

University of Southampton

Response to questions for the University of Southampton with regard to Scrutiny Panel A - A Call for Inquiry For Evidence in Respect of the Effectiveness of the Council's Article 4 Direction and Houses in Multiple Occupation – Supplementary Planning Document (HMO SPD)

1. The University of Southampton has concerns relating to housing pressures on the City of Southampton in general, in that houses in multiple occupation, owned by landlords concerned only with income, can lead to both poor quality standards for the occupants of those houses as well as the general and creeping degradation of the neighbourhood and community. This is both to the detriment of the citizens of Southampton, the general quality of the environment within Southampton and also (potentially) sub-standard conditions for the occupants of those houses. Furthermore, the degradation of residential environments potentially deters commercial investment from both within and without the city. An attractive, safe and affordable residential environment is a key element of the decision making process for investors bringing employment and economic activity to the city.
2. The University is currently in the process of completely revising its Accommodation Strategy for student residences and at present, has two developments underway, Mayflower Halls of Residence and City Gateway, which collectively, will introduce 1,489 additional bedroom units to the City for the purposes of student occupation. A recent decision has also been made by University Council, to progress with the development of our Chamberlain Hall site which ultimately will yield 379 bedrooms in the first phase and in the second phase, a further 41 units, ultimately producing a total of 420 units. This however, will not be deliverable before 2016. This will increase our capacity from approximately 5000 to 6500 units.

In parallel, consideration will be given as part of the revision of our Accommodation Strategy during the calendar year 2014, to an additional expansion of student bedroom places, to further alleviate pressure on the City housing stock. This will be given consideration alongside a strategic review of future potential student numbers which in the current economic conditions and so soon after the introduction of increased fees, will be subject to some volatility.

With regards to the impact that these proposed developments may have on reducing housing pressures in the City, the University of Southampton believes that there will be a beneficial impact in that there will be a wider choice for students and with an increased focus on development in the City Centre (Mayflower Halls), a substantial contribution to the re-invigoration of the central Southampton area.

3. It is difficult to assess the impact that the HMO SPD has had on Southampton at a relatively early stage in its implementation. Whilst the University both recognises and welcomes a degree of greater control, it is also at pains to

point out that HMO's are not solely occupied by students but by a wide range of citizens ranging from recent arrivals in the UK as well as young professionals and all social groupings in-between. The University has a concern that students who may well be the future contributors to Southampton's economy, are not "victimised" in any kind of unintended way by unnecessary focus on them as a single use class.

4. The HMO Licencing Scheme, if applied appropriately, should both enhance control and quality of the HMO stock and potentially have the benefit of restricting the impact on certain specific neighbourhoods. That said, there must always be extreme caution applied, to ensure that unintended consequences are not created which might for example, result in further degradation of areas cause by properties falling into non-use or disrepair. It must always be remembered that the University of Southampton brings significant economic benefits to the city and the immediate region and this hopefully will, prevent any consideration of singling out students and stigmatisation.
5. The University is supportive of any attempt to improve the quality of housing for citizens of Southampton, whether they be families with a long history of occupation in this area, or relative newcomers including students. The University is keen that there may be no formation of "student ghettos" or any kind of single population type, such that, the general environment of the City of Southampton is negatively affected. The University is keen that Southampton as a city, becomes a city of high quality housing for all, with a focus on all citizens, including students (who may be future contributors to the Southampton economy) being encouraged to assist in the creation of a diverse and environmentally enhanced city.

Kind regards

Kevin Monaghan
Director of Estates
Estates and Facilities
University of Southampton
Level 3, Building 35, Highfield,
Southampton SO17 1BJ
Tel: +44 (0)23 8059 7724
Fax: +44 (0)23 8059 3840
www.southampton.ac.uk/estates