

## MANAGING STUDENT OCCUPANCY SCRUTINY PANEL – ACTION NOTES

### MEETING 1 – 30TH MAY 2013

**ATTENDED BY:** Councillors Jukes (Chair), Bradshaw, Burr, M. Hunt, Pacey, Parton, Ranson, Smidowicz and M. Smith

Officers: M. Hopkins and F. Whittington

### CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING:

DOCUMENT OR MATTER	ACTION(S) AGREED
Appointment of a Vice-chair	Councillor M. Smith unanimously appointed as Vice-chair for the Panel
Scope Document and Background Papers Responses to Questionnaires	Scope Document - Noted Background Papers – Welcomed A summary of response from the public was received and noted.
Invite agent witness	Officers identify an appropriate agent and invite to the meeting to be held on 28th June 2013
Information regarding types of restrictions: e.g. planning, building regulations, PD rights, covenants, licensing	Officers follow up
Witnesses:	Additional material provided by witnesses was accepted as part of the evidence gathered by the Panel
Kingfisher Area Residents Group (KARG) – David Harris and Richard White	
Nanpantan Residents Network	No representatives available to attend the meeting, written representations had been tabled at the meeting. (Copy filed with the agenda for the meeting)
Storer Area Residents Group (SARG) – Hilda Puttick and John Burnard	
Swamped by Cars (SbC) Nicholas Ball and Ian Webb	

### ISSUES DISCUSSED WITH WITNESSES:

WITNESS	ISSUES DISCUSSED
KARG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The initial intended make up of the residents of the estate at the planning stage 2003 – professionals, families and retired couples. The downturn in the housing market and the</li></ul>

	increase in the number of University students, resulting in the introduction of (and increases in recent years) of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No register of properties to determine accurately the exact number of HMOs on the estate. Estimate 55%.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current situation - all residents agree there is a problem. Those still wishing to move were having difficulty as no more HMOs were being allowed in the area and were wishing to be treated as a special case, others wishing to remain don't want the situation to worsen further. To change the estate residents suggested that the situation needed to be stabilised, with no more HMOs and hope that market forces would assist with a return to a more balanced community.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the area had devalued properties. Residents would like to return to a balanced neighbourhood where the residents' group could meet to arrange social events rather than as at present deal with student related issues.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As the majority of the student population on the estate changed at the end of each academic year, a new cycle of issues and difficulties began each October.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>References were made to changes in the licensing laws and the availability of cheap alcohol fuelling ASB.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students complained of a lack of support from local letting agents and difficulties getting repairs completed. For example during flooding in November 2012, private landlords supported their residents, many of the agents showed no concern at all.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern was expressed in respect of the number of 'to let' boards on the estate. The Council considered there was no problem, while residents believed the boards to be unsightly and highlighted the student accommodation leading to further burglaries in the area and an increase in insurance premiums for all.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The area is much quieter during the three month summer vacation, although a number of foreign students remain in the area during that period.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wren Close is 100% student population and that had resulted in difficulties with ASB as there are no residents to report problems. Residents had become used to noise, for example singing at 4.00am. Other issues reported to the police were no longer given incident numbers, however local officers requested reports continue to be made, those were recorded and shared between the Police, University and Council.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Litter was an ongoing concern. Residents understood that SERCO programmed work in the area only once a month.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were positive links with many students. Residents had been invited to a social event at Kingfisher Halls of residence.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents wished to acknowledge the support given to them by the University, although they recognised that the University had difficulties addressing the current situation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The introduction of a parking scheme in the area had been a success, although there was no parking for visitors and more</li> </ul>

	<p>signage was required to ensure people were aware of the scheme.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern was expressed that a number of students, especially overseas students did not have adequate insurance for the cars they drove.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>SUGGESTED PROPOSALS FOR A WAY FORWARD:</b></p> <p>An embargo with no more HMOs in the area – with an expectation that within 5 – 8 years there would be a more balanced community and a wider range of residents.</p> <p>A Licensing Register established.</p>
NRN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No representatives available to attend the meeting, written representations had been tabled at the meeting. (Copy filed with the agenda for the meeting)</li> </ul>
SARG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 1992 the area was a model of sustainability, including a manageable percentage of students, contributing to a vibrant atmosphere. An erosion of that balance took place between 1994 and 1998. The Residents' Group alerted the Council to the situation in 1999. Reference was made to the work of other councils to address similar problems, for example in Leeds and Nottingham. Since 2004 changes had occurred to improve the quality of life in the area, with the support of the Council, University, Students' Union and Police. The adoption of the Student Housing SPD and the Article 4 Direction had helped to control the balance of student accommodation in the area.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of 'small output areas' confused. Using a threshold of 10% within 100 metres would be clear and unambiguous, with a town wide balance.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents living close to Halls of Residence were subject to unacceptable noise in the evenings/night.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While looking at Halls of Residence, calculation could be 5 or 4 bed spaces rather than 6.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the current time there was no policy to support houses moving from a C4 to C3 use. It was suggested that if a C4 was empty for a year it should automatically revert back to a C3 use. At the current time there were approximately 12 such empty properties in the area.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SARG maintains a database of HMOs both in its area and the Burleigh Road area.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reference was made to the purpose built student accommodation in the centre of town, which had never been fully occupied.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>SUGGESTED PROPOSALS FOR A WAY FORWARD:</b></p> <p>The suggested development of the Article 4 Direction and the Student Housing SPD should:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply to the whole of Loughborough if not Charnwood</li> <li>• Use more easily verifiable criteria i.e. thresholds of 10% within 100 metre radius and only one C4 property should be permitted adjacent to a C3 property</li> <li>• Be included in the current draft of the Core Strategy</li> </ul> <p>All HMOs in Loughborough should be licensed rather than use of the voluntary EMLAS accreditation scheme. Both Oxford and Newham Councils have introduced such a scheme.</p> <p>Consider incentive schemes to return houses to C3 use.</p>
SbC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initially the Group had been formed to address parking issues in its area. Restrictions had been introduced and the University now held a register of students' cars, which had resulted in the situation being manageable in the majority of cases. As more students moved into the area the concerns of local residents expanded from just parking issues and recently the residents had formed the 'Forest Road North and Holywell Drive Area Residents' Group', which SbC had amalgamated into.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of properties rented to students had increased during the last 10 years and had resulted in the area having unkempt gardens, too many cars, curtains closed all day, rubbish bins left out and houses having a shabby appearance. Despite the SPD and HMO regulations, the area continued to lose family homes to student lets.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were an increasing number of houses being bought by the parents of students and then sub-letting some rooms to friends. Those houses were not covered by legislation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be helpful to include the students living in Halls of Residence in calculating the number of students in an area. In particular where there was an entrance to those Halls in a residential area – e.g. the students used the shops on Derwent Drive and the same entrance to access the library, both of which caused noise problems to local residents at night.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern was expressed that the Planning Department believed it was tied by regulations and reference was made to the recent changes in the National Planning Policy Framework and the opportunities created through the Localism Act.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was within the powers of the Council to restrict licensing hours. It was believed that 95% of ASB was the result of alcohol consumption.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was acknowledged that the University worked to support local residents, for example security staff to address examples of drunken behaviour of students.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>SUGGESTED PROPOSALS FOR A WAY FORWARD:</b></p> <p>A register of Landlords with contact details</p> <p>A rewritten SPD capable of being enforced, with no more than 10% HMOs in any area. That 10% being within 100 metres and only on one side of a family property.</p> <p>No alterations to family homes that would make it difficult to return to a family in the future, eg converting garages into an additional bedroom.</p> <p>The University return some of its properties to family occupation.</p> <p>The ratio of students to the local population across the town should not be allowed to increase.</p> <p>The Panel consider accurate data in respect of the number of students living off campus in the town.</p> <p>Re-consider licensing laws.</p>

<b>POSSIBLE ISSUES FOR THE PANEL REPORT RAISED BY WITNESSES</b>	
KARG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent any more HMOs on estate and rely on market forces to restore balance over 5-8 years</li> <li>• License all HMOs to know where they are – there is still uncertainty about what the number actually is</li> <li>• Landlords need to do more, especially large letting agents</li> <li>• Lettings boards are a problem that the Council is not responding to</li> <li>• SERCO only clear litter in the area once a month</li> <li>• University support is generally good as are links with many student residents</li> <li>• Residents' parking a success but more signs to publicise it would help</li> </ul>
SARG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronology: 1994-98 – offers to buy from landlords, 1999 – alerted CBC of growing imbalance</li> <li>• Recommend 10% HMOs in 100m radius because clearer and more accurate + only one HMO neighbour for any property</li> <li>• A variety of evidence should be used to identify HMOs</li> <li>• 10% should apply anywhere in the town as there shouldn't be student ghettos</li> <li>• In looking at Halls of Residence, could calculate at 5 or 4 bed spaces per HMO rather than 6</li> <li>• Require reapplication for C4 use if vacant for more than 12 months to hasten restoring balance</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider incentive schemes to return to C3 use</li> <li>• All HMOs should be licensed, currently low numbers participating in voluntary schemes</li> <li>• Encourage on campus accommodation</li> </ul>
SbC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue of converting garages to accommodation - policy should encourage scope to return to family use</li> <li>• 10% HMOs + no HMO sandwich</li> <li>• Halls of residence should be included in calculation , gave example of passing through residential area to reach shops/takeaway</li> <li>• Improve accuracy of data on HMOs</li> <li>• If area already &gt;10% then no more permissions and reduce by attrition</li> <li>• Letting agent may be known but not landlord so a complete register important</li> <li>• University could be encouraged to sell its properties in local area</li> <li>• Look at public housing licensing hours – 95% of ASB alcohol related (source?)</li> </ul>

#### **OTHER ISSUES RAISED/DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING:**

The Panel was asked to identify other Key Witnesses to invite to future meetings.

It was suggested that an agent be invited to attend a meeting to give evidence.

#### **FURTHER MEETINGS OF THE PANEL:**

Previously agreed:

17th June 2013 – A presentation from Prof. Darren Smith, Loughborough University re Studentification

28th June 2013 - A full day meeting, with the following witnesses invited to attend:

K. McPheeley – Loughborough University Student Accommodations Officer

A. Chell – Local Landlords Association

E. Read and – President of the Students Union, Ally McDonald Loughborough University

A. Barlow – Loughborough University Communications Officer

Members of the Panel had been asked to identify a date in July to review the outcomes of the first three meetings of the Panel. Following the meeting 6.00pm on 30th July 2013 was agreed for this meeting to be held.