

Consultation on Proposed Selective Licensing of Private Rented Homes in Rusholme and Moss Side

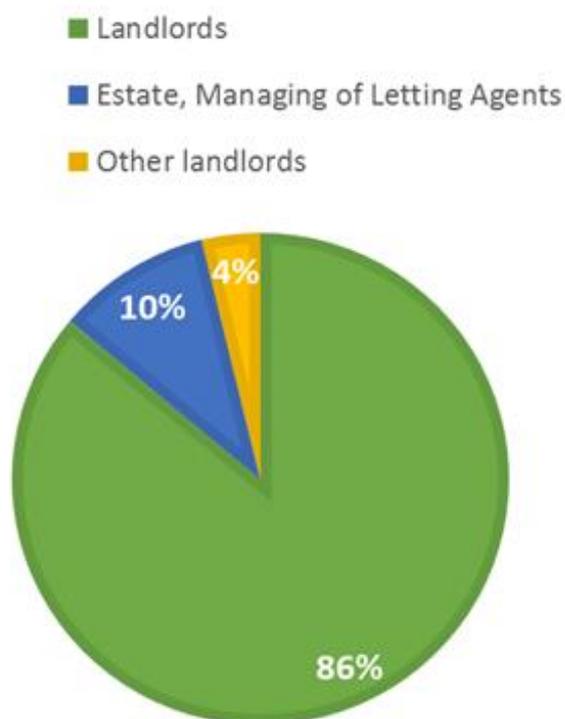
Public consultation with regard the proposed Rusholme and Moss Side Selective Licensing area took place via an online survey between 6 February and 21 April 2017. Details of the scheme and the proposed area and streets to be covered were provided and views were invited from local residents and landlords or letting agents with property in the proposed area (with different survey questions for each group).

A total of 79 responses were received from Landlords and Managing agents and 98 responses were received from residents. The survey was voluntary, and self-selecting so is not a truly random sample of the whole population. It should be treated as indicative of the views of local residents and landlords who took part in the survey, but not necessarily representative of all residents or landlords in the area.

1. Responses from Landlords/Letting Agents

79 landlords and agents responded to the survey, of which 71 identified as landlords, with 86% currently owning a privately rented property. 10% of the responses were from letting agents and estate agents, who manage more than 45 properties between them. The independent landlords own more than 186 private properties for rent, with 97% of these owning 3 or less properties.

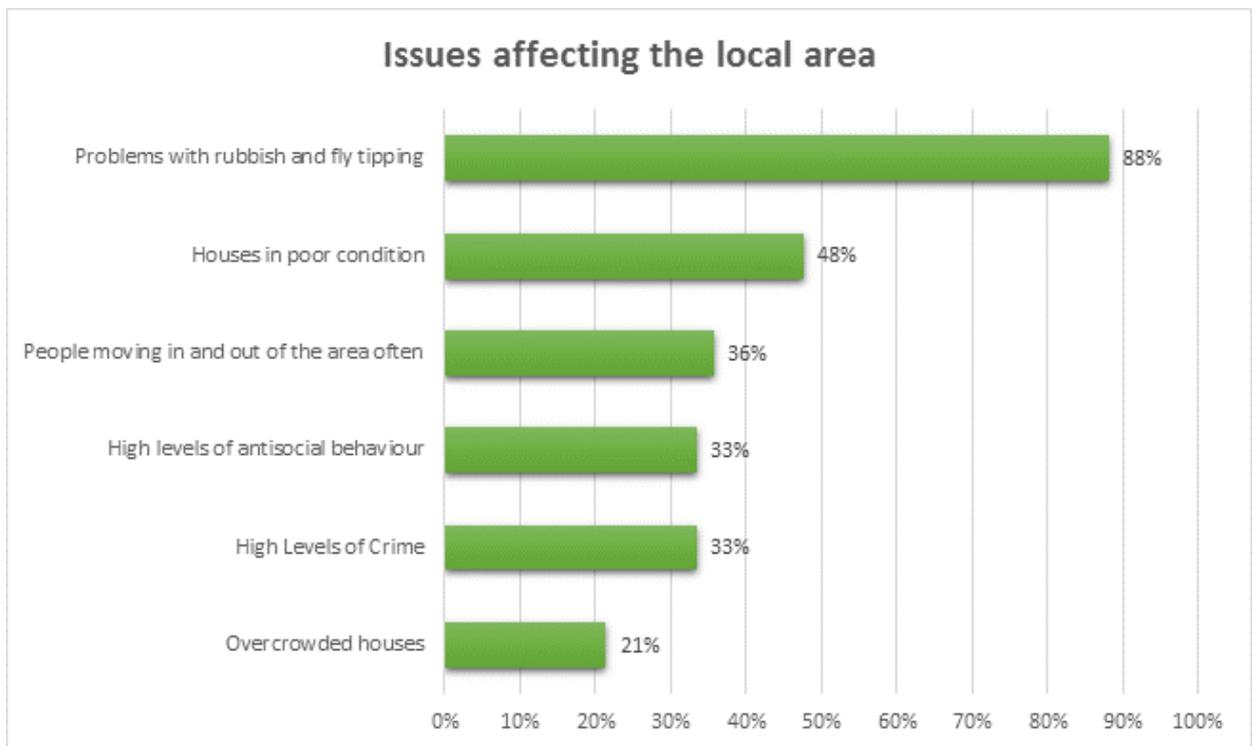
Type of Housing (Landlords and Agents)



1.1. Issues affecting the local area

Landlords were asked to state which of the following issues affected the local area. Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour, Rubbish or Fly tipping, poor house condition, poor property management, and transience (people frequently moving in and out of the area). There were 42 respondents who raised problems within the area, with 28 choosing not to respond and 9 responding that none of the above were issues.

The most frequently reported issue were problems with rubbish and fly-tipping, which was highlighted in 88% of responses. Of the five responses from letting agents, all identified houses in poor condition as being a problem. Other issues highlighted were litter, large numbers of students moving in and out of the area, alcohol related nuisance and some felt that Housing Association/Council tenants were causing problems rather than private tenants.



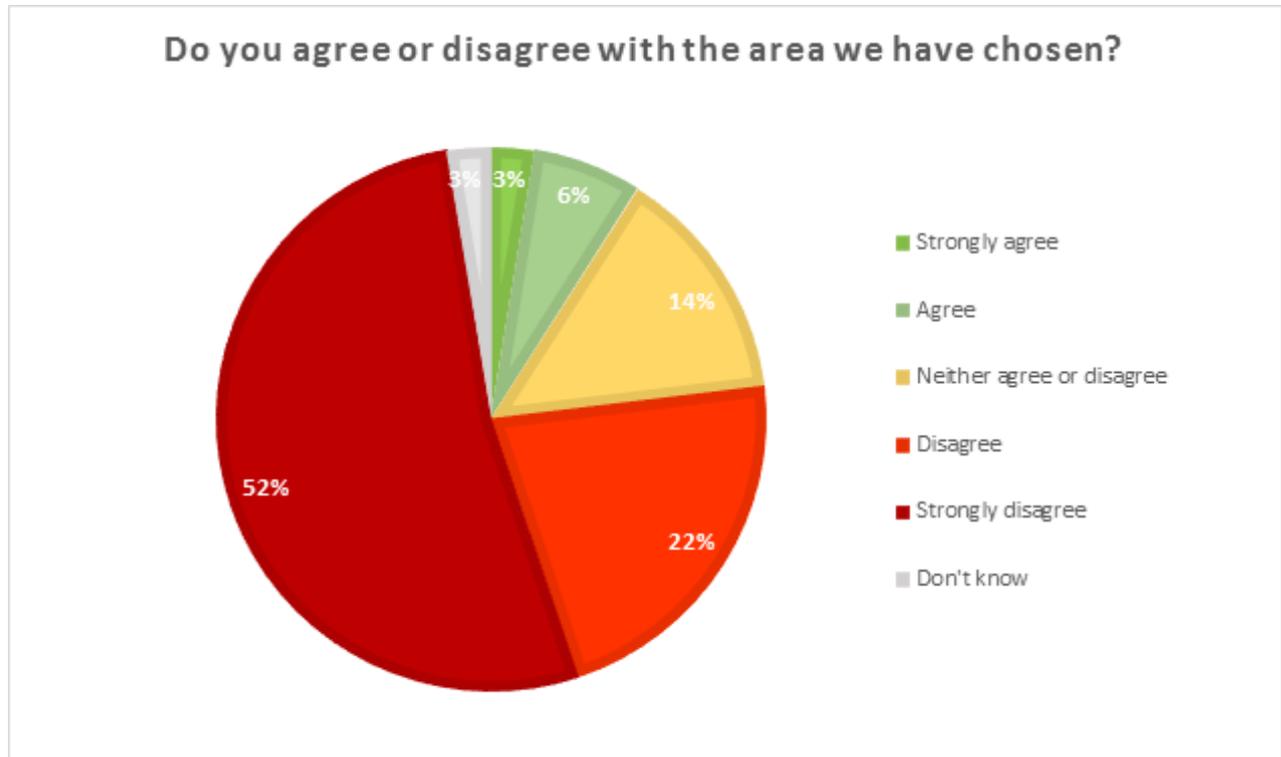
1.2. Issues directly affecting the landlord and their residents in the last three years

Landlords and agents were asked how many of the following issues had affected their property within the last three years. Antisocial behaviour, problems finding tenants, problems getting references, rent arrears, overcrowding.

19% of respondents reported problems in the last few years, with 60% highlighting antisocial behaviour. 33% also reported problems with rent arrears.

1.3. Do you agree with the area the council has chosen?

When respondents were asked whether they agreed with the area chosen 74% disagreed (with 52% strongly disagreeing), 9% agreed and 17% neither agreed/disagreed nor did not know. None of the estate or letting agents were in favour of the area chosen.



For those who disagreed with the area chosen, reasons given included the following;

- Rusholme/Moss Side is a good area and does not meet the criteria for selective licensing
- Area borders should be redefined (broadened)
- Other areas pose more of a problem
- Area could be stigmatised by licensing
- Problems stem from social housing or student properties in the area

Where a change of areas stated some of the suggestions have been;

To exclude; Yew tree road (west), Great Western Street, Eileen Grove, Horton Road, Thornton Road, Brompton, Haydn Avenue, Ruskin Avenue, Ancomb Street,

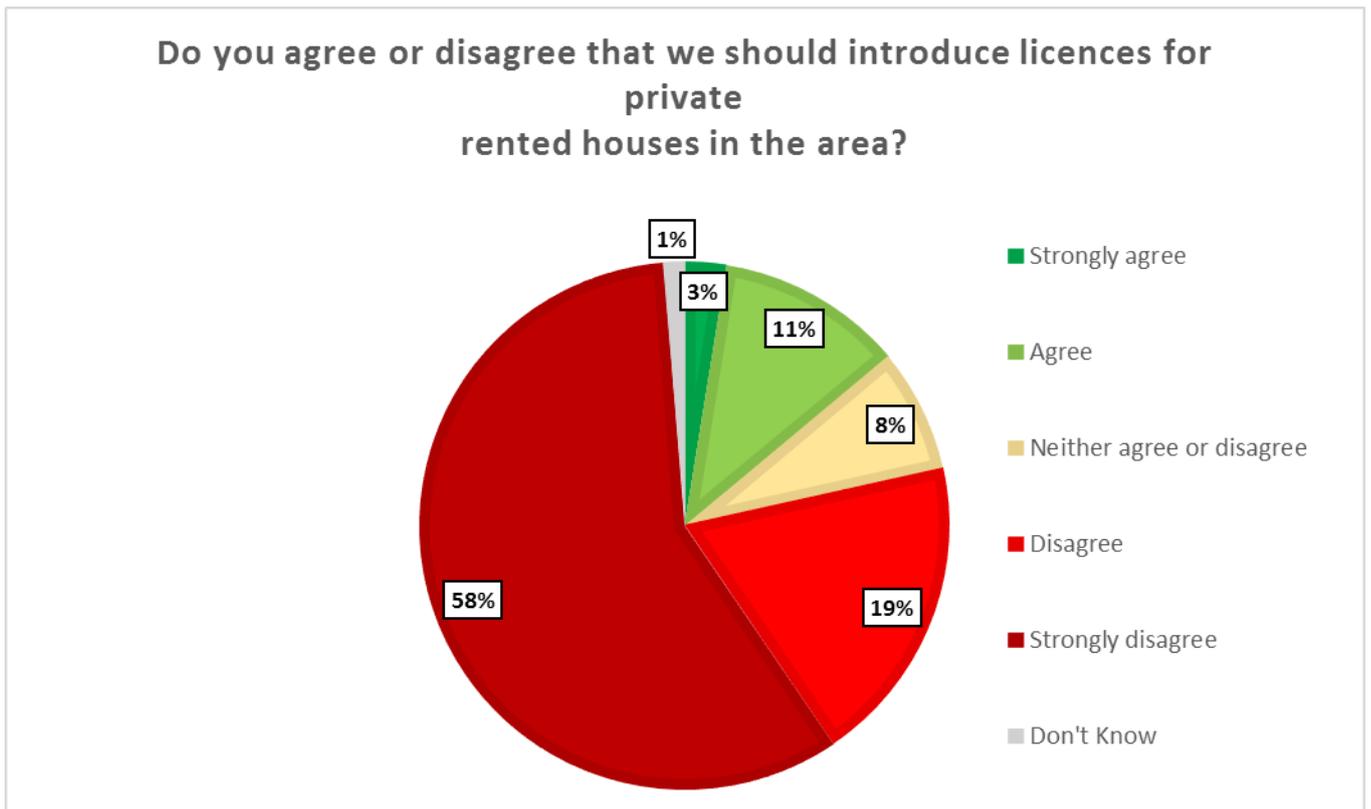
To include; Heald Place, Rear St. Ives, Fallowfield, M14, M15

Many respondents used this space to give their views on licensing itself, not the area chosen and these are summarised at the end of this report.

1.4. Landlords views whether licenses should be introduced for private rented houses in the area.

Landlords and agents responded with 58% strongly disagreeing with licensing. A further 19% disagreed, to give a total of 77% of respondents not in favour of the proposed licensing.

14% of respondents agreed with the licensing and 9% didn't know or neither agreed/disagreed.



The following were positive responses to licensing;

- Improves the quality of rental properties from a letting agents perspective
- More legislation helps tenants and landlords communicate
- Controls rogue landlords
- Improves conditions for renters

Some of the comments were opposed to the proposals for licensing, with over 50 comments falling under the following;

- The high cost of licensing will be indirectly passed onto tenants through rent increases
- Licensing is only being introduced to raise revenue for the council
- The council should be able to deal with rogue landlords without the need of new licensing
- Unfairly passes the cost of rogue landlords onto good landlords

Other issues raised as a negative response to licensing included;

- Local areas with issues (fly tipping, crime etc) have not been addressed successfully so many respondents listed reservations for this scheme
- Previous licensing by MCC deemed unsuccessful
- Rogue landlords won't be deterred by a new license
- Private tenants or landlords are not the cause of the problem
- Many requirements for licensing already obtained by landlords such as HMO
- Negative impact on the area making it less attractive for future buy-to-let landlords
- Area is inappropriate

A few suggestions were proposed as alternatives, such as;

- Licensing landlords, not property
- Providing free licenses to those who pass council checks and fining those who don't

1.5. What support or services could be given to manage privately rented houses in the area?

Landlords and agents were invited to provide suggestions as to what support or services may be of benefit in order to manage their houses to a high standard.

Around 15% of respondents stated that they did not need any additional support from the council. Of those that did suggest support/services, the most frequent themes raised were;

- Invest in the neighbourhood – provide alley gates, tackle ASB and reduce rates of fly tipping/litter
- Provide regular free training, support, and guidance sessions for landlords as to how to manage properties
- Produce a clear list of expectations and standards landlords should adhere to. Conflicting expectations from tenants, agents, MCC and government can confuse things
- Create a directory of vetted and trustworthy tradespeople to help maintain properties

A number of responses discussed that bad tenants do not mean bad landlords. Additional support in dealing with problem tenants and those on housing benefit would be useful.

Other responses included;

- Create a feedback loop of landlords, tenants, and council to ensure regular communication
- Encourage the use of agencies
- Pay housing benefit direct to landlords

- Help with references
- Promote the importance of upkeep

1.6. Would licensing improve things?

63% of respondents agreed that licensing would not improve the way letting agents or landlords manage their tenants, 58% said it wouldn't improve the conditions of rented houses, 68% suggested it wouldn't help improve the area in general, and 91% thought it would not have a positive impact on ASB.

	The way landlords or letting agents manage their tenants	The condition of private rented houses	Antisocial behaviour or nuisance	The area in general
Strongly agree	1%	1%	0%	3%
Agree	13%	20%	9%	8%
Neither agree or disagree	10%	9%	8%	10%
Disagree	27%	30%	33%	32%
Strongly disagree	37%	28%	39%	37%
Don't know / No Answer	13%	11%	11%	11%

1.7. Other Comments

Respondents were asked to provide any other comments at the end of the questionnaire. The key issues raised are summarised as follows:

- Improve council presence in problems areas – more police and waste disposal
- There should be existing legislation the council can utilise instead of introducing new legislation
- Anti-social behaviour is not a result of private housing
- Licensing fee is very high in comparison to other countries (Wales, Scotland)
- Deters landlords from operating in the area
- Consider exemptions for good landlords
- Money used for license could be better invested in improving the property itself
- Install alley gates
- Assumes landlords are local to the area
- Give more support to landlords in dealing with problem tenants
- Provide information packs on renting and a directory of local tradespeople for upkeep
- More liaison with local universities to avoid student damage and ASB
- Not enough information provided for landlords/tenants to make an informed choice in this survey
- Offer landlords training

Other comments raised included:

"I think licencing is the wrong approach in principles-too bureaucratic- much better to generate an 'improvement area' attitude with support and spend money on the properties themselves rather than on paperwork."

“I agree that licensing could be good in some areas but it is not needed here.”

“I feel that good landlords are being punished due to the bad behaviour of the bad landlords”

“In my experience, there is no need for licenses on Thornton Road or Horton Road because the problems suggested to necessitate licences don't exist.”

“I would find it hard to pay for the licence as my rent just about pays the mortgage.”

“You should be looking at only those properties that do not come up to standard”

“Inevitably the cost of this license is going to be borne by an increase in tenant's rent.”

“The council should use existing powers to enforce compliance where required.”