

Notes of the 'Good Neighbours' Nottingham Action Group on HMOs (NAG) Meeting

Friday 26 January 2018

Lecture Room, New Mechanics Institute, Nottingham

The meeting is the latest in a large number of meetings, intended to provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas, and hosted by the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs (NAG) since its formal constitution in 2004 as a city-wide group whose members share concerns about issues such as litter, rubbish, noise, anti-social behaviour and loss of amenities and community cohesion resulting from large concentrations of HMOs, particularly, those with highly transient (largely student) tenants, and absentee landlords.

Apologies received from:

Universities: Professor Shearer West (Vice Chancellor Nottingham University); Steve Denton (Registrar, Nottingham Trent University); Kieran Goncalves (NTU Students' Union)

Nottingham City Council: Cllr. Jane Urquhart (NCC Executive Member for Planning & Housing); Cllr. Sarah Piper; Cllr. Sally Longford; Graham de Max (NCC Housing Strategy & Partnership Manager); Tony Brown (NCC Neighbourhood Services)

Apologies were also received from a number of residents.

Invited Panel:

Chair: Lilian Greenwood (MP Nottingham South Constituency)

Nottingham City Council (NCC): Cllr Toby Neal (Executive Member for Community & Customer Service); Steve Stott (Community Protection Anti-Social Behaviour Manager); Paul Seddon (Chief Planner); Julie Liversidge (Operations Manager Housing Licensing & Compliance Team);

Nottingham University (NU): Dr. Paul Greatrix (Registrar)

Nottingham Trent University (NTU): Michael Lees (Head Customer Services, Estates & Resources)

Nottinghamshire Police: Supr. Ted Antill (Nottingham City Neighbourhoods & Strategic Partnership); Insp. Rob Wilson (Neighbourhood Policing Berridge, Dunkirk & Lenton, Radford & Park, Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey Wards)

Also Present: Chris Leslie (MP Nottingham East Constituency); Cllr. Anne Peach (Radford & Park Ward); Cllr. Dave Trimble (Dunkirk & Lenton Ward); Cllr. Sam Webster (Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey Ward); Cllr. Steve Young (Clifton South Ward); Mike Cole (Nottingham City Council Student Strategy Manager); Iffat Iqbal (Nottingham City Council Neighbourhood Development Officer); Flora Cameron (NCC CPO); Des Storey (NCC SCPO); Melanie Futer (NU Off Campus Student Manager); Eleanor Cosh (NTU Student Community Liaison Manager); Tim Woodman-Clark (NTU Head of Student Accommodation Services); Jamie Dickinson (NU Students' Union); Ellie Mitchell (NU Students' Union); Cassie O'Boyle (NU Students Union); and residents from: Arboretum, St, Ann's, Radford & Park, Bridge, Dunkirk & Lenton, Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey, and Wollaton West Wards.

A representative of the NAG gave a brief summary of the issues and problems experienced during the past 20 years. Lilian Greenwood then outlined the format of the evening's meeting. All the members of the panel were then asked to give a short resume of the work and actions of their respective organisations.

Toby Neal: New legislation regarding sanctions against landlords has been introduced. Selective Licensing is to be introduced into the city. Neighbourhood Development Officers are to be integrated into Community Protection.

Paul Seddon: Gave outline information as to what planning legislation enables him and his officers to do or not do, especially regarding new applications or new developments. The Article 4 relating to HMOs, implemented in 2012, is still active and permission to control letting boards has just been renewed for another five years. Nottingham City Council continues to promote the policy of encouraging purpose built student accommodation. However, planners are now looking into the possibility of adaptability for different usage as one of the criteria by which new applications are assessed. It is proposed that the threshold for acceptance levels of numbers of HMOs is to be lowered from 25% to 10% with NCH (Nottingham City Homes) properties to remain as family homes regardless of their location. Finally, the Sandfield site is to be developed by Persimmon Homes to provide family homes.

Julie Liversidge: The main priority for the HMO Licensing Team is to ensure compliance with the licensing requirements for the approximately 4,000 current HMO licences in Nottingham, of which approximately 1,800 are mandatory and 2,200 are covered by the Additional Licensing scheme.

Mandatory licensing will be changing from April 2018 with the only requirement being five or more people from two or more households (so unrelated). The new definition will become enforceable from October 2018. It is proposed that the Additional Licensing scheme will be renewed when it runs out at the end of 2018. The Council is currently gathering evidence to support an application for a new Additional Licensing scheme and hopes to consult on this from April 2018. Rogue landlords could face civil penalties without being prosecuted of up to £30,000. The first civil penalties have been issued and they fall within the range £3,000 to £6,000. This new power was adopted by the Council in the summer of 2017. The National Database of rogue landlords is a Government-led project and is likely to be introduced from October 2018.

Steve Stott: Gave information on Project Corridor and the increase in external funding. The perceived higher level of anti-social behaviour was matched by the increase in CPNWs and CPNs, with the current number issued for the present academic year higher than the total for the whole of the last academic year, e.g. 104 CPNW's have been issued in the Arboretum area, which includes Portland Road and Cromwell Street, so far this academic year compared to 125 for the whole of last year. Also, to date 500 CPNW's have been issued in New Lenton, the Lenton Triangle and the Park Estate. There has been more targeted work on street drinking with fines issued to people who refuse to surrender alcohol (e.g. 586 alcohol confiscations in the Arboretum area, and 255 in the Derby Road/Canning Circus area). New and more co-ordinated work with the HMO Licensing Team is also taking place when CPNWs are issued to a student-occupied HMO in order to make landlords more accountable for the actions of their tenants. In October 2017, 'door knocks' and letter drops warned students that tougher responses to infringements were being taken. However, there has also been additional support offered to vulnerable students, as well as those suffering from any form of harassment.

Michael Lees: Told the meeting about Nottingham Trent University's policy of transparency, giving examples of student disciplinary measures* and inviting residents to attend disciplinary hearings if they wished. The University continues to support the development of purpose built accommodation and currently only points its students towards accredited properties. He spoke of 'out-duction', which is a scheme aiming to educate first year students at NTU about their responsibilities to be good neighbours when they move into residential areas in their second and third years. Nottingham Trent has created a dedicated community contact e-mail address which is checked daily during working hours: communityliaison@ntu.ac.uk

*A limited number of copies of NTU's Community Statistics and Response Rate' data from September to the time of the meeting were made available by Michael Lees. These data have since also been made available to the NAG in electronic format, and have been uploaded to the NAG's website (www.nottinghamaction.org.uk) where regular updates will be posted as they become available.

Paul Greatrix: Summarised the benefits that Nottingham University brings to Nottingham in terms of finance and jobs, as well as the amount of money which overseas students bring to Lenton in particular. The University is partially responsible for investment in the city of around £677,000,000. He confirmed the University's support for Nottingham City Council Community Protection actions, as well as the financial support of £30,000 currently provided by the University towards increased CPO hours. The University continues to sponsor the Lenton Recreation Ground and provides funding for small local groups from its Community Chest Fund. The University has been active at the recent Community Trigger meetings, and had recently updated its Code of Discipline for Students. He spoke about the University's 'Hello Neighbour' scheme, which, like that operated by Nottingham Trent University, aims to educate students about living in residential areas. He added that Nottingham University would like to see more opportunities for its students to volunteer within the local communities, and is also looking into the introduction of Student Community Wardens.

Supt. Ted Antill & Insp. Rob Wilson: Gave an overview of the six Police districts covering the County. They also talked about measures that have been taken to ensure improvements in the way in which the 101 response team staff deal with callers, recognising the issues that residents have when they call in about disturbance from noise and other anti-social behaviour. Also covered was information about changes, increases and improvements in future Police services, including 'frontline' duty. There will be continued funding from both of Nottingham's universities, and further funding is to come from the Late Night Levy. In addition, the Police will continue to be involved with other issues, such as licensing applications for new off-licenses.

In the Question and Answer session that followed residents recounted their experiences with noise and other anti-social behaviour, and addressed a number of questions to the panel:

- Are there likely to be improvements with the 101 number? *There is further training taking place of all call centre staff.*
- What can be done when landlords and letting agents are 'selling' certain areas as 'student areas'? *If landlords and letting agents are advertising dwellings as HMOs when they may not have the necessary permissions and/or licences, this needs to be reported to the HMO Licensing Team (and to Planning) so that the relevant parties can be contacted.*
- What can be done to stop the late night noise coming from the NTU Students' Union bar after 3.00 a.m. when the CPOs are no longer on duty? *Although there is unfortunately still late night noise into the early hours, it is unlikely to be coming from the NTUSU bar as this closes a lot earlier most nights. The source of the disturbance may be students returning from other bars in the city very late at night.*
- Will Nottingham University be copying NTU's policy of transparency regarding their disciplinary procedures? *Nottingham University will look into this issue but there are always restrictions caused by Data Protection issues.*
- There are very large rubbish bins situated along North Sherwood Street. Do they have to be on the pavements? *This needs looking into with either the CPOs or Waste Management.*
- The cost of purpose built student accommodation appears to be quite high and is likely to be putting off students, thereby reducing the number of students willing to consider moving from HMOs into that type of accommodation. When applications are submitted for permission to construct student purpose build, can the Council set rental levels as a condition of giving permission for the development? *Nottingham City Council has no control over rental levels in student purpose build. Rental levels are subject to market forces and move up and down in response to demand. Unipol rental comparison figures show that there is a range of rentals with some purpose built accommodation being at the lower price end, and others very much higher.*
- Why are so many students still bringing and parking their cars in residential areas? *Although both universities discourage students from bringing their cars, plus where there are residential parking permit areas students have to pay for their permits, there is no legislation to actually ban students from bringing cars to Nottingham, or them parking on public highways. However, Nottingham City Council provides excellent public transport provision and cycle pathways and continues to do its best to reduce the number of student vehicles in Nottingham.*
- Why does the Planning Inspectorate not always support Nottingham City Council when the Council refuses planning permission and the applicant makes an appeal to the Inspectorate? *Most planning appeal decisions uphold the Council's original refusal, but occasionally, for not always understandable reasons, an individual Planning Inspector decides differently. At this point the Council has no recourse other than to accept the unfortunate decision.*
- Is there any chance of looking at the possible development of an App. Which can be used equally by students and permanent residents to make complaints? *This possibility will be explored over the coming months?*
- Are there any plans for further parking permit schemes? *Yes, but they take time and only a couple can be introduced each year. Plus the Section 106 agreements accepted for new student developments usually stipulate no additional parking spaces apart from a few for disabled students.*

After some final remarks, Lilian Greenwood closed the meeting at 8.00 pm.