

1.0 Background

- 1.1 There has been an on-going debate about how best to meet the housing needs of students in Leeds. The Council has always been very clear about its commitment to ensuring the continuing expansion of the City's Universities and the continuing attraction of undergraduate and postgraduate students to Leeds to study, and to strive to retain those students to help build and improve the skills base in the city and the development of a thriving high skill and knowledge based economy in the City
- 1.2 Rapid increases in the numbers of students coming to Leeds to study from the late 1990's were not at first met by a commensurate expansion of purpose built accommodation to house those additional students. This led to a rapid expansion of shared private rented housing to meet demand for accommodation from both new and returning students. This expansion spread into areas not previously containing student residents, and increased the concentration of students in areas which had been home to students in the past.
- 1.3 This in turn led to serious concerns amongst existing residential households in areas of increasing student concentration, and new student residence, about the impact of housing in multiple occupation for students on the amenity, appearance and safety of those neighbourhoods.
- 1.4 Research undertaken in 2012 and 2013 (see below) established that following the increase in student numbers and the impact of increasing incidence of shared multi-occupied housing, significant changes in resident patterns had occurred with increasing numbers of students moving to live in the plethora of new Purpose Built Student Accommodation located in or around the city centre, or to shared housing in neighbourhoods adjacent to the Universities. This has led to a situation of transition for some neighbourhoods and concerns about whether alternative demand for housing is present in areas where students have been found to be leaving, that can prevent an increase in empty properties, and difficulties for existing homeowners needing to move.
- 1.5 Currently there is uncertainty about the future levels of student numbers in Leeds given changes to funding regimes and the increases in tuition fees, while demand from students and their parents (who fund their children's accommodation) has also been changing, and becoming an increasing influence on what accommodation is provided. There also remains, a tension between provision of purpose built housing and meeting student demand in shared housing, and in relation to the actual or perceived impacts of accommodating students on the residential neighbourhoods close to the universities.
- 1.6 All of these issues were debated by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board of Leeds City Council as they monitored the recommendations of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board's investigation into the Private Rented Sector and Empty Properties. Particular concern was expressed about the impact of purpose built student accommodation on the broad "Headingley area"

and it was agreed that the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel would lead a detailed review linking back to the Councils' Housing Strategy and Community ambitions.

- 1.7 A working group of key organisations connected with student housing and representatives of local residents, under the chairmanship of the Executive Member, has been working to consider the issues at play in Inner North West Leeds and agree a partnership approach to tackling these.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 This report seeks to summarise the issues at play in determining the best means of accommodating students in Leeds, and the issues arising from changing numbers of students in the city, changes in the patterns of student demand and residence and changes in underlying housing market conditions.
- 2.2 It outlines the approach undertaken by the Council in examining these issues and what courses of action could be followed and makes recommendations for action to address the current and likely future impact of changing student residence on residential neighbourhoods in Inner North West Leeds.

3.0 The Research Evidence

- 3.1 Two pieces of research have been undertaken to provide some factual basis for decision making on how best to accommodate students and manage the areas where students live. One was commissioned by Unipol Student Homes in 2012 and was undertaken by re'new which considered the changing patterns of student residence between 2007 and 2012 and the underlying housing market conditions in inner North West Leeds. The other was commissioned by Leeds City Council and was also undertaken by re'new which reviewed available evidence on student numbers and supply of accommodation for students, and identify whether there was a clear justification for additional Purpose Built Student Accommodation.

3.2 UNIPOL research findings

- 3.2.1 The research undertaken by re'new on behalf of Unipol Student Homes in 2012 ¹ is attached as Annexe A to this report. The key findings from the research were as follows:
- 3.2.2 There have been significant migrations of students within and out of the traditional student heartlands since 2007. There has been a marked shift in student demand from Central and Far Headingley and surrounding areas towards the City Centre (where the number of students increased by 870% due to the opening of new Purpose Built Student Accommodation and the movement of students into city centre apartment complexes) and areas adjacent to the universities such as Little Woodhouse, Hyde Park and Woodhouse where the number of students increased by 77% between 2007 and 2012,
- 3.2.3 In **Hyde Park and Woodhouse**, the increasing movement of students from Far and Central Headingley and from the city centre, have added to the already high student population living in the area. Hyde Park also has a very high proportion of Houses in Multiple Occupation with some streets completely

¹ Assessment of Housing Market Conditions and Demand Trends in Inner North West Leeds: Huw Jones, Strategy and Intelligence Manager, re'new and Martin Rushall, Unipol - July 2012

dominated by such housing and there is rapid turnover of households in the area. Demand from residential households is limited currently mainly to south Asian communities and other new populations. Property types in the area may be unsuitable for families (as few have gardens or secure play-space or are very small back to backs) Opportunities for starter households to buy in the area are limited by high average house prices and the current mortgage finance constraints. There are long term empty properties, but these have reduced over the last two years. The area has had issues with crime, nuisance, anti-social behaviour, refuse disposal and environmental quality, although there are clear signs of improvement.

3.2.4 Adjacent to Hyde Park is Little Woodhouse, itself adjacent to the large-scale building of Purpose Built Student Accommodation along Burley Road. While this accommodation has enabled students to move from shared HMO housing in Hyde Park and Central Headingley, there have been impacts for the people living in Little Woodhouse.

3.2.5 In **Central Headingley** and nearby areas located farther from the Universities, the number of students reduced by 43.2% in the Cardigan Triangle; by 21.4% in Central Headingley, and by 10.2% in the South Headingley area between 2007 and 2012;. However, there is little evidence of sufficient alternative demand for vacated properties from residential households, although there are signs of family residence returning to certain pockets (The Turnways, Dennistead Crescent, Ash Road, Springbanks, Alma Road area) House prices are still high and unaffordable to many potential first time buyers while owners with equity appear to be looking elsewhere in North Leeds for housing options. Many of the properties being vacated by students or that are currently underlet may not be attractive to families, as they mostly have no private garden space, or may be expensive to de-convert from HMO use and refurbish for family occupation. There is also continuing demand for rented and shared rented housing from young professionals who cannot afford self-contained rented housing and who are unable to buy so demand for HMO type accommodation in the area may still be strong and landlords may seek to switch their focus to letting to such potential tenants.

There are a number of long-term empty properties in the area mostly around Headingley Stadium, along with evidence of a significant level of unlet bedspaces which could feed into empty properties in the future. The area has some residual issues with crime, nuisance, anti-social behaviour, refuse disposal and environmental quality which may serve as a deterrent to incoming demand.

3.2.6 In **Far Headingley; Burley and Meanwood**, where there had been traditionally no or little student residence, the number of students reduced by between 5% and 26% between 2007 and 2012. In Far Headingley, there are signs of the local housing market returning to a fundamentally residential one, with increasing numbers of families buying homes in the area. In Burley, there is evidence of replacement of students by young working individuals in the shared housing in the area, while in Meanwood there is increasing demand from young workers/professionals, linked to a perception that the area is 'on the up'.

3.2.7 *Review of Evidence on supply and demand for housing for students*

The Council also commissioned re'new to undertake a review of available evidence on student numbers and supply of accommodation for students.² This is attached to this report as Annexe B. It found that

- i) Statistics from HECA suggest a modest increase in student numbers rather than an increase of the magnitude that necessitated the large scale building of new Purpose Built Student Accommodation previously.
- ii) Virtually all new students can now live in purpose built student accommodation (PBSA). Students (and their parents, who are increasingly influential to students choosing PBSA for the first year accommodation) are increasingly demanding of their accommodation and are seeking a range of facilities (especially in relation to internet access and provision of communal space).

The current extent of provision of PBSA aimed at new (first year) students suggests that little or no new provision is needed in absolute terms aimed solely at new students. With demand from new students only expanding slightly, it is likely that providers (Universities, private providers, Unipol) will target returning students, and while there is evidence that the vast majority of returning students prefer to live in shared off-street housing close to the universities, there is also evidence that an increasing proportion of students living in PBSA are returning students. Further development of large-scale PBSA aimed at new students could also have an impact on existing University run accommodation and may influence decisions on future of accommodation schemes should empty bedspaces ensue.

- iii) There is evidence of speculative interest from developers seeking to attract overseas finance and investment for PBSA developments that are being 'sold' to developers on the basis of past trends in student applications rather than actual admissions. These are not responding to known surges in demand, but are seeking to draw demand from existing PBSA and shared accommodation.
- iv) Despite evidence of under-letting, the size of the off-street shared housing market is likely to be stable over the coming years and many landlords may be seeking to alter the offer they make to students to compete with the providers of purpose built accommodation and retain their current 'market share' of returning students. Some landlords are still investing, whilst others are beginning to sell as the market becomes more fluid. Indications are that landlords are phasing out smaller rooms where possible. More landlords are including Wi-Fi and installing individual door locks.
- v) There is no evidence of any significant increase in the number of students living at home and studying in Leeds during their studies.
- vi) There appears to be a current surplus of accommodation, in the region of 4,700 bed spaces in relation to likely demand, and over the next few years a further surplus of accommodation could become evident, given likely trends in student numbers. There is likely to be a continuing surplus across all provision in comparison to overall housing need even if the supply of private rented shared housing (in LS6 or the city centre) were to reduce as landlords switch to letting to alternative sources of demand.

² Student Housing Demand and Supply: :A review of evidence: Huw Jones, Associate Consultant, re'new - August 2014

- vii) Currently, it is assumed by the City Council and the Universities that student accommodation needs across the years of study, will be met through a mix of PBSA and off-street shared private rented housing. There is no expectation for all students to be accommodated in PBSA. Switching the thrust of policy towards greater accommodation of students in PBSA would clearly have a knock on effect on the neighbourhoods currently containing a large supply of shared private rented housing aimed at students. Should there be a substantial surplus of bed spaces, and possibly of completely empty properties, in the shared housing market, then this would raise issues of what source of demand could or would 'take up the slack'.
- a. While there are signs of more residential families (especially South Asian families) buying or renting homes in Central Headingley, there is little evidence to show that all vacated shared houses in Leeds 6 would easily revert to family occupation, given the type and size of properties that would probably be vacated ³
 - b. There is evidence of increasing demand for shared housing in HMOs from young working individuals and couples who are unable to afford market rents for self-contained private rented housing, and who may not be able to access home ownership until a deposit is accumulated. Landlords may be switching their business focus from students to young workers.
 - c. Local Housing Allowance rates for housing benefit payment are currently substantially below the average rental levels in most parts of 'Leeds 6', meaning that benefit claimants rehoused would have to find the unpaid difference from their benefit.
 - d. Should landlords decide to 'off-load' surplus properties onto the local market, then this could have implications on property values and confidence in the area.

4.0 Issues to address

4.1 There are a number of key issues emerging from the research undertaken that need to be addressed by the Council and its partners

4.1.1 Across the three areas

- i) How to ensure that there is provision of high quality accommodation for students that offers choice, meet student preferences and is located within easy reach of the University campuses
- ii) How to ensure that any new Purpose Built Accommodation is needed, and is of a type and level of amenity that will add value to the supply of accommodation for students, and potentially for other needs groups in the future; Selective use of small scale PBSA, configured in such a way as to be attractive to returning students, and located in areas close to the Universities may help draw demand further from off-street shared housing. This approach is being promoted by residents groups in Nottingham to support the development of innovative accommodation which will be attractive to returning as well as first year students⁴

³Assessment of Housing Market Conditions and Demand:Trends in Inner North West Leeds op cit

⁴ Changing Lenton: Lenton's Housing and a 'Vision for Lenton' Report of a round table meeting - Friday, 29th November 2013.

- iii) How to ensure that the use of HMO Policy (Policy H6 of the LDF Core Strategy) to limit the conversion of 'family housing' to HMOs takes account of the different housing market conditions in the various parts of Inner North West Leeds and does not either disadvantage homeowners in areas where alternative demand may be limited or limit provision of housing options for young people on low pay;
- iv) Consider how best to ensure that new housing developments in the area contribute constructively to the housing options in the area, including determining how best to use S106 contributions from private housing developments.
- v) Consider opportunities to return long term empty properties into residential accommodation. There are 124 long term empty properties across the area and whilst the rates are lower than the city average, there may be opportunities to bring them back into use.
- vi) How to ensure that shared housing across the city is of a high quality (of condition, amenity and management service).
- vii) Much good work has been done to promote the area, such as that sponsored through the Headingley Development Trust and the Hyde Park Unity Day, but consideration is needed as to how best to continue to address the often negative image of the area, and to promote them as good and vibrant places to live.

4.1.2 *In Hyde Park, Woodhouse and South Headingley*

- i) How best to apply use of HMO Policy (Policy H6 of the LDF Core Strategy) in a way that takes account of the existing high level of concentration of HMOs, and avoids the restriction of opportunities for existing homeowners to sell their properties or, opportunities to meet demand and need for shared housing from other groups;
- ii) How to assist and attract new demand to the area including first time buyers and young 'family building' households, young working households and South Asian households;
- iii) Consider how best to ensure that development at the Leeds Girls High School site contributes to sustainable housing options in the area
- iv) Consider opportunities for bringing long term empty properties back into residential use
- v) How best to deliver neighbourhood management including services to improve the environment, reduce undue noise nuisance, effectively dispose of domestic waste and enhance community safety;
- vi) How to improve the quality, energy efficiency and safety of back to back housing and its streetscape.

4.1.3 *Central Headingley, Cardigan Triangle and Headingley Hill*

- i) How to support, promote and market 'residential enclaves' (Turnways, Denistead Crescent, Ash Road, Spring Banks, Buckinghams) for residence by self-contained households including families and 'family builders';
- ii) Consider how best to apply use of HMO Policy (Policy H6 of the LDF Core Strategy) in a flexible way that can limit unnecessary expansion of HMOs while enabling landlords to meet changes in housing demand and avoiding any restriction of opportunities for existing homeowners to sell up and move on should they want, or need to;

- iii) Consider how to bring empty properties back into residential use, including exploring the feasibility of converting surplus large terraced housing without gardens to flats (e.g. in the Estcourts, Headingleys) aimed at long term residential use;
- iv) Consider how to attract young working individuals and couples, who are the 'family builders' of the future (some of whom may wish or need to share housing) to live and remain in the area;
- v) Consider how best to encourage the improvement of the safety, energy efficiency and appearance of back to backs and the streetscape in areas where they exist e.g. Ash Road area, Granbys;
- vi) Consider how best to deliver continually improving neighbourhood management.

4.1.4 *Far Headingley (inc Moor Road, Becketts Park, Weetwood)*

- i) Support the current return to residential occupation including marketing and promoting the area to attract incoming households; and through use of HMO Policy (Policy H6 of the LDF Core Strategy) to protect the move back to residential occupation and prevent any return to significant levels of multiple occupation;
- ii) Consider opportunities for bringing long term empty properties back into residential use
- iii) Ensure that new developments (Bodington, Tetley Halls) contribute to local housing options;
- iv) Ensuring that the area provides housing options for young professionals and workers.

5.0 **The Council's approach to addressing issues raised**

- 5.1 The Council has deployed a range of means to consider and tackle the issues raised by the research undertaken on student accommodation and housing market conditions in Inner North West Leeds.
- 5.2 The Council established a Working Group chaired by the Executive Member for Housing and consisting of the key organisations involved in the provision of accommodation for students including the Universities, private landlords, Unipol Student Homes and the Student Unions and representatives of local residents groups.

5.3 Noise nuisance

The Council has introduced a new procedure for tackling noise nuisance within the three areas. The new procedure agreed with the Universities includes

- 5.3.1 A single point of contact within the Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team
- 5.3.2 Community Committee funding to provide a dedicated patrol
- 5.3.3 A pilot exercise, now being evaluated, which provided a dedicated Police patrol from Friday to Sunday
- 5.3.4 The introduction of home visits

5.4 Parking

The Council has undertaken work to review policy relating to parking and parking permits in areas where convenience of parking for residents may be compromised by concentrations of HMOs. The Council has proposed implementing a slight relaxation of policy regarding parking spaces per

households where HMOs are converted to other dwelling forms, but is not proposing any extensions in the LS6 area in order to balance parking convenience for residents with the need for appropriate parking to support commercial and retail activity in Headingley Town Centre. It was considered that there might be some scope for no parking markings in front of homes in key areas around Burley railway station. It was also felt that Hyde Park Road might need to have its parking reviewed due to the impact of the amount of parking for the local businesses.

5.5 Planning Policy

The Council has also been striving to build sound policy on student housing within the LDF Core Strategy. Policy H6 sets out the basis for agreeing planning applications to change the use of properties from residential to HMO use, and the expectations for development of Purpose Built Student Accommodation where the Council was seeking to require developers of new PBSA to provide evidence of the need for such additional accommodation.

- 5.6 Following an Examination in Public of the Core Strategy, the Council's policy regarding PBSA was not accepted by the Planning Inspector, while the policy regarding HMOs was accepted along with the possibility of landlords being able to switch (or 'flip') the use of properties from residential to HMO use and back, where housing market and demand conditions justified it.
- 5.7 The Council has invested significant resources to improve the quality of the Private Rented Sector within the area. The implementation and subsequent management of the HMO Licensing Scheme has made a significant difference to property standards. The Unipol Licensing Scheme has also made a significant contribution in this area.
- 5.8 The Council has introduced a localised approach to tackling Environmental issues in the area.
- 5.9 The Council has also supported the formation of a Neighbourhood Forum for Headingley, and the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the area.
- 5.10 The Universities, Student Unions and Unipol have all contributed to increasing communication with students about the expected levels of behaviour when living in the area amongst long standing residents.

6.0 **Proposed Actions**

- 6.1 The following measures are recommended to the working group for their approval to take forward action to tackle the housing and neighbourhood management issues in existence in Inner North West Leeds. It is the intention that this report will feed into the Inner North West Community Committee and will be used as evidence within the Neighbourhood Planning process. The key actions as set out below will also be monitored periodically by the Leeds Housing Forum.

6.2 **Planning**

- 6.2.1 For the Inner North West Community Committee to ensure a strategic approach is taken towards combining oversight of planning issues, housing development and delivery of neighbourhood based services relating to community safety noise nuisance refuse disposal and environmental condition,
- 6.2.2 For the Inner North West Community Committee to commission a six-monthly review of evidence on student applications and the numbers of students with an accommodation need, student residential

patterns and housing market and neighbourhood conditions in the various parts of Inner North West Leeds

- 6.2.3 For the Leeds Planning Service to strategically and operationally manage the application of Core Strategy planning policies including:
- i) Formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan
 - ii) Application of use of HMO Policy (Policy H6 of the LDF Core Strategy) including the ability for HMO landlords to 'Flip' the use of HMOs between letting to families and HMO use
 - iii) Progressing the planning policies relating to new housing developments in the area (Tetley Hall, former Leeds Grammar School)
 - iv) Progressing and advising upon any new applications for PBSA in the area.
 - v) Monitoring any changes in definition of HMOs taking place nationally and advising on implications for planning policy pertaining to Inner North West Leeds.

6.3 Housing

- 6.3.1 For the Director of Environment and Housing to ensure delivery of a six-monthly review of evidence on student applications and the numbers of students with an accommodation need, student residential patterns and housing market and neighbourhood conditions in the various parts of Inner North West Leeds
- 6.3.2 For the Director of Environment and Housing to
- i) Consider options and opportunities for bringing long term empty properties back into use
 - ii) Commission an annual Housing Market Assessment to advise on housing demand and need in the areas concerned
 - iii) Advise on and research the feasibility of converting large properties to flats and broker subsequent initiatives
 - iv) Advise on the potential future use of any surplus PBSA to meet housing needs

6.4 Community and Neighbourhood Services

- 6.4.1 For the Inner North West Community Committee to oversee the strategic approach to provision of community services in the area, through the Environment sub group and monitor effectiveness of delivery and positive service outcomes
- 6.4.2 For the Leeds Students Unions to continue to support effective community engagement and involvement by students and encourage responsible residence amongst students.
- 6.4.3 For the Director of Environment and Housing to complete the pilot refuse collection exercise in the Ash Road area and develop relevant collection options for the area
- 6.4.4 For the Director of Environment and Housing to consider street cleansing "Zonal Teams" to offer an efficient, seamless area-based approach to cleansing working closely with enforcement officers and with waste collection teams to resolve specific issues.

6.4.5 For the Director of Environment and Housing to continue to provide an effective low level anti-social behaviour service with a particular emphasis on tackling noise nuisance.

6.5 Parking

6.5.1 Highways Services will investigate measures required to relieve the pressure on local residents living around Burley railway station.

6.5.2 Highways Services will review the parking arrangements on Hyde Park Road.

6.6 Marketing and Publicity

6.6.1 For the Inner North West Community Committee to commission a marketing and promotion campaign aimed at positively promoting the area as a good and vibrant place to live and counteracting the negative descriptions that are present on the internet, and could be framing views of the area and frustrating demand. This could involve using a range of tools such as photographs, websites, etc. to change perceptions by better and positive promotion of the area, in order to attract new families to the area, as well as ensuring that graduates who may wish to do so remain in the area. This approach has been proposed in the Lenton area of Nottingham.⁵

7.0 Action Plan

Action	Responsible Deliverer	Target Timeframe
Review Market Conditions	Housing Growth Team	June 2015 and thereafter Annually
Review land availability for new family housing	Housing Growth Team	March 2015
Returning long term empty homes into family accommodation	Housing Growth Team	Ongoing to March 2018
Enabling landlords to switch use of HMOs	Chief Planning Officer	Ongoing
Progress planning process for key development sites	Chief Planning Officer	March 2016
Expansion of the Ash Road refuse collection pilot	Waste Management Services	December 2014
Evaluate Ash Road waste collection pilot and bring forward further proposals for the area	Waste Management Services	May 2015

⁵ Changing Lenton op cit

Partnership working with Student Unions to ensure students understand their role in the community	Community Safety University Student Unions	Ongoing
Targeted out of hours noise nuisance work	Community Safety	Freshers week, term starts and year ends and key festival dates
Consideration of a positive publicity programme	Neighbourhood Planning and Community Committees	Develop a programme
Consider parking remedies around Burley railway station	Highways Services	June 2015
Consider parking remedies on Hyde Park Road	Highways Services	June 2015

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Richard Jones – Leeds Residential Property Forum

Megan Kearney – Unipol

Vicki Johnson – Leeds Carnegie University

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