

Landlords Survey

How many HMO properties do you manage?

Most respondents had 6 or more properties, 1 had only 1

How many of these properties are licensed?

Half said none, half had some

What are the benefits to you as a landlord/agent of having a licence?

Awareness that the property has reached Warwick District Council's requirements for HMO Licensing approval. It helps to improve housing standards in the private rented sector.

I currently do not need a licence for my student properties. I have 4 students in each of my properties over two floors. I can't think of any benefits of having a licence other than a further income stream for a cash strapped Council. It appears to me that local authorities often extend schemes to raise funding to counter austerity cutbacks and for local political window-dressing.

Keeps on top of landlords managing standards, and keeps on top of safety in properties.

being in the clear as to letting arrangements/standards/compliance reassurance for tenants

What are the negatives of having a licence?

None

1. The licence standard would be much lower than the standards that I apply to my HMOs, so why do I need a licence? Extending schemes of this kind will see responsible landlords paying for expensive licences, while the criminals will continue to operate under the radar. 2. Complex regulatory systems are pushing up rents and preventing more investment in the private rented sector at a time when it needs to expand to help tackle the housing crisis. It would increase my rents by at least an additional £20 per month to include fees and my administration charges. As a long distance landlord who manages my own properties, for example, I would travel a round journey of around 360 miles to open a property for the Council to view. Though I am happy for the Council to view my student properties in Leamington. 3. Criminal landlords often continue to operate as local authorities fail to use their enforcement powers. Let's get the existing legislation working to route out poor quality landlords. Councils already have enforcement powers to take action against those who act illegally and bring the whole sector into disrepute, but are failing to use them, with only 827 prosecutions against landlords over the last five years. 4. Yet more paperwork. Already introduced recently - right to rent booklet, immigration checks, higher taxes etc. 5. The licensing scheme is not fully supported by recognised landlord associations. For example, the RLA objects to local authority proposals for discretionary licensing – particularly with regard to the fee levels imposed and are speaking out against schemes across the country. 6. Local authorities already have the powers needed to effectively monitor landlords through council tax documentation. 96% of councils ask for landlords' data on these forms.

Sometimes less important areas are focussed on and still don't cover some fundamental common issues, such as damp & condensation

Costs

Would you support the idea of extending licensing to ALL HMOs?

Yes
 No
 No
 No

In relation to your answer for question 5, please explain why.

Your survey assumes we know anything about the licence, so essentially, I don't know.

1. The Council should offer benefits and incentives to good landlords to improve properties. There was an excellent, free to join Student House Accreditation Scheme, which WDC abandoned. This scheme incentivised landlords over time to develop their properties through gaining more stars for improvements. I imagine cost was a factor that stopped the Council from continuing with this excellent scheme? It should be re-introduced, free, as a local initiative and incentive for good landlords.
 2. Co-regulation should be an alternative to licensing. Such a scheme would commit its members to providing high standards of housing. This should be available as an alternative to the council's own licensing scheme. I believe in self-regulation for compliant landlords.
 3. Licensing penalises good landlords. My properties are already considerably higher in standard than a licence would require. The additional expense of applying for a licence would be passed to the tenant. For example, in my unlicensed properties I already have hard wired smoke/carbon monoxide detectors, fire doors to bedrooms, coded burglar alarm, 5 lever locks external doors, window locks, double glazed, external security light, security chain on external door, fire extinguishers and fire blanket, annual gas landlord gas service/certificate, 5 year electrical certificate, annual PAT of my electrical equipment, risk assessment, smoking not permitted in house etc
 4. Licensing provides a spot check in time - anything can happen in the 5 year intervening period between when the licence is granted to when it is renewed. How often do the Council check on a property, once it is licensed?
 5. Landlords may wait until the licence is up for renewal before they make any necessary improvements. I make annual improvements regardless.
 6. There is no national system of setting licence fees, a minority of landlords might migrate to cheaper licence fee areas.
 7. The Council already has sufficient powers to investigate and bring to account poor landlords.

this would increase costs and put up rents, i dont think this is needed in smaller hmos

Have you had to apply for change of use under Warwick District Council's HMO Article 4 Direction?

No
 No
 No
 Yes
 No

Do you know how to find information about Warwick District Council's HMO licensing and/or planning process?

Yes
 No

Yes, but I am a long distance landlord and although my correspondence address is known by Warwick District Council, I never receive any information directly either by email or post from WDC other than that which I receive as a Landlord Steering Group member.

Yes via website

Yes

Please add any additional comments

I rent out a house I used to live in. A HMO opposite forced me to move as student lifestyles are simply incompatible with the rest of the population. Who do the HMOs suit? The big landlords, but not the residents. Students simply keep different hours to working people and families. When they live together in large groups the anti-social nature of this is exacerbated. Eg. if they are going out they may not leave their premises until 11 or 12 at night, and then this can be in very large (therefore noisy) groups. I am essentially anti, any further HMO developments. The ones that exist should also have to provide a concierge/security to ensure that students impact on the neighbours is minimal. It is possible to coexist but HMOs make it harder. A HMO on George St has 40+ residents, the footprint of the building allows for 3 or 4 cars. So that has an impact, why does a student need a car? The buses run to Warwick Uni extremely regularly. Most students I have spoken to are decent people and the policy is not their fault. But genuine acceptance of student lifestyle has to go hand in hand with these developments. They go out in groups, leaving late, and coming back in the early hours. This is often midweek, as town is considered safer by them then. Did you know that the council noise pollution team doesn't work late midweek? Just when you need them, it's simple observations like that which could help if HMOs must exist at all. Personally, I'd have them all on campus, just saying.

1. The Council should look for positive ways to incentivise landlords. 2. It would be helpful, for example, if the Council recognised that some landlords who volunteer to sit on the Landlord Steering group travel very long distances. I have a round journey of approximately 360 miles and it takes me at least 6 hours to travel to and from a meeting. The Council could find, a very small sum, to pay a reasonable mileage allowance to reward landlords who give up their time to assist the Council at Landlord Steering Group meetings. 3. In my view a well run local self regulation scheme involves landlords. A licensing scheme does little to involve landlords. In several ways it alienates landlords. 4. The Council already has sufficient powers to deal with poor landlords. 5. Have you evaluated the success or otherwise of your licensing scheme? What effect has it had, when compared with, for example, the Student House Accreditation Scheme? There seems little point in introducing an extension, if there has been little effect with the licensing scheme. 6. Time to think outside the box? Self-regulation?