

Zone 3, Trinity Audit

Undertaken - 7th February 2023

Target Area

The Zone 3 Trinity audit took place on 7th February 2023 targeting the Cog Lane properties within the designation, properties included were: 3-229 Cog Lane and 144-354 Cog Lane.

The remit of the audit was to conduct visual checks of all private rented properties within Zone 3 of the Trinity Selective licensing designation. This was to ensure that all properties were free from defects and in general good condition.

The purpose of the audits was to collect visual data including:

- State of the back streets (fly tipping etc).
- State of back yards of rented properties (correct waste disposal bins, cleanliness and secure gates/walls).
- Visible defects /external house defects on rented properties.
- Internal inspection where there was evidence of disrepair, dissatisfaction or a check of smoke/carbon monoxide alarms was evident.
- Occupancy checks on vacant or non-licenced rented properties were identified from council tax records.
- Desktop checks were also made of Gas Safety Records, Electrical Installation Condition Reports and Energy Performance Ratings of the licenced properties.

Composition

The area consists of 142 houses, of which 89 properties are classed as licensable, with 82 of these already licensed or in the process of becoming licensed. 7 properties are currently unlicensed, and we are in the process of pursuing these through sending reminders; if the owners fail to licence the properties this will result in civil penalty or prosecution. Due to several sales of properties within the area recently, this number does evolve and change, and we expect more properties that are currently exempt from licencing will require licences in the coming weeks and months. This is constantly monitored, and requests sent out to new owners to be licenced as soon as they are found to be privately rented.

At the end of the audit:

- 71 of the licensable properties were already licenced.
- 11 had applied for licences but these applications are still ongoing.
- 1 property had a formal approved exemption.
- 11 properties have either had the licence revoked or are in the process of being revoked.
- 11 were owned by Registered Social Landlords (exempt from licencing regulations).

- 12 were vacant.
- 8 properties were rented but no application has been submitted; some of these have had their licence previously revoked and the property ownership has changed so a new application is required.
- 28 were owner occupied properties.
- 1 Property was found to have an expired EPC with a previous rating of a G.
- 8 Properties with expired EPC's of which 2 appeared to have new tenants since the certificate expired.

Dirty back yards

6 dirty back yards were found. The rubbish was excessive, totaling 10 bin bags of waste along with 1 of the properties having large amounts of animal waste in the rear yard. All were reported to landlords along with street scene and all rear yards were cleaned by the tenants or landlords, within a matter of a couple of days.

Wheelie Bins

All properties were found to have sufficient waste disposal equipment.

It is a condition of the landlord's Licence that they provide waste disposal equipment at the start of the tenancy. Where no evidence can be provided by the landlord that they have issued waste disposal equipment, the selective licence team can act against the landlord for a breach of the conditions of their licence and can result in a Civil Penalty.

Fly-tipping on the Backstreet

No fly tipping within the back street areas were found.

Overall, the back streets were kept clean and free from any rubbish. Parts of Cog Lane to the rear of the properties are laid to grass. These have become exceptionally muddy over the winter and although there is not a problem with waste, can be slightly unsightly / hazardous to walk on.

Property Disrepairs

Property Conditions are checked against the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). It is a risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in properties. Tackling the hazards will make housing healthier and safer to live in.

The HHSRS identifies 29 potential hazards within properties. To check against all the hazards, require a full internal and external inspection of the properties.

As the remit of this audit was a visual external inspection of the properties, it rules out any suggestion that all hazards could be identified from it. However, the visual inspection information together with the GSC, EICR and EPC data is a good indicator to identify properties that potentially may have disrepairs.

The audit identified 39 of the 90 licensable properties as having some sort of disrepair that requires attention by the landlords. These in the main were broken gates, perished pointing or leaking gutters.

The disrepairs were brought to the attention of the landlords, and some will be passed to the Council's Housing Standards Team for a full inspection. Following our communication with landlords to repair the issues, it was found that 2 of the properties were going through court eviction processes as the tenants continued to refuse access to the landlords. We also found 5 of the properties to have recently been sold; we are in the process of obtaining new ownership details to ensure they become licenced and disrepair addressed.

All but 6 external repairs were made, one of which is now a vacant property, and the others are in the process of being remedied due to being in new ownership. Although, many of the superficial disrepairs might not be enforceable under HHSRS, the Council can through its Good Landlord and Accreditation Scheme (GLAS) ask for the disrepairs to be remedied if they wish to become accredited members.

Energy performance Certificate (EPC)

All rented properties must have an EPC rating of at least an 'E'. Where properties have a lower rating, landlords are expected to improve the property in order to raise its EPC rating. All properties licenced or applying to be licenced with the audit area had EPC's of at least an 'E'. 8 Properties were identified as having an expired EPC; 1 of these was a G. Action is being taken to ensure that those properties with new tenants since the EPC expired obtain a new EPC.

Gas Safety Certificates

All rented properties require an annual Gas Safety Check (GSC). Landlords operating within the Selective Licence areas are required under the conditions of their licence to submit an annual gas Safety certificate to the Selective Licence team. Failure to provide an annual GSC certificate is a breach of their licence condition and can result in their licence being revoked.

All landlords would have submitted a valid GSC at the time of being granted a licence. However, 75 out of the 82 licenced landlords or those that have applied, had not submitted an up to date GSC since. We have now received all but 14 of these certificates after reminder letters were sent to all landlords to send in their current GSC certificates. These 14 will now be prioritised for enforcement action.

Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)

Recent legislation brought in by the Government requires all landlords to have a 5 yearly inspection of the electrical circuits in their rented properties. The legislation came into effect after the current Trinity SL designation began. Although now all selective Licence applicants are required to submit a 'satisfactory' EICR for their property. It was not a requirement at the beginning of the designation.

66 of the 82 Landlords licenced or applying for a licence had not submitted an EICR at the start of the audit. There are currently 11 EICR's outstanding. Reminder letters have been sent out requesting landlords to submit their EICRs. We are beginning the task of sanctioning landlords who have failed to obtain an EICR.

Follow Up

The area will continue to be monitored by both Housing and Streetscene officers. Although we will be moving on to auditing the other zones within the designation, the whole area remains a priority and will be continually checked and patrolled to ensure standards are met.

The properties at the bottom end of Cog Lane that are long term vacant are in the process of being renovated. We have liaised with the empty homes team who are working to bring these properties back into use. We will continue to monitor the renovation when it commences and assist where we can to enhance the row.

Audit Summary

	19/1/23 Cog Lane	6/6/23 Cog Lane
Total Properties	142	142
Part 3	90	90
Licenced	82	71
Applied Not yet Licenced	6	11
Revoked		7
Being revoked		4
Exempt RSL	12	11
Exempt Selective Licence	1	1
Owner Occupied	30	28
Vacant	9	12
Licenced HMO	0	0
Not applied	2	8
Gas Expired	75	14
EPC Rating below E	0	1
EICR Not submitted	66	11
DBY on Audit Day	6	0
Smoke Breach found on Audit Day	0	0
No Wheelie Bin	0	0
Disrepairs	39	6