# Great Yarmouth plans sweeping licensing scheme to tackle substandard private rentals amid housing crisis



Great Yarmouth Borough Council is taking steps to expand its selective licensing scheme, a move designed to improve living conditions in approximately 5,000 privately rented homes. This initiative is particularly focused on three wards—Nelson, Cobholm, and Southtown and Central and Northgate—areas identified as among the most deprived in England. The proposed scheme is set to build on a previous initiative launched in 2019, which targeted solely the Nelson ward and reportedly generated almost £95,000 in fines for non-compliant landlords within its initial three years.

Under this new licensing proposal, which is expected to last for five years, the council aims to better combat health hazards, overcrowding, and issues related to inadequate heating and insulation in rental properties. Alongside enhanced property inspections, the council will impose a £784 licensing fee for landlords operating within the targeted zones. It is noteworthy that the council has indicated this fee will not be used for profit but rather to fund the regulatory framework of the scheme.

Paul Wells, the cabinet member for environment and licensing at Great Yarmouth Borough Council, emphasised the council's commitment to addressing substandard accommodation. "Most landlords are good ones and want to provide good-quality homes, but sadly not all are," he said, highlighting the unacceptable reality for many residents living in poor conditions. Wells reassured that the council aims to foster better relationships with landlords and agents to ultimately ensure tenant welfare.

However, the proposed expansion has already drawn criticism from the Eastern Landlords Association. Chairman Paul Cunningham labelled the initiative a "money-grabbing exercise" that would ultimately lead to increased rents as landlords pass on their compliance costs to tenants. Cunningham expressed frustration over the ongoing tensions between local landlords and the council, arguing that the scheme risks alienating those who may already feel unfairly targeted. He stated, "The costs will mean rents increase and more landlords will sell up, exacerbating the existing shortage of rental properties."

The urgency of these measures is underscored by alarming statistics concerning housing conditions in Great Yarmouth. Recent reports reveal that the targeted wards experience significantly higher crime rates, with over half of the 9,809 crimes reported in the borough occurring in these areas. Additionally, a feasibility study has identified a worrying trend of overcrowding within privately rented homes—evidenced by the 112 complaints received by the council over the last three years. A report from the Building Research Establishment notably found that 18% of private rented properties in Great Yarmouth had at least one serious health hazard, compared to the national average of 12%.

Despite the council's efforts, previous initiatives have faced challenges. Residents in the Nelson Ward, for instance, noted that despite the identification of numerous property issues and fines issued to landlords, many still endure poor living conditions. The limited impact of the pilot scheme has raised questions about the effectiveness of the council's approach, with critics arguing for the need for more comprehensive and enforceable measures.

Compounding the issue is a broader crisis in the housing sector across Norfolk. As of late 2023, over 11,800 individuals were on housing waiting lists in the region, with Great Yarmouth alone having more than 800 outstanding applications. The rising demand for affordable housing amid climbing rental prices and living costs further highlights the urgent need for immediate and effective solutions. Recent government reports suggest that while housing in Great Yarmouth is relatively cheaper than in nearby areas, it remains largely unaffordable for many due to stagnant incomes.

As the council prepares to discuss these proposals further, the stakes could not be higher for both tenants and landlords in Great Yarmouth, with the potential for both progress and conflict lying ahead in the pursuit of better housing standards.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25196280.great-yarmouth-council-seeks-tackle-problem-landlords/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/article/6247/Great-Yarmouth-Borough-Council-starts-inspections-to-improve-private-rented-housing-under-Selective-Licensing-Scheme)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25196280.great-yarmouth-council-seeks-tackle-problem-landlords/?ref=rss), [[5]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/20657626.tenants-say-landlord-crackdown-failing-horrible-conditions-persist/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25196280.great-yarmouth-council-seeks-tackle-problem-landlords/?ref=rss), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crgpr7ev0vmo), [[4]](https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/new-figures-reveal-scale-of-worsening-housing-crisis-in-norf-9347267/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25196280.great-yarmouth-council-seeks-tackle-problem-landlords/?ref=rss), [[6]](https://www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/article/6006/How-affordable-is-housing-in-Great-Yarmouth), [[7]](https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000145/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25196280.great-yarmouth-council-seeks-tackle-problem-landlords/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/article/6247/Great-Yarmouth-Borough-Council-starts-inspections-to-improve-private-rented-housing-under-Selective-Licensing-Scheme> - In January 2020, Great Yarmouth Borough Council initiated a five-year Selective Licensing Scheme targeting the Nelson Ward to enhance living conditions and address unethical landlords. The scheme required landlords to obtain licenses and adhere to health and safety standards. By February 2021, 1,484 properties were licensed, 1,169 inspected, and 4,850 issues identified, ranging from imminent to minor risks. The council collaborated with Home Safe to administer the scheme, conducting proactive inspections to identify sub-standard landlords and ensure compliance. Enforcement actions included financial penalties, prosecution, civil penalties, or landlord banning orders for non-compliance.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crgpr7ev0vmo> - In December 2023, Great Yarmouth Borough Council unveiled a £2 million plan to establish a 'social letting scheme' aimed at increasing affordable rental properties. The initiative sought to lease up to 50 properties from private landlords and refurbish vacant homes to provide quality, affordable accommodation for households at risk of homelessness. This approach aimed to reduce the £500,000 annually spent on temporary accommodations and bed and breakfasts. The proposal was set to be discussed at a full council meeting on 14 December 2023.
4. <https://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/new-figures-reveal-scale-of-worsening-housing-crisis-in-norf-9347267/> - In January 2024, data from a Freedom of Information request revealed that over 11,800 individuals were on housing waiting lists across Norfolk by the end of November 2023. Great Yarmouth had 813 outstanding applications, with an additional 1,096 yet to be assessed, and more than 100 households in temporary accommodation. The escalating demand for housing was attributed to factors such as rising rents, increased cost of living, immigration, and a shortage of both private and social housing. The situation underscored the urgent need for comprehensive housing solutions in the region.
5. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/20657626.tenants-say-landlord-crackdown-failing-horrible-conditions-persist/> - In February 2021, tenants in Great Yarmouth's Nelson Ward expressed concerns that the council's five-year Selective Licensing Scheme, implemented in January 2019, was not effectively addressing substandard housing conditions. Despite licensing 1,484 properties and identifying 4,850 issues, tenants reported ongoing problems, including health hazards and poor living conditions. Some landlords faced penalties for non-compliance, but tenants felt that the scheme's impact was limited, with many still residing in inadequate housing. The council acknowledged challenges but emphasized the scheme's role in discouraging unethical landlords.
6. <https://www.great-yarmouth.gov.uk/article/6006/How-affordable-is-housing-in-Great-Yarmouth> - Great Yarmouth Borough Council's 2024 report highlighted that, despite lower house prices and rents compared to neighbouring areas, housing remained unaffordable for many residents due to low incomes. The lower quartile house price-to-earnings ratio was 9:1, significantly higher than the recommended 3 to 3.5 times income. With over 1,000 active applications for council housing and 150 for affordable homeownership products, the demand for affordable housing in Great Yarmouth was increasing, reflecting a broader regional housing crisis.
7. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000145/> - The 2021 Census data revealed a significant rise in private renting in Great Yarmouth, with the percentage of privately rented homes increasing from 16.5% in 2011 to 21.5% in 2021. This 5.0 percentage point increase was notably higher than the 1.9 percentage point rise in the nearby Broadland area. Over the same period, homeownership in Great Yarmouth decreased from 64.3% to 61.8%, and social renting fell from 17.2% to 16.2%, indicating a shift towards private renting in the region.