

Queensgate Zone 2

Introduction

The new designation of Queensgate came into force on the 27th April 2025.

Queensgate ward as a whole has the fourth highest level of private renting in the borough. This audit primarily concentrated on the overall appearance of the area and to inspect the rented properties for both external items of disrepair and to establish ownership and the occupation status of identified rented properties.

On the 14th May 2026, an external audit of the properties and neighbourhood in Zone 1 of the Queensgate designation took place. In advance of the external checks a desk top audit was completed which involved checking the status of all properties in the area and for any licenced properties their compliance with all their licence conditions. Visual data on the condition of the back streets and yards in the area also were undertaken as part of the audit.

Purpose of the audit

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

- To check and validate the status of compliance with licence conditions with current and valid Gas Safety Certificates, Electrical Inspection and Condition Reports and Energy Performance Certificates.
- To check the physical state of the back streets and surrounding areas for the likes of environmental crime, fly tipping etc.
- To check the condition of the back yards of rented properties (correct waste disposal bins, cleanliness, and secure gates and walls)
- To identify visible defects/ external house defects on rented properties
- To carry out internal inspections where there was evidence of disrepair, check on compliance of smoke/carbon monoxide alarms were evident in line with the regulations.
- Occupancy checks of vacant or non-licenced rented properties identified from council tax records.
- Desktop checks were also made of Gas Safety Records, Electrical Installation Condition Reports and Energy Performance Rating of the licenced properties.
- Sample internal inspections to check that the properties were effectively managed

- Sample tenant referencing checks to check that the landlords are obtaining references prior to renting out their properties.

Target Area



Zone 2 streets included Heap Street, Ford Street, Rylands Street, Latham Street, St Andrews Road and 8-46 Briercliffe Road .

8-46 Briercliffe Road are a mixture of terraced housing and flats above shops.

This area has easy access to the local shops and to the town centre. These streets are a popular area for renting.

There are a total of **141** properties in this zone, **63** of which are rented and classed as 'Part 3' properties for licensing purposes.

At the start of the audit in May 2026

- 63 of the properties in the area were Part 3 rented properties
- Only 34 of the licensable properties were licensed
- 36 of the Part3 let properties requiring a licence have applied and these are being processed
- 1 of the properties are owned by Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) who are exempt from Selective Licensing
- 12 properties are vacant
- 26 are Owner Occupied properties

Certification

The Selective Licensing conditions state that a Licence Holder must produce to the authority a valid Gas Safety Certificate (GSC) every 12 months and an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) every 5 years. In addition, they also need to ensure that there is a current Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) in date with an energy efficiency rating of an E or above.

At the start of the audit in May 2026

- 25 Gas Safety Certificates had expired
- 13 Electrical Installation Condition Reports had expired
- 4 Energy Performance Certificates had expired

This may have been due to the certificates originally submitted with the applications expiring during the processing period. All affected landlords were contacted and asked to provide current valid certification.

Status following audit in July 2026

- 7 Gas Safety Certificates are still outstanding
- 5 Electrical Installation Condition Reports are still outstanding
- There are no Energy Performance Certificates outstanding

Future audits will check for 100% compliance with the requirements for landlords to have valid and up to date certifications for their properties.

Neighbourhoods

At the time of the audit there was evidence of fly tipping. Several streets had issues of abandoned rubbish or items of furniture were left on the back streets which was reported directly to Streetscene, and these were cleared with a couple of weeks. This seems to be a continuous ongoing problem in the Queensgate area. The Landlord Licensing Officer will work with Officers from Streetscene to look to improve this area through a combination of advice/education, enforcement action.

Back yards

On audit day, 2 dirty back yards were found with black bags and household waste being stored. On return to the office I contacted the owners of the properties advising that the yards need to be cleared and that Street Scene could offer a yard clearance and would be able to offer to quote for the removal of the rubbish. I also sent emails to Street Scene. On the follow up visit only of these properties still had a dirty back yard.

An owner-occupied property lacks a rear yard gate, contributing to ongoing fly-tipping within the rear yard. Streetscene has cleared the accumulated waste. The Landlord Licensing Officer has liaised with relevant services to consider suitable intervention measures to prevent recurrence.

I will continue to monitor the area and work along with Streetscene to tackle this issue through educating residents and making sure strict sanctions are issued where possible.

Disrepairs

On the day of the audit the team externally inspected properties using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which is a tool that the Local Authority uses to identify and detect potential risks and hazards to health and safety from deficiencies of the property.

The audit identified **61 of the Part 3 properties had some sort of disrepair**. The majority of these properties had multiple disrepairs such as slipped roof tiles and vegetation in gutters. Although we found a lot of the properties required new yard gates and painting to the front and rear elevations. The properties with more serious disrepairs were prioritised for inspection.

Following the initial audit day, relevant owners and landlords were contacted via email, clearly listing any issues whilst also advising them of the follow up audit and a deadline to complete the repairs.

On the follow up audit **25 of the properties identified still had disrepairs**. An action plan will be completed to ensure compliance.



Photo showing the front elevation at the time of the audit



Photo showing the work completed at the post audit



Photo showing the front elevation at the time of the audit



Photo showing the work completed at the post audit

Following the initial audit, 8 properties were raised for inspection, these were referred to the Housing Standards team to carry out an internal inspection using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

On the day of the audit, a Home Improvement Agency letter was delivered to an owner-occupied property that appeared to be in poor external condition. While the Council cannot require owner-occupiers to carry out improvements to their homes, the letter was intended to inform the resident of potential grant funding and other financial assistance that may be available through the Council to help improve the condition of the property and housing standards.

Internal Inspections

The audit also included a sample internal inspection of 8 properties where Selective Licencing applications had been submitted.

These internal inspections identified the following issues :-

- **Lack of smoke detection**
- **One property had no working boiler**
- **Rooms being used as bedrooms which were uninhabitable as they did not meet the current building control standards.**
- **No escape window on the first floor**

Only 1 property passed the Selective Licencing Inspection.

2 properties were referred to Housing Standards as there were serious Category 1 and 2 disrepairs.

Emails were sent to the landlords/managing agents of the other 5 properties detailing the repairs that were carried out.

Post inspections have now been completed on the outstanding 5 properties all the work has been completed on all 5 properties

Tenant Referencing

A sample of 8 new applications from landlords was checked to find evidence that landlords/managing agents were carrying out tenant referencing checks prior to offering tenancies to new tenants.

Whilst it was evident that the majority of landlords were carrying out reference checks from current or previous landlords (where relevant) there were a few that could not provide evidence of referencing checking.

The licence conditions for selective licencing requires landlords to obtain tenant references from previous landlords so this requirement needs further promoting to landlords/managing agents.

The Council will therefore monitor the referencing carried out by these landlords during the designation to ensure at the next change of tenancy the referencing is carried out correctly.

Selective Licensing Applications Status – July 2026

Selective Licensing came into force in the Queensgate area on the 27th April 2025. The scheme requires all private landlords operating within the designated area to obtain a licence in order to legally rent out their properties.

Since the scheme came into operation we have received 76 licence applications for this zone.

- 40 licences have been issued
- 36 Applications have been received and are being processed
- 20 Part 3 rented homes have still not submitted applications

All received applications are currently under review and being processed in accordance with the licensing procedures.

Reminder letters will be issued in due course to all non compliant landlords, advising them of their legal obligations under the Selective Licensing scheme and warning of potential enforcement action should they continue to operate without a licence.

Continued failure to apply may result in penalties, including civil penalties or prosecution, as outlined in the Housing Act 2004

Outcome of audit

The implementation of Selective Licensing in Queensgate is progressing steadily. Efforts are now focused on ensuring full compliance through a combination of ongoing application processing, targeted communication, and enforcement where necessary. Working together with the owners, landlords, Police and Street Scene there has been a considerable amount of works carried out to the properties and cleaning of back streets which has led to the improvement of the area. The area will continue to be monitored over the coming months by the Landlord Licensing Officer and Street Scene throughout the remainder of the Selective Licensing designation.

Although the audit for Zone 2 has been completed the Council is unable to report on some of the updated figures due to a system changeover.

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