
Report to Cabinet

13 December 2005

Report of
Director of City Development

Title
Student Accommodation

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purposes of this report are to describe the findings of a study of student accommodation in the City and to recommend an appropriate course of action.

2 Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (a) agree that policy issues are dealt with in the Local Development Framework, rather than through the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document;
- (b) agree to the carrying out of a study into levels of student car parking in residential areas;
- (c) ensure that officers monitor housing issues in their regular meetings with the University of Warwick and Coventry University; and
- (d) agree that copies of the final report of the study be made available to all who contributed.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 At the beginning of 2005, the City Council commissioned planning consultants Entec UK to carry out a study of student accommodation in the City. A variety of factors had led to the commissioning of the study. There had been a number of planning applications for purpose-built student accommodation; there were concerns relating to the character of some parts of the City changing as a result of an increase in the student population; and there were concerns about parking, particularly on the edge of the city centre, involving a perception that students (as well as people working in the city centre) were taking up residents' parking spaces.

3.2 The original expectation was that the study would lead to the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document to the Coventry Development Plan and, in commissioning the study, there was a recognition that there was a balance to be struck between various issues relating to higher education in the City. On the one hand, there are positive benefits which the two universities and their students bring to the City as a whole whilst, on the other hand, the presence of concentrations of students has implications for housing needs in the City and for local communities.

3.3 The study was based on a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. It examined the distribution and trends in student housing; it looked at the changing picture of student housing demand; and it involved interviews with key stakeholders, including the Universities, the Further Education Colleges, the Council (Planning and Housing), local communities, developers and agents.

3.4 The main findings of the study were that:

- there is sufficient private rented accommodation in the City to meet immediate student demand;
- new purpose-built accommodation is popular and the corporate sector is likely to pick up increased demand;
- the impact of the increase of purpose-built accommodation on the private rented sector is uncertain, especially bearing in mind influences such as differences between areas, asylum seekers and effect of the Housing Act 2004;
- although concentrations of student population are generally not as high as in some other cities, there is a balance to be struck in considering planning applications in areas where the student population is already high;
- a positive approach to locating new student housing developments, combined with a tighter management and accreditation process for student housing in the older stock, may provide a more realistic way ahead than area restraint policies; and
- it is important that any policy on student housing is closely linked to the City's views and visions on how best to encourage regeneration and sustainable communities.

4 Proposal and Other Option(s) to be Considered

4.1 These findings were discussed at a presentation of the study to Members and Officers on 26 August 2005

Overall Approach

4.2 There was general agreement at the seminar that the approach should be one of encouraging corporate sector developments in appropriate locations (possibly in areas without concentrations of students), whilst attempting to disperse existing concentrations of student accommodation / private rented accommodation / Houses in Multiple Occupation. Some measure of control for the latter exists through Policy H 6 of the Coventry Development Plan and under Housing Acts. In terms of planning policy, it was agreed that

- (i) the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document is not needed at this stage and
- (ii) the issues are best dealt with in the Local Development Framework.

4.3 In relation to the latter, strategic housing issues would be covered in the Core Strategy (the preparation of which is currently beginning), with more detailed issues at a later stage.

Parking

- 4.4 There was agreement at the seminar that significant parking issues remain. However, problems are not predominantly caused by students and resolution of the issue is more related to residents' parking, particularly in some areas near Coventry University and the city centre. It was agreed that more detailed information on actual levels of student parking in residential areas is needed, leading to recommendations which could go into the draft Parking Supplementary Planning Guidance. This is likely to involve analysis of Census information, as well as a parking and roadside interview survey around Coventry University, in order to obtain information on student parking. It is proposed that this work is begun, possibly in conjunction with Coventry University.

Review

- 4.5 The study raises a number of management issues in relation to student accommodation. It concludes that a positive approach to locating new student housing developments should be combined with a tighter management and accreditation process for student housing in the older stock. It is thus important that student housing issues are kept under review in the City Council's regular contacts with the Universities and with landlords.

5 Other specific implications

5.1

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Best Value		◆
Children and Young People		◆
Comparable Benchmark Data		◆
Corporate Parenting		◆
Coventry Community Plan	◆	
Crime and Disorder		◆
Equal Opportunities		◆
Finance		◆
Health and Safety		◆
Human Resources		◆
Human Rights Act		◆
Impact on Partner Organisations		◆
Information and Communications Technology		◆
Legal Implications		◆
Neighbourhood Management		◆
Property Implications		◆
Race Equality Scheme		◆

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Risk Management		♦
Sustainable Development		♦
Trade Union Consultation		♦
Voluntary Sector – The Coventry Compact		♦

5.2 Coventry Community Plan

Creating effective housing choices and balanced communities is seen as one of the steps towards the achievement of the Community Plan's priorities.

6 **Monitoring**

6.1 Information will continue to be collected to support policy preparation.

7 **Timescale and expected outcomes**

7.1 The amended Local Development Scheme being submitted to the Government Office notes that preparation of the Core Strategy has begun, with adoption expected in 2008, whilst detailed work on housing issues will begin in the second half of next year.

	Yes	No
Key Decision		√
Scrutiny Consideration (if yes, which Scrutiny meeting and date)		√
Council Consideration (if yes, date of Council meeting)		√

List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper	Location
Hou 6 Student Accommodation File	CC4/6.01
Student Accommodation Study: Final Issues Report (Sept 05) Entec UK	