

Southampton Solent University

1. What is Solent University's view on housing pressures in the city in general and the availability of accommodation for students?

From a Solent University perspective, the City of Southampton offers a broad mix of owner occupied, social and privately rented housing stock. In recent years a key growth area has been in city centre dwellings - primarily one, two and three bed flats within large developments - aimed at individuals, couples or small families that wish to live close to, or in the centre of the city. The occupants of these developments are either owner occupiers or renting privately.

Solent University is unable to comment on the wider housing pressures, but appreciates that the private rented sector in Southampton continues to attract many different categories of occupants and that this in itself causes pressure on this segment of the market; these include students (and graduates choosing to remain in Southampton due to securing employment) from both university's, individuals and families that are unable to secure social housing, and those renting as an alternative to purchasing a property and becoming an owner occupier.

Whilst there is evidence of a diverse mix of individuals, groups and families seeking to rent in the private rented sector in Southampton, it is Solent University's opinion that although additional pressure may have been placed on this segment of the market, indications are that there is no shortage of landlords and letting agencies who actively promote their properties to students, and choose to let to students as a 'preferred' tenant type. Anecdotally, both landlords and agencies have indicated that the risks associated with letting to students (primarily associated with rent arrears, and damage to property during or post vacation) are less than associated with other categories of tenants - and that there has been a migration towards renting to students, and away from other tenant types as a result.

Both Universities in the City have sizeable residential portfolios in comparison to respective numbers of full time students seeking to live in or close to the centre of the Southampton. This is supplemented by additional provision by private providers of purpose built student accommodation. It is also understood that additional, privately operated purpose built student accommodation, will become available for the 2014/15 academic year.

Both Solent University and the University of Southampton partner with Southampton City Council and other key stakeholders (including Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services, Hampshire Constabulary, the respective Student Unions, and landlord representative groups to promote and encourage high standards of property management through the Southampton Accreditation Scheme for Student Housing (SASSH) initiative

2. Please outline:

- A. Any developments, planned or currently being built, that will increase the number of accommodation units managed by Solent University; and
- B. the impact that these developments, and those by the University of Southampton, may have on housing pressures in the city.

A - Solent University currently has no plans to develop or build additional student accommodation. Solent's portfolio of accommodation in central Southampton is in excess of 2300 bed spaces and has remained at this level since 1996.

B - Solent is unable to comment on the potential impact of the developments currently under construction commissioned by the University of Southampton.

3. What impact, if any, has the HMO SPD had on Southampton?

From a Solent University perspective there is no material evidence to indicate that the HMO SPD has had a significant impact to date on the students studying at this institution.

Given that the action was not retrospectively applied, there is no evidence to suggest that the availability or provision of shared properties in the areas of the city inhabited by Solent students (primarily The Polygon and surrounding areas) has declined. It is unknown whether any application refusals in the areas popular with Solent students has had an impact on either the balance between supply and demand, or rental levels due to the number of available properties to let remaining static.

Any impact would be more evident in areas where there was a lower density of HMO's, and where landlords or developers may have submitted planning applications and had these refused - thus retaining existing balance of dwelling house and HMO properties.

4. Do you have any views on the subsequent introduction of the HMO licensing scheme? For more information visit link >
(<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/living/housing/private/landlord/hmos/mandatory.aspx>)

Solent University welcomes initiatives that are designed and intended to improve the quality of private rented premises, and importantly property management standards. Given that the scheme was only introduced in the summer of 2013, and that any impact assessment of the success or otherwise of the initiative may be a little way off, it is (at this stage) not possible to pass

any meaningful comment on whether it is an effective tool to meet the intended objectives.

Anecdotal feedback received from landlords, representative bodies and other key stakeholders through the SASSH initiative, indicate concerns in relation to;

1. the ability of, and time taken by Southampton City Council to 'turn around' an application for additional licensing - given the number of HMO's captured within the four wards of the additional licensing scheme
2. Additional licensing costs would be passed on to the (student) tenants, thus increasing rents and affecting the affordability of housing to a tenant that has limited disposable income, and limited access to a Maintenance Loan or Grant
3. Adding unnecessary, additional bureaucracy and costs to landlords that already comply with a set of enhanced property and management standards through compliance and adherence to the SASSH initiative - which is supported and includes SSC as a key partner. The additional licensing scheme affords no recognition or allowance (via a financial discount) to those landlords who voluntarily sign up to, and comply with the SASSH standards.

5. Do you have any recommendations you would like to submit to the Panel related to the terms of reference?

Any evidence you have to support your responses would be gratefully received.

No recommendations reference the terms of reference of the Panel

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