

Consultation on the Draft Interim Planning Guidance On Purpose Built Student Housing

Feedback Report

Introduction:

The Draft Interim Planning Guidance on Purpose Built Student Housing has been produced in order to promote the development of a range of purpose built student housing schemes in suitable, sustainable locations throughout the city.

Newcastle is a major centre for learning. Newcastle University, Northumbria University and Newcastle College all have ambitious master plans for growth in the city centre. Such a concentration of knowledge-based institutions is a feature of successful cities and a key characteristic of a strong city and regional economy.

As the universities and college grow, the Council seeks to accommodate the growth in student numbers and harnessing the many benefits this brings. This document is part of an overall approach towards addressing housing mix and promoting sustainable communities. It deals specifically with meeting the need for new purpose built student housing.

Consultation:

The guidance was subject to pre-consultation discussion and correspondence including being presented at the Shared Housing Working Group. It was also publicised in the local press and in City Life.

Following approval of the document for consultation by the Planning and Transportation Strategy Committee, the official consultation period commenced on the 8th June running until 20th July. This was subsequently extended to allow for presentations at further ward committee meetings.

The methods of consultation used included:

- Features in City Life
- Letters to key stakeholders, organisations and individuals
- Document published on the Councils web site
- Document made available to view in all local libraries and customer service centres
- Press release
- Meetings with the Universities and College

- Presentations at ward committees (Scotswood and Benwell, North Jesmond, South Jesmond, North Heaton, South Heaton, Ouseburn, Westgate, Wingrove and Fenham)
- Presentation at Private Landlords Forum

Summary of key issues of consensus:

In summary, the representation received signify a range of different interests and perspectives of a variety of stakeholders including regulatory organisations, national and local associations, developers, landlords and members of the community.

Key issues arising from the consultation included:

- General support for the document to encourage the provision of appropriate and sustainable purpose built student accommodation. The document was noted to be welcomed by a number of the respondents - Developers / individuals / regulatory authorities. There was also support and acknowledgement that the guidance was in line with regional economic and spatial policy.
- Desire for new purpose built accommodation to relieve pressures on communities.
A number of respondents considered that new accommodation would relieve existing communities with over heating of the student population.
- Concern that purpose built student housing could be built to the detriment of existing communities and the private rented sector. Students most mobile / transient sector therefore can move from areas easily potentially resulting in vacancies etc
- Need for more positive reference to the existing accommodation offer – both the existing purpose built accommodation and the accommodation provided by the private rented sector
- Apprehension with regard to developing purpose built student housing in areas with existing high concentrations of students and/or existing purpose built student housing
- Support for seeking to ensure affordable student housing provision.
- Representations asked that other mechanisms for delivery of purpose built student housing be included – such as co-operative housing currently being explored by the Nation Students Union.
- Debate over the relative merits of locating students away from the main campuses and the willingness of students to travel to campuses
- Limited number of responses with explicit reference to scoring. Some queries over whether certain criteria should be given greater weight. However, there was not a consensus
- Need to take into account all necessary environmental, social and economic considerations upon submission of any planning application for the identified sites.
- Requests that the document be made more user friendly including site references and mapping

The Council's Response to the Consultation and Changes to the document

A number of changes have been made as a result of the consultation exercise. Details of the Council's response to individual representations and any subsequent amendments made to the document are available in the supporting 'Representations, Response and Changes' document. This document sets out the key changes to the document:

Evidence

Further evidence and explanation of university growth and the estimated bedspace requirement has been developed. A fact sheet has now been produced alongside the document as supporting evidence that will be reviewed and updated.

Impacts of Purpose Built Student Housing

There were mixed views principally from private landlords and members of the community as to the potential impacts of purpose built student housing on existing communities (whether these be positive or negative). It is recognised that relocating some students from existing communities could be a consequence of additional purpose built student housing provision. The impacts of purpose built student housing will therefore be monitored through the Council's Housing Strategy. Reference has been added to the document accordingly. Reference has also been added to emphasise the clear links between purpose built accommodation and the private rented sector.

Existing accommodation Offer

As evidenced in the previous appendix and now accompanying fact sheet, there is a need for additional purpose built bed spaces in the city. The existing accommodation offer however plays a vital role and will continue to be key to student housing provision and choice. In addition to emphasising the links to the private rented sector there is more positive reference to the existing accommodation offer.

Mechanisms for Purpose Built Student Housing Delivery

Further details added for options for delivery of purpose built student housing including identification of other delivery mechanisms for student housing e.g. co-operative housing

Accessibility to Campus

The importance of new accommodation being close to campus was emphasised by Northumbria University and by New Student. The Council agree that proximity to campus is a key factor in a sites' suitability. Accessibility has therefore been factored into the site scoring methodology. It was considered however that proximity should not be given greater weight than other factors. Proximity to campus or 'accessibility' as referred to in the document must be considered in the context of other issues including deliverability / timescales, planning and regeneration merits. It was requested that accessibility to Newcastle College also be scored. The draft did not include accessibility to Newcastle College as the College have a relatively

small scale need for accommodation. In recognition that the College does require accommodation accessibility has been mapped and sites scored accordingly.

Scoring

In response to some representations, further explanation and justification has been provided for the scoring methodology applied. The scoring is intended to provide an indication as to the suitability of a site. The scoring takes into account the key criteria and represents a balanced view taking into account each factor equally. All estimates are soundly based.

User Friendly

Amendments have been made to the revised document to enable users to cross reference details in the main text with the accompanying maps. A glossary has also been added particularly in reference to use of acronyms and planning terms. It is considered the document is now more user-friendly.

Specific Changes to Sites

Specific changes have also been made to certain sites, in light of the consultation and also in light of developments since publication of the draft for consultation. Those sites subject to change include:

- Addition of Quay Timber, Summerhill House and Sanderson Hospital as potential sites (Sanderson Hospital assessed and discounted)
- Westgate Community College –the site has been subject to further analysis since publication of the draft guidance. The site is split into two main elements. One, with its main access onto Grange Rd. This is a residential street and it is considered that student housing development, particularly in this part of the site would give rise to ‘Some conflict with surrounding uses and / or detrimental impact on residential amenity in the area’. The planning merits score for the site has therefore been reduced. Consultation on the site did however reflect general sympathy towards student accommodation with the other element of the site, onto the West Rd. Taking into account that it is more viable that only part of the site is likely to be suitable in principle for student housing, the estimated site capacity and resulting score has been reduced accordingly.
- Scotswood and West Benwell Terraces – the site score has been revised to reflect the anticipated long timescales for delivery of any potential student housing in this location.
- New Bridge Street – the site score has been revised to reflect delivery issues and likely timescales associated with the site including relocating existing services on the site
- Hunters Moor Hospital Site – further analysis of the site has been undertaken. It is considered the site could accommodate an estimated 180 student bed spaces

- General Hospital –the NHS Foundation Trust have identified a greater capacity on the site than was originally identified. The site also scores more highly on accessibility reflecting it's accessibility to Newcastle College.