

WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Meeting held on 9 July 2013 at 15.00
Civic Hall, Leeds LS1 1UR

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| 1. | Introduction and apologies |
| 2. | Summary of key issues |
| 3. | Discussion on key planning issues |
| 4. | General group discussion |
| 5. | Review of Planning Policy |
| 6. | Summary |
| 7. | Date and time of the next meeting: Friday 9 th August 2013 at 3pm |

WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Notes of the meeting held on 9th July 2013 at 3.00pm
Civic Hall – Leeds

ATTENDANCE

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| Cllr Gruen | Executive Member – Labour |
| Cllr Walshaw | Labour – Headingley |
| Cllr Nash | Labour – City and Hunslet |
| Cllr Nagle | Labour – Rothwell |
| Cllr Lay | Liberal Democrat – Otley and Yeadon |
| Cllr Proctor | Conservative - Wetherby |
| John Statham | LCC Housing Services |
| Mike Brook | LCC Housing Services |
| Suzy Harrison | LCC Housing Services |
| Phil Crabtree | LCC City Development |
| Robin Coghlan | LCC City Development |
| Jason Singh | LCC WNW Environment and Neighbourhoods |
| Victoria Loveseed | Unipol |
| Ian Robertson | University of Leeds |
| Stuart Byrne | WNW Area Management |
| Huw Jones | Re’new (associate) |
| Vicki Johnson | Leeds Met University |

APOLOGIES

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| Jane Maxwell | Planning, Policy And Improvement |
| ? | Student Union representative |
| Martin Blakey | Unipol |

| | ITEMS DISCUSSED | ACTION |
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| 1. | <p>Introductions & apologies</p> <p>Cllr Gruen welcomed all to the meeting and advised of apologies. Cllr Nagle was omitted from the attendees list in the previous meeting notes and apologies given.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Summary of key issues</p> <p>Phil Crabtree referred to Leeds Planning Policy for purpose built student accommodation, specifically H6-Part B. Referring to the Manchester approach, policy should be fixed at larger schemes supported by the university / HE institution for the supply of all or some of the bedspaces the new development will provide. PC highlighted the controls and management needs to address student accommodation in the future and the requirement to evidence the 'need' for additional bedspaces given that the circumstances in Leeds differs from those in Manchester. This was then open for discussion with the group.</p> | All |
| 3. | <p>Discussion on key planning issues</p> <p>PC referred to 2 additional papers circulated to the group prior to the meeting.</p> <p>1. Martin Blakey's briefing notes - noted that demand for student accommodation is declining and that purpose built student accommodation is not deemed suitable to any other tenure identifying a need for tighter regulation with a need for direct report from educational institutions. Central principles are needed to judge future planning applications for larger purpose build development. Concern raised of increased voids in areas of student housing due to surplus student stock</p> <p>2. Huw Jones (study for Unipol) identified first year student demand is already catered for so additional student accommodation would need to come from elsewhere. 2nd / 3rd year students have different needs. The emphasis should be on the 'level of need' – does it make a contribution to the city?</p> <p>Cllr Gruen then recapped the meeting to date and identified the key issues for the group to discuss further as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the factual position on existing student numbers? • What are the specific requirements for new student accommodation build and how can new build be more flexible? • The need to develop a policy (possibly interim) on assessing new planning applications <p>It was noted that the development for a suitable planning policy was to be treated as a matter of urgency.</p> | PC |
| 4. | <p>General group discussion</p> <p>Initial thoughts from Cllrs Nagle and Nash queried the need for additional</p> | |

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| | <p>student accommodation and also noted that student accommodation varies widely from traditional housing provision. They also were interested to understand Unipol and the Universities' views on the potential existing over-supply and the likely impact of reduced student numbers.</p> <p>Cllr Gruen agreed that there is a need to understand the true facts and establish the correct base line.</p> <p>VL suggested that the existing research carried out by R'New does provide sufficient base line information, although this could be refreshed. She suggested there could be approx. 6,000 empty bedspaces currently, mostly in traditional off-street accommodation. However, details on void numbers in purpose built accommodation is difficult to obtain as the larger providers were not always forthcoming with this information.</p> <p>IR gave an update on behalf of Leeds University regarding specific student needs. He also acknowledged the good quality accommodation provided by the existing major providers. However, he identified that new developers were not necessarily as dedicated to providing good quality housing but were more profit motivated. He suggested that in his view it would be better to use any potential development land to build accommodation that would benefit the city as a whole rather than further student housing.</p> <p>Cllr Walshaw agreed with the above and also questioned the quality of the proposed student developments. He asked the question whether it was time for planning policy to say no to applications unless a need and quality can be assured.</p> <p>VJ advised that from a Leeds Met perspective she agreed with the above comments from LU and Unipol and concurred that they too have voids and reduced bedspaces.</p> | |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Review of Planning Policy</p> <p>HJ identified that 3,500 units with planning permission remain unbuilt. This raises the question of competition and viability in the market and the need to undertake a study of the true need as new bedspaces will only be filled at the expense of existing student accommodation.</p> <p>Cllr Proctor agreed with this sentiment noting that applications for new builds appeared to be more about satisfying the needs of investors rather than provision of quality housing.</p> <p>Reference was made again to the relevant planning policy H6 part B (details were included in the handout provided to group members). The main points to note were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is currently missing – there should be a requirement for any future application to detail a demonstrable need for the development (will be necessary to define 'need') • Can future developments be 'future proofed' to ensure longevity and flexible housing provision. • The need for minimum standards and suitability of accommodation provided. <p>A general discussion then took place regarding the need to regulate the quality of the proposed housing. MB advised of existing issues relating to over development of existing housing in the traditional PRS sector leading to inadequate room sizes and enforcement action is being taken to regulate this. It is important to ensure that there is a joined up approach</p> | |

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| | <p>when considering future planning applications to ensure we prevent any such issues occurring in new build developments.</p> <p>PC gave a summary of the areas to be considered when developing or amending planning policy. These were summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition that need and demand cannot be fixed but each application will need to be assessed under its own merits. • Any new policy must be long lasting and able to be flexible / adaptable (may also be possible to provide supplementary notes to better advise developers). • There was a question as to whether management arrangements of these developments could be linked to their planning application. • Issues of quality relate to internal and external construction, including building materials. • We will need to consider what status is given to the policy and ensure it is fully consulted and tested. <p>Both Cllrs Proctor and Gruen identified a possible need to develop an interim planning policy to address the existing and expected planning applications of this nature?</p> | |
| <p>6.</p> | <p>Summary</p> <p>Cllr Gruen concluded the meeting and thanked the group for their constructive comments. The next steps to be carried out before future meetings were agreed as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To produce a new 'draft policy' for consultation 2. Produce a narrative of the current situation – where we are now issues etc. 3. Consider legal implications of introducing an interim planning policy prior to October. | <p style="text-align: center;">PC HJ PC</p> |

Date of Next Meeting: Friday 9th August 2013 - 3pm Civic Hall, Leeds.