



Thanet

This popular seaside resort struggled to restructure following the decline of domestic tourism. This is a case study explaining how the council worked to turn socially troubled multiple occupancy into an opportunity to provide higher quality rented homes. There are plans for thousands more homes to be built on sites across the area. There is strong shared focus on economic growth reflected by local, county, parliamentary and resident representatives.

Thanet Council (Margate and Cliftonville)



Market
Renewal

Selective
Licensing

Improvement
incentives
to landlords

Rogue
landlords

Thanet's Market Renewal

Margate's significant housing challenge stemmed from an economic problem. But a housing problem has required a housing solution. Thanet Council has tackled that problem in a very direct way.

Margate was long a popular seaside resort and it struggled to restructure following the decline of domestic tourism. Many guesthouses converted into low-end multiple occupant rented accommodation with shocking housing conditions.

Poor housing conditions fuelled wider anti-social and neighbourhood problems. With falling demand for market-sale properties and more money to be made from rented housing, home ownership declined.

Ultimately, private rented properties dominated and a disproportionate number of tenants were housing benefit claimants – nearly 80 per cent of all homes rented by housing benefit claimants in some parts of the area.

To counter this, the council has worked hard to tackle the number of sub-standard rental properties. In 2008, the council listed Cliftonville West and Margate Central as **housing market renewal areas**, demonstrating their intention to improve the housing stock and reduce levels of deprivation. Direct intervention has taken place under the Live Margate name in partnership with Kent County Council and the HCA, to stimulate the housing market and reduce the number of derelict properties.

As well as the creation of renewal areas, Thanet council have also used additional local authority powers to introduce **selective licensing** for landlords in Margate and Cliftonville. The licensing was first introduced in 2011 for five years, but has been

extended to now cover the 2016-2021 period and covers a wider area.

All privately let properties in the area covered are required to be licensed and must meet the council's compliance and property management conditions. The initiative is combatting low property demand and poor quality housing conditions.

Thanet council have also been working to crackdown on rogue landlords, helped by a 2016 government funded £88,000 **rogue landlord grant**. More than 300 properties were inspected, 462 warnings issued and 48 formal notices served. This builds on from the successful selective licensing initiative to identify and renovate poorly managed properties.

Thanet have also worked hard in the renewal area to bring empty properties back into use through a combination of initiatives. The council joined forces with Kent County Council in 2003, and have since brought over 1,000 **empty properties back into use**, with a current rate of 120 per year in Thanet. The council are offering **incentives to landlords** such as interest-free loans to help fund renovation costs for properties in the Margate and Cliftonville renewal area.

As a result of these interventions, there are now more safer and better-managed private sector homes in Margate. New affordable housing is being built and there has been a fall in anti-social behaviour in recent years.

While this area still has challenges, the council continues to implement housing renewal initiatives. Thanet recognise that their policies are designed to have a long-term impact. Over the next five years, the council will focus on reducing resident turnover and attracting new private sector investment.