

REPORT OF THE: Director of Development Department

MEETING: Inner North West Area Committee

DATE : 8th December 2005

SUBJECT : UDP Review Inspectors Report on ASHORE and student developments in Little Woodhouse.

Electoral Wards Affected :

Headingley

Hyde Park & Woodhouse

Kirkstall

Weetwood

Specific Implications For :

Ethnic Minorities

☐

Women

☐

Disabled People

☐

**Executive
Function**

☒

**Council
Function**

☐

**Eligible
for Call In**

☒

**Not eligible for Call In
(details contained in the report)**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Area Committee on the impact of ASHORE, the UDP Review Inspectors Report and the development of student accommodation in Little Woodhouse.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Area of Student Housing Restraint (ASHORE) was proposed in policy H15 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Review and sought to control and restrict student development and occupancy within the designated area. Policy H15a also sought to encourage dispersal in sustainable locations in other parts of the city.
- 1.2 The UDP Review Inspectors report has now been published and contains some criticism of ASHORE, as well as proposing some fundamental change to the approach towards student housing and other housing needs within the locality.

2.0 Area of Student Housing Restraint (ASHORE)

- 2.1 The ASHORE policy sought to resist extensions to halls of residence which would increase the net number of bedspaces as well as new halls of residence within the designated area. Where planning permission was required for extensions to student houses, resulting in an increase in habitable rooms, such as bedrooms, these were also considered to be unacceptable and were likely to be refused planning permission.

- 2.2 There was also a presumption against the development of, or changes of use, resulting in new Houses in Multiple Occupation or flats of 3 or more bedrooms. Such development would be subject to a Condition prohibiting occupancy by full time students. Developments of, or changes of use, resulting in new flats of 1 or 2 bedrooms were likely to be acceptable, provided that all other planning considerations were satisfied. In practice, new houses and flats of 1 or 2 bedrooms within the ASHORE area have also be subject to a Condition prohibiting occupancy by full time students.
- 2.3 Policy H15a of the UDP Review encouraged student housing outside of the ASHORE in locations which are within the city centre or are within other areas which are, or have the potential to be, well connected by public transport, have the potential to be attractive to students as places to live and be in areas which can assimilate student population growth without prejudice to the amenity and viability of the existing community. In addition, new student developments were to be encouraged in inner city locations where a contribution to regeneration objectives could be achieved. There have since been a number of such purpose built developments in Little Woodhouse, the city centre and the Meanwood Road corridor, all outside of the ASHORE area.

3.0 UDP Review Inspectors Report

- 3.1 The Inspector Report considers at length the issue of whether there is a 'student' problem. On the surface, it seems as though there is an acknowledgement of issues within the locality, but some concern as to what extent these are caused by the student population, specifically that issues surrounding crime and disorder are arguable and that housing availability and price are likely to have been much the same, even without students. However, it is stated that the concerns about loss of overall balance in the community, particularly manifested through the transience and seasonal nature of student occupancy, are well founded. The Inspector also states that a continuing and significant growth in the number of students living in and around Headingley could in time seriously erode the range of choice of housing and the level and quality of services, such as education.
- 3.2 The Inspector cited evidence to suggest that student numbers are levelling off, although he accepted that this ought to be treated cautiously. He goes on to say that within the limits of what is possible under planning powers, seeking to manage such change, and maintain better community balance, are valid planning objectives, best achieved through measures to maintain diversity in the housing stock.
- 3.3 It is clear from the report that the Inspector considers that the ASHORE approach is fundamentally flawed in that it has a limited impact upon the change from owner occupation to student occupation, has a potential negative impact upon sustainable development principles, is inflexible and over-simplistic. His criticism was also directed towards the discriminatory implications towards students and the negative phrasing of the policy. The Inspector states that the success of any planning policy will instead depend on its efficacy in maintaining and enhancing the diversity of the housing stock.

- 3.4 The Inspector has therefore suggested an Area of Housing Mix, more positive in its tone, which would seek to maintain and enhance the quality and variety of local housing stock. It is proposed that such a policy would have both regulatory and promotional aspects; the first to maintain a reasonable stock of housing suitable for family accommodation, and the second to encourage improvements to the student housing stock, in particular through the provision of purpose built accommodation, with the aim of reducing conflict over time between the interests of students and other residents.
- 3.5 In terms of a geographical area, the Inspector states that if the emphasis is positive rather than restrictive, then the precise extent and definition of the area becomes less important and there is a good case for both widening the area to include the additional areas suggested by objectors, namely Kirkstall Hill, Beckett Park Campus, Moor Grange and Lawnswood, whilst retaining those areas suggested for deletion, namely Burley Lodge and Woodhouse. The Inspector considers it imperative for the success of the policy that the Council take a strong lead from the outset in planning for student housing in appropriate locations as an integral part of regeneration, and in partnership with the universities and other accommodation providers.
- 3.6 The Inspector concludes that the wording of policy H15 be deleted. The proposed policy therefore states that student accommodation will be acceptable within the area (formerly ASHORE), provided that it does not reduce the quantity and variety of housing available for family occupation, there would be no unacceptable effects on neighbours living conditions and that consideration will be had for scale, character, car parking and improvement of student housing stock. Additionally, the Council should work with Universities and student housing providers to manage provision so as to maintain a reasonable balance with other types of housing, improve stock and identify opportunities for new purpose built accommodation. The Inspector also concludes that the wording of policy H15a be deleted and re-worded to encourage student housing development in particular locations subject to a number of criteria to ensure sustainable development.

4.0 Development of Student Accommodation in Little Woodhouse

- 4.1 Whilst the ASHORE policy has been resisting purpose built student accommodation within the area designated under policy H15 of the UDP Review, a number of student developments have been taking place elsewhere. Specifically, a number of such developments have been completed or approved in the Little Woodhouse area as well as developments in the city centre and the Meanwood Road area.
- 4.2 It is arguable that such developments may ease the pressure on the student housing market in Headingley, although there is criticism of the scale of such development in Little Woodhouse by nearby residents in that area. Particular concerns include the large influx in additional population, the transient nature of the population, the impact upon residential amenity, the lack of facilities in the area and the size and design of the buildings themselves.
- 4.3 The table below (Fig. 1) provides key information on the purpose built student developments that have taken place or have consent in the Little Woodhouse area. The data collected shows the substantial amount of student bedspace provision that is being made available.

Ward	Development	Number of bedspaces	Greenspace contribution	Provision of other facilities / comments
City and Hunslet	Liberty Park, Marlborough Street - Built	564 bedspaces	N/A	
City and Hunslet	Sentinel Towers, Cavendish Street - Built	240 bedspaces	N/A	
Hyde Park and Woodhouse	Park Lane/ Hanover Square – Has Consent	10 cluster flats comprising 70 bedspaces	N/A	
Hyde Park and Woodhouse	Concept House, Belle Vue Road and Park Lane – Current Application	113 student flats comprising 406 bedspaces. 18 private flats comprising 32 bedspaces	Offsite contribution to be agreed	
Hyde Park and Woodhouse	Burley Road and Westfield Road – Under Construction	34 cluster flats comprising 177 bedrooms and 109 studios	Offsite contribution of £253,000.	Three A1/A3 units
City and Hunslet	1 and 3 Burley Road – Under Construction	190 cluster flats comprising 953 bedspaces and 50 studios	Offsite contribution of £188,760.50 paid. Second instalment of £188,760.50 to follow.	Gym Restaurant/Bar Option for 50% non-student accommodation
City and Hunslet	5 Burley Road – Current Application	124 self contained flats comprising 554 bedspaces	Offsite contribution of £212,832.	Option for 50% non-student accommodation
City and Hunslet	The Tannery, 43 Cavendish Street - Built	91 cluster flats and 51 studios totalling 531 bedspaces	N/A	Option for 50% non-student accommodation
City and Hunslet	RSPCA site, Cavendish Street – Has Outline Consent	N/A	N/A	Option for 50% non-student accommodation
City and Hunslet	46 Burley Street - Withdrawn	55 cluster flats comprising 304 bedspaces	N/A	Student and key Worker accommodation. Gym and Laundry.

Fig. 1 – Students developments in Little Woodhouse, details correct as at December 2005. The figures show a total provision of 3858 bedspaces.

- 4.4 It is also worth noting that a number of other student developments have extant permissions, are currently under construction or have recently been completed, in addition to those listed in Little Woodhouse. These include:
- Carr Mills, Meanwood Road, Meanwood – Has permission
 - Leodis Works, North West Road, Woodhouse – Completed
 - Eldon Court, Woodhouse Lane, Woodhouse – Under construction
 - Unite development, Clay Pit Lane and Junction of the Inner Ring Road, City centre – Under Construction.
- 4.5 It is difficult to assess to what extent the ASHORE policy has resulted in the driving of purpose built accommodation to the Little Woodhouse and City Centre areas. The areas where the market has moved to are likely to have depended on the likelihood of getting planning permission, hence avoiding ASHORE, whilst homing in on potential re-development sites of a significant size and capable of accommodating significant development. From a development control perspective, the ASHORE policy has certainly been a useful tool in dissuading developers from submitting applications for purpose built student accommodation within the designated area in recent times.
- 4.6 Many of the above developments in Little Woodhouse are of a significant height and are substantially higher than the lower rise, mainly commercial premises that they have replaced. The city centre policies contained in the adopted UDP encourage the provision of student accommodation in this area. The city centre boundary runs roughly north-south through St Andrew's Street at this point. To the west of this boundary, there are no policy restrictions preventing student development, other than the proposed ASHORE policy which relates to the land north of Burley Road and Park Lane. However, this is now subject to the comments made in the UDP Review Inspectors Report as discussed above.
- 4.7 In terms of national planning policy, Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 – Housing (PPG3) promotes higher density development on brownfield sites, close to town and city centres, along routes which are well served or have the potential to be well served by public transport infrastructure. In light of the above national and local policy considerations, it is therefore likely to be very difficult for the Council to resist the principle of the uses and the principle of tall buildings. However, the detailed design, scale, massing and form of developments will be subject to negotiation to ensure appropriate townscape.
- 4.8 A tall buildings strategy is currently being worked on by the City Council and generally promotes taller buildings in appropriate locations. The student developments erected along the Burley Road / Kirkstall Road gateway into the city centre are located on the floor of the Aire Valley in what is arguably an acceptable position. However, it is likely that development proposed which is closer to the established residential areas on the higher ground will need to be reduced in height in order to prevent adverse impacts upon residential amenity.

- 4.9 A further consideration is the location of the Hanover Square and Woodhouse Square Conservation Area, the Clarendon Road Conservation Area and the City Centre Conservation Area. Within Conservation Areas, new developments are required to preserve or enhance that character and appearance of that area. In this respect, development within these established residential areas will be subject to other policy criteria. Broadly speaking, this means that any developments here will need to be of a scale and massing congruent with the immediate surroundings and much care and consideration will need to be given to the use of materials and the articulation of detail relative to the surrounding historic environment. Notwithstanding this base line, clearly every site will need to be considered on its individual merits.

5.0 Developing an Area of Housing Mix

- 5.1 In light of the UDP Review Inspectors Report, it is now suggested that the Council considers developing an Area of Housing Mix, rather than ASHORE and thus promoting a positive enabling approach, rather than a restrictive one.
- 5.2 The inspector is therefore suggesting a re-worded policy H15a which would to some extent endorse the recent student developments in Little Woodhouse. There is a clause in the re-written H15 policy which seeks to ensure that there would be no unacceptable effects on neighbours living conditions including through increased activity, or noise and disturbance, either from the proposal itself or combined with existing similar accommodation. However, this relates specifically to the designated Area of Housing Mix and will be a key issue when considering a proliferation of purpose built student accommodation.
- 5.3 The Inspector advocates an approach of partnership working with the Universities, providers of student accommodation and the local community to draw up a Student Housing Strategy. The strategy is suggested to manage the provision of new student accommodation, maintaining a reasonable balance with other types of housing, seek progressive improvement of the student housing stock and identify opportunities for the provision of purpose built and managed student housing that would reduce pressure on the rest of the housing stock. This strategy is to relate specifically to the Area of Housing Mix proposed in policy H15.
- 5.4 In the proposed policy H15a the Inspector also advocates further partnership working with the Universities and accommodation providers in order to identify and bring forward specific potential development sites that would be suitable for purpose built accommodation. The Inspector also suggests that these sites should be considered subject to a number of criteria including good transport links, be attractive to students to live and be of a sufficient scale to form a viable student community, be well integrated into the surrounding area in terms of scale, character and services, contribute directly to the regeneration of the surrounding area and not unacceptably affect the quality, quantity or variety of local housing stock. The implication is that these sites may be located anywhere in the city, subject to the above criteria and thus could be used to encourage further, more widespread, dispersal.
- 5.5 The comments made in the Inspectors Report will be discussed at a forthcoming Development Plans Panel meeting prior to the Council's formal response being made. The issues raised in the Inspectors Report will also be discussed further at the forthcoming Planning Group meeting.

6.0 Timescales

- 6.1 It is worth noting the timescales of the UDP Review. The issues raised in the Inspectors Report will be debated at the forthcoming Development Plans Panels in January and February, with a view to modifications being made in March/April. It is then intended for the UDP Review to be adopted by July.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 The Inner Area Committee is asked to:
- Comment upon the contents of this report .