would lead to increased costs for landlords which would ultimately be passed on to tenants in the form of higher rents. They argued that this would exacerbate the already high cost of living in Westminster and during a cost-of-living crisis.

> *"The proposed scheme will result in increase in rent due to fewer properties available for rent and increased cost to landlord due to licence fees and potential alteration to the properties required by licence. As a result, tenants will not be able to afford to rent a properties in Westminster."*
>
> *"A concern is whether licensing will further increase rents, as landlords pass on the costs associated with the licensing fee and any improvements required to meet the licensing requirements, thereby further pricing out lower-income tenants. Proper guardrails need to be in place to ensure landlords are not able to disproportionately shift the burden of maintaining their property onto tenants."*

2. Focus on enforcement and existing laws: several respondents suggested that the council should prioritise enforcing existing laws and regulations rather than implementing a new licensing scheme. They argued that there are already measures in place to address poor housing conditions and ASB and that the council should focus on effectively enforcing these laws.

> *"Even the legal requirements for a rental property are not monitored or policed now so until that can be managed affectively what is the point in introducing more conditions. This will only impact and penalise the good landlords and the bad landlords who already do not comply with legal requirements will continue to flout your 'conditions'. Manage what you have now properly!!!"*
>
> *"The whole system is over regulated and is making rents too high except for the council estates. The legislation is already there but unenforced. Spend the money on the homeless this is waste of taxpayers money when we are so short. You have regulated enough."*

3. Criticism of Westminster Council's own housing management: many respondents criticised Westminster Council for not adequately maintaining its own social housing properties. They argued that the council should address the issues within its own housing stock before targeting issues within the PRS.

> *"The council does not manage any other licensing scheme well so reason to believe that this would be any different. There will be no one to 'police' or monitor this effectively. It*

will definitely reduce the number of rental properties on the market and therefore increase rents further making living in Westminster as a private tenant unaffordable."

"The real issues come from the council owned properties. They are very slow at responding to leak issues etc. and cause damp and mold issues into privately owned properties."

4. *Impact on rental market and housing supply:* some respondents expressed concerns that the licensing scheme would discourage landlords from renting out their properties, leading to a decrease in the availability of rental housing. They argued that this would further worsen the housing crisis in Westminster.

"*Costs will reduce stock and increase overheads therefore there will be less affordable rentable houses.*"

"Imposing more restrictions on landlords and the availability of rooms will further reduce the supply of rooms and drive rents even higher, There are already loads of smaller rooms which have been made un-lettable by regulations."

5. *Need for targeted approach:* several respondents suggested that the licensing scheme should be more targeted, focusing on specific problem areas or landlords rather than applying to all properties. They emphasised the importance of addressing the issues caused by a minority of landlords without burdening all landlords with additional costs and regulations.

"I don't believe there are huge issues in these areas. The few that may be an issue can be singled out rather than a blanket policy of licensing which would seem to penalise good landlords like mine!"

"This is just a money making scheme. Bad landlords don't sign up, you just tax good ones who raise prices and then blame them when they have to raise their prices because they can't afford to run otherwise."

3.6 Views on the proposed selective licensing scheme fee

The consultation asked respondents for their views on the proposed licence fee for the proposed selective licensing scheme. Information about the proposed licence fee was provided within the consultation documents.

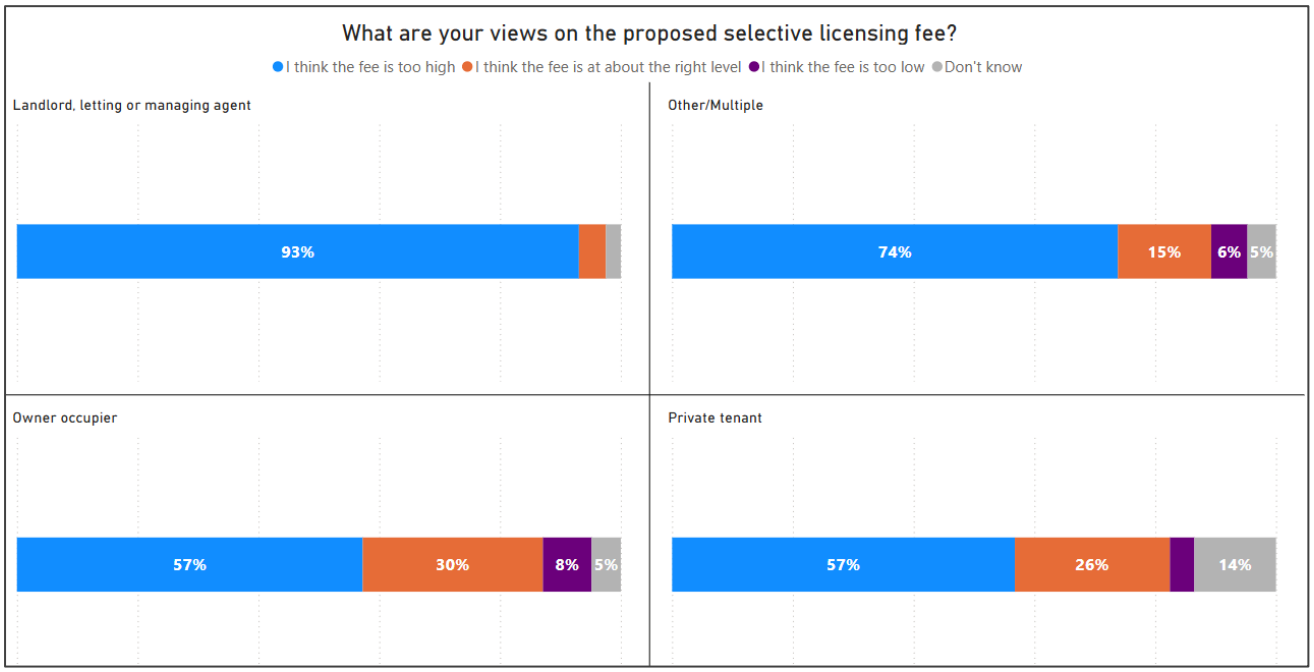
Respondents were asked how reasonable they feel the proposed selective licence fee of £995 for a five-year licence is.



Of the **633** respondents who answered this question, a majority of respondents, **75%**, said that they thought that the fee is too high.

All stakeholder groups had a majority that thought the fee was too high, but the majority varied considerably by group. Landlords, letting and managing agents were the most consistent in responding that the fee is too high, with **93%** selecting this option; the "Other/Multiple" stakeholder group had **74%** thinking the fee was too high, while private tenants and owner occupiers both had **57%** of respondents responding that the fee was too high.

30% of owner occupiers and **26%** of private tenants thought the fee is at about the right level. Only a small percentage from each stakeholder group responded that the fee is too low.

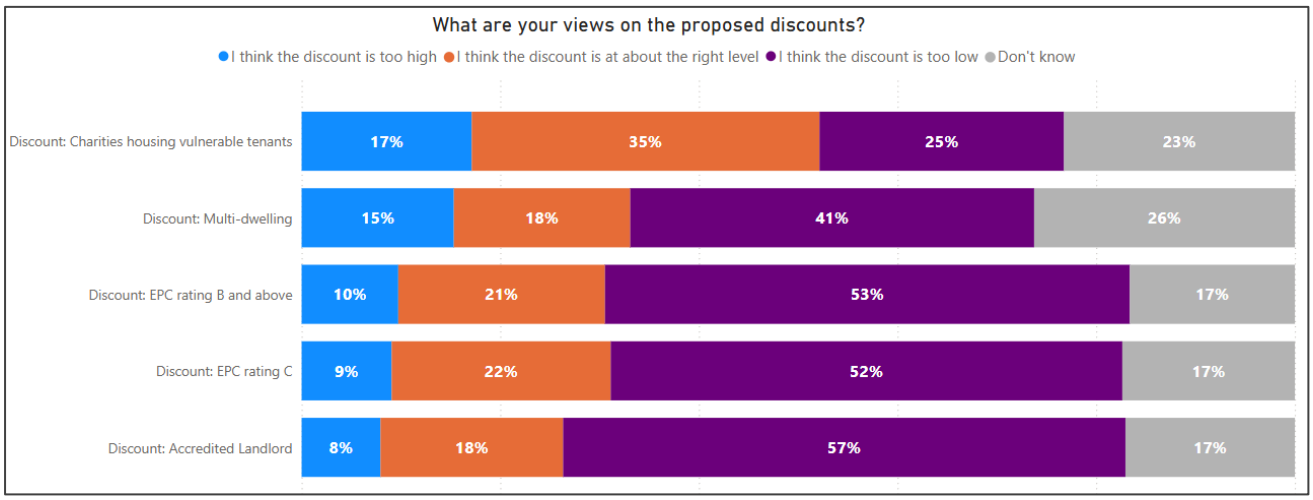


3.7 Views on the proposed licensing scheme discounts

During this consultation, the council proposed five separate discounts. The discounts proposed were for accredited landlords, charities, EPC ratings (two tier of C, and B or above), and multi-dwelling.

Nature of discount	Amount (Selective)
Accredited landlord	10% of total fee off Part B (£99.50)
Charities	100% of total fee
EPC rating B+	20% off Part B (£90.40)
EPC rating C	10% off Part B (£45.20)
Multiple leaseholds within the same freehold	£125 off Part A

The consultation asked respondents for their views on each of the proposed licence fee discounts. Information about the proposed licence fee discounts was provided within the consultation documents.

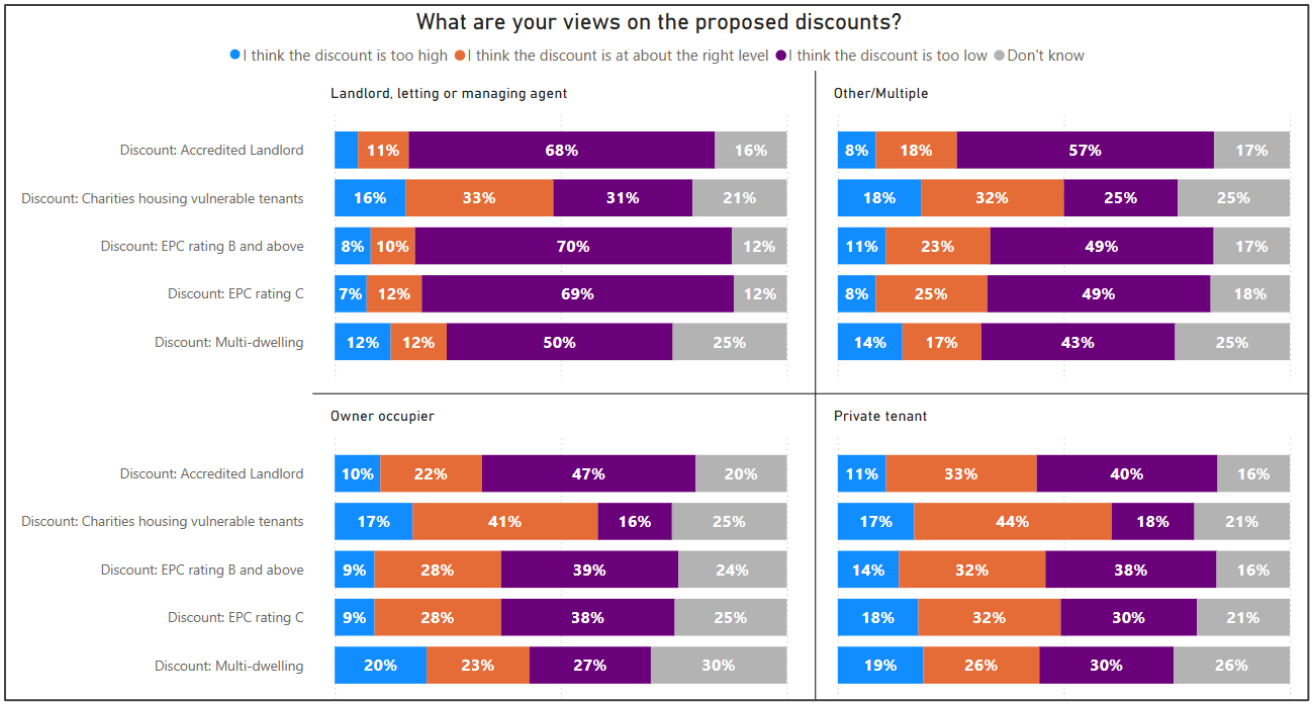


Of the **658** respondents who shared their views on these discounts, for the EPC and accredited discounts, around **55%** stated that the discounts were too low. For the multi-dwelling discount **41%** thought the discount was too low and more than a quarter of respondents stated that they did not know/have an opinion. More interestingly, **25%** of respondents thought the Charities discount was too low, despite it being 100% discount.

Looking at the results by stakeholder group, around **70%** of landlords, letting and managing agents generally viewed the accredited landlord and EPC discounts as too low. When considering the multi-dwelling discount, a lower proportion, **50%**, viewed the discount as too low. **31%** viewed thought the charities discount was too low.

Within the "other/multiple" stakeholder group, roughly **50%** thought the discounts were too low except for the charities discount where **25%** thought it was too low, and the same proportion stated they didn't know.

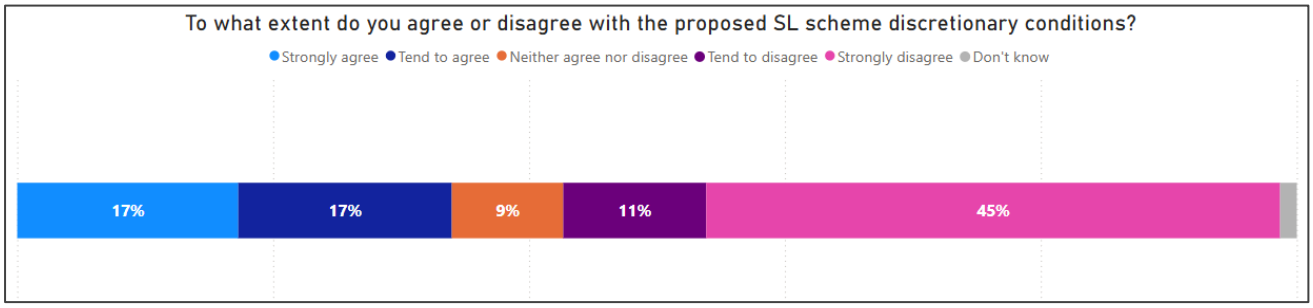
Responses from private tenants and owner occupiers were quite similar, with a more even distribution across the options although "discount too low" was still slightly ahead in most cases. Excluding charities, responses were broadly between **30% and 40%** for the discount being too low, and between **20%** and **35%** for "about the right level". For the charities discount, "about the right level" was the most popular answer followed by "don't know".



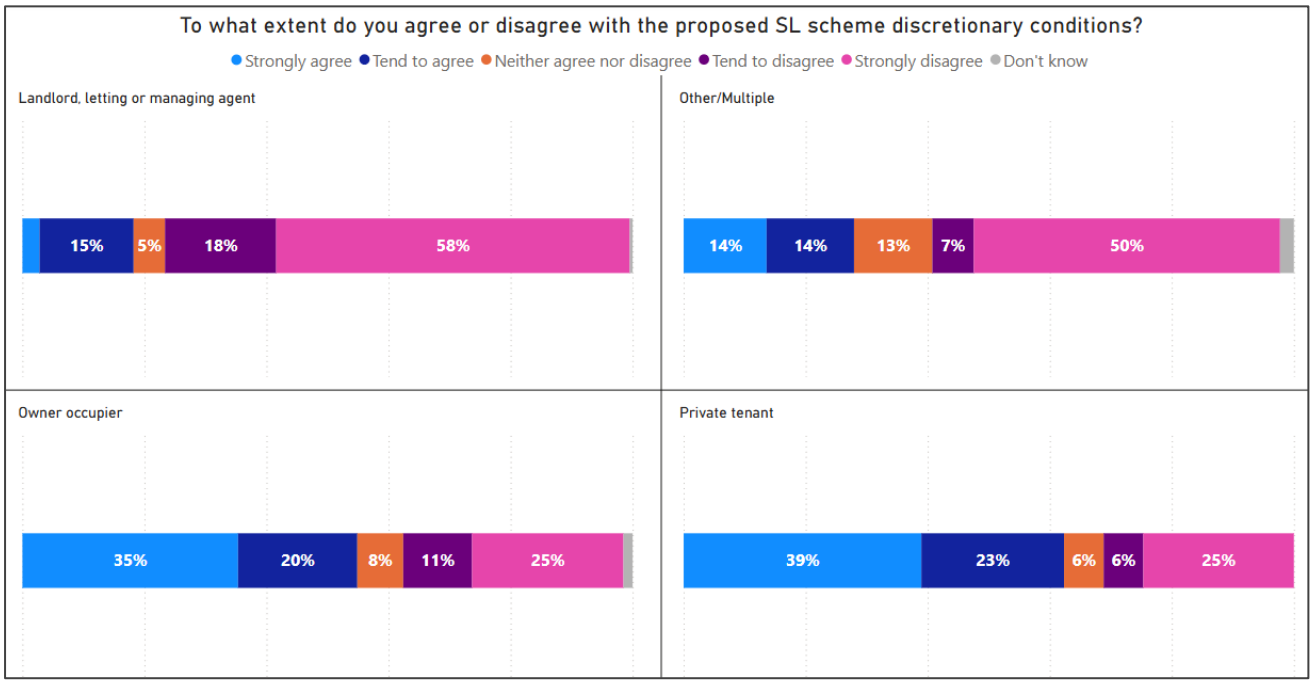
3.8 Views on the proposed selective licensing scheme conditions

The consultation asked respondents for their views on the proposed selective licence conditions. Information about the licence conditions was provided within the consultation documents.

Of the **690** respondents who answered this question, a majority of respondents, **56%**, disagreed with the proposed licence conditions, while **34%** of respondents agreed.



Looking at the responses by group, landlords, letting and managing agents and "other / multiple" stakeholders are largely opposed, with **76%** and **57%** respectively disagreeing with the selective licensing conditions. Private tenants **62%** and owner-occupiers **55%** are both majority in favour of the selective licensing conditions.



Free text comments regarding the selective licence conditions

The free text comments for the questions asking respondents to explain why they disagreed with the proposed selective licence conditions were analysed. The analysis looked at the responses by stakeholder type.

Landlords/agents

For landlords/agents, several themes emerged, but especially the notion that the current regulations and requirements are enough and that additional conditions are unnecessary.

1. *Excessive burden:* many landlords and agents argue that the proposed selective licensing conditions are excessive, place an unfair burden on responsible landlords (and in certain cases should be the responsibility of the tenant) and should not go further than national law.

> *"The proposals are using a sledge hammer to crack a nut. Increasing bureaucracy is not the way to deal with poor housing or anti social behaviour. If housing is of a poor quality or any occupier is anti social, the Council needs proper powers to rectify the situation. A blanket register is just a register incorporating expense and time."*
>
> *"Anti social behavous has nothing to do with the Landlord! Why are you charging the landlord for a license and to blame the landlord if the tenant is the one causing nuisance!?!?!*

NO landlord wants a troublesome tenant...you need to focus on the tenant...not the landlord!!!! Charge the tenant a fee to ensure no anti scoial behaviour."

"The level of interference is excessive. Discretionary Licence conditions which exceed Mandatory Licence conditions will drive up costs. The level of information required to be provided to Westminster is huge and I doubt Westminster are capable of managing that volume of information. The requirement to provide hard wired, linked smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in halls, landings, bathrooms and lavatories is costly and excessive..."

2. *Focus on existing regulations:* several landlords argued that the proposed conditions largely overlap with existing regulations and requirements. They believed that enforcing and ensuring compliance with these existing regulations would be more effective than introducing new licensing conditions.

"Many of the issues targeted by the discretionary conditions are already covered under existing housing, safety, and tenancy laws. For example, property maintenance and tenant management are regulated by laws such as the Housing Act 2004 and health and safety regulations. Imposing additional conditions under the licensing scheme risks duplicating these requirements, leading to unnecessary red tape."

"*Strengthen enforcement against landlords who flout existing laws, rather than imposing blanket licensing requirements."*

3. *Impact on rents:* landlords expressed concerns that the additional costs associated with meeting the selective licensing conditions will ultimately be passed on to tenants in the form of higher rents. They believed that this will further exacerbate the affordability crisis in the rental market

"I understand that these proposed changes have the best intentions however, in my opinion, they will have the opposite effect to that intended. The fundamental problem is that there is no enough rented accommodation in Westminster and these changes will further force out landlords and increase rents in the borough."

"The costs associated with implementing discretionary conditions will ultimately be passed on to tenants in the form of higher rents. This could exacerbate the housing affordability crisis, particularly in areas of high demand such as Westminster. Furthermore, landlords may choose to withdraw properties from the rental market altogether, reducing the overall supply of housing."

Residents/local businesses

Similarly to the responses from landlords/agents, a common theme was that the licence conditions are covered by existing law. There was also a concern about the impact on tenants and that added requirements could lead to increases in rent and decrease in supply.

1. *Focus on existing regulations:* respondents expressed their disagreement, in many cases questioning the need for additional regulations and suggested that existing laws and enforcement should be sufficient

> *"There are already sufficient regulations in place. A proper enforcement is the responsibility of the council."*
>
> *"Imposing more restrictions on landlords and the availability of rooms will further reduce the supply of rooms and drive rents even higher, There are already loads of smaller rooms which have been made un-lettable by regulations."*
>
> *"The Council already has powers to tackle some of the issues e.g. HMO regulations, noise abatement powers, fly tipping/ dumping of rubbish (most of which contain credit card receipts e.g from shopping and food deliveries). The Council should review existing processes set up to discharge their existing duties before spending on potentially unnecessary additional processes."*

2. *Impact on tenants:* several respondents raised concerns about the potential negative impact on tenants, such as increased rents, reduced housing options, and difficulties in obtaining references or finding accommodation due to stricter regulations

> *"The proposed scheme will result in increase in rent due to fewer properties available for rent and increased cost to landlord due to licence fees and potential alteration to the properties required by licence. As a result, tenants will not be able to afford to rent a properties in Westminster."*
>
> *"These proposals will simply increase the costs (i.e. licence fees) that landlords pass onto their private tenants. It will have no impact on the condition of the properties. Existing legislation (if enforced by Westminster Council) already provides this protection to tenants. The proposals will be ineffective as good landlords already comply with these standards and bad landlords will ignore/evade the licencing. Westminster will spend excessive resources trying to identify poor landlords when this money could be better spent on improving social housing. More ineffective and costly red tape."*
>
> *"Costs will reduce stock and increase overheads therefore there will be less affordable rentable houses"*

3. *Enforcement:* some respondents raised concerns of the council's efficacy to enforce the scheme and questioned its effectiveness.

> *"As you say above, these are already legal requirements and if the council thinks that landlords are contravening them they already have enforcement/prosecution powers. Implementing a licensing scheme is just adding more bureaucracy."*

"Just help support tenants in existing legal process. And lead by example (rather than letting your own tenants in mould and wet conditions for months"

"i think it is too vague and doesn't ensure that landlords will meet obligations"

4. Protection for tenants: several respondents noted that there should be added conditions relating to the council's abilities to protect tenants and limit the power of landlords

"There needs to be more control of Landlord's agents."

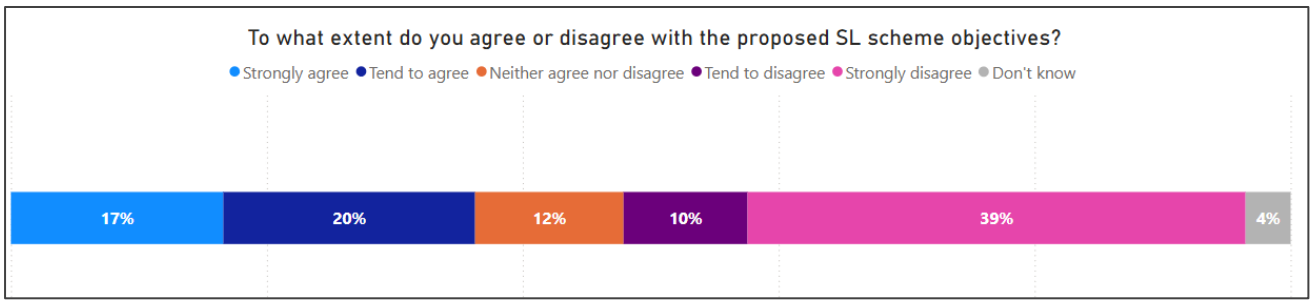
"What powers do you have to enforce against landlords without a selective licence?"

"Within Westminster there are several large landlords, that hide behind offshore multiple companies. Some of the worst are in fact large political donors. They won't get any licenses or the multitude of companies they own. How will you tackle that??."

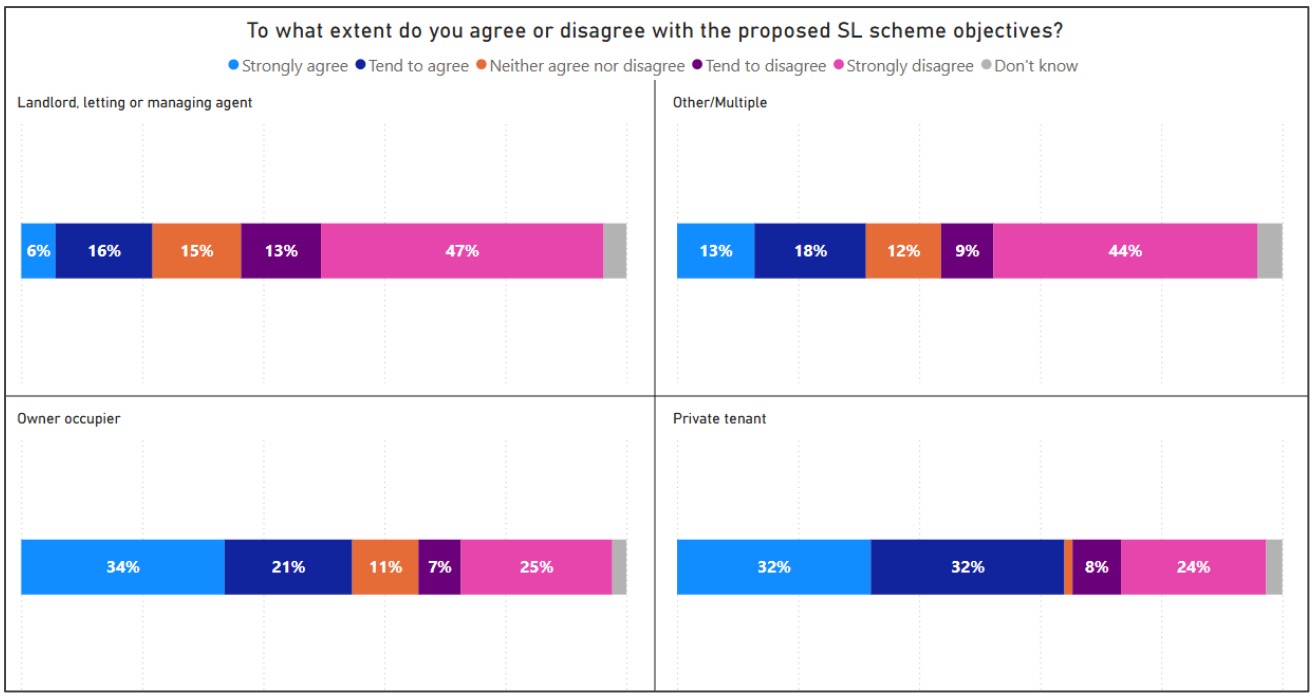
"Broader minimum standards to disincentivise hoarding of property and annual unrelated rent increases"

3.9 Views on the proposed licensing scheme objectives

The consultation asked respondents for their views on the proposed licensing scheme objectives. Information about the licensing scheme objectives was provided within the consultation documents.



Of the **681** respondents who answered this question, a slight majority of respondents, **49%**, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposed licensing scheme objectives, while **37%** of respondents agreed.



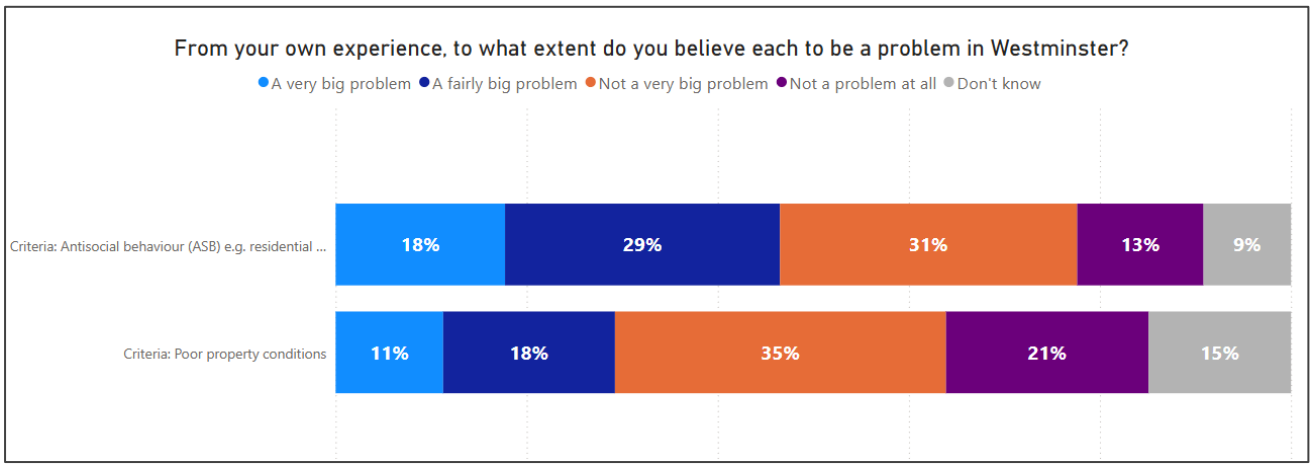
Looking at the responses by group, landlords, letting and managing agents are largely opposed, as are "other / multiple" stakeholders with **60%** and **53%** respectively disagreeing with the objectives. Private tenants **64%** and owner-occupiers **55%** are both majority in favour of the objectives.

3.10 Views on issues in Westminster's PRS

Respondents to the survey were asked their opinion of issues relating to poor property conditions and ASB in private rented properties in the city.

Respondents were asked to what extent they believed that poor property conditions and ASB are problems in their local area of Westminster.

688 respondents in total answered this question.



Poor property conditions *(684 responses)*

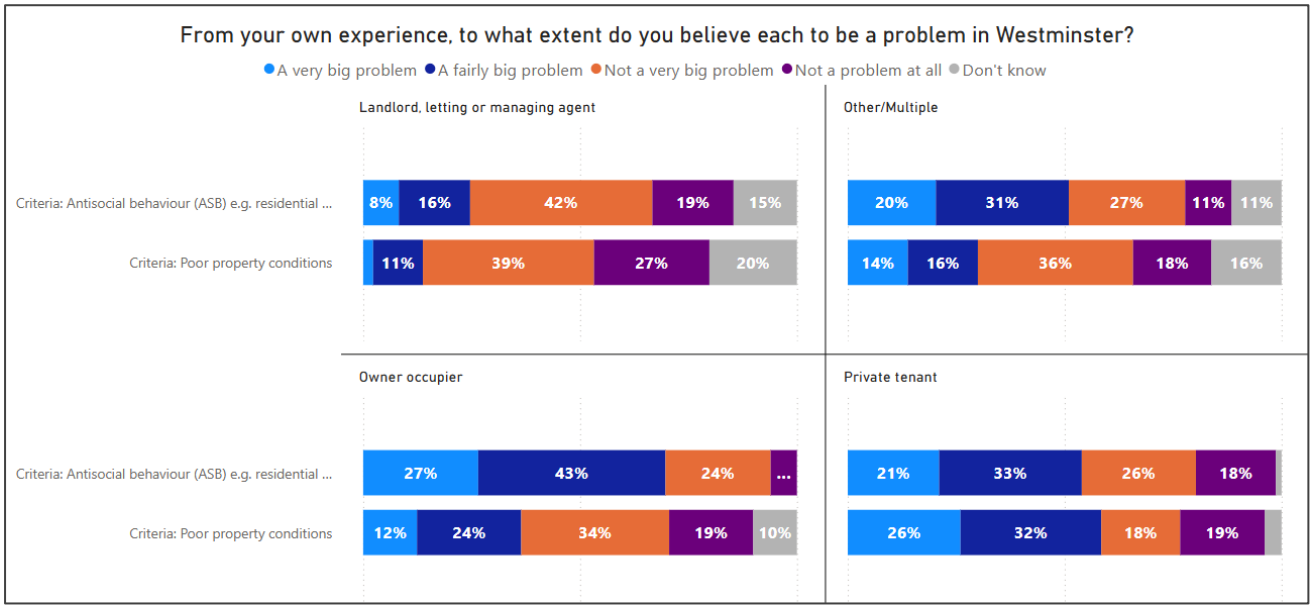
A majority of respondents, **35%**, stated that they believed poor property conditions were not a very big problem. **29%** believed they were a fairly big or very big problem while **21%** believed they were not a problem at all.

When looking at the responses by stakeholder group, as can be seen in the graphs below, there is great polarity between landlords, letting and managing agents and private tenants and other stakeholders; where only **14%** of landlords, letting and managing agents viewed poor property conditions as a fairly big or very big problem, in contrast, **58%** of private tenants viewed poor property conditions as a fairly big or very big problem.

ASB (688 responses)

35% of respondents thought that ASB was not a very big problem as opposed to **47%** who thought it was fairly big or a very big problem and **13%** who thought it was not a problem at all.

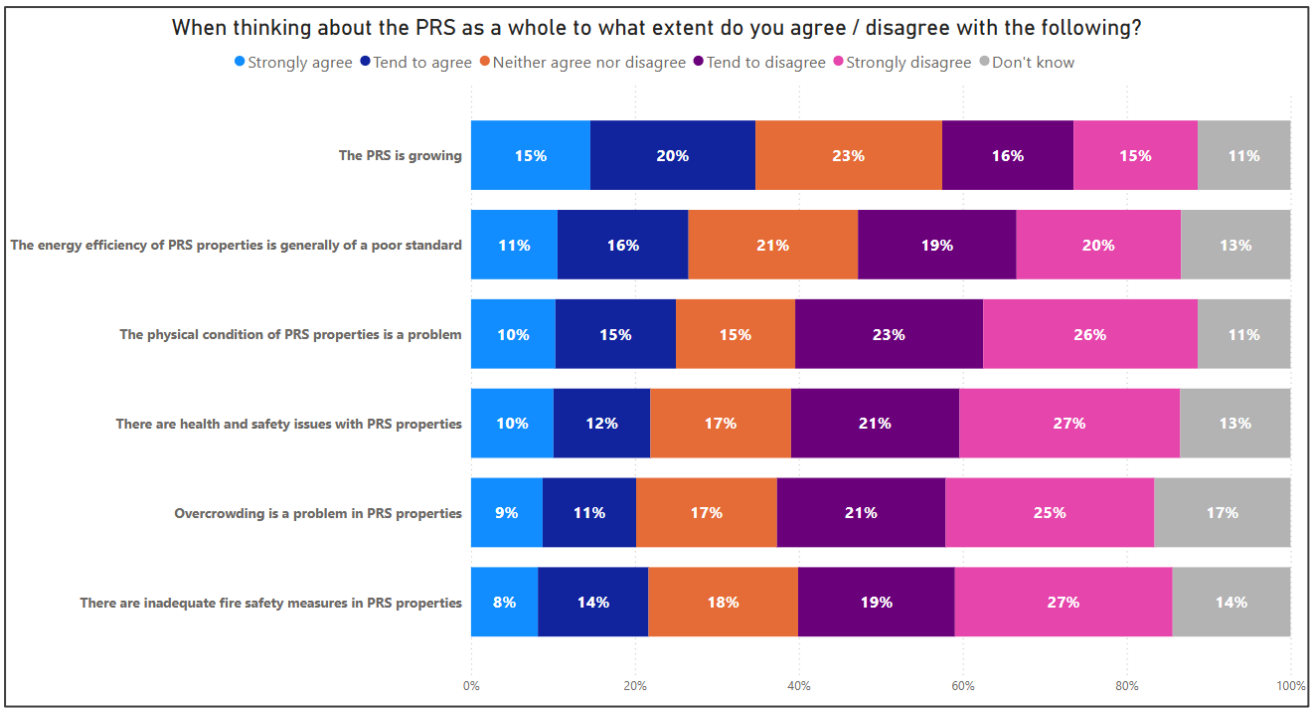
There is also polarity between landlords, letting and managing agents and private tenants and other stakeholders when considering ASB; where **24%** of landlords, letting and managing agents viewed ASB as a fairly big or very big problem, whereas **54%** of private tenants and **70%** of owner occupiers viewed ASB as a fairly big or very big problem.

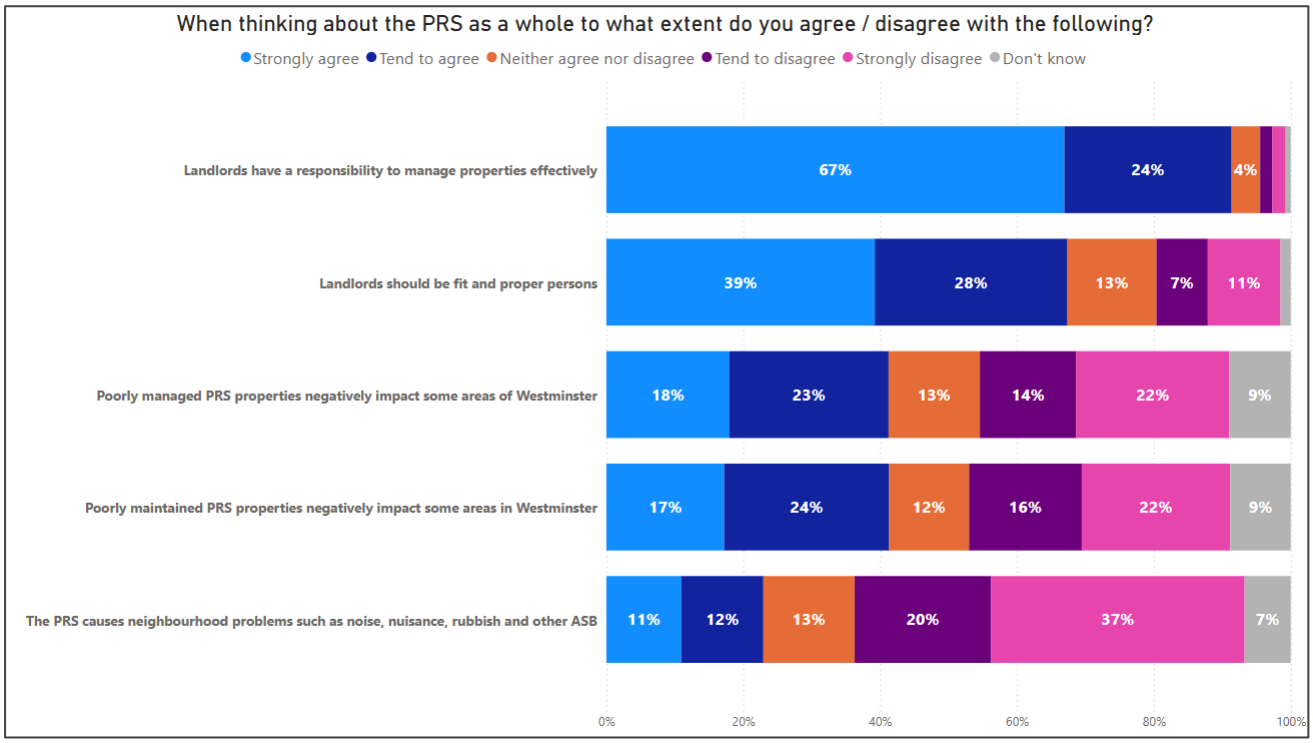


3.11 Views on the PRS in Westminster

Respondents were also asked about their views on the PRS in Westminster as a whole.

682 respondents in total answered this question.





The number of PRS properties (680 responses)

When asked whether the number of private rented properties in the city has been increasing, **35%** agreed or strongly agreed, while **31%** disagreed or strongly disagreed. A significant proportion of respondents, **34%**, stated that didn't know or neither agreed nor disagreed.

The energy efficiency of PRS properties (682 responses)

When asked whether the energy efficiency of PRS properties is generally of a poor standard, **39%** disagreed or strongly disagreed while **27%** agreed or strongly agreed.

Physical condition of properties (680 responses)

When asked whether the physical condition of private rented properties in the city was a problem, the majority of respondents, **49%**, either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while **25%** agreed or strongly agreed.

Health and Safety Issues (676 responses)

When asked whether there were health and safety issues with private rented properties in the city, the majority of respondents, **48%** either disagreed or strongly disagreed and **22%** agreed or strongly agreed.

Overcrowding (675 responses)

When asked whether there was an issue with overcrowding in private rented properties in the city, a majority, **46%**, disagreed or strongly disagreed, while **20%** agreed or strongly agreed and **34%** didn't know or neither agree nor disagreed.

Inadequate fire safety measures (674 responses)

When asked whether there were inadequate fire safety measures in private rented properties in the city, **46%** disagreed or strongly disagreed, **22%** per cent agreed or strongly agreed and **36%** stated that didn't know or neither agreed nor disagreed.

Landlord responsibility (671 responses)

When asked if landlords have a responsibility to manage their properties effectively, the overwhelming majority of respondents, **91%**, either agreed or strongly agreed.

'Fit and proper' person (668 responses)

When asked if landlords should be 'fit and proper' persons (e.g. have proper management or financial arrangements in place and not have convictions for certain types of offences), again, the overwhelming majority, **67**%, either agreed or strongly agreed, versus **18%** who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Poorly managed properties (667 responses)

When asked whether poorly managed private rented properties were contributing to the decline of some areas in Westminster, a small majority agreed, with **41%** agreeing or strongly agreeing, while **36%** either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

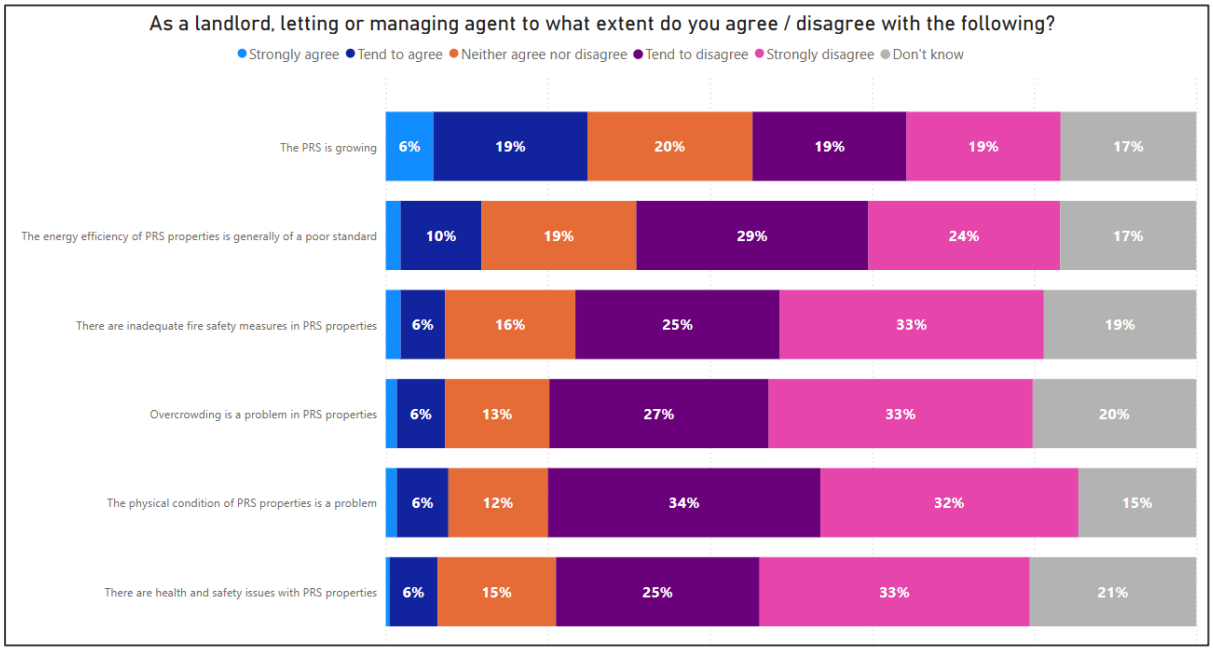
Poorly maintained properties (668 responses)

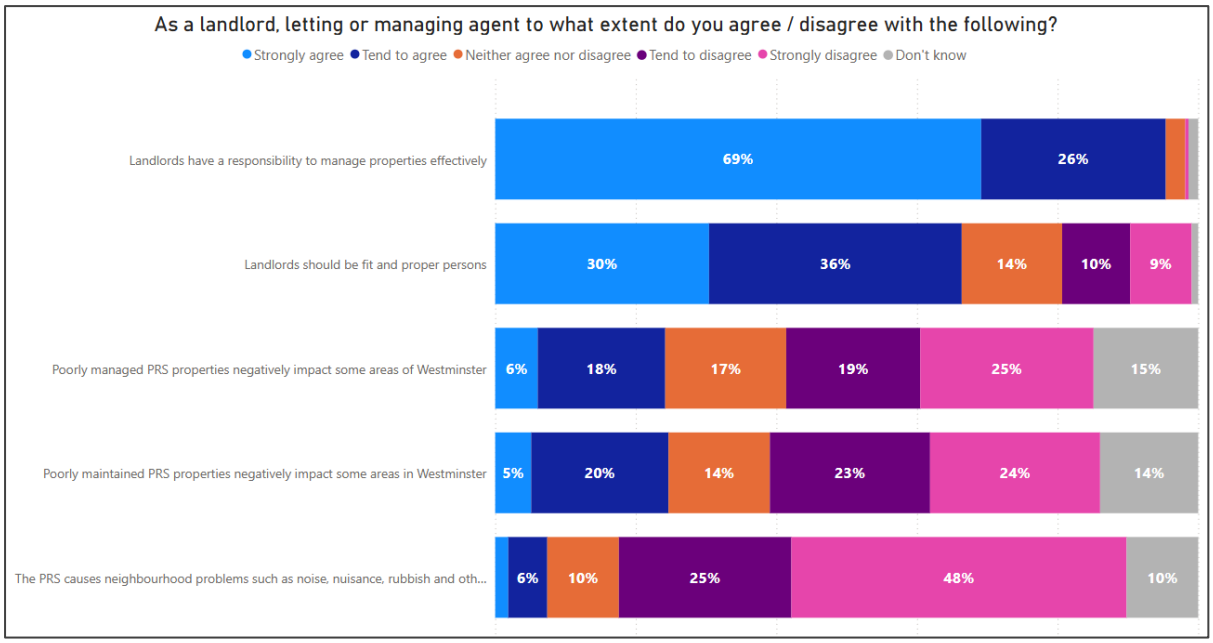
When asked whether poorly maintained private rented properties were contributing to the decline of some areas in Westminster, the responses were slightly more mixed, with **41%** agreeing or strongly agreeing, while **38%** either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

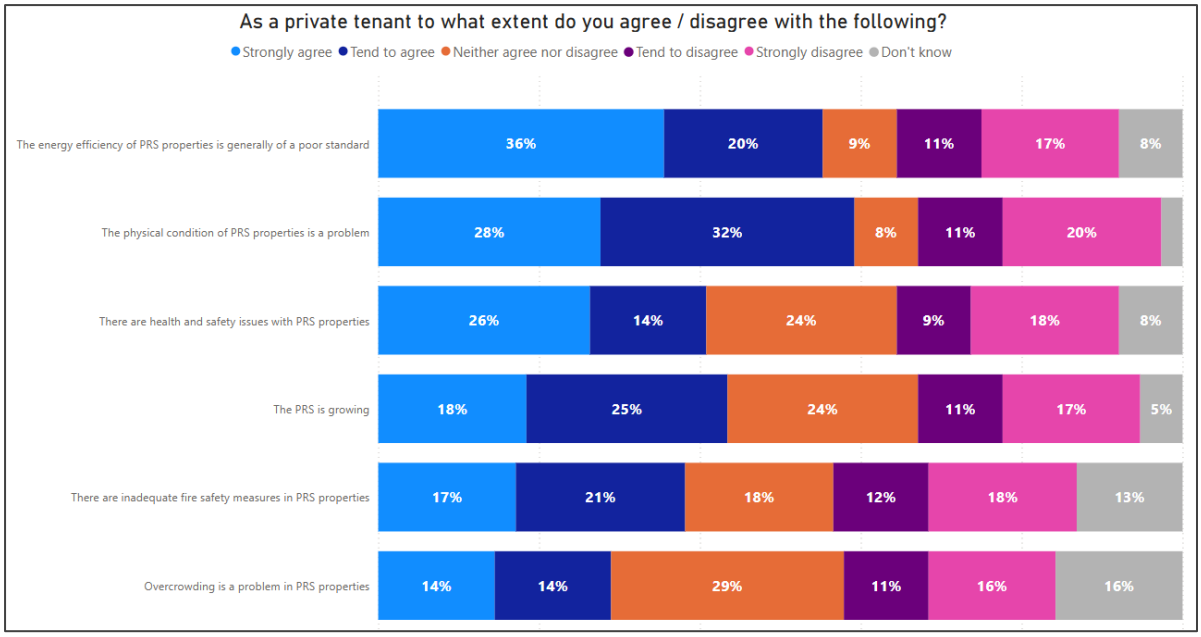
Neighbourhood problems such as noise, nuisance, rubbish and other ASB (667 responses)

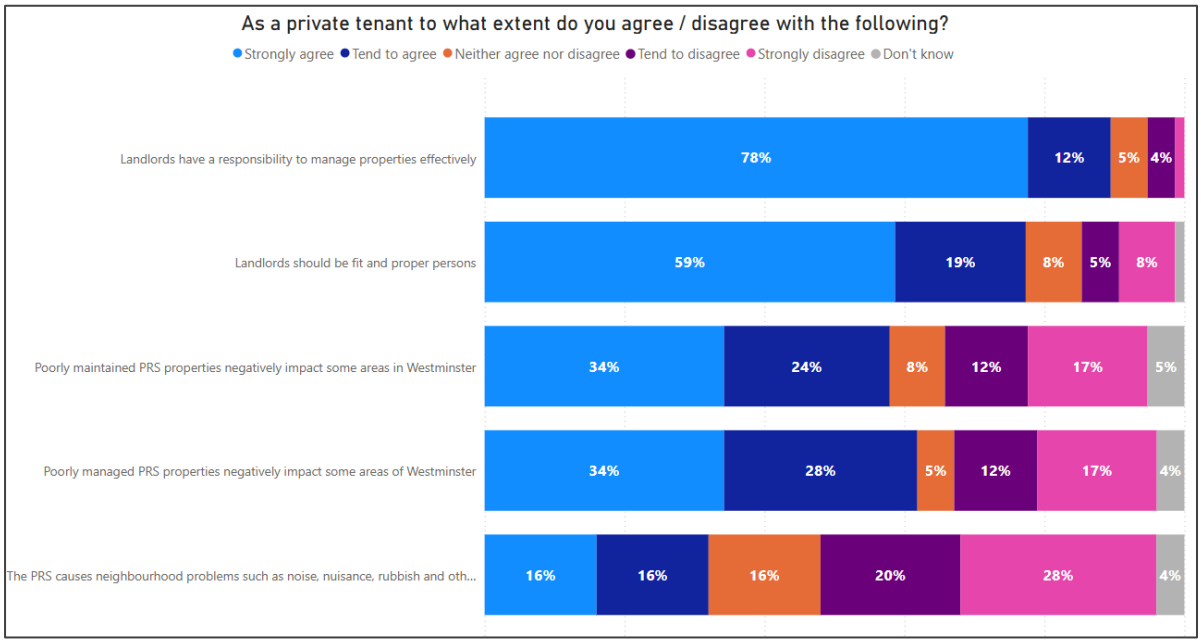
When asked whether the PRS causes neighbourhood problems, the majority, **57%**, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

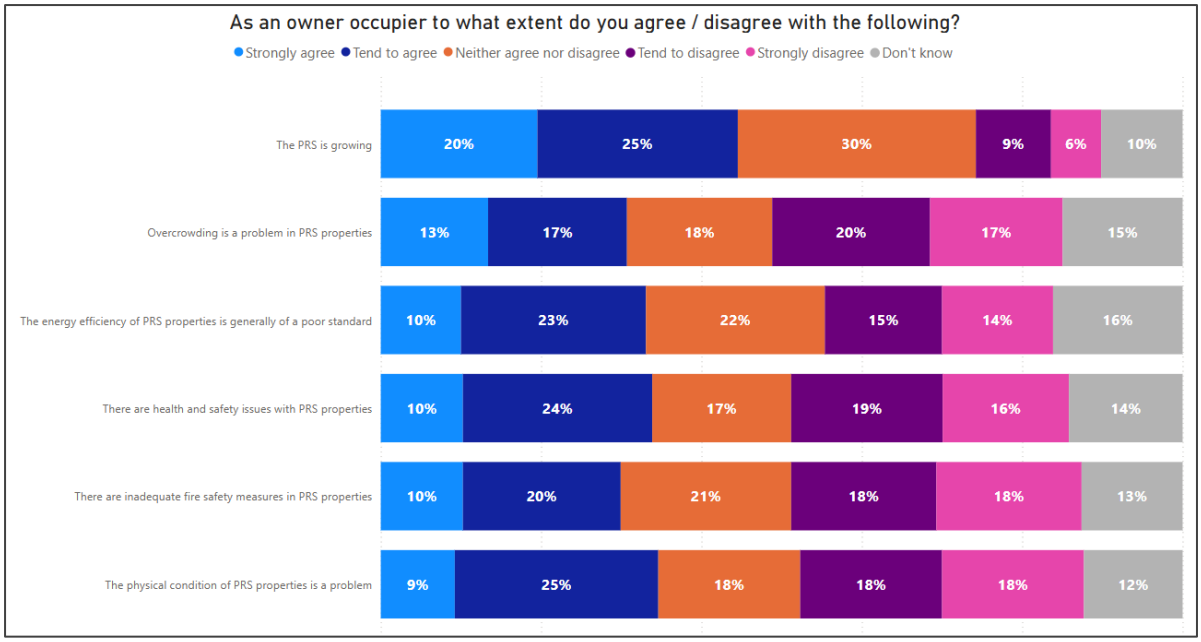
Similarly, when looking at responses by stakeholder group, there is a stark contrast between landlords, letting and managing agents' perceptions of the PRS in Westminster and that of private tenants and owner occupiers, with other/multiple stakeholders landing somewhere in between. The stakeholder breakdown is shown in the graphs below.

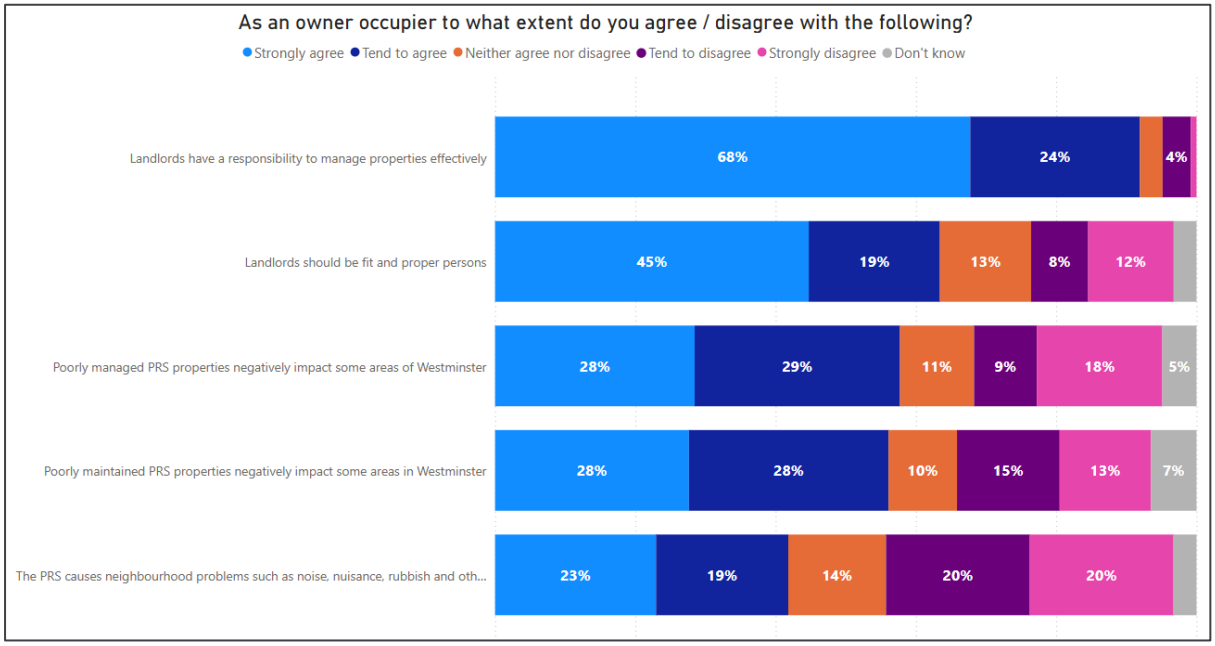


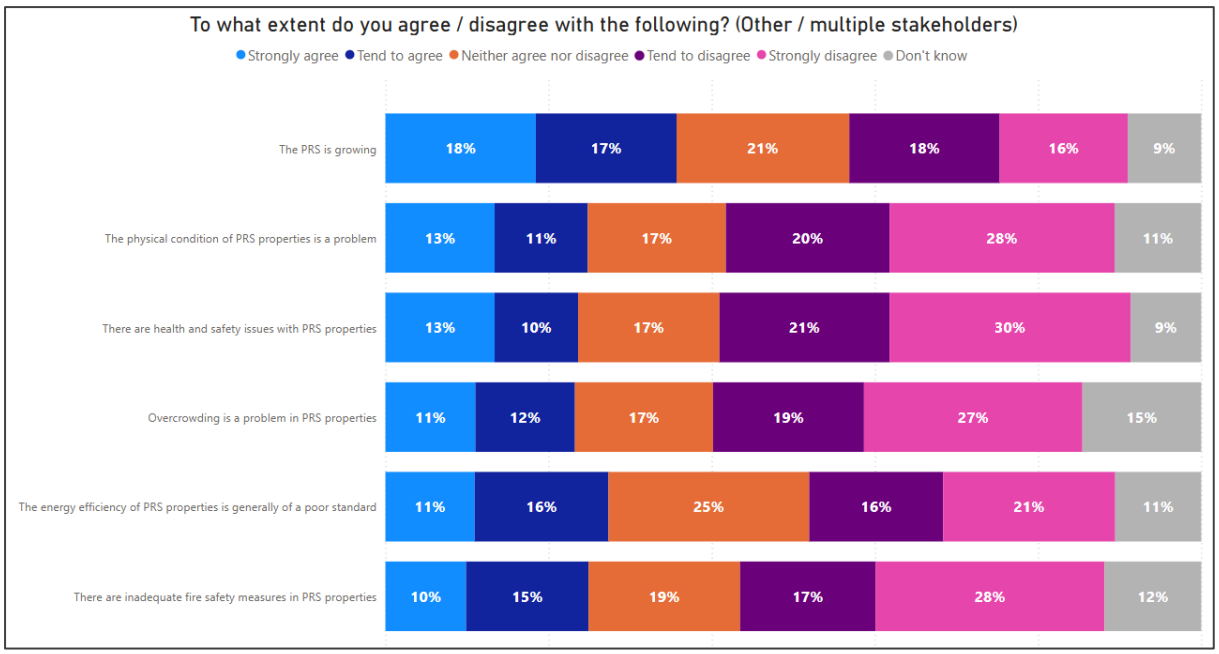


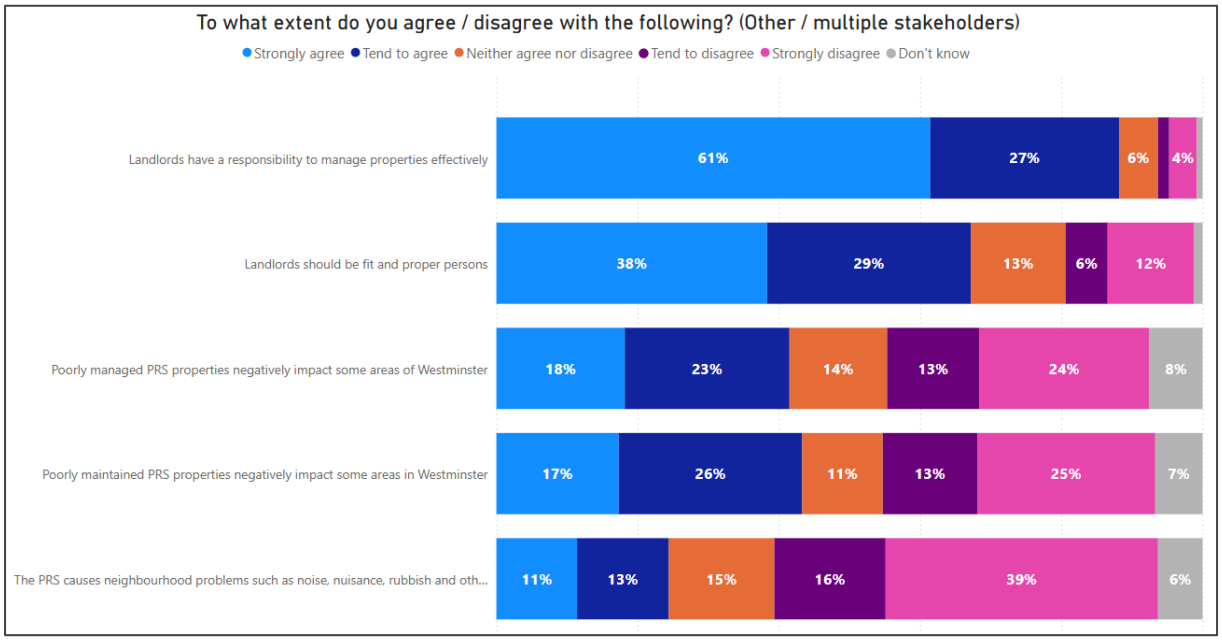

As a private tenant to what extent do you agree / disagree with the following?
Strongly agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know
The energy efficiency of PRS properties is generally of a poor standard
36%
20%
9%
11%
17%
8%
The physical condition of PRS properties is a problem
28%
32%
8%
11%
20%
There are health and safety issues with PRS properties
26%
14%
24%
9%
18%
8%
The PRS is growing
18%
25%
24%
11%
17%
5%
There are inadequate fire safety measures in PRS properties
17%
21%
18%
12%
18%
13%
Overcrowding is a problem in PRS properties
14%
14%
29%
11%
16%
16%


As a private tenant to what extent do you agree / disagree with the following?
Strongly agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know
Landlords have a responsibility to manage properties effectively
78%
12%
5%
4%
Landlords should be fit and proper persons
59%
19%
8%
5%
8%
Poorly maintained PRS properties negatively impact some areas in Westminster
34%
24%
8%
12%
17%
5%
Poorly managed PRS properties negatively impact some areas of Westminster
34%
28%
5%
12%
17%
4%
The PRS causes neighbourhood problems such as noise, nuisance, rubbish and oth...
16%
16%
16%
20%
28%
4%


As an owner occupier to what extent do you agree / disagree with the following?
Strongly agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know
The PRS is growing
20%
25%
30%
9%
6%
10%
Overcrowding is a problem in PRS properties
13%
17%
18%
20%
17%
15%
The energy efficiency of PRS properties is generally of a poor standard
10%
23%
22%
15%
14%
16%
There are health and safety issues with PRS properties
10%
24%
17%
19%
16%
14%
There are inadequate fire safety measures in PRS properties
10%
20%
21%
18%
18%
13%
The physical condition of PRS properties is a problem
9%
25%
18%
18%
18%
12%


As an owner occupier to what extent do you agree / disagree with the following?
Strongly agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know
Landlords have a responsibility to manage properties effectively
68%
24%
4%
Landlords should be fit and proper persons
45%
19%
13%
8%
12%
Poorly managed PRS properties negatively impact some areas of Westminster
28%
29%
11%
9%
18%
5%
Poorly maintained PRS properties negatively impact some areas in Westminster
28%
28%
10%
15%
13%
7%
The PRS causes neighbourhood problems such as noise, nuisance, rubbish and oth...
23%
19%
14%
20%
20%

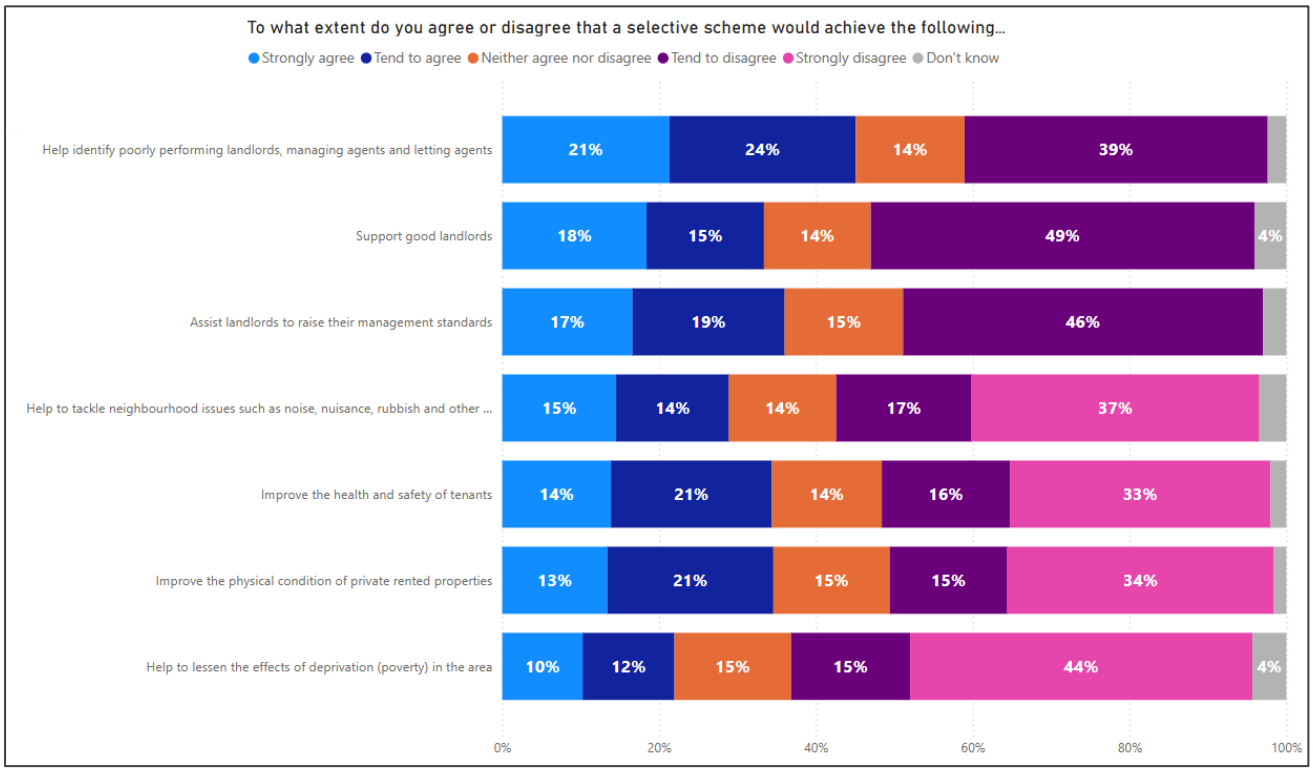

To what extent do you agree / disagree with the following? (Other / multiple stakeholders)
Strongly agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know
The PRS is growing
18%
17%
21%
18%
16%
9%
The physical condition of PRS properties is a problem
13%
11%
17%
20%
28%
11%
There are health and safety issues with PRS properties
13%
10%
17%
21%
30%
9%
Overcrowding is a problem in PRS properties
11%
12%
17%
19%
27%
15%
The energy efficiency of PRS properties is generally of a poor standard
11%
16%
25%
16%
21%
11%
There are inadequate fire safety measures in PRS properties
10%
15%
19%
17%
28%
12%


To what extent do you agree / disagree with the following? (Other / multiple stakeholders)
Strongly agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know
Landlords have a responsibility to manage properties effectively
61%
27%
6%
4%
Landlords should be fit and proper persons
38%
29%
13%
6%
12%
Poorly managed PRS properties negatively impact some areas of Westminster
18%
23%
14%
13%
24%
8%
Poorly maintained PRS properties negatively impact some areas in Westminster
17%
26%
11%
13%
25%
7%
The PRS causes neighbourhood problems such as noise, nuisance, rubbish and oth...
11%
13%
15%
16%
39%
6%

3.12 Views on selective licensing scheme outcomes in Westminster

Respondents were also asked about their views on whether they thought a selective licensing scheme in Westminster would help to achieve certain outcomes.

695 respondents in total answered this question.



The question asked to what extent they agreed that a selective licensing scheme in Westminster would help to achieve the following outcomes:

Help identify poorly performing landlords, managing agents and letting agents (670 responses)

45% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while **39%** disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Support good landlords (668 responses)

49% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while **33%** said they agreed or strongly agreed.

Assist landlords to raise their management standards (669 responses)

46% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while **36%** said they agreed or strongly agreed.

Help to tackle issues of neighbourhood problems such as noise nuisance, rubbish and other ASB (695 responses)

The majority of respondents, **54%**, either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while **29%** either agreed or strongly agreed.

Improve the health and safety of tenants (692 responses)

49% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while **35%** said they agreed or strongly agreed.

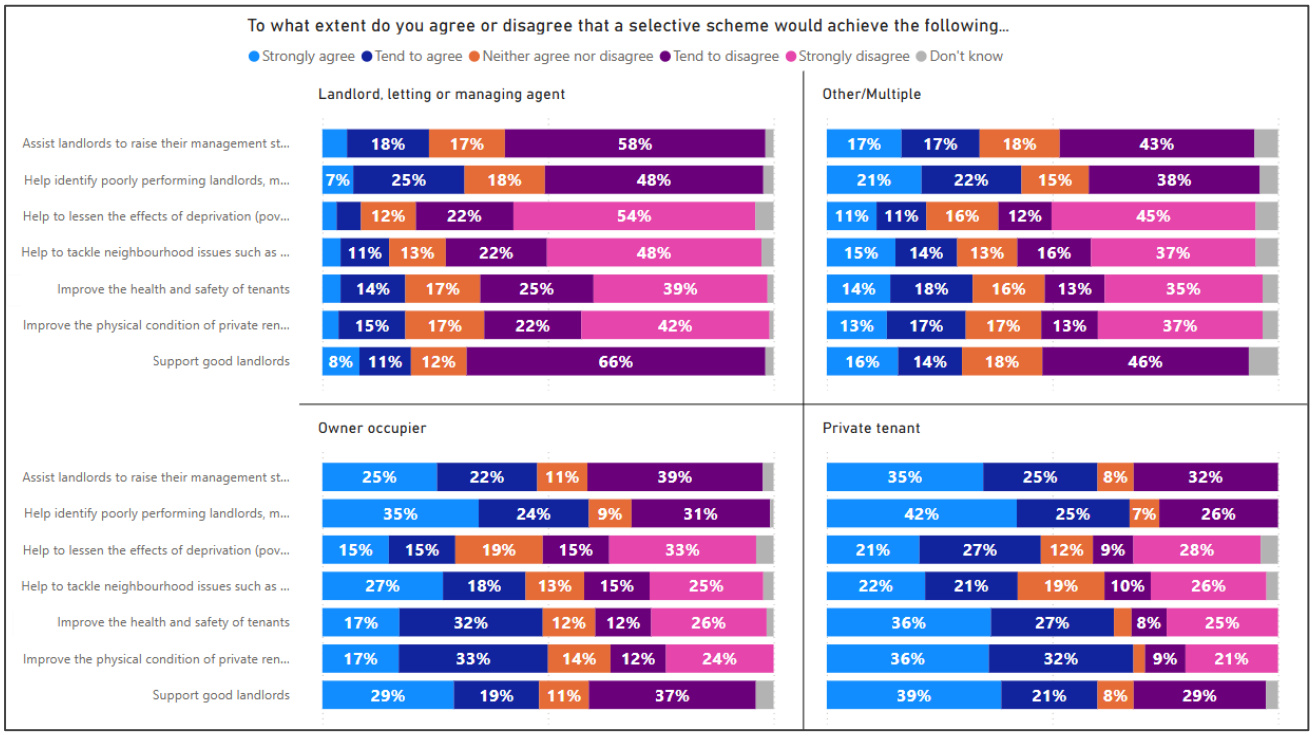
Improve the physical condition of private rented properties (694 responses)

49% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while **34%** said they agreed or strongly agreed.

Help to lessen the effects of deprivation (poverty) in the area (692 responses)

The majority of respondents, **59%**, either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while **22%** either agreed or strongly agreed.

As is the case with the majority of responses, there is polarity between the views of landlords, letting and managing agents and those of private tenants and other stakeholders. The stakeholder breakdown is shown in the graphs below.



3.13 Alternative solutions, other comments and considerations

Open text responses were also requested to gather additional comments, and to determine whether stakeholders felt that there was anything further that the council should consider:

Some respondents suggested alternative approaches to improving housing standards and ASB, such as focusing on better management and enforcement of existing regulations. They emphasised the need for a more balanced and targeted approach that does not penalise good landlords or deter investment in the rental market. A major theme was that the council should focus on building new homes and helping to make renovations to existing properties easier.

1. Building/development: multiple respondents expressed the view that enhancements to existing, and building of new properties, both by the council and within the PRS with council support would alleviate some of the issues that the council is seeking to address through its licensing schemes.

> *"Westminster council must improve the quality of building, windows and maintenance work. Westminster council must act as a responsible Landlord towards Leaseholders."*
>
> *"The Council should be designing policies to encourage and support a mix of middle and lower income tenants in private rented properties, until it can provide sufficient social housing for these demographics - that is safe and and repaired quickly for tenants."*
>
> *"The EPC rating can not work with old buildings where the freeholder is responsible as passes costs to the leaseholder. This make it not practical and is totally unfair to penalise a landlord when the EPC is beyond there control or even affordability."*
>
> *"Many rental properties in Westminster are leasehold flats within a freehold building. The landlord who is the leaseholder would be required to apply for the license but it is possible that improvements required for the licence may be the responsibility of the freeholder. This could be difficult to implement and lead to disputes."*

2. Desire for a broader/adjusted scope, including new areas, council properties and Housing Associations: several respondents questioned the scope of the scheme, and some expressed the view that the licensing scheme should not only cover private rentals, but also council stock and housing associations. They argue that all housing should meet certain safety and maintenance standards.

> *"Given the proposed scope of the scheme I do not believe that it could be properly administered for the level of fees proposed."*
>
> *"Why only these areas? Why not all of Westminster?"*
>
> *"The most disappointing properties, (untidy, badly maintained) and the worst tenant behaviour (antisocial, illegal substances) seems to be concentrated in council owned properties which are far more numerous than private rental properties. Bringing these issues under control would deliver a bigger contribution to the area and raise the community standards for all."*

3. Tenant protection and support: there was a call for better support and protection for tenants, including better communication of information regarding private rentals more targeted inspections and enforcement for the worst properties.

"We need fairer support from council and landlord"

"I suggest that in support of Licensing Changes, there needs to be a comprehensive public information programme, to appropriately reach high proportion of existing and future private tenants, to ensure they know current legislation regarding their rights and protections as tenants, and as laws hopefully change details of how they can use them. Information could be included in paperwork sent to all Council Tax payers, and included in residents magazine, and e-newsletter. Essential in this would be relevant contact department at Westminster Council, and list of local places that can advise and act as advocates for renters, such as CAB, Law Centres, Shelter etc."

"A more effective approach would involve targeted enforcement against properties with documented issues, along with proactive inspections and community outreach to identify and assist vulnerable tenants. By focusing resources on the properties most in need of intervention, the Council can address substandard housing more directly. Additionally, robust action against social nuisances and targeted support for at-risk residents would help foster a safer, more cohesive community without overburdening responsible landlords."

4. *Short-term lets:* some stakeholders suggested more needs to be done to regulate short-term lets because they are negatively impacting communities and increasing incidents of ASB.

"Yes, outright ban of Air B N B style letting. Insist they require consent and that the owner of the property only is renting, not a tenant sub-letting. Also insist building insurance is aware of the short term tenancies created."

"The big problem is short-lets. It has devastated quality long-term rental availability at reasonable prices, shattered residential communities and created anti-social, nuisance and waste issues in Westminster. Never mind the unsightly security key boxes everywhere. Most leaseholders are breaching their leases, including ex-local authority lessees. Most are breaching the 90 day per annum maximum short-let rule of WCC, including (perhaps especially, large commercial landlords. This should be the primary focus for WCC."

"The biggest problem is with short term (AirB&B) type lets where tenants do not show any respect for neighbourhoods and the practice "hollows out" communities. There was a scheme for regulation of short term lets but I am not sure what happened to it - it seemed like a good idea to me."

5. *Collaboration with landlords:* some stakeholders suggested working collaboratively with landlords to improve housing standards, rather than imposing burdensome fees and regulations.

"Collaborate with landlords, tenants, and local communities to address antisocial behaviour through targeted initiatives."

"Goverment has put in more tenants rights, but I have seen little support for Landlords or inititatives to help them make the necessary improvements. Some flats can not get to an energy performance of a certain level as it is dependent on the whole building (for which they might not have control) but they will still be penalised. There seems to be a difference in type of landlords that has not been mentioned, e.g. freeholders vs leaseholders, flats vs buildings or houses.
I think anytime new legislation comes in it needs to be done more gradually to give people time to work with it."

"Provide clear, actionable support for landlords to improve property standards voluntarily."

3.14 Views supporting the proposed schemes

It is worth noting that, although the majority of the free text questions invited responses, these were only when respondents were in disagreement. There were however many positive comments about the scheme. Some of these are listed below:

"I think that is the only way to solve the problem; as a person who rented a flat in Westminster, I know that the flat is painted before to hide rotting walls and damp very often, and as a tenant, you have minimal ability to address it. You know most properties have similar or other issues, and landlords or agents have no incentive to address these issues. Most of these issues pose a serious health risk. The landlord may still transfer these costs to tenants, but without such legislation, there is no price differentiation between good and bad properties, and no one gets a survey done for a rental property. Hence, the market is not operating efficiently due to insufficient information. Such a regulation is the only path to secure tenants' health and safety."

"Very keen to see the schemes start as the private rented sector in Westminster is in such dire need of reform"

"I hope this plan will tackle what is more important to me personally and other people I know: mould, condensation and old pipes"

"As I say, for Landlords like mine (name redacted) they put the carrying out of their duties to an agent whose main objective is to avoid spending money or doing repairs. Agents have to be more accountable."

"I would like to see Marylebone included in the main scheme (1). I live in a residential building where there is excessive AirBnB letting by other apartment owners in the building. This has impacted our quality of life with anti-social behaviour (noise, drinking, rubbish, poor treatment of building resulting in property being damaged, vermin, - and trafficking which we had to report to the police). Property owners 'play the system' but placing multiple and fake listings on rental sites and trying to look like they are sticking within a certain period when they are not. The enforcement and accountability is poor with the Council and police not having the resources needed (and culture?) to take action. I hope a licensing scheme will clamp down on the above."

"As a private Renter for the pastv 16 years my land lord didn't even do the gas safety check and the electric bord check as I pay with my own money .They failed to repair maitain the house as I do everything by myself on my budget, failed to protect my deposit, only ask for rent or haresing me on the phone to go out with my children if I don't pay. They failed to renew my contract for the past 7 years. They failed in everything as the landlord need to improve for the leaving arrangement for the tenant. I strongly agreed to give them options if they need to rent they property need a licence and improve the living standards."

"The risk is that the ultrarich will leave their property unoccupied, and hence, I would say that a higher tax on property that does not have regular electricity and water bills to encourage individuals to rent vacant properties will supplement this proposal by ensuring there is sufficient supply in the market. Higher tax on unoccupied properties is done successfully globally to increase the supply of rental properties. Maintaining supply while increasing the safety and health condition of properties will achieve the real aim of this proposal."

4. Public meetings and written responses

Westminster City Council held two virtual public forums, an in-person Landlord Forum and 20 in-person drop-in sessions, to provide information about the proposed schemes and to gather feedback from stakeholders. Feedback was also gathered through formal written responses. Below is a summary of the key themes that came out of the forums and the written submissions.

Council officers also responded to email queries that were sent as part of the consultation.

4.1 Public online forums

The council, in conjunction with Cadence Innova, held two meetings aimed at engaging with landlords, agents and residents, to make them aware of the consultation and to gather their feedback. There was an online meeting (via Microsoft Teams) which was held on **9 December 2024** with **35** attendees (the actual number of attendees fluctuated during the meeting as attendees joined late or left early), and a further virtual event held on **8 January 2025**, with **111** attendees.

Council officers were present at every public forum. Following on from a presentation about the proposals, the majority of the meeting was used to undertake a question-and-answer session. Attendees had the opportunity to express their views and ask questions about the proposals. They were able to highlight areas requiring clarification and suggest matters for the council officers to consider. During each public forum, council officers attempted to address all questions posed by attendee, or directed them to the consultation documents for further information (often when there were specific questions about the proposed licence conditions, fees etc).

The main themes of the questions and views expressed were as follows, categorised by theme:

Fees & discounts

Do the discounts accumulate?

Would you consider a discount for properties where WCC is the freeholder?

That is the highest Selective Licence fee throughout London, why is it so high?
In setting the fee, has the council considered cost savings available when RRB is implemented with landlord and property details available from there?
Would the licence fee be deductible for tax purposes?
Will freeholders be charged fees also, if they are going to be responsible for communal areas which will have an effect on the property? Can they be made to pay for a proportion of the fee for a privately rented flat that they are also responsible for?

Effectiveness, enforcement and fairness/justification

Is there a proven improvement when selective licensing has been introduced by other councils?
Licencing schemes have a poor reputation, with poor inspection rates, or inspections carried out late into the 5 years, when tenant dilapidation has taken place. Why have you not considered a scheme such as that operated by Southampton, where landlords have the option to use a RICS surveyor to certify standards, allowing a landlord to schedule inspection at the commencement of the licence?
How will you be able to identify the landlords in the wards. Won't the worse behaved landlords be very reluctant to engage?
The estimated level of hazard in PRS homes sounded really very low compared with hazard levels uncovered through inspection of licensed properties in a neighbouring borough. Does it reflect what you have learnt through licensing current scheme?

Licence Conditions

Are there different conditions for leaseholders vs freeholders? I am a leaseholder landlord and can only go so far regarding fire safety for example.
One of the suggestions for the conditions was the electrical appliances (not the portable ones) need to be tested. Can this be simply covered by an EICR certificate?
Great concern is with clarity about the fire doors due to its financial burden on landlords...

ASB

Westminster has some of the highest rental rates, and therefore the tenants are of a high standard. What are the comparative ASB statics between private-rented, social-rented and non-domestic setting? And why aren't the ASB issues being funded by service charge or other council funding sources which as Council Tax?
Could it be an option to introduce licensing only if the property receive complaints or has previous history of ASB rather than adding more financial struggle to the responsible landlords ?

Other

How are you going to support good landlords otherwise we will all sell up
I think it is unfair that privately rented properties owned by housing associations are exempt. Also the tenants in some wards mean that they will not have this protection.

This is surely outrageous, and if there are only a few properties, then it won't cost too much for the council
Does a landlord that uses an accredited managing agent qualify as an "accredited landlord" ?
Why is the council not focusing on the health hazards of its own flats in the area before looking at PSR?
In what way will this scheme be designed to ensure it does not cut across the government's proposed reform of the rental sector
How would you significantly improve EPC ratings with a tenant in residence?

In summary, many landlords and agents held strong views and were negative to PRS licensing in general. In particular, they perceived unfairness of the scheme in targeting good landlords and were concerned about the effectiveness of selective licensing schemes and the council's own ability to achieve its objectives. The main objections, however, were to the economic costs of licensing schemes on landlords, which they felt would inevitably be passed onto tenants.

Though a significant number of the attendees were landlords and managing/letting agents, a number of tenants were also among the participants. The views of tenants as a group were difficult to assess in the context of the forum because they did not self-identify when posting questions to the Q&A.

4.2 Written representations

Westminster City Council received 54 written responses and questions through its email inbox during the consultation period from various stakeholders including residents, landlords and landlord groups, including 5 written letters responding to the consultation from representative organisations. A summary of key themes and concerns is listed below, and the organisations' full submissions are included in Appendix 4.

Concern that the scheme is sufficiently resourced for effective inspections and enforcement to take place (**Safeagent** & **Westminster Property Association**)
The council should recognise the private sector's vital role and avoid discouraging landlords at a time when we need more PRS properties. (**Westminster Council Conservative Group**)
The council should recognise the important role of letting agents and the new legislation with regards to protecting client money (**Safeagent**)
Preference for a regulatory framework (instead of the SL scheme) which seeks to educate rather than use punitive measures (**Propertymark**)
Questioning of the application processing (Part A) operating (Part B) fees for selective licensing (£543 and £452) (**Safeagent**)
Disappointed to see no proposed early bird fee discount (**Safeagent**)
Insufficient discounts offered for affordable housing charities and multi-dwelling (**Westminster Council Conservative Group** & **Westminster Property Association**)
Concerns around cost effectiveness of the proposed scheme (**Propertymark**)
Concerns around data modelling and reductive quantitative methods leading to an overly broad regulatory approach (**Westminster Council Conservative Group** & **Westminster Property Association**)

Concerns around impact of the fee on cost of living and supply of properties in the PRS (**Propertymark** & **Westminster Property Association**)
Request to support landlords with property improvement grants and support with decarbonisation (**Propertymark**)
Concerns that responsibility for ASB is unfairly placed on landlords within the proposals (**Propertymark**)
The proposed ASB provisions require further development with regards to implementation, classification and integration with existing policies. (**Westminster Council Conservative Group**)
Request for clarity on how and to what specific ends the council will enforce the schemes and achieve the stated objectives (**Propertymark**)
Consider additional fee discounts to reflect diversity within the PRS including key worker housing (**The Howard de Walden Estate** & **Westminster Property Association**)

4.3 Letter of support

During the consultation, Westminster City Council also received a letter from Waltham Forest Council in support of the council's proposals to implement the selective licensing scheme, drawing on their current experience of implementing a large-scale selective licensing scheme. This letter can be found in Appendix 5.

5. Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Communications and Marketing visuals and analytics
- Appendix 2 – Survey respondent profile
- Appendix 3 – Survey questionnaire
- Appendix 4 – Full written representations
- Appendix 5 – Letter of support

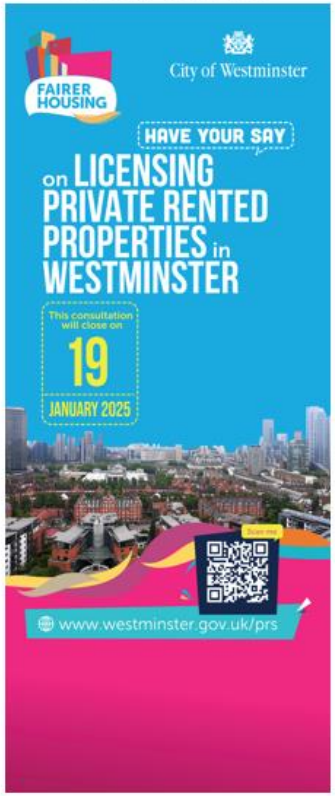
Appendix 1 - Communications and Marketing visuals and analytics

Assets

Poster



Pull up banner



Out of home











A5 leaflets



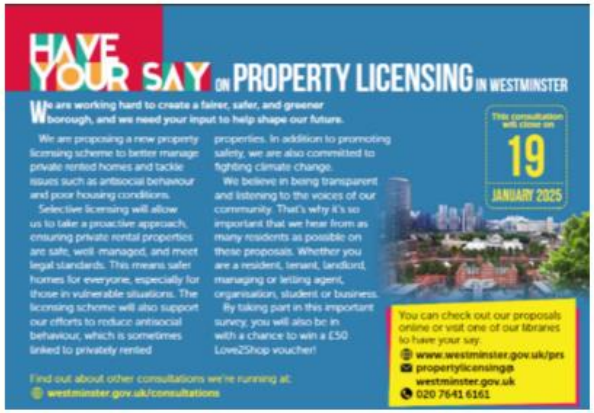


Social media tile



Online banner

Westminster channels



Your Westminster





Libraries



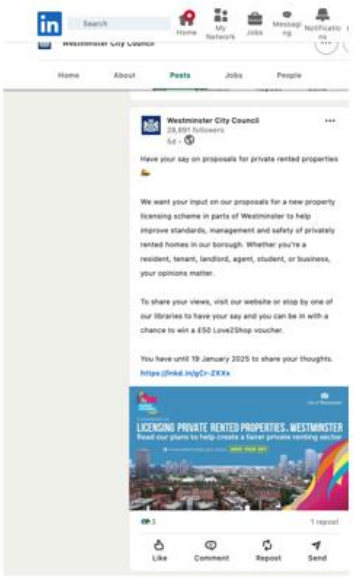
X (Twitter)



Facebook



Instagram



LinkedIn

Online articles



Landlord Today



Property Industry Eye

Property 118





WestminsterExtra



The Negotiator

London Property Licensing



Out of home

827,954 impressions

33 sites













14 days



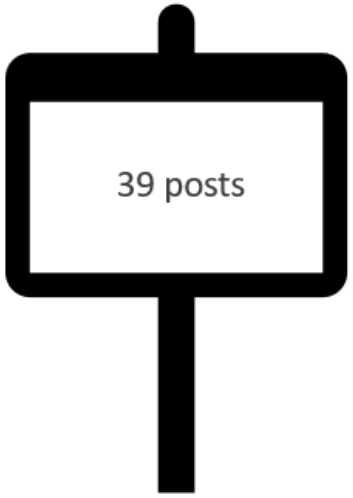


Six boroughs

Organic social media analytics

393 clicks







14,155 impressions

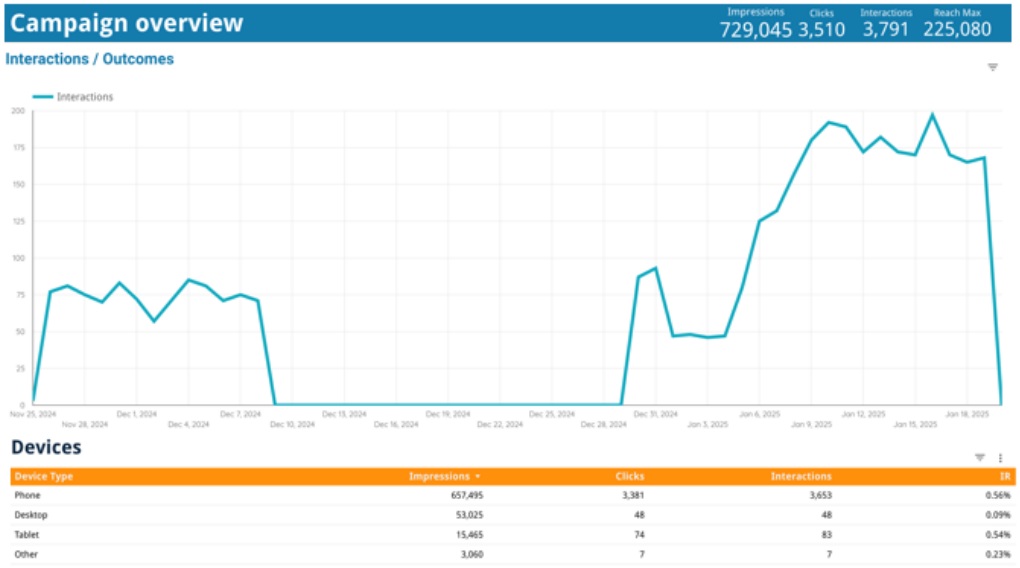
8 likes

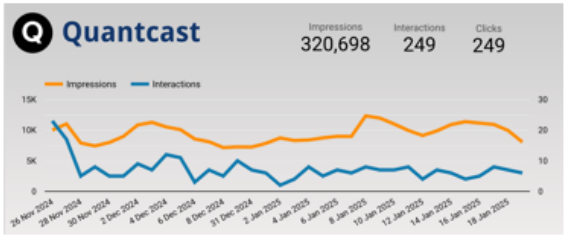


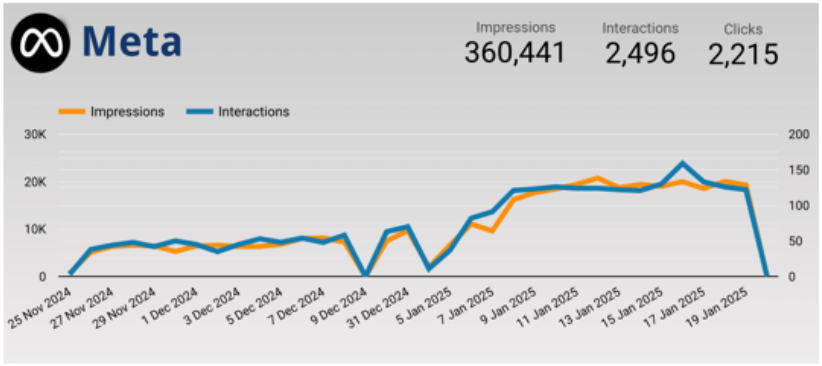


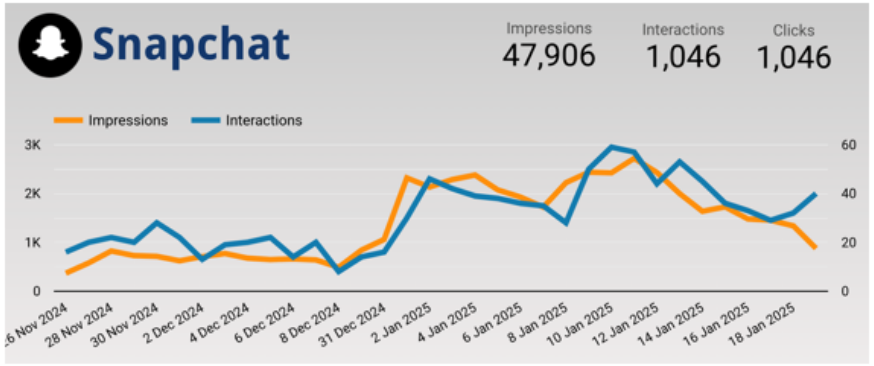
21 reposts

Programmatic campaign analytics



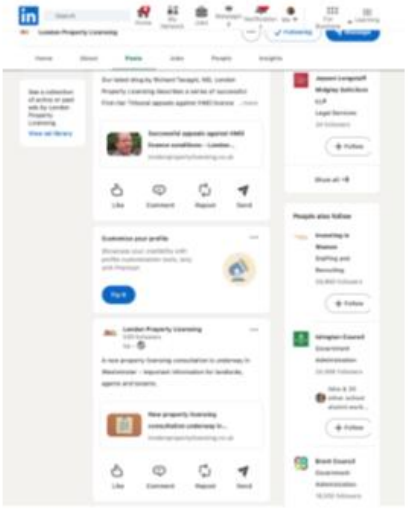


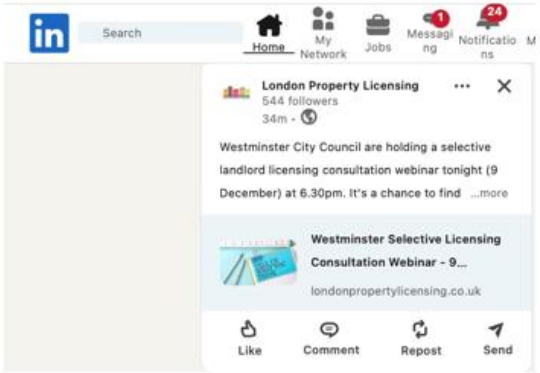




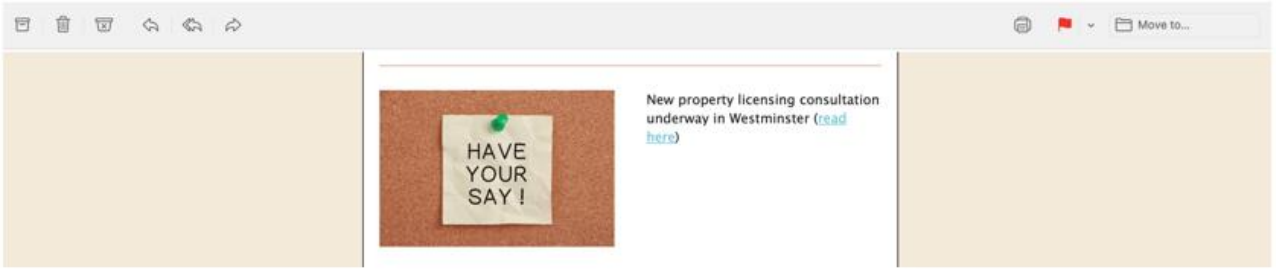
London Property Licensing campaign









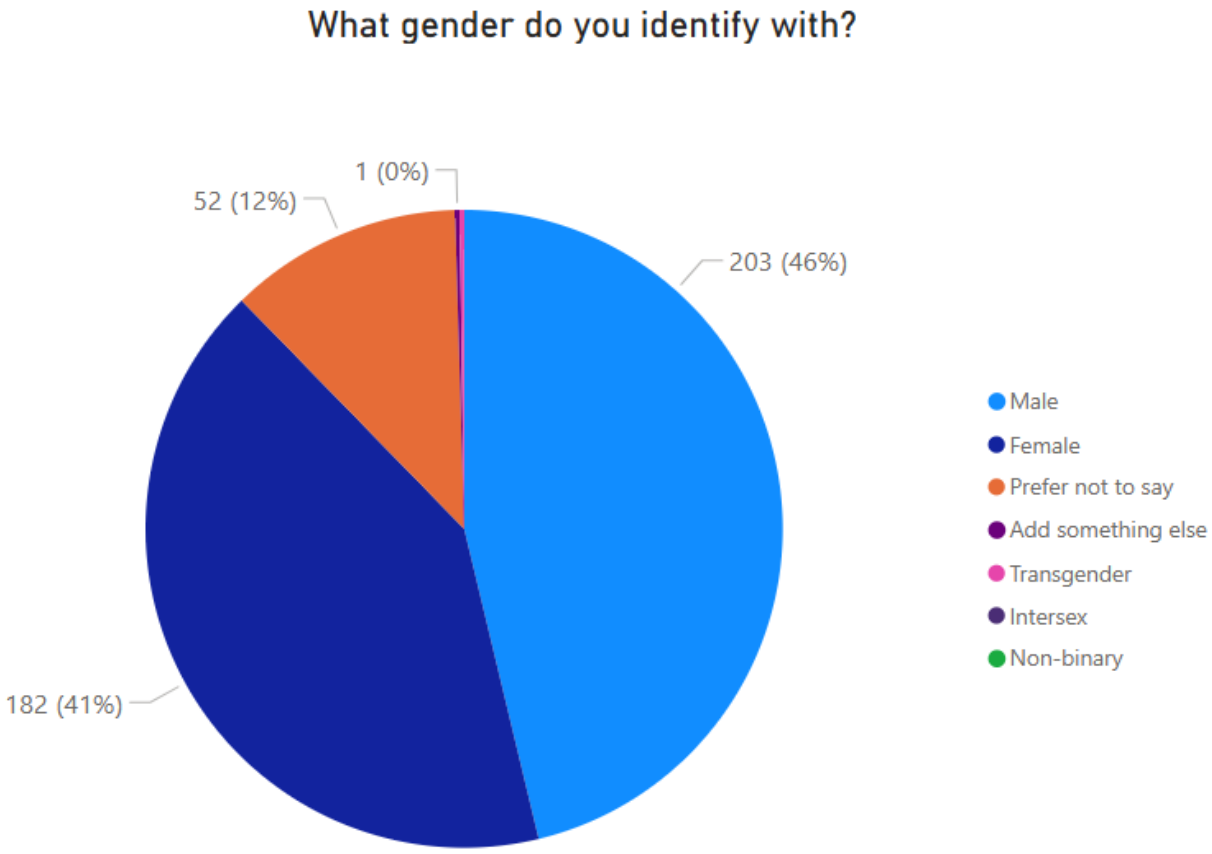


Appendix 2 - Survey respondent profile

The respondents to the consultation survey were asked if they would give their age range, sex, ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability status. Their responses were compared with benchmarks for the city using the 2021 census[2]. It is worth noting that for each of these equalities' questions, a certain proportion of respondents either did not respond or chose 'prefer not to say' as their response, therefore fully accurate comparisons with the compulsory census data cannot always be made.

Gender

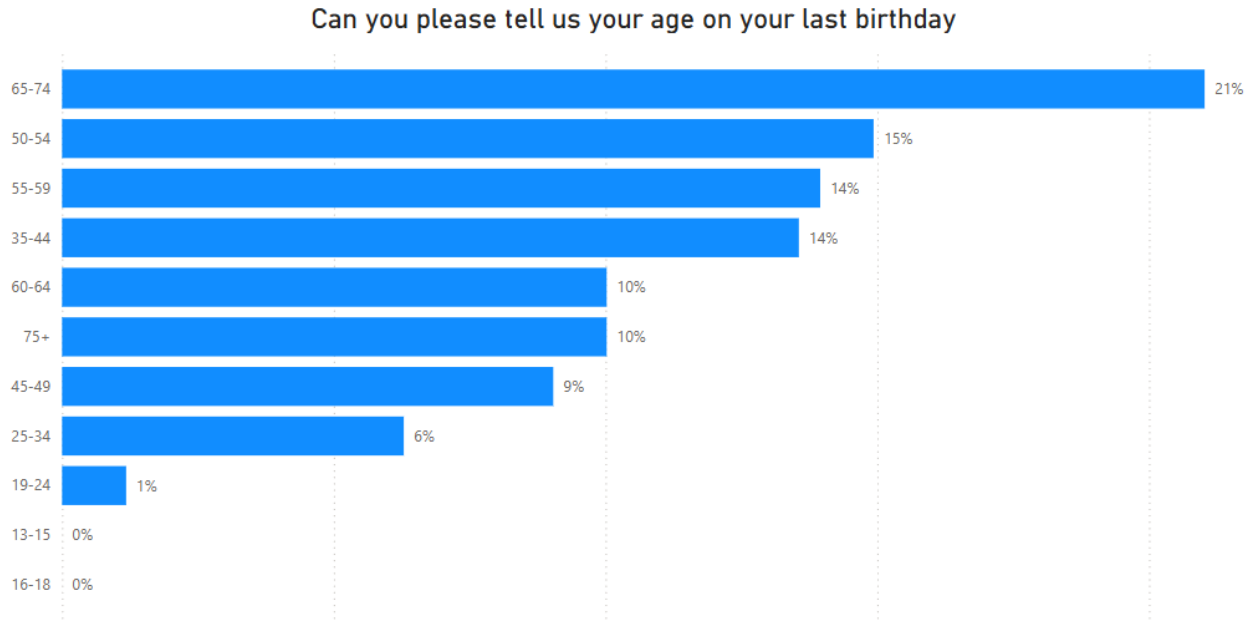
Of the **438** respondents who answered this question, **46%** said they were male and **41%** said they were female.



According to the 2021 Census, the population of Westminster is **52%** female and **48%** male, meaning that, among those that chose to answer this question within the survey, men were overrepresented.

[2] Census - Office for National Statistics

Age



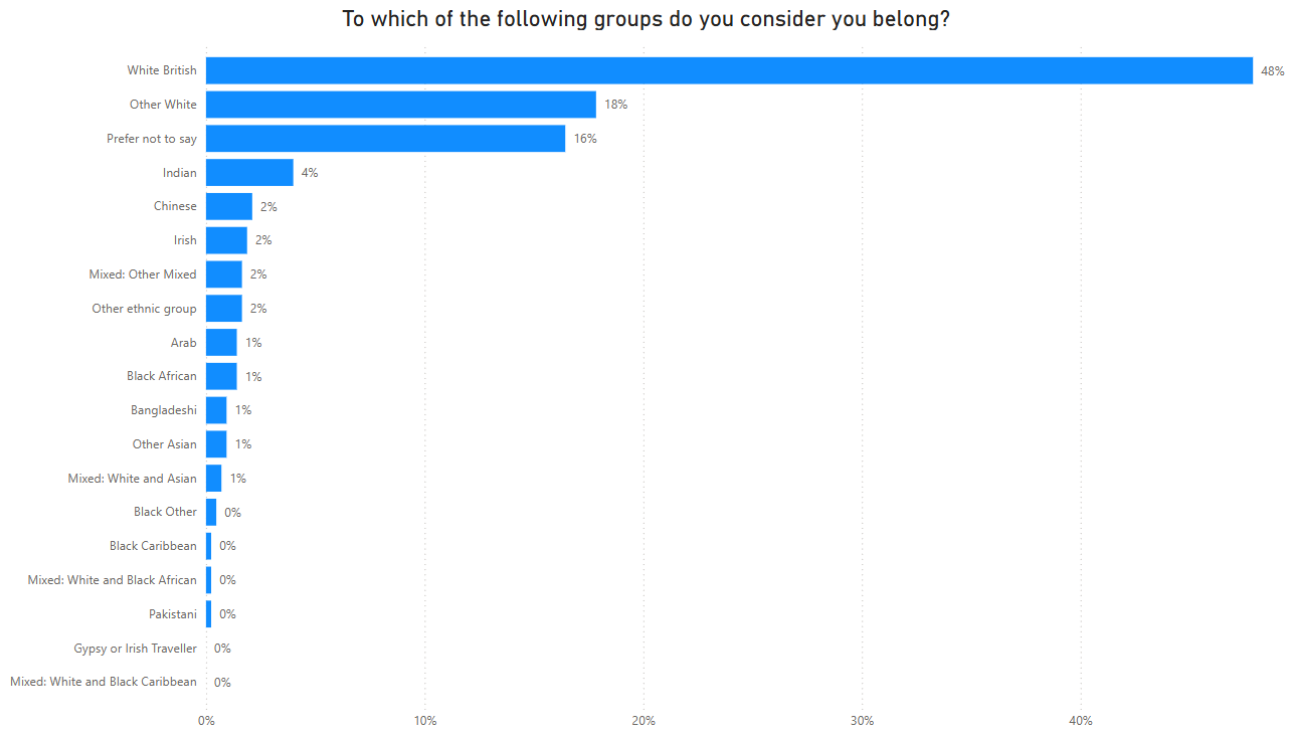
509 respondents answered this question.

Age groups 45 to 54 (**122** responses) and 55 to 64 (**122** responses) were the most represented within the consultation and made up **24%** each of the total. The age group 65 to 74 (**107** responses) made up **21%,** 35 to 44 (**69** responses) was next representing **14%,** followed by 75+ (51 responses) with **10%**. The 25 to 34 (**32** responses) demographic made up about **6%** of the responses and 19 to 24 (**6** responses) made up about **1%**.

Compared to the Census data for the city, the 65-74 age group is significantly overrepresented at **21%** compared to the Census figure of **6.7%**. 75+ is also significantly overrepresented at **10%** compared to the Census figure of **5.4%** (75 to 84 and 85 years and older), as is 50-64 years old with **39%** versus the Census figure of **17.8%**. The 25-34 age group is significantly underrepresented at **6%** versus the Census figure of **21.6%**. The 35-49 age group is roughly accurately represented.

Ethnic origin

Respondents were asked "To which of the following groups do you consider you belong?". **426** respondents chose to answer this question with their race or ethnicity.



A notable proportion (**50**%) of respondents to the survey either did not answer this question or selected 'Prefer not to say'.

The 2021 Census results for Westminster regarding ethnic groups are shown below:

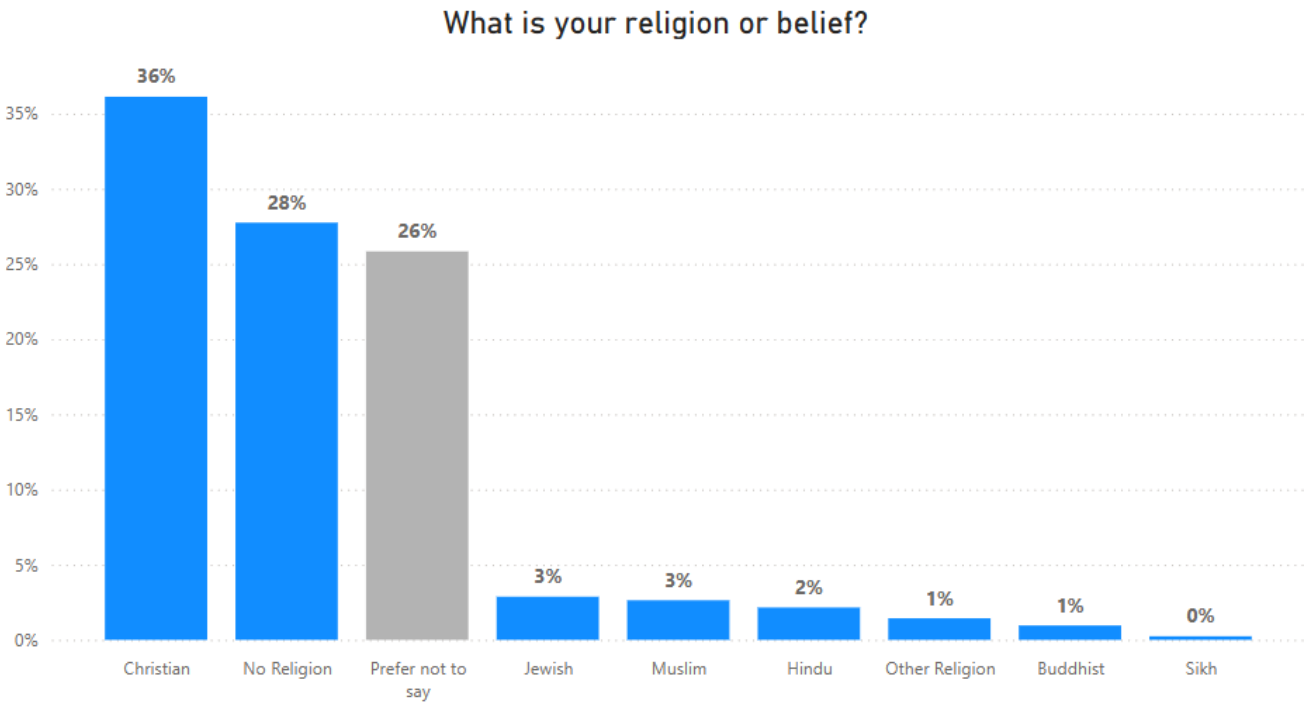
Ethnic Group	Percentage (2021 Census)
White	55.2
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	16.8
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	8.1
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	6.5
Other ethnic groups	13.5

Of those who chose to give an ethnic group largest group of consultation respondents were people of White ethnic origin (**66%**), which is above the city's demographic figure of **55%**. The proportions of respondents who identified as Indian (**4%**), Chinese (**2%**), Bangladeshi (**1%**), Pakistani (<**0.5%**) and Other Asian (**1%**), were underrepresented compared to Census figures of **16.8%** (Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh).

The proportion of respondents of Black African (**2%**), Black Other (**>1%**) and Black Caribbean (**>0.5%**) were underrepresented compared to Census figures of **8%**.

Religion and beliefs

Respondents were asked their religion or beliefs. **418** respondents chose to answer this question. The largest proportion of respondents, **36%** gave Christian as their response, followed by 'No Religion" with **28**%.



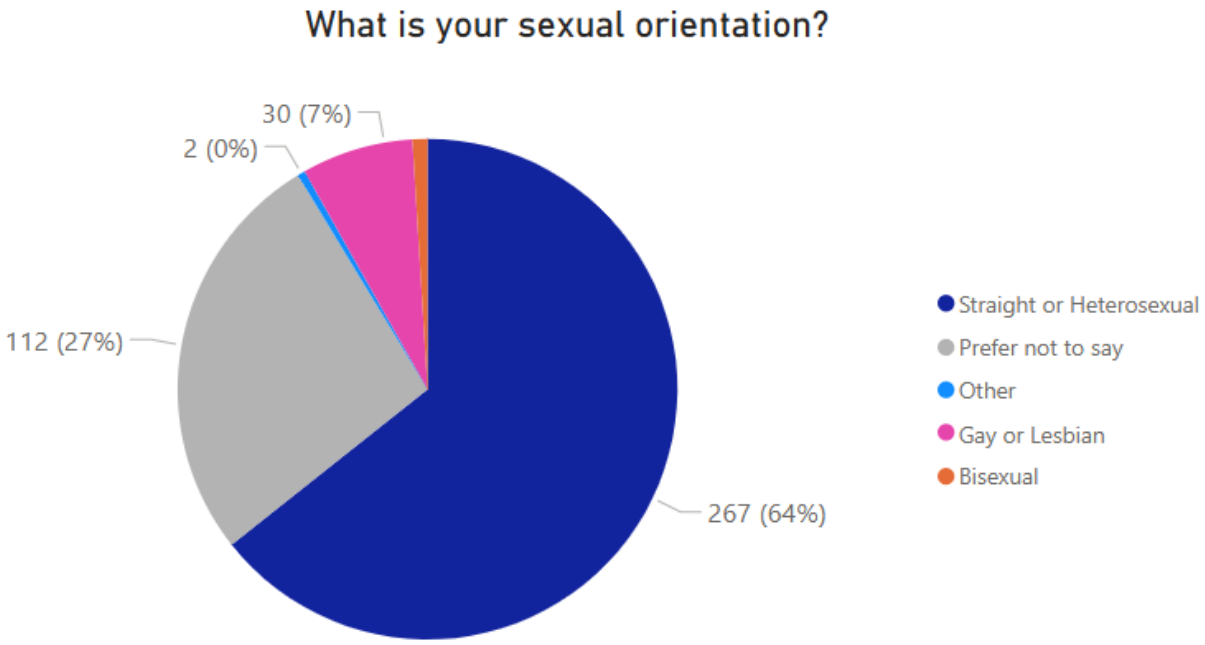
The 2021 Census results for Westminster regarding religion or beliefs are shown below.

Religion or beliefs	Percentage (2021 Census)
No religion	25.9
Christian	37.3
Buddhist	1.3
Hindu	2.2
Jewish	2.8
Muslim	20.0
Sikh	0.3
Other religion	0.9
Not answered	9.4

Based on the answers of those who gave their religion or beliefs, the Christian and Muslim populations were underrepresented while the Jewish populations were slightly overrepresented. Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh populations were approximately represented in line with Census data.

Sexual orientation

Respondents were also asked their sexual orientation. **415** respondents chose to answer this question. The largest proportion of responses were from people who identified as straight/heterosexual (**64%**). A large proportion of respondents, **27%**, gave the response 'prefer not to say'.



The 2021 Census results for Westminster regarding sexual orientation are below.

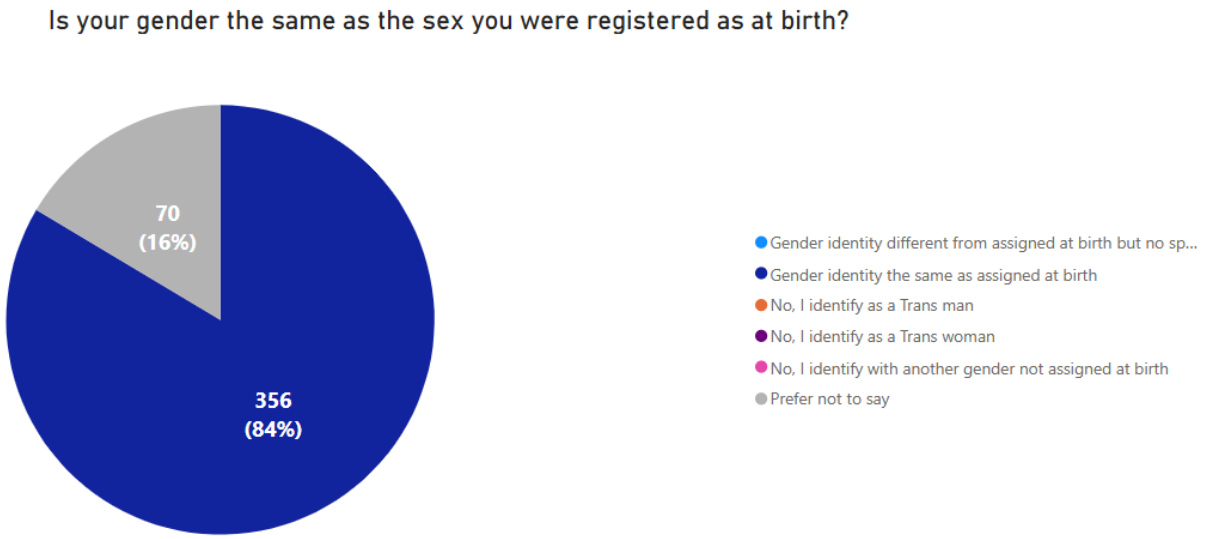
Sexual orientation	Percentage (2021 Census)
Straight or Heterosexual	83.1
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Other (LGBT+)	5.7
Not answered	11.2

The straight/heterosexual population are underrepresented by the consultation responses (**64%** compared to **83.1%** according to 2021 Census). The gay or lesbian and bisexual populations were slightly overrepresented (**8.7%** versus **5.7%**). Given the large proportion of respondents to this question who gave the response: 'prefer not to say' (**27%**), combined with the proportion of survey respondents who chose to answer this question, these representations cannot be assumed to be comparable to the wider city.

Gender identity

Respondents were also asked whether their gender identity is the same as the sex they were registered at birth.

426 respondents chose to answer this question. The largest proportion of responses were from people whose gender identity was the same as assigned at birth (**84%**). A large portion of respondents, **16%**, gave the response: 'prefer not to say'.



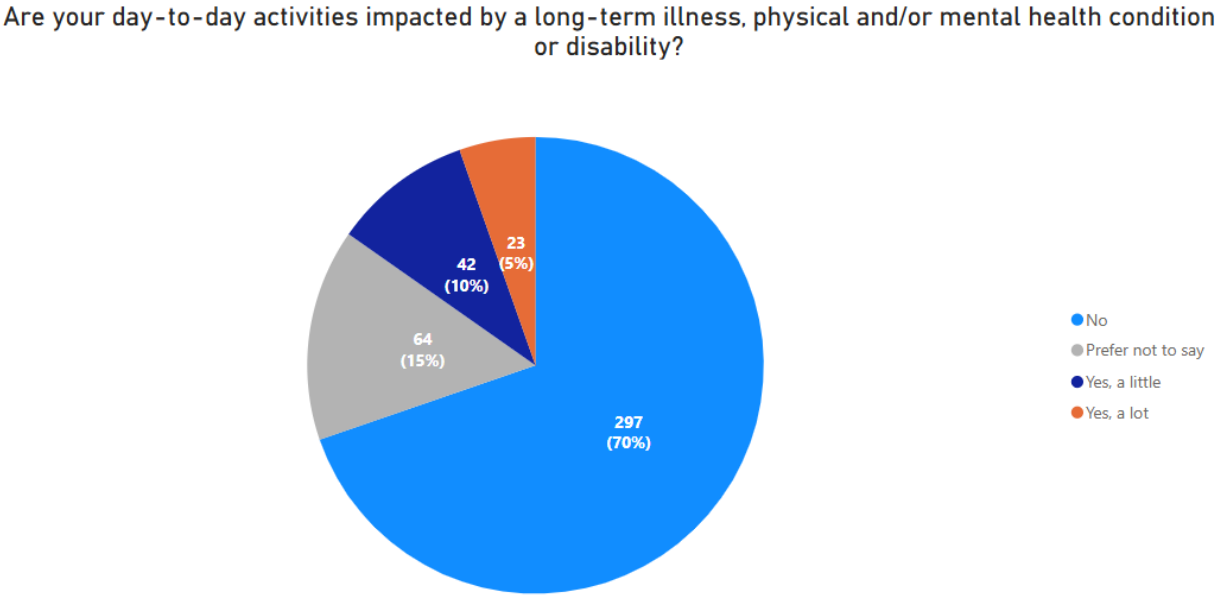
The 2021 census has **0.7%** of Westminster residents saying their gender identity is different to their sex registered at birth, however 9.2% of the population did not answer that question in the Census therefore the actual proportion of people identifying as transgender may be higher.

Gender Identity estimates from Census 2021 are official statistics in development. This reflects their innovative nature and the evolving understanding of measuring gender identity, along with the uncertainty associated with these estimates[3].

[3] Sexual orientation and gender identity quality information for Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

Disability or long-term health condition

Respondents were also asked if they considered themselves to have a disability. **426** respondents chose to answer this question.

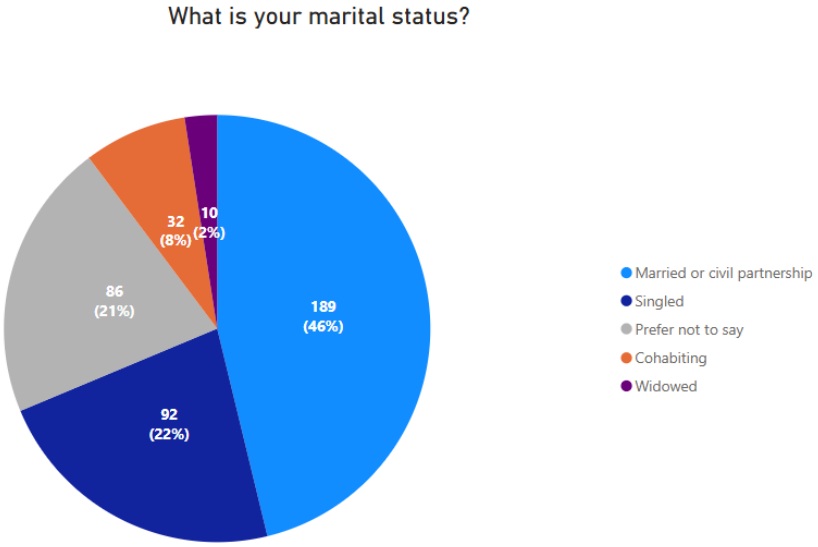


A proportion (**15%**) of those who answered the question gave the response 'prefer not to say'.

15% of the respondents to the question said they considered themselves to have a disability, which is approximately the same as **15.8%** of Westminster residents who, in the 2021 census, stated that they had a disability that affects their day-to-day activities a little or a lot.

Marital Status

Respondents were asked what their marital status is. **409** respondents chose to answer this question.



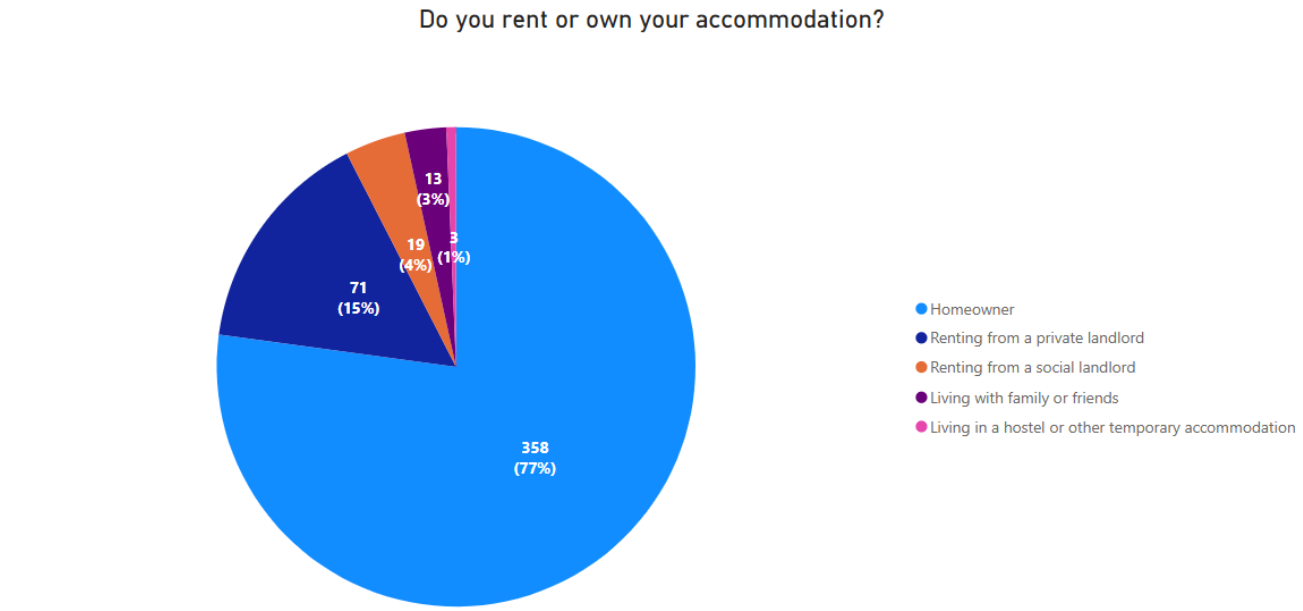
Almost half of respondents who answered this question were married or in a civil partnership (**46%**), while **22%** were single and **8%** were cohabiting.

Marital Status	Percentage (2021 Census)
Never married and never registered a civil partnership	54.4
Married or in a registered civil partnership	32.2
Separated, but still legally married or still legally in a civil partnership	2.4
Divorced or civil partnership dissolved	7.6
Widowed or surviving civil partnership partner	3.4

Compared to the Census data, respondents who were widowed were underrepresented (**2%** versus **3.4%** in the Census) and those who are married or in a civil partnership were overrepresented (**46%** versus **32.2%** in the Census).

Accommodation

Respondents were asked if they rent or own their own accommodation with options on their living situation. **464** respondents chose to answer this question.

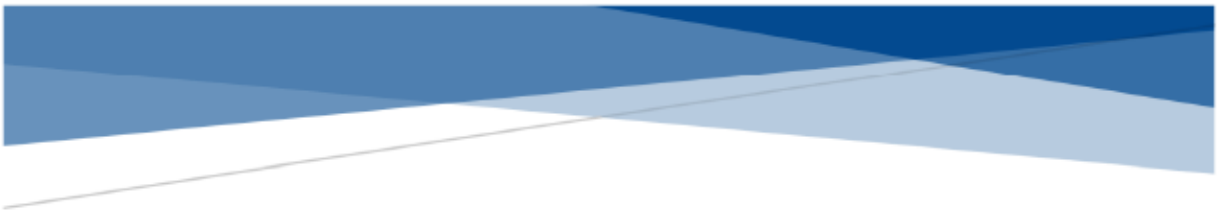


A large majority of respondents who responded to this question were homeowners (**77%**). **15%** stated they were renting from a private landlord and **4%** from a social landlord.

Housing Tenure	Percentage (2021 Census)
Owns outright or with a mortgage or loan	27.4
Shared Ownership	0.7
Socially rented	28.3
Private rented	43.4
Lives rent free	0.3

Homeowners were significantly overrepresented (**77%** versus **27.4%**) whereas private rented and socially rented tenures were both significantly underrepresented, **15%** versus **43.4%** and **4%** versus **28.3%** respectively.

Appendix 3 - Survey questionnaire



Have your say on licensing privately rented properties in Westminster

Selective Licensing consultation survey

YOUR PRIVACY

All the information you provide will be treated in strict confidence, will only be used for the purposes of this consultation and will only be shared with Cadence Innova who have been appointed by the council as consultants on this project.

Following the consultation a public report will be produced in which feedback from individual members of the public will be anonymous, but views from organisations may be attributed in full.

You can read the Council's Privacy Notice here: Privacy | Westminster City Council

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE CITY OF WESTMINSTER

In what capacity are you responding to this survey?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONLY ONE BOX THAT APPLIES TO YOU

☐	**As a Westminster resident or a local business in Westminster (but not a landlord)** – *please answer the red shaded question overleaf, then go to the 'Local Issues?' section*
☐	**As a landlord, letting or managing agent with properties in Westminster** – *please answer the blue shaded section overleaf, then go to the 'Local Issues?' section*
☐	**As another type of stakeholder** – *please answer the green shaded section overleaf, and following questions*

Please provide the following information about yourself (where relevant) so that we can monitor the representativeness of the responses and identify trends. We will take all feedback into account, regardless of whether you provide your personal details.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU: WESTMINSTER RESIDENTS & BUSINESSES

If you are a resident living in Westminster, or responding on behalf of a local business in Westminster, which of the following best describes you? PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

☐	Private tenant living in a single-family dwelling (e.g. a self-contained flat or house)
☐	Private tenant living in a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) or bedsit where you share some basic amenities (e.g. toilet, bathroom, kitchen) with others
☐	Westminster Council tenant
☐	Housing association tenant
☐	Owner occupier
☐	Shared owner – with a share in the equity of the home
☐	Local business in Westminster (but not a landlord)
☐	Other

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU: LANDLORDS AND AGENTS

If you are a landlord or agent with properties in Westminster, which of the following best describes you?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

☐	Landlord who manages their own property	☐	Managing agent
☐	Landlord who uses a managing agent	☐	Registered social landlord
☐	Letting agent	☐	Other ☐

Do you live in Westminster?

☐	Yes	☐	No

Please indicate how many properties you own/manage in Westminster, for each of the following types.

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX FOR EACH TYPE OF PROPERTY

	0	1	2-10	11-50	51-100	101+
Single family occupancy house/bungalow	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Self-contained flat converted	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Self-contained flat purpose built	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
House in Multiple Occupation (3 or 4 people)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
House in Multiple Occupation (5 or more people)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Are you accredited or a member of any of the following? PLEASE TICK ✓ ALL THAT APPLY

☐	National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA)	☐	ARLA Propertymark
☐	London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS)	☐	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)
☐	UK Association of Letting Agents (UKALA)	☐	Other landlord/letting agent association ☐
☐	Safeagent	☐	No

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU: ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, which organisation do you represent?
PLEASE ANSWER IN THE BOX BELOW AND CONTINUE ON A SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

Please give us the name of the organisation and any specific group or department. Please also tell us who the organisation represents, what area it covers and how you gathered the views of members.

If you are another stakeholder (e.g. with links to a neighbouring borough), please use the box below to provide full details. PLEASE ANSWER IN THE BOX BELOW AND CONTINUE ON A SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

LOCAL ISSUES?

From your own experience, to what extent do you believe each of the following to be a problem in Westminster? PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX IN EACH ROW

	Not a problem at all	Not a very big problem	A fairly big problem	A very big problem	Don't know
Poor property conditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Antisocial behaviour (ASB)*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

**This question is referring to ASB specifically in relation to housing. Examples include noisy, rowdy or inconsiderate neighbours, vandalism and damage to property, environmental damage including littering, dumping of rubbish and fly tipping.*

Thinking about the private rented sector (PRS) as a whole in Westminster, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? PLEASE TICK ✓ONE BOX FOR EACH STATEMENT

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The PRS is growing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The physical condition of PRS properties is a problem	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The energy efficiency of PRS properties is generally of a poor standard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are health and safety issues with PRS properties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overcrowding is a problem in PRS properties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are inadequate fire safety measures in PRS properties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The PRS causes neighbourhood problems such as noise, nuisance, rubbish and other ASB	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Poorly maintained PRS properties negatively impact some areas in Westminster	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Poorly managed PRS properties negatively impact some areas of Westminster	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Landlords of PRS properties have a responsibility to manage their properties effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To help with the management of PRS properties, landlords should	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

be 'fit and proper' persons *(e.g. have proper management or financial arrangements in place, and not have convictions for certain types of offences)*						

SELECTIVE LICENSING SCHEMES

The council is proposing to introduce a selective licensing scheme for privately rented homes in 15 wards.

A selective licensing scheme is when the whole or part(s) of a borough are subject to a designation under the Housing Act 2004. The designation makes it compulsory for all properties that are rented to single households (e.g., a family) or two unrelated sharers (e.g., two friends living together) to hold a licence before it can be legally let to tenants.

The 15 wards have been chosen because they have high levels of privately rented accommodation, which is in poor condition and, in the case of certain wards, high levels of antisocial behaviour as well. By implementing a selective licensing scheme, the council will be able to effectively deal with the poor conditions and antisocial behaviour by requiring landlords to license their property with the council and meet certain property management conditions.

The proposed scheme has two designations. The first designation will apply to eight wards on the basis of poor housing conditions. The wards are:

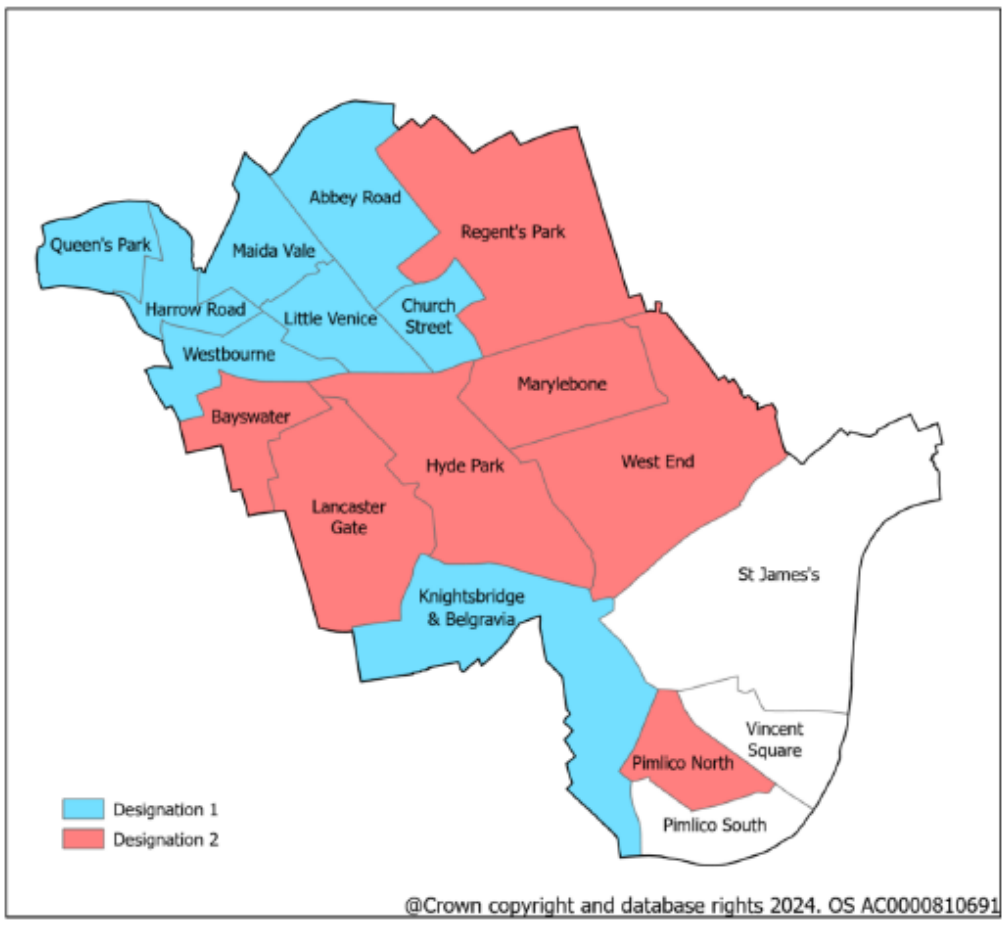
- Abbey Road
- Church Street
- Harrow Road
- Knightsbridge & Belgravia
- Little Venice
- Maida Vale
- Queen's Park
- Westbourne.

It is predicted that properties in these eight wards have high levels of serious hazards above the national average.

The second designation will apply to a further seven wards:

- Bayswater
- Lancaster Gate
- Marylebone
- Pimlico North
- Regent's Park
- West End
- Hyde Park

The properties in these wards are also suffering from high levels of serious hazards above the national average *and* high levels of antisocial behaviour. These two designations constitute a single scheme that would come into force in in spring 2026.



If the scheme is approved, landlords will be required to apply to the council for a licence for each privately rented property they own or manage in the area. Each licence application must be accompanied by a licence fee. Conditions will be attached to each licence and landlords would be bound by these conditions.

You can find out more about the proposed areas, licence conditions and fees in the supporting consultation document: www.westminster.gov.uk/prs

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for a selective licensing scheme in the eight wards in Designation 1?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for a selective licensing scheme in the seven wards in Designation 2?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

To what extent do you agree or disagree that a selective licensing scheme will help to achieve the following outcomes? PLEASE TICK ✓ONE BOX FOR EACH STATEMENT

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Improve the physical condition of private rented properties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improve the health and safety of tenants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Help to tackle neighbourhood issues such as noise, nuisance, rubbish and other ASB	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Help to lessen the effects of deprivation (poverty) in the area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Help identify poorly performing landlords, managing agents and letting agents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Assist landlords to raise their management standards	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support good landlords	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you disagree with any of the above, please can you explain why and what alternatives you think should be considered to address the problems?

PLEASE ANSWER IN THE BOX BELOW AND CONTINUE ON A SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

-

SELECTIVE LICENCE CONDITIONS

If a selective licensing scheme is introduced, all landlords will be required to obtain a licence for properties meeting the selective licensing criteria. The licence can contain two types of conditions, mandatory and discretionary.

The mandatory conditions are those relating to electrical, gas and fire safety, tenancy agreements and references. These are required by law and must be applied. These mandatory conditions do not form part of the consultation.

The discretionary conditions are part of the consultation, they are discretionary because they enable local authorities to address specific issues within their areas however, if the proposed licensing scheme and licence conditions are approved, all selective licence holders will need to comply with them. You can find out more about the proposed selective licensing scheme conditions at:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed selective licensing discretionary conditions?
PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you disagree with any of the discretionary conditions for selective licensing, or think there are other selective licensing conditions (not already covered by mandatory or discretionary) that should be included, please can you explain below?
PLEASE ANSWER IN THE BOX BELOW AND CONTINUE ON A SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

Are there any other selective licence conditions (not already covered by the mandatory or proposed discretionary licence conditions) that you think should be included? If 'Yes', please state below

Yes	No	Don't know
☐	☐	☐

PLEASE ANSWER IN THE BOX BELOW AND CONTINUE ON A SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

LICENSING SCHEME FEES

The Housing Act 2004 permits the council to set licensing fees to cover the costs of administering the licensing scheme over five years. Licence fees cannot be used elsewhere in the council or used to generate a profit. As long as the licence conditions are complied with, the licence would remain valid up to a maximum of five years.

The council's proposed fees per property licence are below. The law requires that the payment is collected in two parts. The initial part of the fee (Part A) is charged to cover the cost of processing the application. If the application for a licence is successful, the remainder of the fee (Part B) will be charged before the full licence is issued. This part of the fee is a contribution to the other costs incurred by the council in running and administering the licensing scheme, for example the cost to the council for enforcement of licences. The licence fee will be kept under review at least annually.

Scheme	Part A	Part B	Total
Selective	£543	£452	£995

The full schedule of proposed licence fees, discounts and charges can be found here

What are your views on the proposed selective licensing fee?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

I think the fee is too high	I think the fee is at about the right level	I think the fee is too low	Don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐

LICENCE FEE DISCOUNTS

The council is proposing four different discount payments against the full licence fee. Some properties will be eligible for multiple discounts: Please refer to schedule of fees, charges and discounts for more information [LINK].

Nature of discount	Amount
Accredited landlord	10% of total fee (£99.50)
Charities	100% of total fee
EPC rating B and above	20% of Part B (£90.40)
EPC rating C	10% of Part B (£45.20)
Multi-dwelling	£125

All discounts are at the discretion of the council and will be kept under annual review.

What are your views on the proposed discounts?

PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

	I think the discount is too low	I think the discount is at about the right level	I think the discount is too high	Don't know
Accredited Landlord	☐	☐	☐	☐
Charities	☐	☐	☐	☐
EPC rating B and above	☐	☐	☐	☐
EPC rating C	☐	☐	☐	☐
Multi-dwelling	☐	☐	☐	☐

LICENSING SCHEME OBJECTIVES

As part of the planning process for any private rented property licensing scheme, the council must define its objectives for the scheme, and set out how it plans to enforce it.

You can find out more about the proposed scheme objectives in the supporting consultation evidence pack document (see Page 52): www.westminster.gov.uk/prs

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed licensing scheme objectives?
PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you disagree with any of the objectives for the licensing scheme, or think any other licence scheme objectives should be included, please can you explain why?
PLEASE ANSWER IN THE BOX BELOW AND CONTINUE ON A SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

Are there any other licence scheme objectives (that are not already covered by the objectives listed) that you think should be included? If 'Yes', please state below

Yes	No	Don't know
☐	☐	☐

PLEASE ANSWER IN THE BOX BELOW AND CONTINUE ON A SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

DO YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER COMMENTS?

Are there any other things you think the council should consider to help improve the condition and management of the private rented sector in Westminster? Are there any other comments that you would like to make about the proposed selective licensing schemes?

PLEASE ANSWER IN THE BOX BELOW AND CONTINUE ON A SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

LICENSING DESIGNATIONS

Westminster City Council is legally obliged to offer to send you a copy of the licensing designation(s) before any licensing scheme is introduced. These are supporting documents that define various things including the area where licensing will be required, as well as detailing the commencement and duration of the designation(s).

Please be aware that Westminster City Council are the data controllers but not the data processors for this survey. Any contact details you provide will be separated from your survey response therefore you will not be identified in the results and report of findings received by the council. We will not pass your details on to any third parties. The council's Data Protection Officer can be contacted via dpo@westminster.gov.uk

Your contact details will be used by Westminster City Council only for the purpose of the notification under the Housing Act 2004, and of issuing the licensing designation(s), as required to fulfil the council's duties under Regulation 9 (3) - The Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Other Houses (Miscellaneous Provisions) (England) Regulations 2006 – the publication requirements relating to designations made under the Housing Act 2004, require that within two weeks after the designation was confirmed or made, the local housing authority must send a copy of the notice to any person who responded to the consultation.

The contact information will not be shared, shall be retained for no more than three years after decisions have been finalised, and shall be processed in adherence to your legal rights, including but not limited to the right to withdraw consent, right to copies of your information and right to be forgotten. If you are dissatisfied with the processing of your information, you can raise your concern with the council's Data Protection Officer. You have a right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (www.ico.org.uk). Further information can be found at

Privacy | Westminster City Council

Please provide your name with either an email or postal address if you would like to receive a copy of the licensing designation(s)

Full name

Email address

Postal address

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

What is your full postcode?
This will help us understand views in different areas

If you are providing your own personal response, please answer the questions below...

Westminster City Council has a duty to promote equality and want to make sure all parts of the community are included in this consultation, but these questions are optional. All consultation responses will be taken fully into account when making decisions, regardless of whether you provide your details.

What was your age on your last birthday?

- ☐ Under 25
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 or above
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

- ☐ White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- ☐ White: Irish
- ☐ White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- ☐ Any other White background
- ☐ Mixed: White and Black Caribbean
- ☐ Mixed: White and Black African
- ☐ Mixed: White and Asian
- ☐ Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background
- ☐ Black/Black British: African
- ☐ Black/Black British: Caribbean
- ☐ Any other Black/Black British background
- ☐ Asian/Asian British: Chinese
- ☐ Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi
- ☐ Asian/Asian British: Pakistani
- ☐ Asian/Asian British: Indian
- ☐ Any other Asian/Asian British background
- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Any other ethnic group
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Do you have any long-standing illness or disability?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What is your religion or belief?

- ☐ Agnostic
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Humanist
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Sikh
- ☐ No religion/belief
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What is your sexual orientation?

- ☐ Heterosexual/straight
- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Gay man
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*
- ☐ Prefer not to say

How did you hear about this consultation? *(tick all that apply)*

- ☐ Leaflet
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Westminster social media
- ☐ Social media advert
- ☐ Other online advert
- ☐ Poster
- ☐ Westminster website
- ☐ Local newspaper
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Landlord / Agent
- ☐ Other *(please specify)*

How long have you owned property in Westminster?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ 1 - 2 years
- ☐ 3 - 5 years
- ☐ 6 - 10 years
- ☐ 10+ years
- ☐ Not applicable

Appendix 4 - Full written representations

Safeagent

safeagent

Proposed Selective Licensing Scheme in the City of Westminster

Safeagent Consultation Response

18 January 2025

An Introduction to safeagent

Safeagent is a not for profit accrediting organisation for lettings and management agents in the private rented sector. Safeagent (formerly NALS) provides an overarching quality mark, easily recognised by consumers, with minimum entry requirements for agents. Safeagent operates a government approved client money protection scheme and is a training provider recognised by the Scottish and Welsh governments for agents meeting regulatory requirements in those devolved nations.

Safeagent agents are required to:

- deliver defined standards of customer service
- operate within strict client accounting standards
- maintain a separate client bank account
- be included under a Client Money Protection Scheme

Agents must provide evidence that they continue to meet safeagent criteria on an annual basis to retain their accreditation. The scheme operates UK wide and has 1,700 firms with over 3,000 offices, including agents within the City of Westminster.

We very much welcome the opportunity to contribute to this consultation exercise.

Overview

We understand Westminster City Council is seeking to implement a selective licensing scheme covering fifteen of the eighteen wards. We understand the intention is to tackle poor housing conditions and anti-social behaviour across two designations. In preparing this consultation response, we have carefully considered the information published on the council's website.

Evidence base

We note the council estimate 43% of the housing stock is privately rented with this being the predominant housing tenure.

We note the evidence base shows there has been a marked reduction is tenant service requests over the last five years despite the growth in the sector.

In relation to anti-social behaviour, the evidence base appears to be cumulative data over five years with no breakdown by ASB type or year to analyse trends. This has prevented us from making any meaningful comments on the data presented.

The selective licensing scheme proposed will dwarf the mandatory HMO and additional licensing schemes already in place. We have concerns the council will lack capacity to effectively resource such a large scheme. With data showing a downward trend in tenant service requests, we would encourage the council to

1

focus on the wards of greatest concern so there is capacity to inspect a significant proportion of the rented properties in that geographical area. If that approach delivers meaningful results over five years, resources can then be directed into the next area of concern.

Licensing fees
We recognise the council need to charge a reasonable fee to cover the cost of administering and enforcing the licensing scheme. It is important that the council implement an efficient and streamlined licence application processing system. This will help to minimise costs and keep fees at a reasonable level, thereby minimising upward pressure on the rent that is charged to tenants.

We understand the council is intending to charge a selective licence application fee of £995. We are concerned that this will be the highest ever selective licensing fee in London and almost a third higher than the London average of £758.75[1]. This increases the upward pressure on rents and is something we should all seek to avoid.

We would question the £543 cost for processing one selective licence application and £452 contribution to the cost of operating the licensing scheme over five years. We would request clarification as to how these processing costs have been calculated.

We are disappointed to see no proposed early bird fee discount. This is a useful feature to incentivise professional landlords and agents who act promptly to ensure applications are submitted when the scheme is introduced. We encourage the council to consider this option and to offer the discount for at least three months leading up to scheme implementation. In doing so, it is important that the council undertakes an active promotional campaign and that the application system is operational throughout that period to enable applications to be submitted.

We welcome the proposal to grant safeagent accredited firms a 10% discount. We note scenario B and C both relate to landlords who are accredited and there is no fee calculation example where the managing agent is accredited. We would seek clarification about how this will be applied in practice. With overseas landlords the managing agent may act as licence holder but for UK based landlords, it is more likely the safeagent accredited firm will be the designated property manager. We think the accreditation discount should be offered in both circumstances. This will incentivise landlords to appoint an accredited managing agent and help to drive up standards in the private rented sector.

We welcome the proposed discounts for high levels of energy efficiency and charities housing vulnerable people. In relation to the discount for multiple applications within the same block of flats, we request clarification whether this discount applies if a safeagent accredited firm submits several applications for different landlords within the same block. We would also seek clarification whether the discounts listed are cumulative.

Licence Conditions
We have studied the proposed list of selective licence conditions in Appendix 2.

[1] London Property Licensing research, 2024/25

We have made some suggestions to help improve and fine tune the wording of the conditions. This in turn should help landlords and agents to understand and comply with the requirements.

Condition 3
The wording slightly departs from the mandatory condition. In doing so and applying the referencing condition to 'all persons' who will occupy the property, it requires the licence holder to demand references for every child in the family. This is clearly not what the mandatory condition intended. We would request the council apply the Schedule 4 wording more precisely to avoid this unintended conequence.

Condition 4
We would encourage the council to review this condition which supplements the mandatory condition. The wording needs to be sufficiently broad to avoid excluding vulnerable groups from the private rented sector. For example, prison leavers, people granted asylum, people fleeing domestic violence and homeless people trying to move into secure accommodation may all struggle to source a reference. The licence holder also has no control about what a third party puts in a reference. They can only assess the suitability of the prospective tenant based on the information that is provided. We would request that the council consider the risk of exclusion as part of the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) and make any necessary adjustments to avoid that happening. We could not find this issue referenced in the EIA.

Condition 6
The wording slightly departs from the mandatory condition. The requirement to produce the gas safety certificate on the anniversary of the licence coming into force is unduly prescriptive. If would mean that a landlord producing a gas safety certificate at a different time in the year would be in breach of this condition. We would encourage the council to adopt the Schedule 4 wording. We would have no objection if the council wish to add an extra clause requiring submission of the certificate on demand with 21 days. This would be consistent with conditions 2, 5, 7, 8, and 9.

Condition 10
Subsection (d) is highlighted as being a mandatory condition but it is not. It is unclear what the condition means over and above sub-sections (a) to (c). The text insert in italics after the condition indicates mains wired smoke alarms must be installed in some rental properties as a selective licence condition. We understand such a condition is not permitted for selective licensing purposes as Part 3 of the Housing Act 2004 excludes 'conditions and contents' for this purpose.

Conditions 13 and 14
We would request the council review the terminology used as a repair request and a complaint are two completely separate issues. When an issue arises during the tenancy, tenants make a repair request to their landlord or managing agent. The matter would only be escalated to a complaint if the tenant is not satisfied with the response received. It appears these conditions are referring to service requests rather than complaints.

Condition 15
We have some concern about the intended meaning of this condition. For example, many landlords may appoint a national company to offer a repair, maintenance and serving contract for the heating and hot water system. If an issue arises, the company providing the service would be contacted. In many cases, they will outsource the work to their network of approved contractors operating across the country, many of which may be self-employed. The wording of the condition suggests that work outsourced in this way could breach of the condition and that surely cannot be the council's intention.

Condition 16
We would question why full records of this nature for every tenant in every property need to be retained for five years, even if the tenant has vacated the property. It is important under GDPR rules that information is not retained for longer than is necessary. We would suggest changing the timescale to the duration of the tenancy, or the duration of the tenancy plus six months.

Condition 18
We would suggest the condition is amended to refer to gardens and yards within the curtilage of the house, or words to that effect. Otherwise, if could inadvertently make a long leaseholder responsible for the upkeep of a communal garden that is maintained by the freeholder.

We would suggest conditions 18 and 22 are combined as they both require six monthly inspections associated with pests. We would suggest these two conditions are also combined with condition 32, as all three conditions require one six monthly inspection.

Conditions 27
We have serious reservations about the requirements imposed by this condition with respect to managing agents. When a licence application is submitted, if is for the council to be satisfied the managing agent is a fit and property person to manage the property and that the licence holder is the most appropriate person to be bound by all the conditions. There is no requirement for a managing agent, either at time of application, of if appointed post-approval, to be bound by one or more licence conditions if they are not the licence holder.

The notification of a new managing agent is already covered by condition 26(f). If the managing agent is named on the licence, this will require a licence variation application. The council would then assess the fit and proper status of the manager before deciding whether to approve or refuse the request.

The only time we can foresee a managing agent might be bound by conditions is if the licence holder resides outside the UK. That narrow example does not justify condition 27 being imposed on every licence. We would request the council delete this condition in full or contact us to allow a further discuss on this point.

Condition 31
We question the need for the licence holder to provide details in tenancy management arrangements to tackle any anti-social behaviour as prescriptive requirements are already set out in conditions 36 (a) to (h).

Condition 38
It is difficult for the licence holder or manager to obtain access for council officers at any reasonable time as they must give tenants at least 24 hours' notice before trying to obtain access themselves. It is assumed the council acknowledge and appreciate this practical limitation.

General
Some of the licence conditions have writing in italics, fainter font and some sections in bold inserted beneath the main text. There is no key or explanation of what this signifies. If this is intended as supporting guidance, this needs to be made clear.

Delivering effective enforcement
It is vital that the council have a well-resourced and effective enforcement team to take action against those landlords and agents that seek to evade the licensing scheme. It is also important to explain what resources will be available to inspect licensed properties to ensure they are in good repair and well managed.

Without effective enforcement, new regulatory burdens will fall solely on those that apply for a licence whilst the rogue element of the market continue to evade the scheme and operate under the radar. This creates unfair competition for safeagent accredited firms who comply with all their legal responsibilities. They are saddled with extra costs associated with the licence application process and compliance, whilst others evade the scheme completely.

Recognising the important role of letting agents
Letting agents have a critical role to play in effective management of the private rented sector. We would encourage the council to explore mechanisms for effective liaison with letting agents and to acknowledge the benefits of encouraging landlords to use regulated letting agents such as safeagent accredited firms.

Regulation of letting agents
To achieve better regulation of the private rented sector and improve consumer protection, it is important the council takes a holistic approach that extends far beyond the proposed licensing scheme.

Since October 2014, it has been a requirement for all letting agents and property managers to belong to a government-approved redress scheme. In May 2015, new legislation required agents to display all relevant fees, the redress scheme they belong to and whether they belong to a client money protection scheme. On 1 April 2019, new legislation required letting agents and property managers that hold client money to be members of a government approved client money protection scheme. At safeagent we operate one of the six government approved client money protection schemes.

To assist councils in regulating the private rented sector and effectively utilising these enforcement powers, we developed an Effective Enforcement Toolkit. Originally published in June 2016, the second edition was published in 2018. The third and most recent edition of the safeagent Effective Enforcement Toolkit, developed in conjunction with London Trading Standards, was published in 2021. It can be downloaded free of charge from our website:

https://safeagents.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/safeagent-Effective-Enforcement-Toolkit-2021.pdf

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this consultation response, please do not hesitate to contact me. Can you also please confirm the outcome of the consultation exercise in due course.

[redacted]
Chief Executive

Safeagent
Cheltenham Office Park
Hatherley Lane
Cheltenham
GL51 6SH

[redacted]
Website: https://safeagents.co.uk

propertymark

Westminster City Council – Consultation on proposal to introduce a Selective Licensing scheme in two designations
Response from Propertymark
December 2024

Background

1. Propertymark is the UK's leading professional body for estate and letting agents, property inventory service providers, commercial agents, auctioneers and valuers, comprising over 18,000 members representing over 12,800 branches. We are member-led with a Board which is made up of practicing agents and we work closely with our members to set professional standards through regulation, accredited and recognised qualifications, an industry-leading training programme and mandatory Continuing Professional Development. Members benefit from guidance, advice, and research as well as a comprehensive programme of workshops, conferences and events and we regulate members' activity according to a code of conduct and rules, with disciplinary action for instances of non-compliance.

Overview

2. Westminster City Council are proposing a selective licensing scheme which would extend licensing to all private rented accommodation occupied by a single household or two unrelated sharers in fifteen council wards. The selective licensing scheme would be split into two designations:

   - The first designation would cover the council wards of Abbey Road, Church Street, Harrow Road, Knightsbridge & Belgravia, Little Venice, Maida Vale, Queen's Park and Westbourne. This scheme would be designed to tackle poor housing conditions.

   - The second designation would cover the council wards of Bayswater, Lancaster Gate, Marylebone, Pimlico North, Regent's Park, West End and Hyde Park. This scheme would be designed to tackle poor housing conditions and high levels of anti-social behaviour.

   The intention is that both designations would start on the same day and run for a period of five years.

Summary

3. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on introducing a selective licensing scheme in Westminster. Propertymark is supportive of efforts made by local authorities to improve housing stock within the private rented sector (PRS). However, we do not think that licensing is the best method to achieve this aim. Accordingly, we object to your proposal.

4. Propertymark would prefer a regulatory framework, which seeks to educate landlords in improving their stock rather than punitive measures that are difficult to enforce and only

punish compliant landlords letting those that require improvements to go undetected. We oppose this proposal on several grounds which are set out below.

5. Westminster City Council have identified several alternatives to a licensing scheme. For example, wider promotion of voluntary accreditation schemes to facilitate improvement in management practices and standards. Or to tackle anti-social behaviour, which is a key aim of the proposed scheme, formal notices can be served at addresses identified as having anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues. This can resolve ASB at the particular address. However, there is little evidence that the council have assessed their potential other than through a desk top exercise. We would be grateful for further evidence on how Westminster have supported landlords in improving their management responsibilities and best practice that they have shared through education to improve standards.

Licensing structure

6. **Costs of the scheme** – We hope that Westminster City Council can clarify how much the scheme will cost the council. Many selective licensing schemes are a significant investment for local authorities, and we would ask that members of the authority consider carefully if such a scheme offers value for money for their residents and is the most cost-effective method to improve the quality of the PRS. The consultation document does not reference any costings to the council and this needs to be clear and transparent. Although the council are seeking to make the scheme cost neutral, in our experience, the costs for such a scheme can outweigh the revenue made from licenses. We note that the scheme is the second licensing scheme that Westminster have considered for the area, and we would recommend the council consider cost efficiency and lessons learnt from the previous scheme especially as this is a relatively large scheme covering fifteen wards.

7. **Number of properties** – According to the Westminster City Council consultation document[1], the 'PRS in Westminster has grown steadily from 45,252 in 2011 to 55,274 in 2024. This represents a 22% increase over the last 13 years.' Moreover, 'the PRS in Westminster is distributed across all 18 wards. The number of PRS properties per ward ranges from 5,153 (West End) to 1,509 (Queen's Park). The percentage of PRS properties in each ward ranges between a maximum of 54.1% (Hyde Park) and a minimum of 28.3% (Queen's Park.)' While the PRS makes a significant proportion of all housing tenure in the area, there is little evidence that some of the socio-economic issues that the scheme seeks to resolve are not attributed to social sector or even owner-occupied sector. Given the strong short-term lets market in the area, the consultation document also does not differentiate between the PRS and the short term lets market. There is no analysis as to what extent the short term lets market has contributed to some of the aims of the proposed scheme.

8. The case that the PRS is growing in Westminster has already been concluded. The PRS is also an increasingly important housing tenure and is home to many people living in the local

[1] Have Your Say Today - View consultation documents before completing the survey - Selective Licensing Consultation

authority area. One of our concerns about licensing schemes, is that the enforcement of schemes to ensure standards are being met in the PRS is often inadequate resulting in compliant landlords having to pay for the scheme and rogue landlords and agents continuing to operate below standard under the radar. We would be grateful for clarity on resources Westminster City Council will use to ensure that enforcement is adequate and are able to check every property across the area. This is especially important in this case as the proposed scheme covers fifteen of the eighteen wards within the borough. Accordingly, we would be grateful for clarity on numbers of enforcement officers and what the council's target is in the number of properties to be checked. Westminster City Council should also consider if they have sufficient resources given the likely extra pressure on regulation from the purposed Renters' Right Bill[2].

9. **Fees** – While we except that costs in London are traditionally higher than other parts of the country, at £995 for a selective licence, the fee is very high given the costs that landlords will experience in maintaining the property. The proposed fees are especially high compared to other local authority selective licensing schemes including £550 in Liverpool.[3] The fee is also higher compared to the proposed fees for selective licenses under consultation in other London Boroughs where costs including labour tend to higher including £640 in Brent[4] and £652 in Merton[5] (before discounts.) However, we do welcome discounts for those members of accredited bodies such as Propertymark as well as discounts for those properties with a high EPC and for multiply properties in the same lease.

10. **Impact of cost-of-living and landlords** - Regardless of the fee level or discounts that are applicable, we are concerned these charges will come at a time when landlords are impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and the impact fees could have on the ability of landlords to improve standards. Our members have also told us that a common concern from landlords on licensing schemes is that the costs can be extremely high for landlords especially those, as we have just highlighted, as having larger portfolios of properties.

11. **Impact on supply of homes** - Exiting the market is especially a concern for smaller landlords who are more likely to sell their properties and further shrink the supply of PRS properties leaving remaining private tenants with higher rents. Our research on the shrinkage of the PRS[6] found 53% of buy to let properties sold in March 2022 left the PRS and that there were 49% less PRS properties to let in March 2022 compared with 2019. In addition to these concerns, those landlords who remain in the market, often have less money to improve conditions from increased costs. If the decision to operate a selective licensing scheme across designated areas within Westminster is approved, then there is a concern that landlords currently operating within Westminster could invest in neighbouring local authority areas or exit the market altogether. This could result in fewer housing options for people living in Westminster meaning some people might be forced to find housing options outside the area, change

[2] https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3764
[3] Fees, discounts and exemptions - Liverpool City Council
[4] Appendix 3 Proposed Schedule of Fees and Charges (1).pdf
[5] London Borough of Merton Landlord Licensing and HMO Planning Controls Consultation
[6] A shrinking private rented sector | Propertymark

employment or break social ties within the community. This is more likely under the scheme that Westminster are considering where the council are targeting a large area of their borough. This will likely lead to these areas becoming less desirable for landlords to invest in and increase any problems in terms of standards.

12. **Unintended Consequences** – We are pleased to see that Westminster acknowledge that the PRS is an important and increasingly growing tenure that is home to many people living within the Borough. Renting in Westminster, compared to many areas across London is very expensive and has properties that are both the most expensive to rent in the country and London. The median monthly rent in the borough is £4,250 per calendar month which would be challenging for many low wages and tenants in receipt of benefits[7]. Accordingly, some renters living within the area will require cheaper accommodation due to being on a low income and the continued challenges in the cost-of-living crisis. We previously outlined the possibility that further legislation could reduce the housing options of the most vulnerable from landlords exiting the market there could be further implications on the rent level for those landlords who remain. As is the general law of supply and demand, if the supply of PRS property reduces, the cost of rent for the remaining properties is likely to rise. With the current demographics of persons accessing the PRS in Westminster, there is a very real danger that many low-income families will be priced out of living in the area.

Improving standards

13. **Property condition** – According to the Westminster City Council Private Rented Sector: Housing Stock Condition and Stressors Report[8] large parts of the designated areas within Westminster was built pre-Second World War and is characterised as including significant levels of older stock. Areas that have these characteristics are often inner-city communities with large section of pre-1919 built housing. Accordingly, a significant amount of investment is required to improve the condition of stock including the energy efficiency of properties. We would be grateful if Westminster City Council could clarify if they have any proposed grants or funds available for landlords to improve stock.

14. **Deprivation**– Although there are pockets of deprivation within the proposed area, Westminster is characterised as having low deprivation overall including within the designated area[9]. This may suggest that some of the aims of the proposed scheme would be better targeted by supporting landlords to improve standards and to target other impacts to anti-social behaviour such as the nighttime economy and short term lets. Regardless, we do not see a link between licensing and how such a scheme can improve multiple deprivation. In order to alleviate poverty and deprivation within the pockets that apply, the council would be better advised to adopt community development schemes to improve employment and income opportunities. Private landlords are not equipped to improve these areas and there

[7] London rents map | London City Hall
[8] Have Your Say Today - View consultation documents before completing the survey - Selective Licensing Consultation
[9] English indices of deprivation - GOV.UK

is little evidence to suggest that licensing schemes have improved community development in this regard.

15. The consultation document references fuel poverty. However, according to National Energy Action, 11.3% of households in Westminster are impacted by fuel poverty compared to 11.5% in London and 13% nationally[10]. This would suggest that properties are of a good standard in terms of energy efficiency especially when considering the age of stock and other local challenges such as a high proportion of heritage properties. Nevertheless, we would be grateful if Westminster could clarify what support it provides landlords and their agents to decarbonise including grants from ECO 4 and flexible eligibility. We unfortunately have not been able to locate the council's statement of intent for the eco flex scheme, so we would especially be grateful for clarification.

16. **Damp and mould** – The housing conditions report refers to the problems of damp and mould. However, no statistical evidence has been provided on the prevalence of damp and mould. Restricting issues of damp and mould and other health detriments in housing in a priority of the UK Government who are introducing 'Awaabs' Law to the Private Rented Sector as a provision of the Renters' Rights Bill.[11] We would be delighted to support the council in raising awareness with landlords and agents on their responsibilities as part of the provisions of the bill in particular new reporting and mediation of health and safety deficits in private properties.

17. **Energy efficiency** – The housing conditions report states that 'Westminster has 4,765 PRS EPC ratings that are E, F, & G. EPC ratings E, F, & G represent properties with the least energy efficiency. West End (512) and Marylebone (481) have the highest number of EPC rating E-G.' However, many of these properties may be exempt due to the high proportion of listed buildings locally. Furthermore, since 1 April 2020, landlords can no longer let or continue to let properties covered by the MEES Regulations if they have an EPC rating below E, unless they have a valid exemption in place. The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for the PRS will increase to EPC C by 2030. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss ways that Westminster could support landlords and their agents decarbonise.

18. **Empty properties** – Westminster City Council state that 'licensing increases the council's ability to uncover empty properties and those being used for short lets beyond 90 days and encourage their use back into the housing market.' This according to the council will be a major benefit of licensing and to the community. However, Westminster have not provided any statistical information on long-term empty homes in each proposed area. We agree with the council that empty properties blight local communities and are a wasted resource. However,, we would welcome clarity on what tools Westminster City Council would use to empty properties including Empty Management Dwelling Orders.

[10] Westminster North - National Energy Action (NEA)
[11] Guide to the Renters' Rights Bill - GOV.UK

19. **Homelessness** – The private rented sector also makes a significant contribution to meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people, and in many cases has prevented homelessness and minimised the use of temporary accommodation. With increased costs likely from any proposed licensing regime, how will Westminster City Council support landlords and property agents sustain tenancies for vulnerable tenants? Will they provide support for substance misuse, provide support for tenants with mental health concerns or provide budgeting advice? There is an unlevel playing field between support for vulnerable tenants in the social and private sectors as social housing providers have the means to support such needs and often landlords are not qualified in these specific areas. We note that the council have already worked with Safer Renting to support tenants access Rent Repayment Orders, but in terms of landlords and agents that want to positively support homelessness, how have the council engaged with specific stakeholders.

20. **Current enforcement** – Data for Westminster City Council's previous licensing schemes requires further clarity. For example, more clarity on the nature of complaints for properties in the PRS and how properties were improved. Westminster should also consider setting targets on how they perform in the proposed scheme. For example, how many working days will it take for a typical licence application to be processed and issued? Salford should also publish key statistics on their enforcement activity including warning letters, prosecutions, and civil penalties issues. We would be grateful if this data could be broken down by years and whether the action was within a selective or additional licensing scheme area or from general enforcement. We would also be grateful for clarity on the reasons for issuing civil penalties for example, how many were for over-crowding, banning orders or for simply not obtaining the correct license.

21. We would welcome clarity on what the council's enforcement policy will entail. How will the council educate landlords to ensure they are complaint, and for those landlords who struggling with the management of properties, will the council recommend landlords discharge their duties to Propertymark registered agents especially the high reliance on agents?

Engagement

22. **Engagement with landlords and letting agents** - For most cases of substandard accommodation, it is often down to landlord's lack of understanding rather than any intent to provide poor standards. Westminster are proposing efforts to engage with landlords and agents. However, we would be grateful for clarification on how the authority engages with landlords and agents including landlord forums. Furthermore, there is no due regard in encouraging landlords or property agents to be members of an accredited membership scheme such as Propertymark. Fundamentally, we believe engagement is more credible over a longer more embedded period. Propertymark has a network of Regional Executives and a series of Regional Conferences that take place throughout the year.[12] We would be very happy to work with the council to engage with local agents over a victual roundtable

[12] https://www.propertymark.co.uk/about-us/board-and-governance.html

discussion on how standards can be improved. Given that Westminster has the highest number of offshore owned properties in the country (over 16,000), which means day to day rental and property management is often conducted by agents, we are disappointed that we have not had any specific engagement with the council as of yet.

23. To strengthen this engagement, we would be very happy to support the council in engaging with our members and local property agents. A licensing scheme is a very reactive mechanism, and it is far more beneficial to have a programme of education to engage with landlords on helping them improve before a situation gets worse. We would welcome clarity on what training opportunities the council will provide to landlords and agents to help them understand their responsibilities and improve standards.

24. We note one of the schemes objectives is to have an emphasis on engagement and education to raise awareness amongst landlords, letting agents and tenants of their respective rights and responsibilities. Unfortunately, we have seen no evidence of engagement with property agents throughout the scheme. However, as we have stated previously, we would be happy to support the council in raising awareness with our membership on this proposed scheme or any other pertinent activities.

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

25. The consultation document highlights several initiatives that the council are working collaboratively with other stakeholders such as the Metropolitan Police and the London Fire Brigade in conjunction with neighbourhood safety teams. While these initiatives are admirable 'and in no doubt achieving successes in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, the case how a selective licensing scheme would compliant these schemes and further their aims have not been made.

26. The consultation document highlights that anti-social behaviour is also a problem in the proposed area. However, the consultation document does concede that there could be many other factors why crime and anti-social behaviour might be high in these areas including short term lets or the impact the nighttime economy has on the area. Furthermore, landlords are not the best equipped to deal with anti-social behaviour and certainly do not have the skills or capacity to deal with some tenants' problems such as mental health or drug and alcohol misuse. As one example, if a landlord or their agent had a tenant that was causing anti-social behaviour, the only tool that the landlord or agent could use would be to seek possession from the tenant under a Section 8 notice. While this would remedy the problem in the short-term, the tenant is likely to still occupy this behaviour and all that has been achieved is that the anti-social behaviour has moved from one part of Westminster to another or another local authority area.

27. In this context, it should be noted that with regards to reducing anti-social behaviour, landlords and their agents can only tackle behaviour within their properties. Effectively, they are managing a contract and not behaviour. Landlords and their agents are not responsible in any form for anti-social behaviour occurring outside the property. Nevertheless, we would be

interested to learn about any partnership work the council are proposing with stakeholders such as the Metropolitan Police in reducing anti-social behaviour and how the scheme will support these aims.

Environmental crime

28. The evidence document has highlighted selective licensing as a tool to tackle environmental crimes such as fly tipping. Westminster City Council state that of their total number complaints in relation to vandalism, fly tipping and other environmental crimes, a significant proportion occur in the proposed area. Westminster City Council also state that 'poor waste management and fly tipping are linked to the PRS, particularly within HMOs. All HMO licences contain a condition that the licence holder must provide adequately sized bins and sufficient recycling containers for the occupiers', but do not provide any evidence to suggest the problem originates from private rented sector properties. While we welcome efforts to tackle fly tipping, unless the perpetrator is caught doing the fly tipping or there is some sort of evidence, such as an addressed letter, within the fly tip, then it is impossible to suggest to what extent fly tipping is a problem directly from the PRS. Even if the link between fly tipping and the PRS could be proved, there is very little that landlords could do for any behaviour outside the tenancy unless the fly tip was done within the grounds of the property. Additionally, once the landlord or agent has provided adequate bins and waste facilities, it is incumbent on the tenant to use them appropriately.

Selective Licensing and Section 21

29. We note that the UK Government have proposed abolishing Section 21 as part of the Renters' Rights Bill. However, before the Bill is enacted, Propertymark would like clarification on the council's policy concerning helping a landlord when a section 21 notice is served, the property is overcrowded, or the tenant is causing antisocial behaviour, as per the council's consultation. What steps will the council take to support the landlord? It would be useful if the council were to put a guidance document before introducing the scheme to outline its position regarding helping landlords remove tenants who are manifesting antisocial behaviour. The recent proposed changes to section 21 legislation and how tenancies if implemented could mean landlords will become more risk-averse to taking tenants with a perfect reference and history. We would be willing to work with the council and develop a dispute resolution service with other local authorities.

Conclusions and alternatives

30. Propertymark thinks that local authorities need a healthy private rented sector to complement the other housing in an area. This provides a variety of housing types that can meet the needs of both residents and landlords in the area. Appropriate regulation and enforcement are essential for improving standards and removing criminals from the sector who exploit landlords and tenants. An active enforcement policy that supports good landlords and letting agents is crucial as it will remove those who exploit others and help create a level playing field. It is essential to understand how the sector operates as landlords and letting

agents can often be victims of criminal activity and antisocial behaviour with their properties being exploited.

31. If the scheme is approved, the council should consider providing an annual summary of outcomes to demonstrate to tenants, landlords and letting agents' behaviour improvements and the impact of licensing on the designated area over the scheme's lifetime. This would improve transparency overall. Propertymark has a shared interest with Westminster City Council in ensuring a high-quality private rented sector but strongly disagrees that the introduction of the proposed measures is the most effective approach to achieve this aim both in the short term and long term.

32. We would welcome the opportunity to work with Westminster City Council to further engage with our members and property agents in the local area.

COMPANY REF: AM/WCC/SELECTIVELICENSING/25

THE HOWARD deWALDEN ESTATE

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Mr Geraint Maddocks
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Westminster City Council
City Hall
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London
SW1E 6QP

By email only:
Propertylicensing@westminster.gov.uk

17th January 20245

Dear Sir

REPRESENTATIONS ON CONSULTATION FOR- SELECTIVE LICENSING- SHAPING THE FUTURE OF PRIVATE RENTALS IN WESTMINSTER

We enclose herewith, on behalf of The Howard de Walden Estate (The Estate) representations regarding the City of Westminster Consultation on the proposed selective licensing scheme for private rented homes. As the City Council will know, The Howard de Walden Estate is located in Marylebone stretching from just west of Marylebone High Street to Hallam Street in the east, Marylebone Road in the north and Wigmore Street to the south encompassing approximately 95 acres of central London and completely within the Marylebone Ward as shown within the mapping of this consultation.

As custodians of rich heritage and a mixed property portfolio in Westminster, we take great pride in being responsible private landlords to each of our 4 major property portfolios including the 850 residential units that we manage and maintain. These units provide a range of housing from studio flats within mixed use buildings to large single family dwelling houses where we pride ourselves on being able to supply housing with keeps both families and people of all ages living with Marylebone Village.

In addition to market let housing, The Estate also provides key worker housing at a reduced market rent for various members of medical staff working within our local private hospitals. At the outset of this programme in 2019/2020, the Estate granted 19 key worker tenancies as it was recognised that housing affordability is a significant factor in the recruitment and retention of key workers within the health service. In the UK, there are an estimated 10.6 million key workers (ONS 2020) and around 51% are employed in healthcare and education. Therefore, we understand the importance of supporting these key members of staff so the are located as close to their place of employment as possible.

As the City Council will know, our long-term approach in preserving and maintaining the Estate's legacy is to ensure that it's protected for future generations, so our approach ensures continuity with a careful eye on sustainability having declared a net zero Estate 2040. Thus, we support the overall aims of this proposal to assist in maintaining housing quality, including property management and safety standards however also raise the following points as concerns regarding the implementation of this scheme:

THE HOWARD deWALDEN ESTATE

1) **Renter's Right Bill- Duplication of Database Information**

The Renter's Right Bill is the biggest change in residential rental legislation in 30 years and as the City Council will know, part of the bill required that there be a 'Private Rented Sector Database' to help landlords understand their legal obligations and demonstrate compliance to both *sustainability but also health and safety standards*. In addition, this legislation will provide better information to tenants to make informed decisions when entering into a tenancy agreement. We also understand that this Bill will support local authorities by helping them to create a meaningful process for enforcement where it is needed most.

The Estate believes that the 'Selective Licensing Scheme' as proposed seeks to duplicate many aspects of the Renter's Right Bill, therefore creating a financial and administrative burden to existing landlords and any new landlords seeking to enter the market. Therefore, we believe that should the Selective Licensing scheme progress forward, it should only do so on the Renter's Right Bill has passes and the scope of the database becomes clear.

2. **Housing Targets**

The Howard de Walden Estate believes that it has a role to play in supporting Westminster City Council in achieving its housing targets as set more recently by Central Government. Overall growth in the economy and housing is a key ambition for the City Council as set and understood by the City Plan and planning policy as a whole and we believe this scheme has the potential to encourage 'good landlords to exit the area' therefore leaving a reduced stock of housing at an increased rent.

In addition, there is an understanding that the potential of the Renter's Right Bill is already having an impact and therefore we believe following the bill passing into law, Westminster should wait to see the real term impact on the housing market before implementing further change.

3. **Fee and Proposed Discounts**

We would encourage the City Council to extend the fee discounts to better reflect the diversity in privately rented residential portfolios which include properties rented under S106 and key worker housing as described in the introduction of this letter.

In addition, we believe that if fees are to be discounted based on EPC ratings, we would encourage the City Council to review how planning policy can support the upgrading of Westminster's heritage buildings more quickly to improve overall efficiency of our historic residential properties.

We would urge the City Council to consider granting free selective licenses to landlords who can demonstrate good management and consistent supply of GSC, EICRs and compliant EPCs and fine those who do not.

4. **Available Resource**

We believe the City Council should consider the potential administrative burden both at the City Council and for private landlords to run this scheme particularly when it is very similar to the national scheme which is coming forwards. Therefore, we welcome the confirmation from the City Council that they will have administrative resource to handle the potential significant volume of processing licensing application should this scheme be implemented.

THE HOWARD deWALDEN ESTATE

5. Enforcement

Finally, the Estate encourages the City Council to consider in more detail how this scheme will be enforced what penalties and deterrents that will be put in place for those who choose not to follow the rules or meet the maximum compliance requirements.

At this point in time there is not enough information to assure the Estate that robust enforcement policies are in place as part of this proposal.

The Estate would like to thank the City Council for the opportunity to comment on these proposals. We look forward to continuing to proactively work with the City Council on these proposals and would like to offer any industry knowledge and expertise to support discussions going forward. In the meantime, should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

[redacted]
Director of Planning and Place
[redacted]

Conservatives

17th January 2025

Westminster City Council Public Consultation - Private Rented Property Licensing

A response from the Westminster Council Conservative Group

1. **Summary**

• We support efforts to maintain and raise standards in rental properties.
• The scheme as drafted penalises good landlords to regulate bad ones at a time when landlords are leaving the rental market. The proposal should be revised so that offenders and poor landlords bear the lion's share of the costs.
• Creating a costly duplication of the government's proposed landlord register serves no purpose. The scheme should be revised to work through that register, enabling focused investigation of poor landlords rather than penalising all landlords.
• Experiences from Liverpool to Newham and Salford demonstrate potential pitfalls. As much of the data used to justify this scheme is abstract and less specific to Westminster than the specific knowledge of councillors and other residents, the risk of failure is increased. The scheme should begin with pilot areas to achieve optimum effectiveness and facilitate learning about the housing stock in localities.

2. **Support for improvement**

We support efforts to raise standards in rental properties. Labour's Renters Rights Legislation and the last Conservative government's Renters Reform bill shared similar objectives (with the main difference being our preference to reform the courts before abolishing Section 21 - an approach validated by current court system challenges).

Where licensing has been successful, it has encouraged landlords to improve their properties through a balanced approach: emphasising support and education while maintaining enforcement measures for violations. Many landlords have joined professional groups to work collaboratively toward these goals, accepting the new regimes.

3. **Concerns with the proposals**

However, a number of concerns about these proposals merit careful consideration and we have discussed these with a set of landlords both large and small. Poorly thought through licensing schemes often prove ineffective, potentially deterring responsible landlords while failing to address problematic ones, as evidenced in Liverpool. This issue is particularly relevant given current market conditions, where private landlords are increasingly withdrawing from the sector (as documented by Savills, London Councils, and Trust for London). We must recognise the private sector's vital role and

respect landlords as business operators, particularly small-scale landlords who have often invested in property as part of their retirement planning.

4. Key Issues with Labour's Current Proposals

1. The scheme unfairly burdens compliant landlords with the costs of regulating non-compliant ones.

2. It relies more on largely abstracted data modelling and reductive quantitative methods rather than qualitative risk assessment based on Westminster specifics, leading to an overly broad regulatory approach that many landlords have told us they view as primarily revenue-generating.

3. It appears to disregard lessons from the HMO licensing scheme, where approximately 1.7 compliant landlords subsidise each non-compliant one. Some landlords have remained entirely unresponsive, worsening this ratio. Moreover, the scheme lacks clear metrics for evaluating improvements in the stock and value for money.

4. The proposal overlooks the government's forthcoming landlord register, creating unnecessary duplication. A more pragmatic approach would leverage this register to develop the Westminster scheme and for targeted enforcement.

5. While £1,000 per five-year license may seem reasonable to some, this fee compounds existing business costs during a period of market contraction. The Liverpool scheme highlighted several operational challenges:
- High council administrative costs affecting residents
- Extended license application processing times
- Limited enforcement capability despite fee collection
- Difficulty identifying unlicensed properties
- Cost transfer to tenants

Any of these factors would further discourage landlords when we need more, not fewer, private rental sector properties. How will the Council ensure that such mistakes are avoided?

6. The proposal's anti-social behaviour (ASB) provisions require further development. Critical questions remain unanswered regarding implementation, ASB classification, and integration with existing Westminster policies. We suggest from experience that PRS properties are more rarely locations of significant ASB.

5. Additional Concerns

Limited discounts for affordable housing charities should be reevaluated and extended.

There is insufficient recognition of economies of scale for multiple properties within single buildings. There is also a lack of clarity about the licensing of common areas in multiple property buildings with ownership by both lease and freeholders. Common areas often present greater risk and more problems such as ASB.

6. Recommendations

1. Utilize the government's new register rather than creating a parallel system; develop an investigative approach supporting compliant landlords while penalizing offenders through enforcement that then substantially funds the scheme.
2. Develop an evidence-based model to classify properties incorporating local knowledge from councillors and residents rather than relying largely on academic abstractions.
3. Emphasise collaboration with other boroughs to reduce duplication and administrative costs and share best practices, while maintaining focus on Westminster's specific needs.
4. Learn from poor experiences in Liverpool, Newham, and Salford.
5. Prioritize constructive landlord engagement and good administration over confrontational approaches.
6. Implement pilot programmes in two areas before a broader rollout.

This approach would better serve both landlords and tenants while being more likely to achieve the underlying goal of improving rental property standards.

[redacted]
Shadow Housing Spokesperson
January 2025

By email only

Westminster Property Association

Mr Geraint Maddocks
c/o Property Licensing Team
Westminster City Council
City Hall
64 Victoria Street
London

SW1E 6QP

19 January 2025

Dear Geraint Maddocks,

RE: WPA response to Private Rented Property Licensing consultation

I am writing on behalf of Westminster Property Association ("WPA") to provide our response to the Private Rented Property Licensing consultation.

Westminster Property Association is a not-for-profit membership body representing the leading owners, investors, professional advisors and developers of real estate across the commercial and cultural heart of the capital. You can view our current membership list here.

WPA recognises the importance of the Private Rented Sector (PRS) to Westminster's housing landscape and shares the City Council's desire to ensure all residents have access to high-quality, well-maintained homes.

However, with a national registration scheme for landlords expected under the Renters' Rights Bill, which aims to achieve similar objectives and is described by the Government as the biggest change in rental legislation in 30 years, we would strongly encourage the City Council to consider any duplication with this incoming national policy and delay implementation until the impact of the scheme can be fully understood. Duplication risks placing a potentially unnecessary regulatory burden on landlords, particularly as it is currently unclear what the national registration scheme will involve and how it will impact housing supply and demand.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for your engagement on the proposed initiative, in particular, your participation in our workshop in December 2024. I have summarised in this letter the key matters arising from the consultation (appendix 1) to which we wish to respond, while appendix 2 (page 3) provides detailed answers to the specific questions in the consultation document.

We look forward to continuing to engage with the City Council further and if you have any questions regarding our response, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Chief Executive,
Westminster Property Association

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By email only

Westminster Property Association

APPENDIX 1

Feedback overview

Fee and proposed discounts

We recommend extending the proposed fee discounts to better reflect the diversity in charitable uses of private rented properties, incorporating properties rented under Section 106 or as key worker housing.

If fees are to be discounted based on EPC ratings, then we encourage the City Council to ensure that buildings which reach these standards can receive the appropriate accreditation in a timely manner.

We also recommend the City Council review how planning and policy can better support the swift upgrading of Westminster's heritage buildings and ensure that planning applications which propose building works that will improve energy efficiency are determined in a timely manner to improve the overall quality of Westminster's housing stock. A 'retrofit first, not retrofit only' approach should be encouraged to allow property owners to improve the energy efficiency of older buildings, including the demolition and redevelopment of buildings where required.

Differentiation with the PRS database

WPA recommends that the City Council give great consideration to whether a selective licensing scheme should be introduced before the Renters' Rights Bill is passed. WPA is concerned that the scheme will be duplicated by the PRS database as part of this Bill, which is currently going through Parliament and will require landlords to register themselves and their properties on the database. This could mean that much of the required information will already be available to the City Council, increasing the regulatory and administrative burden to landlords with little additional benefit.

Enforcement of the policy

WPA encourages the City Council to detail more thoroughly how the scheme will be enforced and what deterrents will be put in place for landlords who choose not to follow the rules to ensure maximum compliance.

We understand failure to apply for a licence will result in a financial penalty or prosecution and that that this can result in landlords subsequently registering. However, we would like to receive more concrete data on the impact similar enforcement policies have had elsewhere.

Available resource

We would urge the City Council to consider the burden managing this scheme may have on council resources, particularly when there is very likely to be a similar national scheme coming forwards. We would welcome confirmation that the City Council will have the additional resource available to handle the significant volume of licensing applications that will occur if the scheme is implemented.

Impact of the scheme

WPA would like to see more tangible evidence on the potential impact of the scheme and we urge the City Council to conduct more research into how it may effect the supply of housing and rents in Westminster, and therefore the City Council's ability to reach its housing targets. As the Renter's Rights Bill has not yet passed, we are unable to determine the impact of this additional regulatory burden on housing stock and supply. Any reduction in supply, could see rents increase. WPA would recommend pausing implementation of the scheme until the real term impact on the housing market can be accurately assessed and understood.

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APPENDIX 2

WPA response to consultation questions

Question 1. From your own experience, to what extent do you believe each of the following to be a problem in Westminster?

Poor property conditions

Westminster City Council has predicted that there are 6,764 private rented properties across the borough that have at least one serious hazard.[1] However, WPA would like the City Council to provide more information on how this estimation was made, given the volume of poor property conditions is a central justification for the scheme.

Antisocial behaviour (ASB)

ASB is a multifaceted and complex social issue which is not limited to the private rented sector (PRS). WPA would like the City Council to provide further detailed evidence on the root causes of anti-social behaviour in Westminster and how it is attributed to housing accommodation provided by the sector, as this is currently unclear.

Question 2. Thinking about the private rented sector (PRS) as a whole in Westminster, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The Private Rented Sector (PRS) is growing

WPA strongly agrees with the above, with the PRS seeing a 22% increase over the last 13 years and being widely expected to increase further.[2]

The physical condition of PRS properties is a problem

WPA would not generally consider the physical condition of PRS properties to be a large-scale issue but instead a small minority of properties need to be brought in line with the general property standard of the area.

The energy efficiency of PRS properties is generally of a poor standard

Westminster has a large number of historic buildings and 56 conservation areas, making building upgrades to improve energy efficiency challenging. WPA would encourage reviewing planning and policy to facilitate faster planning consents for building works that reduce operational carbon emissions.

Question 3. Thinking about the private rented sector (PRS) as a whole in Westminster, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The private rented sector (PRS) causes neighbourhood problems such as noise, nuisance, rubbish and other ASB

As mentioned above, problems such as anti-social behaviour are not limited to the PRS and should not be considered as a root cause of these issues. WPA would encourage the City Council to provide further evidence that can demonstrate how selective licensing has reduced ASB where similar initiatives have been implemented elsewhere.

Question 4. Thinking about the private rented sector as a whole in Westminster, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Landlords of private rented sector (PRS) properties have a responsibility to manage their properties effectively

WPA strongly agrees that landlords have a responsibility to manage their properties effectively and, barring a small percentage of housing stock, this is already the case.

[1] Westminster City Council, 'Licensing Private Rented Properties in Westminster: Consultation Evidence Pack'

[2] Ibid.

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To help with the management of PRS properties, landlords should be 'fit and proper' persons (e.g. have proper management or financial arrangements in place, and not have convictions for certain types of offences)

We strongly agree that landlords should be fit and proper persons.

Question 5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for a selective licensing scheme in the eight wards in Designation 1?

Although we support the City Council's desire to improve the quality of stock, we are concerned about the impact this scheme will have on housing supply and rents (as this is currently untested) and question whether the City Council has the resources it needs to implement the scheme effectively. WPA is also concerned that duplication created by a national registration scheme as a result of the incoming Renters' Rights Bill will create an unnecessary administrative and regulatory burden.

Question 6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal for a selective licensing scheme in the seven wards in Designation 2?

As mentioned in question 5, we have concerns around the impact of the scheme and the City Council's ability to implement the scheme effectively.

Question 7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a selective licensing scheme will help to achieve the following outcomes?

Improve the physical condition of private rented properties

Based on the effectiveness of prior licensing schemes implemented in Westminster, selective licensing will have a limited impact. Of the 2,541 properties that received an HMO licence, less than a quarter have been improved since the start of the additional HMO licensing scheme.[3]

Improve the health and safety of tenants

As most properties in Westminster meet these standards the impact of selective licensing may not be significant.

Help to tackle neighbourhood issues such as noise, nuisance, rubbish and other Antisocial behaviour (ASB)

WPA would urge the City Council to assess whether there are other policies that could be implemented to improve ASB in the area and evidence if and where selective licensing has improved ASB elsewhere.

Question 8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a selective licensing scheme will help to achieve the following outcomes?

Help identify poorly performing landlords, managing agents and letting agents

WPA partially agrees that selective licensing will help to identify poor performing landlords. However, the PRS database that will come into effect if the Renters' Rights Bill is passed has a high potential to do this more effectively and would limit the need for the implementation of the selective licensing scheme.

Assist landlords to raise their management standards

The majority of homes would not be found to need improvements and therefore the scheme may have a limited benefit.

Support good landlords

While being well intentioned, the scheme will be an extra administrative and regulatory burden and could lead to some 'good' landlords exiting the area.

[3] Westminster City Council, 'Licensing Private Rented Properties in Westminster: Consultation Evidence Pack'

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Question 9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed selective licensing discretionary conditions?

The conditions may only have a limited positive impact on the private rented sector, as they are largely conditions that a professional landlord would already have in place.

Question 10. What are your views on the proposed selective licensing fee?

WPA believes that the fee is at the right level, however we recommend that the proposed discounts need to be extended to cover properties rented under Section 106 or key worker housing.

Question 11. What are your views on the proposed discounts?

As above.

Question 12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed licensing scheme objectives?

WPA supports the objectives of the scheme, however, we would encourage the City Council to consider whether implementing this scheme will have the impact it hopes and weigh this against the additional resource cost to the City Council and the regulatory and administrative burden to landlords, when there is a similar national scheme due to come forwards.

Question 13. If you disagree with any of the objectives for the licensing scheme, or think any other licence scheme objectives should be included, please can you explain why?

WPA supports the objectives of the scheme.

Question 14. How satisfied are you with the overall proposals for selective licensing?

As laid out in the above, the WPA shares the objectives of the scheme but recommends the City Council consider whether it is necessary to place another regulatory burden on the sector when a similar national scheme is expected to come into force.

The Westminster Property Association is a company limited by guarantee in England
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Appendix 5 – Letter of support

Waltham Forest

Councillor Khevyn Limbajee
Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest Town Hall
Forest Road
London
E17 4JF

Telephone: 020 8496 4340
Email: Cllr.Khevyn.Limbajee@walthamforest.gov.uk

Cllr Matt Noble
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Renters
Westminster City Council

Dear Cllr Noble,

03 January 2025

Re: Westminster City Council – Selective Licensing Consultation

Following your letter dated 20 December 2024 to Linzi Roberts Egan, the Chief Executive of Waltham Forest Council, on behalf of Waltham Forest Council, I am writing to express support for the implementation of a Selective Licensing Scheme covering 15 wards in Westminster City Council to tackle identified problems including poor housing conditions in privately rented homes within the borough.

To reiterate, Waltham Forest Council fully supports the introduction of a selective licensing scheme in Westminster that will support their current additional licensing scheme. We recognise the importance of the private rented sector in providing homes for people who want to live in the borough. Our experience is that many landlords take their responsibilities very seriously and provide well managed rented homes that are maintained to a good standard. However, there are widespread issues of disrepair and housing hazards in the private rented sector and poorly managed properties that give rise to significant and persistent ASB compared to homes in other sectors. In this regard, we believe that your proposed scheme will give your authority the best opportunity to ensure that all private sector landlords in captured wards meet the highest possible standards.

We believe that selective licensing has brought long overdue regulation to the private rented sector, and we share your view that your scheme objectives cannot be adequately met by means other than property licensing. We have seen the merits of selective licensing first hand since it came into force in Waltham Forest on 1 April 2015. Through the administration and enforcement of successive selective licensing schemes, we have overseen the improvement of over 5000 privately rented homes.

Our licensing schemes have helped Waltham Forest Council to effectively regulate private housing and tackle rogue landlords. It has enabled us to drive up property standards and increase confidence in the private rented sector, as well as help to reduce anti-social behaviour. At the same time, we have been able to administer the scheme in a way that the borough's responsible landlords experience a light-touch approach to enforcement and are supported in the letting and management of their rented homes.

Licence fees are funding vital front line enforcement action to realise our identified licensing scheme objectives. We have been able to develop and maintain the capacity

to carry out proactive/programmed intelligence-led inspections of privately rented homes, as opposed to a purely reactive service. We recognise that residents who inhabit homes in the worst condition are often reluctant to complain to the local authority through fear of eviction.

Our proactive approach to the administration and enforcement of our licensing schemes has enabled Waltham Forest to demonstrate the progress made in tackling damp and mould issues in the private rented sector, following the increased prominence of the issue in the wake of the inquest verdict in the tragic and avoidable death of Awab Ishak.

Private rented licensing, which we made 'digital by default', has also enabled us to better connect to and communicate with landlords through our regular landlord forums and e-newsletters for which we currently have more than 17k subscribers. We are also able to provide support to responsible landlords.

I strongly believe that rented property licensing schemes are an invaluable way for London councils like Westminster City Council and Waltham Forest to help solve London's housing crisis.

Yours sincerely



Lead Cabinet Member for Community Safety