

Subject:	Student Housing Strategy – evidence and options		
Date of Meeting:	15 November 2017		
Report of:	Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 A Students in the Community Scrutiny Review was completed in February 2009. Recommendations from this review helped inform the city's first Student Housing Strategy which was adopted in 2009. The strategy brought together actions to increase provision, conditions and management of student accommodation and support balanced residential communities. The strategy broke ground by being the first nationally and set a benchmark for national good practice.
- 1.2 The Student Housing Strategy 2009 has now expired and there is now a gap in the city's Housing Strategy which was agreed in 2015. A refresh of the strategy has been discussed at the city's Strategic Housing Partnership and agreement is now sought to consult and deliver a new Student Housing Strategy.
- 1.3 This strategy will be developed, building on the progress of the previous strategy, setting out priorities and goals that will support the changing needs and challenges faced by students living in the city. It will set a balance between meeting students' needs and those faced by the rest of the city's population.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Housing & New Homes Committee:

- 2.1 Note the evidence, options and consultation process outlined in the report and within the scoping paper at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Agrees to go out to consultation on a new Student Housing Strategy.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove has an international reputation as a youthful and creative coastal city. It is therefore not surprising that Brighton & Hove is a city with a relatively young demographic profile. Analyses of UK census data, for instance show that the 16-44 age group increased in the city by 15% between 2001 and 2011 rising to 48% (132,192) of the total usual resident population. Importantly

the relatively young population is sustained by the annual movement of students into the city and the propensity of young adults to 'put down roots' in the city after their studies. This brings the city numerous, cross-cutting, economic, social, demographic, cultural advantages for the city. Yet at the same time, the presence of relatively high numbers of students and young people in the city raises challenges as well as opportunities about how to most effectively accommodate them in the city¹.

- 3.2 Brighton & Hove hosts two major higher education institutions, the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex. During the 2016/17 academic year there were a total of 35,930 students studying at the two universities². Each plays a significant role in the city's economy, helping to maintain Brighton & Hove as a strong centre for research and innovation. Their strong academic standing and international connections also strengthen Brighton & Hove's status as an important European centre. Alongside this the city has the British and Irish Modern Music Institute (BIMM) as well as a large number of language schools.
- 3.3 This has brought challenges, in particular the management of rising student numbers in recent years and the adequate supply of good quality accommodation in appropriate locations. In recent years demand for student accommodation has placed pressure on the local housing stock often resulting in perceived or actual impacts on communities accommodating students especially in areas close to the universities.
- 3.4 The University of Sussex has confirmed that there are no current plans to increase the number of students studying at the Falmer campus (18,000). The institution is currently developing a new strategic framework which will look at how it will operate and achieve its aims over the next decade, including delivery of its courses and research activities. For example, the University is looking at online course delivery. Minor growth is expected at the University of Brighton until 2020 with a projected increase of approximately 700 full time students³.
- 3.5 Key considerations for this strategy include:
- Student numbers and growth projections until 2030
 - Housing supply and the potential solutions and issues arising from them including the need to balance affordability and quality. These will include:
 - Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)
 - Private Rented Sector
 - Citywide and sub-regional options
 - University headed leasing schemes
 - Economic, cultural and other benefits of universities to the city
 - Students and the community – high concentration of student communities in certain areas and positive and negative impacts.

3.6 Location of students

¹ Draft Student Housing Study 2017

² Full & part time undergraduate and postgraduate students

³ Draft Student Housing Study 2017

Analyses by the universities have enabled the spatial distribution of students at the two universities to be mapped. They tend to be concentrated around the universities itself and surrounding neighbourhoods with the highest concentrations in the Lewes Road corridor. Factors in this include good transport links and nature of the housing stock.

3.7 Supply – the type and amount of accommodation available

The supply of different types of accommodation within Brighton & Hove can be broadly quantified. The following paragraphs indicate approximate numbers of students in different accommodation types during 2016/17.

3.7.1 No accommodation requirement

Nationally approximately 20% of students do not require term time accommodation. This is reflected locally but this is an increasing trend with 27% of students from University of Sussex not requiring accommodation in 2016/17. There are multiple reasons for this including students deciding to remain living at home due to cost and affordability.

3.7.2 Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)

Accommodation offered through the universities (owned by the university or specialist provision) totals 1,800 bed spaces (University of Brighton) with 5,090 bed spaces (University of Sussex). A further number of bed spaces are available from specialist student accommodation providers through direct let. This has become an increasing desirable option both for first year and returning students.

In the City Plan, Part 1 through Policy CP21 the council identified five sites for the development of new PBSA in the city. Four of these now have an extant planning permission (Varley Halls, Preston Barracks, Circus Street and East Slope), while a previously permitted application at the other allocation (Pelham Street has now lapsed). 4,563 bed spaces currently have planning permission or are under construction with a further 1,000 bed spaces from developments subject to planning permission. Further site allocations will be considered for inclusion in City Plan Part Two. The provision of further PBSA has to be balanced against meeting other City Plan requirements, including requirements for delivery of new homes in the city including affordable housing.

3.7.3 Homestay/Host families

Both universities have access to accommodation under the Homestay scheme but this type of accommodation is not particularly popular with low numbers accessing this service e.g. during 2016/17 the University of Sussex have only 30 students in the scheme. However there has been an increase in the short term 'spot' providers like study hotels e.g. The Britannica enabling students to attend the university for part of the week. Host families predominately meet the need for language school students in the city.

3.7.4 Private rented housing

The remaining requirement for accommodation is met through other private rented properties predominately in the form of shared houses or bedsits (Houses in Multiple Occupation). These are either directly let by private landlords or managed directly by the universities through a university head lease. Under a head lease scheme the University of Brighton has 165 bed spaces within the city

with the University of Sussex reporting 494 across the city and in Lewes District.

In May 2017 council tax data reported 5,200 households with student exemptions in the city. This figure excludes PBSA but will include some owner occupier properties.

Whilst the number of PBSA developments is increasing it is clear that a significant proportion of students can not or choose not to access university provided or other specialist private accommodation.

3.7.5 Houses in Multiple Occupation

The provision of shared rental accommodation by private landlords, for both students and other groups, makes a valuable contribution to the city's housing requirements. In 2015/16 1,783 HMOs were used to solely house students⁴. During the lifetime of the previous Student Housing Strategy licensing of larger HMOs through national mandatory licensing and the introduction of an Additional Licensing Scheme for smaller HMOs in the Lewes Road area in 2012 have brought improvements in both the management and quality of HMO accommodation.

However, such HMOs can also have an impact on residential amenity and the character and housing mix of an area. A number of residential communities within Brighton & Hove have expressed concerns over the impacts of HMO concentrations. Problems identified have included:

- Poor waste management
- A shift from permanent family housing to more transient accommodation
- A reduction in the choice of housing available in the city
- Breakdown in social cohesion
- Noise and disturbance associated with the intensification in the residential use of properties/or the lifestyle of occupants

3.7.6 To minimise impacts on residential communities the council has sought to restore the need for planning permission for houses to be converted to small HMOs, through the use of Article 4 directions, which has been in place since 2013. The direction has been made in areas where the concentration of HMO's are highest (five wards in the Lewes Road area of the city) and where impacts on residential amenity are most pronounced. This is in place in a number of locations where students will want to live, particularly in areas close to or with good transport links to the universities.

3.7.7 Educational establishments are legally exempt from Article 4 directions and HMO licensing (by statute). Therefore homes managed by universities 'head leased accommodation' are exempt, as long as they have no more than six people living in them. It also means that they are not counted towards the 10% threshold levels in these areas when new HMO applications are considered. The council will continue to work in partnership with the universities through the Strategic Housing Partnership to ensure university approaches to seeking accommodation for students are not counter to locally adopted regulatory provisions.

⁴ Draft Student Housing Study 2017

3.8 Neighbourhoods and community cohesion

3.8.1 Integrating students into the local communities is embedded practice at the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex with students reporting enjoyment of living in mixed community areas. Both universities provide information on good neighbourly practice as well as having robust internal processes to help members of the public who may need help on student related matters. In addition, both institutions provide information to students on how they can be involved in projects and events and take part in volunteering opportunities. The range of community initiatives include:

- Running a Community Ambassadors Scheme where students have contacted 7,500 local residents in Moulsecomb, Bevendean and Coldean, and will continue to contact at least 7,500 households annually on the doorstep (University of Sussex)
- Running a Street Marshalling/Streetwise scheme where students go out in pairs in the Hanover & Elm Grove, Lewes Road, Coldean and Moulsecomb areas three nights a week between 10pm to 4am and provide assistance to both students and other residents as needed.
- Completing street clean up events four times a year with local residents, community groups and City Clean (University of Sussex).
- Providing free advice and information to local residents e.g. law students providing advice on housing and welfare and family law (University of Sussex)
- Employing two police liaison officers providing advice and assurance (University of Brighton)
- Running a University Of Sussex Information Centre located on the Lewes Road providing a venue for engagement with current and future students, local residents, parents and businesses.

The scoping paper at Appendix 1 provides detail on the positive work undertaken by both universities.

3.9 Student accommodation in the future

3.9.1 An independent Student Housing Study was commissioned by the council's Planning department. The main purpose of the study was to gain a fuller understanding of the current situation regarding student numbers, and the supply and demand for PBSA in the city. This research covers the period to 2030 and aimed to provide evidence to inform the implementation of Policy CP21 of the City Plan Part 1 and to help inform the development of Part 2 of the City Plan

3.9.2 The draft study is not published as yet but will be made available on the planning section on the council's website once approved. The study modelled the need for new PBSA based on six scenarios – growth in student numbers of 0% or 1% after 2020 at universities, and accommodating modelled percentages of university students requiring accommodation in PBSA with each growth rate. It then looked at the impact this would have on the need for alternative HMO housing in the city. Information from this study once approved will be used to inform the consultation and development of a new Student Housing Strategy.

3.9.3 To date both universities have taken the approach to develop more PBSA to ensure an adequate supply of housing for not only students in their first year, but to meet demand from returning students and post graduates. As outlined in

paragraph 3.7.2, 4,563 bed spaces have planning permission or are currently under construction, with a further 1,000 bed spaces subject to planning permission. It is anticipated that this continued supply of PBSA and current static university numbers projections may help contribute to alleviate HMO supply issues whilst also relieving pressure on the local housing stock, addressing some existing concerns in neighbourhoods with high concentrations of students.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY OPTIONS

4.1 Option 1 – Do nothing

Although local authorities do not have a statutory duty to produce a Student Housing Strategy, without a current strategy, there will be no clear vision for Brighton & Hove's student accommodation, impact on the community and services that can be shared with partners, residents, developers and funders.

Any benefit gained from not allocating resources to develop a strategy and monitor its action plan would be outweighed by the costs incurred through not developing a joined up strategic approach to housing policy and investment decisions.

4.2 Option 2 – Develop a new Student Housing Strategy (preferred option)

A new Student Housing Strategy will set out the council's expectations for new and existing student accommodation in the city. The supporting action plan will span the four years of the strategy, but will be refreshed annually to make it responsive to local and national policy and investment changes.

The new Student Housing Strategy will help our partners, funders and residents understand our ambition for future student accommodation and related services provided for Brighton & Hove's students and existing residents of the communities within which they live. It will move to a better balance between regulatory responses and community initiatives and in addition, it will enable development of opportunities to deliver this shared vision.

The strategy would be developed in four stages

Stage 1: Evidence gathering (Summer/Autumn 2017)

- Examine and refresh our evidence base from the Student Housing Study
- Undertake peer review to understand best practice
- Task and Finish Groups – BHCC and the universities and Students' Unions
- Report to committee outlining evidence and options and requesting permission to consult on the proposed strategy

Stage 2: Consultation (Early 2018)

- Undertake consultation with higher education providers and relevant stakeholders

Stage 3: Housing & New Homes Committee approval (May 2018)

- Report to committee on findings and committee approval sought for a new Student Housing Strategy.

Stage 4: Implementation (Summer 2018 onwards)

- If strategy agreed – implementation and annual monitoring of the action plan

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 A steering group including external stakeholders from the University of Brighton, University of Sussex, Students' Unions and a number of council departments including Housing, Planning, Partnerships, Transport, Community Safety and Environmental Health was formed. A series of task and finish groups have taken place this summer to identify and review priority areas for a new strategy. The group provides a valuable forum which ensures the council and key stakeholders are working together to develop a shared vision.
- 5.2 Subject to committee approval a public consultation is planned to take place at the start of 2018. The consultation process will be designed in a thematic way to ensure respondents can provide feedback on areas of most interest to them.
- 5.3 The council will consult with the Universities, BIMM and higher education providers, Students' Unions, students, local residents, landlords, key interested parties (i.e. Police, Fire Service) and other members of the community including voluntary and community groups e.g. Local Action Teams.
- 5.4 Publicity of the consultation will take place through social media, attendance at community meetings, student fairs and by utilising exhibition space on campus and in the community shop.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The council acknowledges the important contribution that both universities and other higher education providers make to the city. This paper has considered key issues that underpin the emerging policy position about housing supply for students in the city.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 Financial Implications:

The costs associated with the proposed consultation exercise and drafting a new Student Strategy will be met from current general fund housing strategy budgets.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 18/10/17

7.2 Legal Implications:

As mentioned in 4.1, there is no statutory duty on the council to produce a Student Housing Strategy. However, the Student Housing Study and subsequent Strategy will assist the council in the discharge of its functions under the Housing Act 1985 to consider the needs of the district with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation.

7.3 Equalities Implications:

After the consultation a full Equalities Impact Assessment would be undertaken in relation to a new Student Housing Strategy recommended to Housing & New Homes Committee for approval. This assessment would incorporate the relevant findings of the stakeholder consultation to help inform decision making.

7.4 Sustainability Implications:

The Student Housing Strategy will link to the travel plans for both universities and will consider opportunities for improved travel options to broaden housing options for students in the city. Poor quality or overcrowded housing can impact on people's health and personal development, particularly for younger people and families. Improving housing standards and having energy efficient homes will further benefit students through reducing fuel bills.

Any Other Significant Implications:

7.5 Public Health Implications:

None arising directly from this report.

7.6 Crime & Disorder Implications:

The Student Housing Strategy will consider neighbourhood issues and positive and negative impacts that students may have including waste management and noise nuisance. Broader community initiatives such as the Street Marshal Scheme aim to reduce the incidence of anti social behaviour in communities and assist students and residents as required.

7.7 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

A new Student Housing Strategy will consider the opportunities for housing provision for students in the city and the risks associated with these options.

7.8 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

Universities and other higher education providers make an important contribution to the city bringing numerous, cross-cutting, economic, social, demographic and cultural advantages. The development of a Student Housing Strategy will link to the broader protocol currently in development between the council and the universities to support the relationship between the organisations in the city.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

Appendix 1 Scoping paper for developing a new Student Housing Strategy

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents
Student Housing Strategy 2009

