

Loughborough Student Housing Supplementary Planning Document

Prepared for Chamwood Borough Council

Options Report
December 2004

Student Housing in Loughborough

Foreword

The location and extent of student housing has become an increasingly important issue for many Loughborough residents. In some parts of the town, notably the Storer and Southfields wards, the perception is that student numbers have grown to such an extent that it is no longer possible to maintain a balanced community. In these same areas, burgeoning student numbers have also brought problems of late night noise, particularly to the main road corridors. This issue was brought to the fore in a recent high profile planning appeal, where late night noise was given by the Inspector as one of the reasons for dismissing the appeal.

There is considerable evidence to back what is being said by the community. Since 2001, the number of full time higher education students has increased to around 12,000 and the University predicts that this figure will have risen to 13,500 in three years' time. The College presently has around 300 students on full time undergraduate courses and this number is set to rise to 500 over the same period. Most of its further education students are sixth formers and live with their parents. They are not, therefore, considered to contribute to any of the problems associated with student housing.

Over this three year period, the indications are that the numbers of managed student bedspaces will not keep step with the predicted increase in student numbers. The issues described above will therefore continue to worsen if nothing is done.

The University does intend to provide up to 2800 new bedspaces as part of its plans for redevelopment over the next five years. If built, these additional bedspaces would result in a drop in the number of students living in unmanaged houses. However, the first of these bedspaces would not be available until 2007 at the earliest.

Even if this redevelopment takes place in full, it may only be a temporary reprieve as there are no predictions for student intake available beyond 2007/08. It would therefore be wise to identify additional student housing sites now so that there is a continuous supply for many years to come. Only if the provision of managed student housing is consistently above any increase in numbers can the pressure be taken off the private sector and its host communities.

A couple of terms used in this report may need explaining:

studenty - describes an area within which students form the most visible group of residents and where shops and services are geared up to cater for their needs

studification - the process whereby a traditional residential neighbourhood becomes a student neighbourhood

Student numbers

Table One: Student Population of Loughborough by Ward from 2001 Census

Ward	Students aged 18+	Total population	Percentage students
Ashby	3749	6904	54.3
Garendon	262	6071	4.3
Hastings	281	5472	5.1
Hathern & Dishley	144	3720*	3.9
Lemyngton	382	5332	7.2
Nanpantan	1626	5402	30.1
Outwoods	363	5556	6.5
Shelthorpe	185	6320	2.9
Southfields	1334	5277	25.3
Storer	1800	5572	32.3
Total	10126	55626	18.2

* This ward includes the village of Hathern, which is a freestanding settlement and not part of the built up area of Loughborough. A figure of 2000 has been subtracted from the Ward population total to take account of this.

Table One shows the number of students recorded in Loughborough in the 2001 census. This information was gathered during the 2000/01 academic year. There are now around 12,500 full time students in Loughborough (2004/05 academic year). The numbers in each ward will therefore be higher now than they appear in the table above.

While most of the students in Ashby and Nanpantan wards live in managed student accommodation, most of those elsewhere do not. Since 2001, the number of managed bedspaces has risen but not as fast as the growth in student numbers. This means that more students will now be living in the private sector. The number of students in wards such as Storer and Southfields is therefore likely to be higher than shown in the table.

For the purposes of this SPD, it will be necessary to differentiate between the various classes of student as not all impact upon the town in the same way. Table Two below compares the numbers of full and part time students and the numbers of undergraduate, postgraduate and FE students.

Table Two: Student Numbers at Loughborough University 2003 - 2004

	Higher Education		Further Education	Total
	Undergraduates	Postgraduates		
Full time	10075	2011	205	12291
Part time	343	1851	30	2224
Total	10418	3862	235	14515

Part timers

The University has confirmed that most of its part time students are on courses which require them to come onto campus only once or twice a week. Many of these are day release students who work for the remainder of the week. In terms of lifestyle, they do not form part of the same student 'scene' as the full timers and tend to live in traditional family homes across a much wider area than the full timers. They are not, therefore, considered part of the issue.

Further education students

Similarly, the few further education students that the University has tend to be local teenagers still living with their parents. For this reason, they do not contribute to issues associated with student housing.

Postgraduates

According to the University, postgraduates generally behave in a different manner to undergraduates. As may be expected, the feeling seems to be that they are more mature and less likely to cause noise and disruption. Given that they have been in Loughborough for longer, they are also more likely to be involved in the life of the town rather than just the life of the University. Research students, who form 95% of the total, are present all year round and do not contribute to the issue of homes being left empty in the holidays.

Undergraduates

This leaves the full time undergraduates. Experience has shown that members of this group, which makes up the bulk of the student population, tend to base their lifestyles around the campus and see themselves as taking little part in the wider life of the town. Those who do not live in halls tend to try and live as close as possible to the campus and as close as possible to each other and this has led to the problems of high numbers of students in certain wards. Houses occupied by undergraduates are also likely to be left empty for about a third of the year. This group is considered to be at the heart of the issue.

Impacts of different student groups

Taking into account the above, it would appear that, when looking at the impact of students on demand for private sector housing in Loughborough, it is the total number of full time students that needs to be taken into account. However, when considering issues of neighbourliness, such as late night noise, antisocial behaviour and homes being left empty, the number of undergraduate full time students is more relevant. This is consistent with views expressed by both the University and the College.

Of the 12086 full time higher education students registered at the University in 2003-04, some 430 (3.6%) were on placements or based in the University's Peterborough campus, leaving 11656 (96.4%) in Loughborough.

The University intends to increase its number of full time higher education students over the next few years and has given predictions for the three academic years following 2003-04 as follows:

2003-04	12,086
2004-05	12,558
2005-06	12,890
2006-07	13,178

The University has stated quite categorically that its undergraduate numbers will be kept at 2003-04 levels for the foreseeable future and that almost all the identified growth will be in postgraduates, from both home and overseas.

While these additional students will need to be housed, they are unlikely to lead to the same level of disruption to the life of the town that an equivalent number of undergraduates would.

Bedspace numbers

At present, around 43% of undergraduate students are housed in managed housing, with the remainder living in traditional dwellings out in the community. The term "managed housing" refers to purpose built, warden controlled accommodation and covers both university run and privately run halls of residence and self catering flats.

At the time of writing there were outstanding planning permissions for a total of 254 student bedspaces in managed housing. For the purposes of this exercise it has been assumed that these will be ready for occupation by 2005/06. It has also been assumed that the first phase of the University redevelopment, which would provide 760 bedspaces, will be ready for occupation by 2006/07 with the remaining 2040 bedspaces coming on line in phases up to 2010.

The University guarantees a place in managed housing to all first year full time students, of whom there were 3288 in 2003-04. The remaining places are taken up by second and third year undergraduates and postgraduates. With the numbers of new undergraduates each year predicted to remain the same over the next few years, any additional bedspaces in managed housing will be available for postgraduates and second and third year undergraduates presently living in unmanaged housing. It therefore follows that, as time goes by, the numbers of undergraduates living in private rented houses will fall.

Tables Three to Six below show the numbers of full time higher education students in managed and unmanaged housing for the 2003-04 academic year and the three years thereafter. In 2003-04, around 4% of students registered at the University were not based in Loughborough. It has been assumed that this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. The numbers shown in the tables are therefore 96% of the totals given on the previous page.

The tables also assume that:

- a) numbers of full time undergraduates will remain constant
- b) all first year undergraduates will continue to live in managed accommodation
- c) the percentage of postgraduates in managed accommodation will remain at its present rate of 21.5%
- d) the remainder of places will be taken by second and third year undergraduates

Table Three: Student numbers and bedspaces 2003-04

	Undergraduates		Postgraduates	Total
	First years	Second / third years		
Managed	3288	1044	433	4765
Unmanaged	0	5313	1578	6891
Total	3288	6357	2011	11656

Table Four: Student numbers and bedspaces 2004-05

	Undergraduates		Postgraduates	Total
	First years	Second / third years		
Managed	3288	1172	518	4978
Unmanaged	0	5185	1893	7078
Total	3288	6357	2411	12056

Table Five: Student numbers and bedspaces 2005-06

	Undergraduates		Postgraduates	Total
	First years	Second / third years		
Managed	3288	1357	587	5232
Unmanaged	0	5000	2142	7142
Total	3288	6357	2729	12374

Table Six: Student numbers and bedspaces 2006-07

	Undergraduates		Postgraduates	Total
	First years	Second / third years		
Managed	3288	2058	646	5992
Unmanaged	0	4299	2360	6659
Total	3288	6357	3006	12651

What are the impacts on the town?

Newcomers to an established neighbourhood often bring with them a different set of values to those of the host community. Human nature is such that, where they are a small minority, these newcomers will generally try to fit in with the values of existing residents. However, where the newcomers form a large minority or majority, they will tend to behave to their own values rather than those of the host community. At some point a threshold must be reached at which this changeover occurs. This observation ties in with comments made by residents about wishing to see a more "balanced" community, where students live among locals in smaller numbers, respecting their values.

Precisely where this threshold lies has never been determined, but observations by local residents seem to suggest that a street with around one fifth student households feels balanced whereas one with a third student households does not. Perhaps the threshold lies at around a fourth of households? If it does, it is clear that there will be many streets in Loughborough where the balance has already gone.

Table One shows that, as far back as 2001, 25% of residents in Southfields ward and 32% in Storer ward were students. With the increase in numbers that has occurred over the last few years these figures will clearly be higher now. At the same time, anecdotal evidence suggests that student households are becoming more common in Ashby and Nanpantan wards.

Issues associated with high concentrations of students are, of course, not unique to Loughborough; towns and cities all over Britain experience similar problems, many of them having far larger student populations than Loughborough. What sets Loughborough apart from many of these towns is the small size of the town in relation to the University. As will be demonstrated later, this has implications when assessing how useful student restraint policies could be in the town. The table below gives an indication of student numbers and approximate total populations for a selection of towns and cities. Student numbers are taken from university websites and populations from the 1991 census. Please note that populations refer to the whole built up area of a town, not just the administrative district. For example, the population of Nottingham includes the whole of Nottingham and Gedling Boroughs plus those wards in Rushcliffe, Broxtowe and Erewash which form part of the built up area. As will be seen, only Durham has a greater percentage of students than Loughborough. However, while Loughborough has only had a University since 1966, Durham has grown up with its University over the last 170 years. It is therefore more geared up for students than is Loughborough.

Table Seven: Percentages of students in selected towns and cities across Britain

Settlement	Number of Full time students	Population of built up area	Percentage of total population
Birmingham	38,000	1,255,000	3.0%
Brighton	23,000	263,000	8.7%
Canterbury	10,000	44,000	22.7%
Derby	9,000	219,000	4.1%
Durham	13,000	43,000	30.2%
Loughborough	15,000	55,000	27.3%
Leeds	34,000	540,000	6.3%
Nottingham	40,000	500,000	8.0%

A particular feature of Loughborough is that the area closest to the University lacks the large swathes of Victorian terraced housing that students tend to choose to make their home. Many Loughborough students therefore end up either living some way from the University or in house types they would not normally choose, such as those found to the north of Ashby Road and the north of Forest Road.

Providing a greater number of managed bedspaces than there are new students has the potential to draw students out of the private sector, but this will only happen if living in managed housing is perceived to be preferable to living in private housing. In Britain, it has long been the case that students tend to view managed housing as a must for the first year and something to be avoided thereafter. This has to change if the proposed new bedspaces are to be filled. One of the key issues is, of course, cost. It might be assumed that managed housing would be considerably dearer than unmanaged housing but this is not the case in Loughborough; the two are actually very similar.

Managed housing is also more likely to be able to provide such benefits as broadband internet and cable television. According to the University, students value these services very highly. This gives managed housing an edge over many traditional houses.

If there is a net movement back into managed housing, it is likely that students will choose to leave the more peripheral and less studenty areas first. This would take the pressure off housing in Ashby and Nanpantan Wards but may well have little impact on Storer and Southfields Wards, where there is a plentiful supply of older terraced housing close to the University. Simply providing more housing may not, therefore, lead to the return of balanced communities in the most popular student areas.

It should be borne in mind that not all problems associated with students are due to numbers alone. Many are behavioural issues which may well be carried out only by a minority, for example late night noise, untidiness and threatening behaviour. However, it does follow that, the more students in an area, the greater the chance of this sort of behaviour occurring.

What are the shortcomings of the planning approach?

The planning system was designed to manage change. While it can be a proactive tool for effecting change, more often than not the impetus for change comes from without; the planning system acting merely as regulator. This is particularly true when, as in this case, the land in question consists of thousands of private ownerships. Unless the SPD was to recommend wholesale compulsory purchase and redevelopment, its policies would only take effect if and when planning permission was sought.

Options to tackle the conversion of family homes into student houses are limited by the fact that, under planning law, such conversions are not development. Neither does planning law discriminate between occupiers of different backgrounds. In planning terms, a house is simply a house regardless of who lives there. This only changes when more than six people are living together as a non-family group. Few private houses in Loughborough fall into this category. Better management of HMOs may be possible following the incorporation of the Housing Bill into law. The following section gives more information on this.

Policies aimed at controlling occupancy

It is essential that the SPD avoids discriminating directly against groups such as students and it must be carefully worded to avoid this. Tempting though it may be to seek to introduce policies based on occupancy, it must be borne in mind that the role of planning is to regulate land use, not human activity. Indeed, it has been shown in a recent case in Nottingham (ref. Q3060/A/04/1137339) that conditions which seek to control occupation leave themselves open to challenge. In this appeal, the Inspector ruled that it was unreasonable for the Council to impose a condition preventing the occupation of a dwelling by people not living together as a family group. With this in mind, a more successful approach might be to aim to limit extensions, with the stated aim of avoiding over-densification and the loss of amenity space.

Extensions to dwellings

Many extensions to dwellings, while constituting development, are granted consent by the General Permitted Development Order. This means that they fall outside the control of the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Control can be won back by the LPA through the use of Article Four Directives, which remove permitted development rights. However, these directives were never intended to be used widely and setting them up is a lengthy and cumbersome process. To justify the removal of these rights, the LPA would need to prove that the affected properties were in some way special compared to houses elsewhere in the town. Article Four Directives are therefore unlikely to be practical for protecting more than a few streets from unwanted extensions.

Sites for managed housing

The most positive contribution the SPD could make would be to identify sites for managed student housing in locations which would ease the pressure on private housing stock. Typically, these would be former commercial and industrial sites on the fringes of residential areas. In terms of controlling areas of private dwellings, it may be possible to implement policies aimed at restricting extensions on the grounds of loss of amenity space and over-densification. For the reasons given above, we would not recommend using conditions which seek to control occupancy.

Housing Bill

In the fall of 2005, the Housing Bill will become law. This Bill includes changes to the ways in which Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are defined and regulated and has significant implications for private sector student housing.

The present situation

At present, HMOs are defined in such a way that most student houses fall without the definition. This is because an HMO is defined as a property within which the occupants are living as separate households, such as a house divided into bedsits. By contrast, students tend to live as single households with one tenancy agreement covering the whole property.

There is no requirement for local authorities to license HMOs at the present time; any licensing is at the discretion of the local authority. In addition, HMOs are defined purely on the basis of their occupancy; size is not important. The local authority's licensing powers do not extend to control over whether a house can or cannot become an HMO but they do allow it to insist that properties are properly maintained and that front yards and pavements are kept clean.

The new Bill

When the Housing Bill becomes law, the definition of what constitutes an HMO will change. Rather than covering only those dwellings in which people are living as separate households, it will cover any dwelling in which two or more unrelated people are living. This will mean that it covers the vast majority of student households.

Under the new law, local authorities will have a duty to inspect and license any HMO of three storeys or over and having five occupants or more. This will be known as mandatory licensing. They will also have the option of extending this licensing requirement to any HMO under the new definition, regardless of size or height. This will be known as discretionary licensing.

Introducing discretionary licensing is by no means easy. Any local authority wishing to take this path will have to justify why it wishes to do so and will be required to consult all those properties that would be affected. For this reason, the best use of discretionary licensing powers may be to regulate HMOs within a small area where multiple occupancy is known to be an issue. It is unlikely in the first instance that Chamwood Borough Council will have the resources to introduce discretionary licensing as the emphasis will be on mandatory licensing. The council may, therefore, need to take on further EH staff if it wishes to go down this road.

How can this help with the SPD?

Whereas the planning system is the best tool for influencing the future location of student housing in the town, the changes proposed in the Housing Bill will have a far greater impact on the condition of existing student housing. For areas such as Storer and Southfields, where many private houses are already rented to students, the Bill offers the best chance to control the condition of properties and their curtilages.

The SPD therefore proposes that both planning and environmental health measures are implemented side by side. Discretionary licensing areas will be considered in neighbourhoods where there is a recognised imbalance between students and non students.

Leeds Area of Student Housing Restraint

As part of its UDP review, Leeds City Council is introducing an Area of Student Housing Restraint (ASHORE). This is a defined area within which policies to prevent the further spread of student housing will apply. It comes in response to an increase in student numbers from 22,000 in 1991 to 34,000 in 2001 and an increase in private rented housing from 7% to 12% over the same period.

Problems identified by local residents include:

- loss of community
- noise
- tatty front gardens
- poor upkeep of houses
- too many late night pubs and takeaways
- rise in fear of crime

Burley, Headingley, Hyde Park and Woodhouse have the highest numbers of students. The greatest concern, however, is over neighbouring areas where students have not yet moved in force. The ASHORE has therefore been drawn widely to include some of these areas. It specifically excludes existing campuses and sites earmarked for student housing.

Draft Policy H15 states that, within this area, the Council will refuse applications for new halls, extensions to existing halls, extensions to dwellings that could be used for student housing and conversions to HMOs. Where it can, it will condition any new flats so that they cannot be occupied by students.

The Council's Environmental Health, Housing, Street Cleansing and Licensing departments will also be involved.

Outwith the ASHORE, the Council will actively seek to create new student villages to rival Headingley. These will be concentrated in and around the City Centre where they can help to achieve regeneration goals. They must also have good public transport links.

The ASHORE Policy has not yet been adopted and therefore carries limited weight in the planning process. However, it has been quoted in recent appeal decisions and certainly lends weight to the existing UDP Policy H15.

The UDP has been going through its Local Plan Inquiry since July. This is expected to last until February. Below are listed a selection of points raised during the UDP Inquiry on the issue of student housing:

- Headingley is a thriving area because of the students not despite them. Houses are only being bought to let because families have chosen to leave.
- Students should not be singled out. Many of them stay on after graduation and become the young professionals that the city is so keen to attract.
- Restricting purpose built student housing in the ASHORE would put yet more pressure on the existing housing stock.
- Exceptions should be made for empty buildings or unneeded council houses.

- The area of restraint should be extended to include some of the more vulnerable areas close by.
- Neighbouring areas such as Burley and Woodhouse would benefit from a few more students as they presently lack much life.
- The area of restraint is too tightly drawn around the Universities.
- The policies are too negative; there should be more emphasis on creating areas for student housing, such as Holbeck and Beeston.

Would this approach work in Loughborough?

The threefold approach of using planning, environmental health and street cleansing to tackle the issue is supported.

The problems were identified by local residents and were very similar to those identified in Loughborough, so both towns are tackling this from a similar angle.

As shown in Table Seven, Leeds has around 34,000 students in a built up area of around 540,000 people. Loughborough has around 15,000 students in a built up area of 55,000 people. As a percentage of the population, therefore, students are far more significant in Loughborough than they are in Leeds.

The area of restraint drawn up for Leeds would cover about 70% of Loughborough. This is clearly far too large for a town of Loughborough's size and would mean that great pressure would be exerted on the remaining 30% of the town. There is also a question over whether a scaled down restraint area would be large enough to be viable.

The concept of new student villages with their own facilities may work on a smaller scale in Loughborough but they would need to contain their own nighttime drinking venues or they would simply lead to more late night noise as students came home from nights out elsewhere. Finding enough land could be the biggest drawback. Loughborough has only a limited number of small brownfield sites which would be suitable for a student village; it simply does not have the large areas of land that Leeds has available to it.

The issue of what to include and what to leave out from the restraint area will be crucial. While it could be argued that it is the neighbourhoods immediately beyond the most studenty areas that are most at risk, bringing these into the restraint area could make the area so large as to be unwieldy. Leeds City Council has taken the view that it is best to include more rather than less but, as pointed out above, this may not be a viable option in Loughborough.

Nottingham Draft Integrated Action Plan on Students

Nottingham provides a local example of one Council's attempts to control student numbers in the interest of maintaining balanced communities. Here, student numbers have risen by 25% in just three years, from 32,000 in 2001 to 40,000 in 2004 (source: Nottingham City Council).

In response to growing public interest and the formation of the Nottingham Action Group, Nottingham City Council has prepared a Draft Integrated Action Plan on Students (the Plan). The planning side of this has been prepared as Supplementary Planning Guidance so is directly relevant to Loughborough.

The Plan is "a first attempt" to bring together the Universities and LPA on this issue. As well as providing SPG, it also recommends better street cleaning, the redevelopment of low demand housing for students, a joint approach to planning and EH enforcement and a new Student Officer at the Council.

The stated aims of the Plan are:

- to improve the environment in studenty areas
- to improve community relations in studenty areas
- to improve the standard of private rented housing
- to shift students away from the private sector and into purpose built managed housing
- to spread students more widely across the city

Some features of the Plan are:

- The policy of dispersal should not encourage car use.
- City centre or edge of centre sites are deemed to be the most suitable for student housing provided the Universities can easily be reached. Jubilee Campus in Radford and the eastern fringe of the city centre are two such sites.
- The Council is considering a "Special Purpose Vehicle" to redevelop areas of low demand housing. This could be used both to encourage and prevent student housing.
- £650,000 has been set aside for additional citywide street cleaning
- Officers did consider leaving out those areas which were already 90% student occupied but realised that this would not be acceptable politically.

Existing Local Plan Policy H6 encourages student housing where it would not have an adverse impact on existing communities or the residential environment. This is what may be termed a permissive policy. The SPG is, by contrast, a restrictive policy which seeks to prevent the development of HMOs and purpose built student housing in a restraint area shown on a map.

Nottingham City Council already runs a Student Accommodation Accreditation Scheme. It may be possible to bring external decorating and gardening into this scheme following the adoption of the Housing Bill. However, even when the Housing Bill comes in, the Council proposes to license only houses over three storeys with more than five tenants (the default set by the Bill). This will not affect most student houses.

The area of restraint was drawn up on the basis of census data, Council tax returns and informed officer opinion rather than public feeling. One of the results of the public consultation, which ended on 11th October, is that the restraint area may well be drawn wider still.

Would this approach work in Loughborough?

The idea of planning and environmental health working together to resolve this issue is supported. However, there are a number of difficulties in applying other aspects of this approach to Loughborough.

As shown in Table Seven, Nottingham has around 40,000 students in a built up area of around 500,000 people. Loughborough has around 15,000 students in a built up area of 55,000 people. As a percentage of the population, therefore, students are far more significant in Loughborough than they are in Nottingham.

The area of restraint drawn up for Nottingham would cover about 40% of Loughborough. This raises two questions:

1. How would a restraint area of this size work in a town the size of Loughborough: could it be justified at Inquiry?
2. If the restraint area was scaled down, would it then be too small to be viable?

One of the ways in which the Plan seeks to create and maintain balanced communities is through the dispersal of students to other areas of the city. In order for such a policy to be effective, students would have to be spread more thinly across a much wider area than they are at present. While Nottingham has both the land and population to make this a viable option, Loughborough does not. If it is assumed, for argument's sake, that one fifth of houses in student occupation constitutes the upper threshold for a viable community, dispersing the 7,000 students who presently live in private sector housing across the town would require a host population of 28,000. Given that the non student population of Loughborough is only 40,000, this means that students would be present in considerable numbers on two thirds of the town's streets. Clearly, this is unlikely to be acceptable to most residents.

If students do move out of areas of private housing, who will move in to replace them? If the Nottingham Plan was successful it could lead to the creation of large swathes of empty properties and even localised market failure.

Concentrating purpose built student housing onto edge of town centre sites may be the best choice but could lead to worse problems of noise on corridors like Ashby Road.

The concept of a second student village would only work in Loughborough if it had enough late night entertainment venues to cater for its residents. Without adequate bars and clubs, it could lead to more late night noise as its residents came home from venues in other areas.

SPD Options

Four options for the control of student housing are proposed:

- Option One - do nothing
- Option Two - Leeds type ASHORE policy
- Option Three - modified ASHORE policy
- Option Four - targeted approach
- Option Five - threshold approach

Option One assesses what would happen if nothing was done. Options Two and Three propose that the Leeds model be adopted in Loughborough with and without modifications respectively. Option Four splits the restraint area into an inner and an outer zone, with distinct policies for each. Option Five is a new and as yet unproven approach whereby policies are applied on the basis of the most up to date data rather than within a general area. This could prove more flexible than adopting an area based policy.

Each of Options Two to Five include a discretionary licensing area as set out on page ten.

The main points of each option are listed and the pros and cons of each considered.

Option One - Do nothing

In this scenario, no action would be taken to control the number of student households in Loughborough.

In terms of sites for managed student housing, only those sites already in the pipeline or put forward by the University would be developed; no further sites would be identified.

No discretionary licensing area would be declared; only the standard statutory HMO thresholds from the Housing Bill would apply. This would mean that few student houses would need licensing and that there would therefore be little regulation of the residential environment.

Planning applications for the conversion of houses to HMOs and for extensions to dwellings would be determined on their own merits, with no account taken of the fact that they were in studenty areas.

Advantages

- The Council would not have to make resources available for enforcement action
- The likelihood of students moving much beyond their present bounds would be low, so communities on the northern and southern fringes of the town would probably continue to be unaffected by the issue

Disadvantages

- Student numbers in areas such as Storer and Southfields would probably continue to grow
- The upkeep and tidiness of student houses would be no better than it is now
- Nothing would be done to tackle issues of late night noise and antisocial behaviour
- House prices in the most popular student areas would remain high, making it harder for owner occupiers to move in
- Absolute numbers of students living in private, unmanaged housing would only begin to fall after a few years of further growth and this would be entirely dependant on the University's redevelopment programme
- Student numbers would be able to rise unchecked in communities close to the University, such as the one to the north of the Ashby Road

Option Two - Leeds type ASHORE policy

In this option, a line would be drawn on a map within which the policies of the SPD would apply. If the Leeds model was followed to the letter these policies would include:

- A presumption against purpose built student housing and extensions to existing students halls and flats
- A presumption against the conversion of larger dwellings to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- A presumption against extensions of private houses that would enable them to become HMOs in future
- Conditions on planning permissions for new dwellings that would prevent them being occupied by students.

To this list could be added:

- Control over extensions that would lead to over-densification and the loss of amenity space (based upon density guidelines contained in the existing Local Plan)
- In selected streets, the use of Article Four directions to remove permitted development rights

Within this area, the Council would establish a discretionary licensing area that would enable it to license all houses where the occupiers were unrelated. Most student houses fall into this category and would therefore need to be licensed. This would be the most effective way of controlling issues such as untidiness and poor upkeep.

The area of restraint would be drawn using information gleaned from Council tax records. Households occupied wholly by students are exempt from paying Council Tax under what is known as Class N exemption. By looking at the distribution of Class N exempt properties across the town, it is possible to get a good impression of where most students live. There are shortcomings to this approach, notably that, if there are non students present in the household, it will not be exempt. However, it is the most accurate means of locating students available at this point in time.

The issue of what constitutes an acceptable balance between students and non students must be addressed if this option is to work. Both the Leeds and Nottingham restraint areas were drawn up on the basis of officer opinion and public feeling rather than on quantitative analysis. No attempt was made in either case to ascertain what percentage of student households was deemed to be acceptable. There is therefore no guidance to be had from earlier policies. In both towns the areas of restraint were drawn widely, particularly in the case of Leeds. Likewise, this option uses a widely drawn area of restraint but, due to the situation in Loughborough (large University, small town), there are disadvantages in doing this.

Advantages

- Clear boundaries would help with enforcement.
- The Restraint Area would help to spread future student growth away from the worst affected areas.

Disadvantages

- Neighbourhoods beyond the Restraint Area would become more vulnerable to studification and would have little protection against change.
- Refusing managed housing in the Restraint Area would increase pressure on private sector housing.
- The LPA may have difficulty justifying the size of the Restraint Area in relation to the town
- Such a large discretionary licensing area would be hard to justify and to enforce
- Loughborough does not have the capacity of cities such as Leeds to soak up large numbers of students in hitherto unstudenty areas. Restricting the growth of student numbers in the Restraint Area would simply lead to the loss of balanced communities elsewhere.
- Refusing managed housing within the Restraint Area would lead to new halls and flats being built further from the campus. This would increase the number of roads affected by late night student noise and antisocial behaviour.
- An increase in demand for private rented housing in the Restraint Area may cause house prices to rise still higher. This would make it yet more difficult for prospective owner occupiers to get into the area.
- Seeking to control who can and cannot live in a dwelling through the use of conditions would leave the Council open to challenge as it has been held to be unreasonable by the Planning Inspectorate.

Option Three - Modified ASHORE policy

This would operate in much the same way as the first option but with the important difference that sites would be found for managed student housing within the Restraint Area.

As in the first option, a line would be drawn on a map within which the policies of the SPD would apply. These policies could include:

- A presumption against extensions to existing student halls and flats where these could give rise to excessive noise or disturbance to neighbouring dwellings.
- A presumption against the conversion of larger to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- A presumption against extensions of private houses that would enable them to become HMOs in future.
- Control over extensions that would lead to over-densification and the loss of amenity space (based upon density guidelines contained in the existing Local Plan)
- In selected streets, the use of Article Four directions to remove permitted development rights

Sites would be selected, both within and without the restraint area, for new managed housing developments. Such sites would typically be former commercial and industrial sites or redevelopments of existing student halls. It is not considered feasible to create a second student village in Loughborough as there is not enough land available in one place to do this. It is, however, likely that most sites would be located in and around the town centre.

Within this area, the Council would establish a discretionary licensing area that would enable it to license all houses where the occupiers were unrelated. Most student houses fall into this category and would therefore need to be licensed. This would be the most effective way of controlling issues such as untidiness and poor upkeep.

The area of restraint would be drawn using information gleaned from Council tax records. Households occupied wholly by students are exempt from paying Council Tax under what is known as Class N exemption. By looking at the distribution of Class N exempt properties across the town, it is possible to get a good impression of where most students live. There are shortcomings to this approach. For example, if there are non students present in the household it will not be exempt. However, it is the most accurate means of locating students available at this point in time.

The issue of what constitutes an acceptable balance between students and non students must be addressed if this option is to work. Both the Leeds and Nottingham restraint areas were drawn up on the basis of officer opinion and public feeling rather than on quantitative analysis. No attempt was made in either case to ascertain what percentage of student households was deemed to be acceptable. There is therefore no guidance to be had from earlier policies. In both towns the areas of restraint were drawn widely, particularly in the case of Leeds. Likewise, this option uses a widely drawn area of restraint but, due to the situation in Loughborough (large University, small town), there are disadvantages in doing this.

Advantages

- Clear boundaries would help with enforcement.
- Providing managed housing in areas of high demand would lessen the demand for private rented housing in those same areas. This may help to prevent house prices going up any further.
- Neighbourhoods beyond the Restraint Area would not become so vulnerable to studification.
- Much of the town's new managed housing would be close to either the campus or the town centre, reducing the spread of late night student noise and antisocial behaviour into areas hitherto unaffected.

Disadvantages

- Areas outside the Restraint Area would have little protection against change.
- The LPA may have difficulty justifying the size of the Restraint Area in relation to the town
- Such a large discretionary licensing area would be hard to justify and to enforce
- Absolute numbers of students in the Restraint Area would probably continue to rise, albeit in a more controlled manner, which would further affect the amenity of existing residents, especially those on the main walking routes.

Option Four - Targeted Approach

This approach would see two zones set up around the University.

Inner zone

An inner zone would encompass only those streets where the proportion of students was above or very close to the threshold at which a balanced community was no longer felt to exist. It will be drawn tightly so as to avoid any land which might be considered a buffer zone.

Again, this brings us to the problem of defining this threshold. Based upon opinions expressed in meetings with resident groups, the threshold will be taken to be one fourth of the houses on a street in student occupation. It is hoped to use the forthcoming consultation process to come up with a consensus on this matter.

Within the inner zone, the emphasis would be on curbing further growth and managing the existing population better. Policies could include:

- A presumption against purpose built student housing and extensions to existing students halls and flats
- A presumption against the conversion of larger dwellings to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- A presumption against extensions of private houses that would enable them to become HMOs in future
- Control over extensions that would lead to over-densification and the loss of amenity space (based upon density guidelines contained in the existing Local Plan)
- In selected streets, the use of Article Four directions to remove permitted development rights
- A discretionary licensing area for HMOs. This would enable greater control over the upkeep and cleanliness of properties and front yards.

Outer zone

Around the inner zone would be a much larger outer zone, within which the emphasis would be on managing growth and directing development to the best sites. The outer zone could include streets where between one tenth and one fourth of households were occupied by students and would act as a buffer between the most studenty areas and the rest of the town.

Fewer restrictive policies would apply here and there would be no discretionary licensing area. This zone, along with the town centre, would be the preferred area for new managed housing and sites would be identified for this purpose. Outside the outer zone and the town centre, there would be a presumption against managed student housing developments.

Policies in the outer zone could include:

- A presumption against the conversion of larger dwellings to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- Control over extensions that would lead to over-densification and the loss of amenity space (based upon density guidelines contained in the existing Local Plan)

Advantages

- Clear boundaries would help with enforcement
- Concentrating the tightest controls on a smaller area would make it easier to police and would enable a broader range of policies to be set in place
- The lower level of restraint in the outer zone would be easier to justify at inquiry than having strict controls over the whole area
- Private rented housing in the inner zone would be better managed
- Managed student housing would be provided reasonably close to the University but not in areas worst affected by noise and disturbance
- Providing managed housing in areas which still retain a balanced community would lessen the demand for private rented housing in those same areas. This may help to prevent the loss of that balance.
- Neighbourhoods beyond the Restraint Area would not become so vulnerable to studification.

Disadvantages

- Areas outside the Restraint Area would have little protection against change
- Student numbers would probably continue to rise in the outer zone
- Most private student households in the outer zone would be not be subject to inspection
- By not providing managed housing in the inner zone, demand for traditional housing may remain high

Option Five - Threshold Approach

Rather than working solely within a specific restraint area, the policies of the SPD would apply to any area where student numbers were considered too high or at risk of getting too high for a balanced neighbourhood to exist. Areas subject to the policy would be determined on a street by street basis. A threshold would need to be set above which the policies would come into force.

The matter of what constitutes a balanced neighbourhood has never been researched but discussions with local resident groups suggest that the balance may begin to break down when over one fourth of the houses on a street are occupied by students. It is hoped that the forthcoming consultation process will come up with a consensus on this matter.

This approach would be a departure from the preceding three options but may work better in Loughborough, where most of the town lies within one mile of the University or College and could therefore be considered "at risk" of studification.

The number of student houses in a neighbourhood would be determined by Council tax returns. Households occupied wholly by students are exempt from paying Council Tax under what is known as Class N exemption. By looking at the distribution of Class N exempt properties across the town, it is possible to get a good impression of where most students live. There are shortcomings to this approach. For example, if there are non students present in the household it will not be exempt. However, it is the most accurate means of locating students available at this point in time and it does get updated year on year.

Because this Option would not be tied to one area, it could be used anywhere in the town (or indeed the Borough) where studification had been reported and where this was borne out by Council tax returns. This would protect streets containing the types of houses preferred by student landlords without needlessly burdening neighbouring streets where the houses types may be completely different.

In order to work properly, the areas covered by the policy would need to be updated each year in line with the latest Council tax returns (or whatever was to be used in their stead). This ensure that the SPD kept abreast of developments on the ground and did not become outdated.

Sites suitable for managed student housing would need to be identified precisely as this Option does not lend itself to area based statements on the provision of managed housing.

As in Option Four, differing levels of protection could be afforded to different areas. For example, in areas with between one tenth and one fifth student households, there could be mild policies aimed at managing the growth of student numbers. By contrast, in areas with more than a fifth student households, the measures could be more restrictive and could include policies aimed at the management of existing student households.

Policies could include:

- A presumption against new managed housing and extensions to existing students halls and flats where these could give rise to excessive noise or disturbance to neighbouring dwellings.

- A presumption against the conversion of larger dwellings to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- A presumption against extensions of private houses that would enable them to become HMOs in future
- Control over extensions that would lead to over-densification and the loss of amenity space (based upon density guidelines contained in the existing Local Plan)
- One or more discretionary licensing areas in those streets and neighbourhoods with the highest number of traditional dwellings in student occupation
- In selected streets, the use of Article Four directions to remove permitted development rights

Advantages

- The policies would not be tied to any particular area. They would apply to any part of the town where the monitoring process showed a high percentage of students in a traditional residential neighbourhood.
- Protection would therefore be afforded to any part of the town that needed it and would avoid the problem of landlords building just outside the boundary.
- The system would be highly responsive to changes in student settlement patterns so would never need to be overhauled, as would be the case with a restraint area.
- There could be more than one level of policy protection in areas where not all streets experienced problems to the same degree

Disadvantages

- In order to work properly, Option Five would need to be updated on a yearly basis with new information from Council tax records. This would require a commitment from Council staff in both the revenue and planning departments.
- Without a clear boundary, the area to which the policies applied would be hard to determine for those without access to the latest information.
- It would not be possible to link policies on the location of managed student housing to the SPD as there would be no identified restraint areas.

Recommendations

The best solution may well be a combination of options two to five. We consider the following attributes to be important:

- it should have clear boundaries
- it should distinguish between areas where the number of students has already affected the balance of the community and areas which are at risk of this
- it should identify sites for managed student housing in areas where this would not worsen existing issues of noise and disturbance
- it should include a discretionary licensing area only in the most studenty areas
- it should include policies to control extensions and the loss of amenity space
- it should not include policies which seek to control occupancy
- it should be updated year on year

Bearing in mind these points, Option Four would appear to be the best solution as it uses a zonal approach. We would recommend that the yearly overhaul of the figures proposed in Option five is added to this so that the inner and outer zones can respond to changes in the town's student population as they happen.

Perhaps the biggest challenge will be to come up with an answer as to what constitutes a balanced neighbourhood. This question will be crucial to the justification of any restraint areas shown in the SPD. The public consultation exercise should ask this question directly.

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