



**CITY OF DURHAM
PARISH COUNCIL**

Learning from the past.
Building for the future.

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Dear Selective Licensing Team

Consultation on licensing of privately rented homes in some areas of the County

The City of Durham Parish Council is most grateful for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Selective Licensing Scheme for County Durham. The Scheme was strongly welcomed by the Parish Council until it emerged that none of the City of Durham Parish would be included.

The areas for which the County Council presents data are known as Middle Super Output Areas (MSOAs). County Durham consists of 66 such areas. Table 2 of the County Council's report lists the top ten MSOAs by proportion of private rented sector properties. Durham City MSOA comes very much at the top of the list with 66.0% of all residential properties being in the private rented sector. The next highest area is Annfield Plain South & South Moor at 48.7%.

The County Council's consultative report recognises that most of the County's HMOs are in Durham City. It says:

"County Durham is home to Durham University which is regularly ranked in the top ten in the University Guide League nationally, and in the top 100 internationally, and as such attracts many students from around the country and the world. In recent years the University has also expanded its capacity increasing the number of registered students to 18,700 in total from 14,300 in 2003/04. This has led to an increased demand for off-site accommodation mainly found in the form of local residential properties that have been registered as HMOs. More recently there has also been an increase in building single large-scale developments of privately owned and run accommodation blocks within the Durham City area."

The report goes on to note that there are 790 registered HMOs within County Durham with 766 or 97% located in and around Durham city centre.

Based on the adopted criteria and the data used, in the Durham City area only Gilesgate Moor qualifies. The report explains:

“Six areas in County Durham are not included in the proposals: Durham City, which is the main area for university student accommodation and is largely covered by existing HMO schemes.”

The Parish Council is dismayed by that statement. It is self-evident that “existing HMO schemes” do not begin to provide the level of enforcement required for tenant protection and landlord standards here.

At present, Durham County Council runs a voluntary landlord accreditation scheme to attempt to secure improvements in property condition and management practice for those landlords who choose to become a member. As it requires voluntary engagement, rogue or poor landlords are unlikely to participate and a relatively low number of landlords have joined the scheme.

Accordingly, the Parish Council concludes that alongside the County-wide Selective Licensing Scheme there needs to be an equivalent compulsory, self-financing scheme for Durham City to address the facts that virtually all of the County’s HMOs are in Durham City, that the associated problems are extensively documented, and that the voluntary scheme is demonstrably not adequate.

Once the COVI-19 situation eases, the Parish Council would greatly appreciate a meeting with Durham County Council Officers and the Portfolio holder to discuss how to cover Durham City with a compulsory, self-financing landlord licensing scheme of the kind that exists in other cities.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Shanley
Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council