

Houses are More than Bricks • Mortar • Money

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES
FOR
DEVELOPERS & BUY-TO-LET/SECOND HOME SPECULATORS

THEY ARE HOMES BUILDING BLOCKS OF NEIGHBOURHOODS CORNERSTONES OF COMMUNITIES

When it comes to the problems surrounding 'studentification', and HMOs, most of what gets talked about, and shown, is the nuisance: litter, rubbish, persistent, usually low level, often thoughtless, anti-social behaviour.

However, it's possible to clean up streets, get rid of litter, and curb the worst excesses of landlords and their tenants. But none of this is going to make neighbourhoods capable of sustaining and renewing themselves.

That needs people who are prepared to put down roots, feel responsibility for, and to, their neighbours, and, ultimately, contribute to the long term health and future of the greater community. In other words, people for whom houses are first and foremost homes. People who '... stay for the long haul ...'

Yes, a house is probably the single largest financial transaction most of us are likely to contemplate. The fact that the equity is likely increase over time is part of the picture. But not the whole picture.

Just as important is the neighbourhood: its location, its amenities, the people – its 'ambiance'.

We invest in a house and make it a home. We also invest in the long term viability of the neighbourhood. What happens to it and to our neighbours is important. Usually, when we move on the people who buy our home also buy into the neighbourhood and its future strength and vitality and fitness. In our neighbourhoods this isn't happening.

Speculators buying properties for conversion to HMOs purchase a commodity that will give the maximum return on their investment They don't even live here. So why expect them to care about the welfare of the neighbourhood?

Their tenants are young, highly mobile, totally absorbed in their own lifestyles. The houses they occupy are accommodation. Their homes are elsewhere. Their commitment to our neighbourhoods is minimal and transient. Their time as investors in homes and neighbourhoods is yet to come.

The danger is that council, universities, students all concentrate on cleaning up the environment '... bailing out the Titanic's engine room with teaspoons ...' and put aside the fact that there are: too many HMOs, too few families, not enough children, degraded amenities. They must not ignore the social and emotional misery of the real people living in the host communities who are at risk of becoming aliens in the dying neighbourhoods that were once their own.

In our neighbourhoods families and others don't want to, or are prevented from, making a commitment to the 'long haul'. That has to change. How to do it is the real challenge – for council, universities, students [landlords] and, ultimately, for Government itself.

Rise to it and there is some hope that we will again have

—Neighbourhoods where families want to live ... not leave!—

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'Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.'

[Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Website, April 2005]

coming soon

The NAG Website

www.NottinghamAction.org.uk

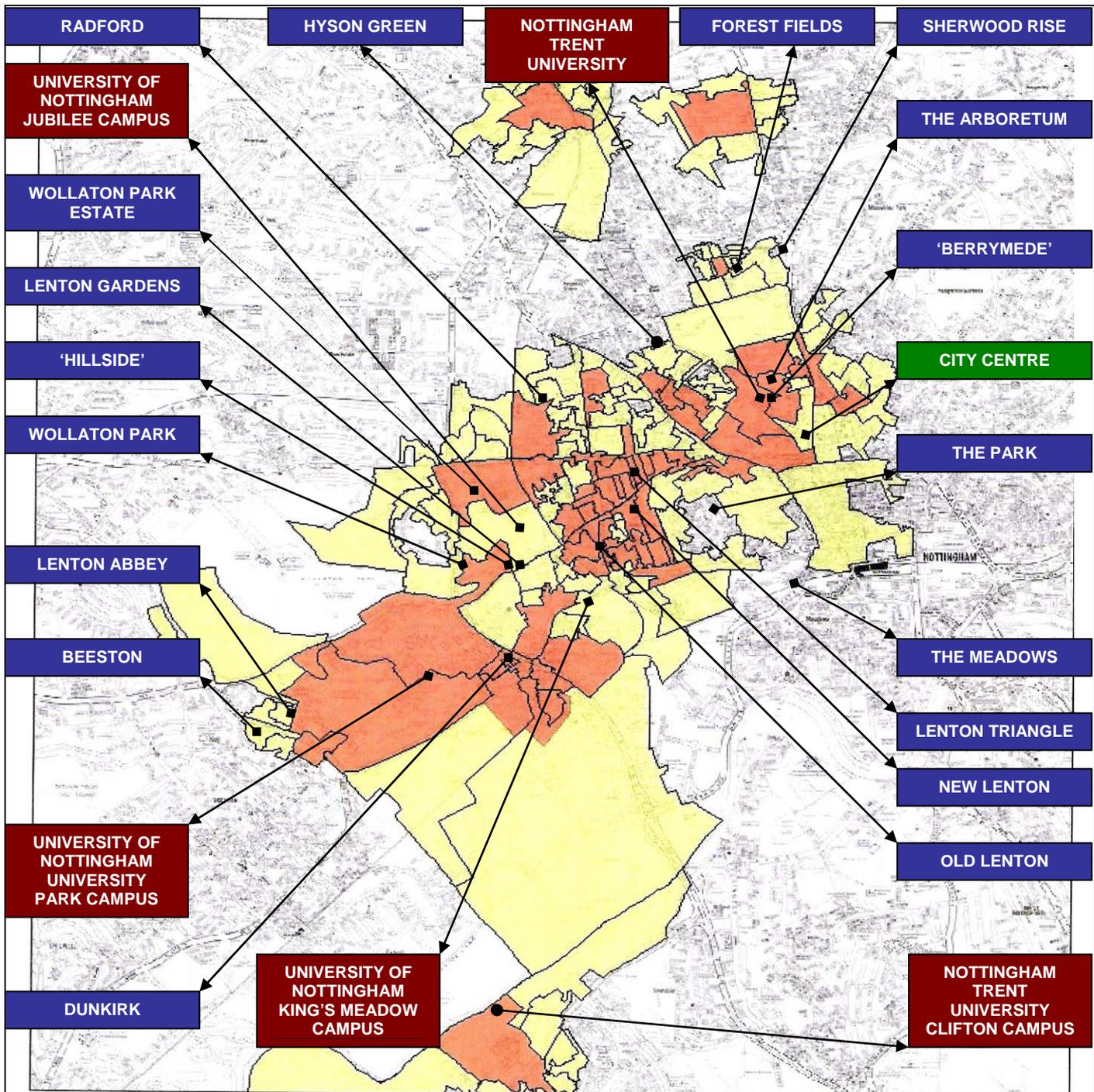
The material for this issue comes from a presentation and a display the Group produced for a national conference on Students and Communities organized by UNIPOL and hosted by Nottingham City Council. The people whose homes are in these neighbourhoods provided the words, most of the photographs and the incentive to produce this very special issue of the magazine.

At a recent seminar in Westminster to launch the report on the impact of 'studentification' on host communities, the Group's representative invited Baroness Andrews, Parliamentary Secretary of State, to come to Nottingham, meet us and see our neighbourhoods. We'll send her a copy of the magazine and hope it reinforces our invitation so that we will soon be able to say:

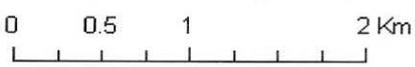
Minister, welcome to our neighbourhoods.

[Editor, September, 2006]

NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP ON HMOs OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS



Title: Output Areas with more than 25% student households and contiguous OAs

Key		Map produced on: 01/12/05	 City of NOTTINGHAM City Development
% student households	 Contiguous Output Areas	Map produced by: Policy and Information Team	
0% - 25%			
 25.1% - 91.0%			

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— Neighbourhoods where families want to live ... not leave! —

From TRENT BRIDGE to SHERWOOD RISE

Two areas separated by the City Centre, very different in character, but with concerns about HMOs and how they may affect their neighbourhoods

SHERWOOD RISE

Conservation area with fine houses and mature trees.

Strong interest from developers wishing to convert houses into HMOs.

Nottingham Trent University and the Clarendon College campus of New College Nottingham near-by

THE MEADOWS

Rich, multi-cultural history. The Embankment is the home of the Riverside Festival. Part of the 1960's clearance. Some, mostly Nottingham Trent, student HMOs

Eckington Terrace winners of Nottingham in Bloom Competition

SHERWOOD RISE RESIDENTS' CONSERVATION GROUP

*Fothergill buildings with great appeal
Hanging baskets made of galvanised steel
Loads of students attending university
Sherwood Rise – fight for it in times of adversity*

© Bard of Basford - Christine M. Wick

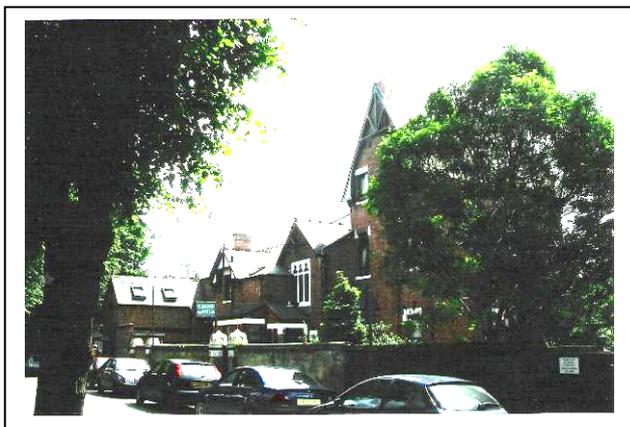
A conservation area, but Victorian properties acquired by the same landlord noticeably deteriorating

Large increase in rubbish

Increase in student accommodation & multi-occupancy in general

Fear that this will lead to:
More families leaving the area
Less settled community

Knock-on effect on local nursery and primary schools



TO LET

Houses [in the Meadows] for 4-7 people available. well maintained & fully modernised to accreditation standard, most rooms are double bedrooms. all have large kitchens with fridge freezer, washing machine & microwave as standard. smoke alarms, burglar alarms, ntl and bt telephone points. fully serviced gfch throughout. close to public transport and ideal for Nottingham Trent City or Clifton sites. typical rent £35-£45 for the large bedrooms

Details taken from website

THE ARBORETUM

Conservation area taking its name from the Arboretum public park opened in 1852. Originally a 'grand suburb' with houses to match. It lies on the northern edge of the city centre close to Nottingham Trent University.

'...LIVING ON THE EDGE OF THE HABITABLE UNIVERSE ...'

An Arboretum Residents' Association Member Speaks

The 'Arboretum' area of Nottingham is very close to the city centre – just on it's northern edge. Most of it was originally built in the mid 19th century, and it takes its name from the Arboretum public park which opened in 1852.



The area was originally a fairly grand suburb – with the houses to match – but by the mid 20th Century was in serious decline. Large parts were nearly demolished as part of the 1960's and 70's slum clearance programme in the city, and were only saved as that ran out of steam and money, along with a growing appreciation of the architectural and social values of old communities.

By the 1980's things had picked up. Some of the older housing (along with new build on areas that had been cleared) was owned by housing associations.

The relatively low price meant that others could be bought by people looking for a large family house on a low income, and the area had already been one of the first places in the city where immigrants from the Caribbean could afford to own their own place. There was still a number of small lace factories and other workshops tucked away here and there, and a varied collection of shops.

And there were students. The Arboretum is right next to Nottingham Trent University, formerly Nottingham Polytechnic (Before that the original base for the University of Nottingham). Students had been part of the community for a long time, and were part of the social mix.

The shift to studentification happened through the 1990's, and was one of those things you didn't really notice at first.

Looking back, a significant change seemed to occur when the old Polytechnic moved from being part of Nottinghamshire County Council (which at that time had control of all the city schools and colleges) to being an independent organisation.

There was less democratic accountability or community dialogue, and the new institution began to compete for students on a national – and international – basis.

As some of the owner occupiers in the Arboretum grew older it became harder for them to maintain the larger properties, and as they sold up student landlords moved in.

As some of the factories and workshops closed they became ripe for conversion or demolition and new build.

The impact of this studentification has resulted in a picture familiar to residents in most other areas facing the same problem.

For some residents it's acute in terms of noise, rubbish, parking problems, or street level hostility such as 'if you don't like it you shouldn't be living in a student area'.

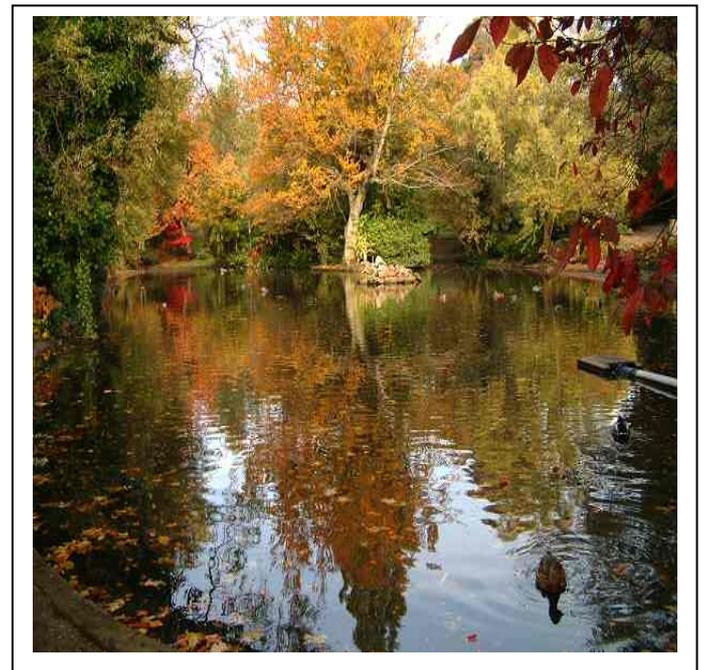
For all of us it's the gradual loss of shops and facilities (The local primary school and nursery are up for closure at present.). The community variety has gone and it's a ghost town in summer.

Things are not helped by the fact that the Arboretum is also 'host' to Nottingham High School for Boys and Nottingham High School for Girls. Both have also followed an aggressive strategy of demolition and expansion.

And with parts of the area notorious for prostitution as well, it sometimes feels as if we're living on the edge of the habitable universe

Long term residents have been trying to make a stand for a while, as individuals and as the Arboretum Residents Association, but the process has been slow and painful.

For a number of years planning permission for conversions or relatively small scale buildings always seemed to get granted, in spite of objections from residents and our local councillor, and the fact that we are a Conservation Area.





We argued that buildings with loads of bedrooms and only one shower and kitchen couldn't possibly be good for a sustainable community. But the planning policy at that time was that densely built four-storey properties were historically appropriate for the character of the area. The sheer number and ugliness of these buildings eventually became indefensible, and the overall awareness of Nottingham City Council of the studentification problem has seen a welcome change in the planning approach. We also found that a high number of objections and public pressure could make some changes to the largest purpose built accommodation – but not stop them.



The Arboretum Residents Association held meetings and attempted dialogue with the two universities. At the time (around 2001) Nottingham Trent University argued that the problems couldn't possibly be connected to them because their student numbers were by that time relatively stable. The University of Nottingham were more positive in their approach, perhaps only because they could claim greater distance from the area. Meanwhile, more and more long term residents gave up in despair, and moved out.

The last couple of years have seen a relative stalemate in most of the Arboretum area. There has been a significant shift in the policy and awareness of Nottingham City Council. It may in some small part be due to the fact that the Leader of the Council is a former ward councillor for the area and had witnessed the problems over a long period of time (and that another senior councillor is a resident and experienced them on the doorstep!). The policy shift is also a credit to the hard work of the Nottingham Action Group and residents across the city. We now see far fewer planning application for student flats, but this may have more to do with the fact that there aren't any more properties left to

change, and the increase in larger purpose built accommodation around the city centre. We're also aware that a lot goes on without the need for planning permission. The Berrymede estate in the corner of our area is bearing the brunt of this at the moment.

Given our close proximity to Nottingham Trent University, we probably faced a total shift to studentification, but our real protection against this has been social housing. Significant parts of the area are owned and managed by housing associations, and these have been able to resist the trend and maintain the basis of a community (although some of their tenants would complain about most other things they do or don't do!). On my own street we have a row of ten houses, with the two at each end rented to students. The rest are owned by our housing co-operative, and we're able to provide housing to long term residents and at the same time passively regulate the behaviour of our student neighbours.

The situation may be stalemate in terms of the pace of change, but the reality is that much of the Arboretum area has been destroyed as a mixed and sustainable community. The work of residents and the City Council continues to be undermined by central government policy, perhaps most obviously by the lack of any mechanism to control or even debate the university's decisions on student numbers and the impact this has on our communities. It would also seem to be time to look at options for post-studentification housing strategy, and recognise the need for intervention on a national scale, comparable in scope (if not policy) with the approach to market failure in older industrial cities.

We decided to live in the Arboretum area because we liked the vitality and the mixture of people. We've lost a lot of that, and we've lost a lot of good neighbours and friends.

Our residents association is now battered and bruised and for the moment we're resting our wounds, but it's valuable to find that we're not alone and that other communities share our concerns. Let's hope we can still make a future.

'... Students had been part of the community for a long time ... were part of the social mix.

The shift to studentification happened through the 1990's

For some residents it's acute in terms of noise, rubbish, parking problems, or street level hostility

For all ... it's the gradual loss of shops and facilities The community variety has gone ...

The work of residents and the City Council continues to be undermined by central government policy. ...'

'BERRYMEDE'

Built in the 1970's to provide city centre homes for families. Today close proximity to Nottingham Trent University makes it a prime location for intensive redevelopment as student HMOs

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO NOW?

Thoughts of a Berrymede Resident

I bought my house in Berrymede about 25 years ago. My son and I had been living in a old house in Sherwood. As it happened I was working in the city centre and during my lunch breaks I'd sometimes go and sit and watch the houses going up.

One day, one of the workmen shouted down to me saying something like: 'You ought to buy one of these.'



I was glad I took his advice. My little house was what we needed. We (in common with other residents) cared for our small area. We kept it clean and tidy, and our gardens neat and looked after.

It was a pleasant place to live — a little oasis in all the clamour and bustle of a busy city.

TO LET

'Delightful mews modern town house with 5 large bedrooms located in the heart of the city centre in a secluded and peaceful mews. Minutes walk to Nottingham Law School/Trent University Campus and on doorstep of all major amenities and attractions. Free private car park spaces for 3 cars



Extracted from website details for a property in the 'Berrymede' Estate

And we 'looked out' for each other as well.

All that has started to change now landlords are buying up the houses. Private parking spaces are blocked. Gardens are abandoned and overgrown. Bins and rubbish are left on the front gardens where there should be flowers, and there's lots of late night noise. In the university vacations many houses are empty, meaning no neighbours. The rest of the time they are overcrowded!

Both these situations attract undesirable elements (drunks, alcoholics, thieves, drug users). Crime of all kinds is also on the up – thefts, break-ins, personal attacks. (I myself was knocked down and my handbag stolen within 20 yards of my front door.)

These houses were built so that people would have the facilities they needed without incommoding their next door neighbours. This is no longer the case where alterations have been made to accommodate extra occupants without any thought for other residents. For instance, the house next to mine now has the kitchen in the lounge. This backs on to my lounge and, as there is no ventilation, cooking smells come through the wall into my home. Alterations within the houses upset too many nearby properties. But they keep on happening.

These houses are supposed to be homes. They were not designed to be student accommodation.

My oasis has almost gone and it seems that the authorities don't want to exert themselves to help

What am I supposed to do now?



What Happens When ...?

An enterprising landlord buys a small house in a pleasant development in central Nottingham — 'desirable, bijou residence' you might call it in estate agent speak?

First of all come the conversions. The garage changes into two bedrooms. The tiny kitchen develops into another bedroom (with specially fitted bed). The lean-to at the back becomes yet another bedroom.

The result is a small two-bed roomed house with **SIX** lettable rooms.

NO PLANNING PERMISSION NEEDED!

You might expect the owner of our two bedroom house needed planning permission. However, all the conversions took place within the confines of the building itself and didn't result in any external alterations. So he didn't!

NO CHANGE OF USE!

You might also expect the house has undergone a change of use requiring planning permission. It has not. It only has six occupants.

For it to be deemed to have undergone a **material** change of use from dwelling house to HMO requires it to have at least seven occupants living together as a single household and for there to be evidence that the change has materially affected neighbouring amenities.

NO HMO LICENSING!

Under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004, the property will become an HMO. However, since it only has two storeys, it will not be subject to mandatory licensing.

AND ... NO COUNCIL TAX!

STUDENTS' FIRE DRAMA

Two students had a lucky escape when a blaze ripped through their city centre home early today.

A young man asleep in the room next to the fire was saved when his female housemate woke up after hearing noises.

The house in Bluecoat Close had smoke alarms fitted but the fire service said they were not in the right position and had not been activated.

Crew manager Gary Morrell said: "The two people who got out are the luckiest people I have met so far in my career."

A faulty TV started the fire about 3.30 am.

Nottingham Evening Post, Thursday, 20 April, 2006.



... 'It was a pleasant place to live — a little oasis in all the clamour and bustle of a busy city.' ... These houses are supposed to be homes. They were not designed to be student accommodation.

My oasis has almost gone and it seems that the authorities don't want to exert themselves to help.' ...

THE PARK

Unique estate with a long, proud history
Much sought after residential area.
Virtually in the city centre



NO NEIGHBOURHOOD IS SAFE ...

By a Park Resident

When I moved to the Park Estate some five years ago, I looked forward very much to living in a beautiful, leafy, quiet neighbourhood so near the City Centre, and yet so peaceful.

Every day I walked home from work, relishing the trees, the birds, the tranquillity. I have many friends who have been driven out of areas like Lenton by the increasingly unbearable noise, nuisance, litter and lack of facilities, and so I knew how doubly lucky I was to live in such a pleasant place.



However, my luck did not last long. Within a year, a student landlord had bought one of the houses in our small, enclosed, quiet courtyard.

TO LET

'A superb modern property located in THE PARK, the most prestigious area of Nottingham with 3 large bedrooms. £750 per calendar month excluding bills.



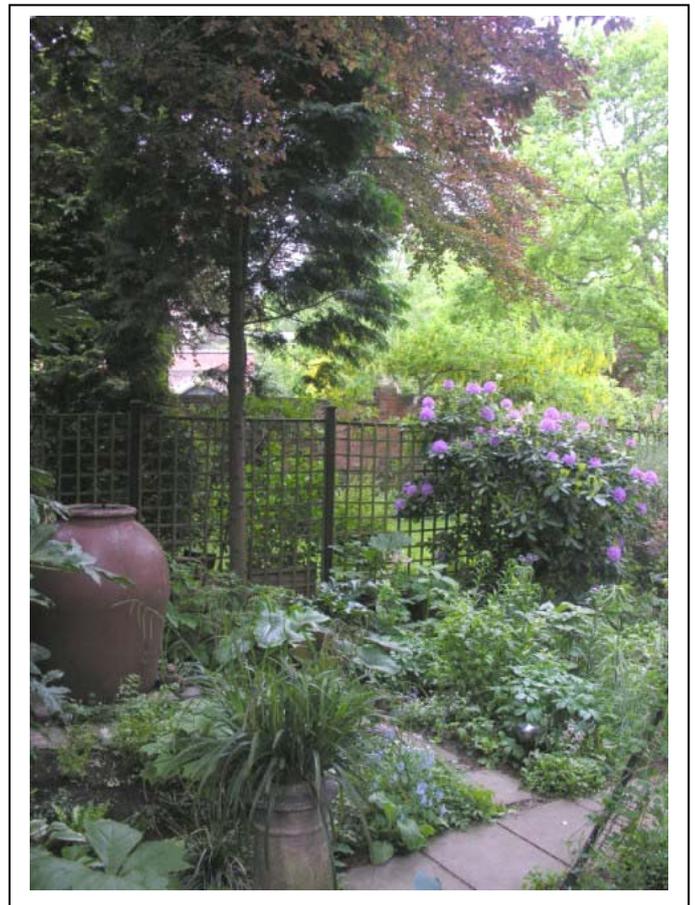
Extracted from website details for a property in The Park

The now familiar cycle began. Building work all summer, followed by noise, mess and general anti-social behaviour during term time.

A year later, another house went the same way — and so it goes on.



I'm sure like so many others, we were taken by surprise. We didn't really see the signs until the plague was upon us



No, we don't have to tolerate as many problems as our friends in areas like Lenton and Dunkirk do. HMO households still make up a pretty small proportion of all households here.



The problem will continue to spread from the 'traditional' student areas. Already Wollaton has changed in ways it would have been difficult to predict just a few years ago.

But our neighbourhood is now tainted by the sorts of things others have been experiencing for years: late night nuisance, loud music, shouting instead of talking, car doors slammed instead of closed, our once-spacious street clogged with huge cars, endless taxis (Why do they even need taxis when they live within a 15 minute walk of Market Square?), mountains of rubbish building up because apparently bright and responsible young people don't seem capable of working out how to dispose of the waste they create by putting it in a bin and placing the bin on the street on an allotted day each week!



As student numbers increase and many are prepared to pay more and more to live in 'nicer, safer' areas (that is areas not already ruined by landlordism and studentification!), the vision fades of Nottingham as a city where families and others want to settle and stay for the long haul and contribute to the community



Whenever I speak to the perpetrators about the nuisance they are causing, they are polite and apologetic; but this doesn't mean I don't have to make the same complaint a day (or an hour) later.

The problem is that the way they choose to live their lives is simply incompatible with other people — people with children to get to sleep at night; people who go out to work and want a rest when they get home; people who are retired and might expect a quiet life; people who simply want to live in peace and quiet without having their neighbours' activities forced on them all the time.



LENTON & DUNKIRK

A collection of distinct neighbourhoods with their own peculiar characteristics. Tower blocks, 'Saturday Night & Sunday Morning', Victorian & Edwardian elegance, terraces, modern family homes and town houses. Now the main dormitories for the University of Nottingham The archetypal 'Student Village'

LIFE IN A STUDENT AREA

In the early 1970's we bought our house on one of Lenton's Drives

A pleasant, tree lined road with semi-detached houses, some pre First World War

Life was good in Lenton with multi-racial and multi-aged family units with all the usual local amenities and facilities in place.



In 1974 our elderly neighbour died and the house next door to us became probably the first HMO on the Drive. Worse was to follow.

In the mid 1980's, family house prices rose in the area, putting them beyond the means of family and first time buyers

Entrepreneurs and absentee landlords bought in and full-scale HMO development began.

The exploitation of students and degradation of Lenton was under way.

In 30 years we have had over 250 students as neighbours

There have been students in Lenton and Dunkirk as long as the University has been at University Park.

They used to baby sit and play football on the street with the children

We didn't think of them as anything else than neighbours

THEY WERE PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Now there are so many of them, they're no longer part of the community

THEY ARE THE COMMUNITY



TO LET

ROLLESTON DRIVE

Built in 1940's & is being extended & refurbished this will be completed in August 2006. This includes new heating by condensing combi boiler, two new bathroom, & new kitchen, redecorated throughout, new double glazing using Pilkington 'k' glass. Excellent quality house, nicely decorated, near to QMC & Nottingham University. Fire Alarm System, Emergency Lighting, Internet & aerial points in all bedrooms. New Ikea Furniture. All double bedrooms & double beds provided. 6 bedrooms at £68 pppw

HARLAXTON DRIVE

Originally built in the 1960's & is an architectural designed split level house. There is a new large breakfast kitchen & two separate bathrooms. There is a combi boiler fitted in 2003. There is a private secluded walled garden, complete with decking/sitting area. Excellent quality house, nicely decorated, near to QMC & Nottingham University. Internet in all bedrooms. New Furniture. Fire Alarm, Intruder Alarm, Emergency Lighting 6 bedrooms at £72 pppw

BARRACK LANE

Built in the 1890's & is a really large period house. New furniture throughout, upgraded kitchen & bathroom. There are 8 bedrooms & 3 bathrooms. Excellent quality house, nicely decorated, near to QMC & Nottingham University. Fire Alarm System, Emergency Lighting, Internet & aerial points in all bedrooms. New Ikea Furniture. Refurbishment Aug 2006. Top rooms have fantastic views over Nottingham & surrounding area. Off road parking for two cars 8 bedrooms at £75 pppw

Taken from website information

Parties all night, most nights in better weather
 Normal life: watching TV, listening to music, reading,
 conversation, visitors, family meals, sitting in the garden is
 spoiled.



Even sleep, when you can get it, is an obstacle to be overcome rather than peaceful rest



Dustbins never moved, rubbish, discarded furniture,
 borrowed street signs
 Landlords don't care and students can't be bothered



**Everything we have built and love is here
 WE DON'T WANT TO LEAVE!**

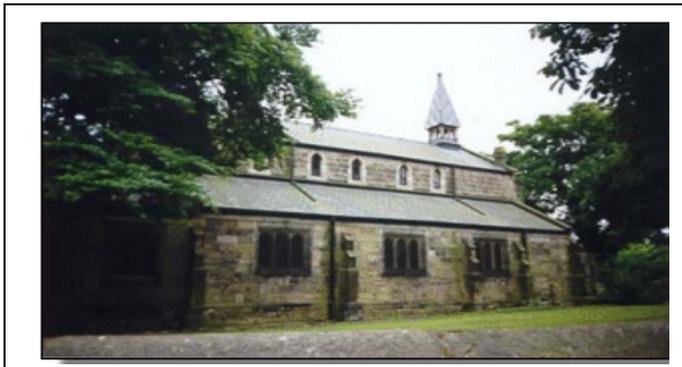


RESIGNATION

No one to leave keys with and no-one who'll notice you've left milk on the doorstep and who'll bother to check if you need help
 Little point in Neighbourhood Watch – too few neighbours who are around long enough
 Fewer young couples, fewer children – only the elderly are left
 Can't move - Unable to move - Don't want to move, - Where to more to?
 Who in authority has listened to us over the last 12-15 years?
 Who in authority can do something?
 Please some-one out there, listen and do something to sort out this mess before we're all part of one huge university campus.

FOR A START GIVE US:
 Regulation of all HMOs
 Legislation to stop investors buying up our homes and turning them into second homes/HMOs
 Appropriate taxation of HMOs
 Our elected leaders need to be allowed to protect all our futures,
 Prevent further loss and degradation of our communities
 Give us a chance to restore pride in our neighbourhoods

[With thanks to those residents of Lenton and Dunkirk whose words have formed the basis of this piece]



LENTON GARDENS

Early 1970's estate, once offered a range of good sized family homes with garages and gardens. University of Nottingham's University Park and Jubilee Campuses close by makes it a target for absentee owners renting out to students



DESPERATELY SEEKING ... FAMILY HOME

As told to the Editor by a former Lenton Gardens resident We'd already done the rounds of lettings agencies and we'd seen some pretty horrible flats at frighteningly high rents. The sort of places we reckoned would put such a strain on our relationship that we'd be splitting up before a year had gone by!

What we really wanted was a house we could call home, not too far out of the city, and within our limited budget. That was the problem.

I remember we searched for weeks. Saturday mornings were spent doing the rounds of the city centre estate agents. Sometimes we came away thinking we might have found somewhere. More often than not we didn't.

It seemed as if we were chasing a rainbow and that, after all, we'd have to rent a flat, and accept that we were going to be throwing good money after bad.

It was August by then. I know it was tiring in town as we traipsed from one estate agent to the next.

Eventually, we'd done the lot and went back to take a look at what we'd picked up.

We couldn't afford more than £17,000 and in that price range there wasn't much on offer.

However, there was one, on Arnesby Road, Lenton. It didn't have a picture and only sketchy details. It'd just been put up for sale.

I wasn't very keen, but I was persuaded to go and take a look.

We found Arnesby Road. A post office and assortment of shops were near by. The houses were traditional semi-detached and the neighbourhood was quiet and obviously well cared for.



Surprisingly quiet considering it was just off Derby Road.

Even more surprising was what happened as we turned a corner. There was the Lenton Gardens estate.



And then we saw our home.



... 'What we really wanted was a house we could call home... .
... It seemed as if we were chasing a rainbow.'

It was modern, detached, tidy and well looked after. Although the sale board said: *View by Appointment Only*, we took a chance and rang the door bell.

The owners were in. They were happy to show us round.

The asking price was £17,000.

We moved in on 5 November, 1978. We're still married 28 years later. Thank you Lenton Gardens!

[Ed: Today, the boards are more likely to say 'TO LET' than 'FOR SALE', and new families look elsewhere for a home.]

THE FEEL OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD HAS GONE



There are 21 houses in our close, 8 of which are HMOs occupied by students.

We have a real fear of growing old in the neighbourhood as there are no younger families who can help out with little things like shopping. This does mean that residents will have to move out as they get older, making matters worse for those left.

It is difficult to establish any relationship with the students as they usually arrive in October and leave the following June to be replaced by new ones.

Having student neighbours means there is no-one to ask to look after the cat or water the plants when we are away.

There is only one family with children in the road, which is typical of the area. So local schools have closed and therefore it will be difficult for new families to ever re-populate the neighbourhood.

For long periods of the year the HMOs are empty and so the whole area is deserted, which is depressing for residents.

Some pubs and shops actually close when the students leave, which makes matters worse.

During this time dustbins and rubbish (beds, electrical white goods, etc.) are frequently left outside by landlords for long periods.

Maintenance on the HMOs is poor, which makes the area less attractive for those who live here permanently. This is particularly noticeable with front gardens. Many have cars parked on them.

As a known student area, crime increases and this makes residents feel more vulnerable themselves, especially when they see police cars frequently visiting properties.

The local pubs are now student venues. We've lost the community pub. It's a small thing, but it matters. There are approximately 40 students in our 8 HMOs. If only 20 have birthdays whilst they are resident, that's 20 parties. Late night music, drinking in the street, and early hours taxis to take them away. If they celebrate in town, we get the taxis at 3.00 a.m. bringing them back.

Disturbance during the night occurs two or three times a week. Often more as different houses go to town to the clubs on different nights.

They tend to return in the early hours. When they do, no matter how considerate they are, they still laugh and shout, even for a few moments as they say their goodbyes. It wakes us up.

Student drinking is also intimidating. We cannot go for a walk later in the evening if there is student drinking in the area. Young drunks can be aggressive to passers by.

The feel of the neighbourhood has gone and the remaining residents dread another house coming up for sale.

It invariably means another buy-to-let property.

REMAINING RESIDENTS WILL HAVE TO MOVE OUT



TO LET

'Fabulous corner detached house with garage, blocked paved driveway for several cars. Large gardens with substantial patio. Immaculately presented with period gas fire in large lounge and extensively fitted kitchen.'

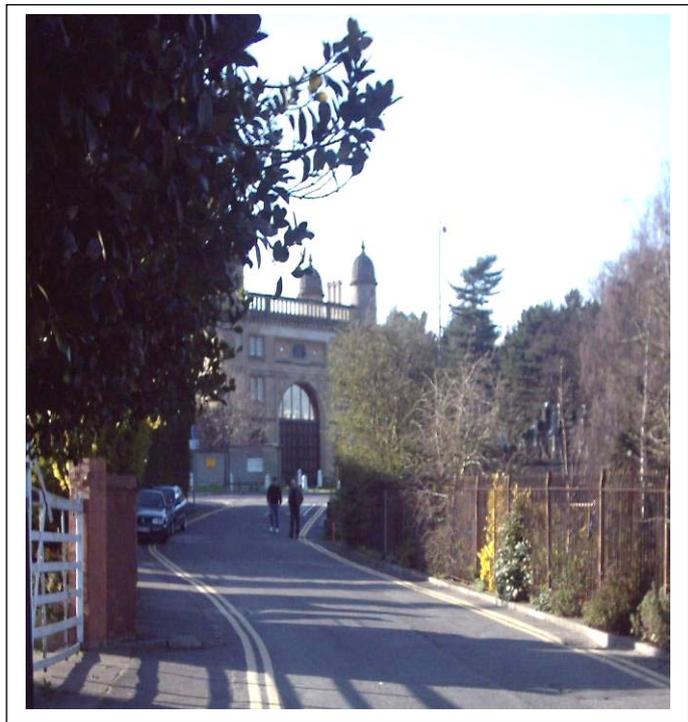


Extracted from website details for a property in the Lenton Gardens Estate.

5 bedrooms at £80.00 per week each.

'HILLSIDE'

Garden gateway to the City. Since the 1920's these houses have provided good homes for families to grow up in. The University of Nottingham is a close neighbour and residents 'must expect students to want to live there'.



A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE

By a 'Hillside' Resident

In 1981 we moved into our present home on Derby Road. For a good time beforehand we had been searching for a traditional, well-built family house. It was wonderful when we secured our property in what, then, was a residential oasis. A good place to live.

It was made even more wonderful because, as a boy, I had travelled past these beautiful, established houses, admired them and the area, and dreamt of one day, perhaps, owning one.



The surrounding properties were all family dwellings. Some of the families had children of much the same age as our own. Friendships formed very quickly and it was indeed very enjoyable to live here

It was a time when we would frequently meet up with our neighbours and socialize. There was a strong feeling



of community and the neighbourhood had a pleasant ambience.



Properties were well maintained, gardens well cared for and well stocked, and it felt good to be living here.

... 'There was a strong feeling of community... ' ...

TO LET

'Large detached house close to QMC with huge 300ft garden. Parking for at least 10 cars. House renovated last year including a fitted kitchen and has 2 shower room and 3 toilets. There is outside brick shed to store cycles. First to see will take.'



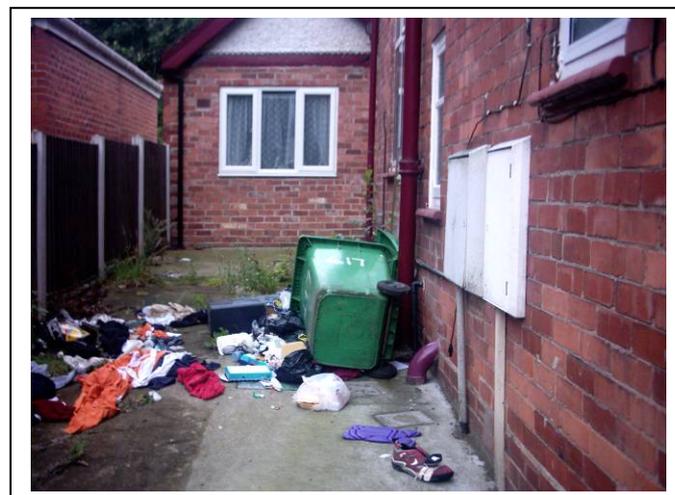
Extracted from website details for a property in the 'Hillside' neighbourhood.

6 bedrooms at £72.00 per week each.

All of this is then made worse by the huge amounts of litter, rubbish and noise created by the landlords and their tenants.



What was not so long ago a nice place to live is degenerating rapidly into squalor.



Out of the original sixteen family-owned homes, there are only six that remain. The rest have been so butchered that they are almost beyond restoration as family homes.

When the government is looking to build thousands of new family homes because of the housing shortage, where is the logic in filling these homes with temporary, student residents?

Both universities are now responding by supporting the building of student apartments. Unfortunately, it is years too late.

The environmental and social damage have been done.

This was a superb gateway to the City, one that Nottingham should have been proud of.

It is now no more than a litter strewn, car infested, run down eye sore.

Is this the price we have to pay for education?

... 'The environmental and social damage has been done.' ...

Changes began to happen when a house not far away from where we live was sold to a couple who implied that they had bought it for their own use.

How wrong!

It is now, and has been for six years or so, a student dwelling.

This was just the tip of the iceberg. Within the next two years another three houses, again within close proximity to our home, had been turned into student accommodation.

During the last five years, more residents have moved because of the ever increasing student population in the area, and the landlords have moved in.

What happens when they do move in is now routine.

Houses are converted to make space for the maximum number of occupants possible.

Ugly 'boxes' with windows have been put into roofs.

Garages have been converted into bed-sits.

Trees have been chopped down and gardens flattened to make space for cars. Sometimes that space has been hard-cored. More often it has been left to become a weed-infested, mud patch.



LENTON ABBEY & BEESTON

Lenton Abbey lies alongside the south-western edge of University Park, just within Nottingham City's boundaries. Mixture of council, ex-council and other private housing. Increasingly of interest to landlords investing in student HMOs. The town of Beeston is part of Broxtowe Borough. It lies close to University Park and also hosts Broxtowe College of Further Education. Has a large student population



IT'S A MATTER OF RESPECT

The story of a disappointed Lenton Abbey resident

I have lived here for some 11 years now and never before have I had any reason to take the steps I have now taken

On Woodside Road there is an HMO where several students are living.

On several occasions my neighbours have pointed out, justifiably, that the front and rear gardens of this HMO are filthy. All types of rubbish are strewn everywhere, including discarded foodstuff. At the front of the house there are black bin liners that have been ripped open and garbage has spilled out

The yard at the rear of the house resembles something you see on TV: a war zone or somewhere in a Third World country.

There are broken bottles smashed and left from one of the parties they have had. There are Sainsbury's shopping trolleys. Pools of vomit that have dried. Cardboard boxes that have been left out in the rain along with broken chairs and settees. It's been like this for some months now.



I wrote a very polite letter to the occupants explaining what a mess and an eye sore the property is, not only for me but also for my neighbours who walk past the house each day to go to the shops.

I asked them, again politely, if they would try and tidy it up.

They ignored my request.



Very early this year the students at the house had a party. One of the female students decided to throw an empty beer bottle over the back fence into the neighbouring property.

The bottle smashed against the door frame of that property, just missing the glass in the door. A friend and I went to the students' house and the young woman owned up to throwing the bottle.

But why did she do it?

My real concern was not the possible damage to the door, but that the bottle could have struck a pensioner or even one of the young children who live next door to me.

I didn't report the incident because it was the first time I'd had cause to complain.

But it seems like my polite approach was, and still is, a complete waste of time.

Last year another group of students lived at the same property. In contrast, it was absolutely delightful to have them as neighbours. They were polite, respectful, understanding, clean and very quiet.

I and other residents commented on how well behaved they were and how much we respected them, not just as young students, but as good neighbours.

It's with sadness and regret that the respect we had for students has now been badly tarnished.

So far I've kept my temper under control, but for how long do we have to put up with this kind of blatant disregard towards the residents of the estate?



NEIGHBOURHOOD SPOILT ...

... By students and landlords. I wonder what my dear old neighbour Lily would think of her beloved garden now?

Lily was a kindly old Irishwoman who lived next to me on Lower Road in Beeston for 30 years before she passed away a while back.

She always had time for a gossip over the hedge or a cup of tea, and we swapped many plants over the years — her beautiful garden meant everything to her and was always kept immaculate. The same applied to the couple on the other side of me — quiet people, very private, but with a deep love for their garden.



How things have changed in recent years.

When my elderly neighbours passed away, the houses were sold, at big profits, to student landlords.

That's how Lower Road in Beeston began its inexorable decline. What used to be a happy street, with families and lots of children, is now nothing but a student shanty town.

The few remaining families are in the minority — and as things get worse every year they inevitably think about moving on.

While the mysterious landlords rake in the rent, the houses go to rack and ruin, the gardens get no maintenance whatsoever, and the rubbish piles up outside as the students can't or won't understand the 'rules' regarding wheelie bins. The landlords are nowhere to be seen.

One garden has now disappeared underneath three feet of grass and weeds — no discernible borders, lawns, paths, rockery or steps, just a pitiful prairie that no-one seems to care about. Another garden is exactly the same — and the front garden and pavement are now strewn with overfilled dustbins that are regularly ignored by the bin men. The overflow — a large pile of black bin bags that you can smell from five feet away — is left there to decay.

The students couldn't care less about the upkeep of the property. They don't seem to notice the mess they create.

Where are the landlords who allow this to happen? Why are they not made to maintain their property? Why are they allowed to spoil our neighbourhood and just walk away with the rent?



Landlords should be made to apply every year for a licence to house students — and if they don't do their duty they should lose their licence! They should be made to inspect their property once a month and take appropriate actions — or pay double council tax.

[Adapted from a letter first published in 'Letters to the Editor', Nottingham Evening Post, Friday, 1 July, 2005]



... *'The few remaining families are in the minority — and as things get worse every year they inevitably think about moving on.'* ...

... *'While ... landlords rake in the rent, the houses go to rack and ruin ...'*

... *'Where are the landlords who allow this to happen?'*

WOLLATON PARK NEIGHBOURHOODS

Developed in 1920's & 1930's on parkland surrounding Wollaton Hall, it lies alongside the University of Nottingham's University Park and Jubilee Campuses. The University's recent expansion has led to much interest by student HMO landlords in the bungalows of the Estate as well as the larger, traditional family houses that characterize this area.



A NEIGHBOURHOOD REACHING THE 'TIPPING POINT'?

Our neighbourhood is adjacent to Wollaton Park and is made up of some 40 detached, family houses. It was built in the late 1920's on land which had been part of Wollaton Hall's parkland.

With our close proximity to Wollaton Park, the University of Nottingham and the Queen's Medical Centre, this neighbourhood has traditionally attracted professional people working in the city. Although it is close to main roads, our cul-de-sac has a quiet, residential setting.

In 2003 one of our homes was converted to create 8 or 9 bedrooms. Without planning permission being sought, the owner then rented it out to students.

This shook us because we believed that existing Covenants laid down by the City of Nottingham and, explicit in forbidding the use of these dwellings except for family use, would prevail. They clearly didn't and the City of Nottingham would not support any legal challenge.

We also woke up to the real world outside our cul-de-sac: to the high concentration of student numbers in neighbourhoods adjacent to ours; and the realization that further houses in our own neighbourhood could very easily become HMOs.

[From a letter sent to the Nottingham Action Group]

A NEIGHBOURHOOD PAST THE 'TIPPING POINT'

Until about five years ago, we had a neighbourhood here. Now we live in a 'student area'.

The grass and weeds get 'done' with a strimmer once every year or so, but forget the hedges and the fences.

Right now, with the students mostly gone, the neighbourhood doesn't look too bad. And you have to feel sorry for the local vermin. They're having a bit of a hard time of it. Short rations for them with no overflowing

wheelie bins and black plastic bags full of decomposing kitchen left-overs and very few discarded, part-eaten pizzas, chips, 'Big Macs' and (real delicacy this) 'Subway' sandwiches.

And I think we're between seasons when it comes to landlords clearing out rubbish. At least I don't think we've got any mattresses, desks, cupboards, bedding and the like lying around in front gardens at the moment, not like last year!



As for the students, they come and go. In a good year they don't cause too much trouble. Before you know it, they're moving out again. ... And you're left wondering what next year's lot are going to be like. Nothing like a bit of change and variety to add spice to our lives.

And where do I live? A short stroll away from the University of Nottingham's delightful campuses with their immaculate lawns, delightful gardens, wooded walks and wonderful lakes.

[Adapted from a letter that appeared in the *Nottingham Evening Post*, Thursday, 14 July, 2005]

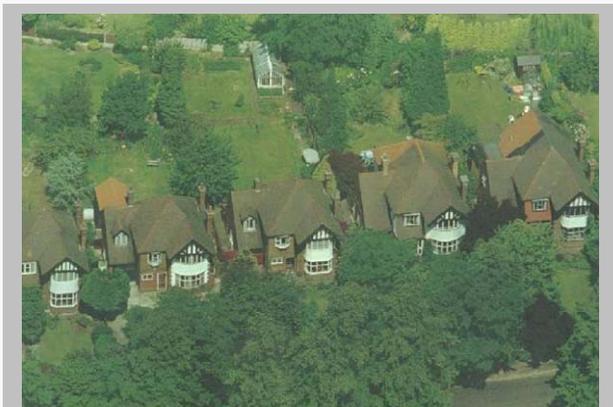


TO LET

DERBY ROAD, WOLLATON PARK

[5 bedroom house]

This house is ... three minutes walk to main University Campus, and five to Jubilee. Everything is just magnificent in this house. Very popular among students, on a quite residential road, with a very nice large living room, spacious rooms fitted kitchen, and utility. A very nice garden. Internet connection. Close to a wide range of shops, and takeaway. Very close to buses, minutes to City Centre



WOLLATON HALL DRIVE, WOLLATON PARK

This house has just been rented to a lovely group of five students. But we still have other houses available in the same area, only few minutes walk, the same quality if not better. This house is one of the most beautiful and luxury house available for the students in Nottingham.

Just opposite QMC, Derby Road side, three minutes walk to main University Campus, and five to Jubilee. Very popular among students, on a quite residential road, with a spectacular large living room, spacious rooms, two bathrooms, fitted kitchen, and utility

Taken from website details

IN 2001 ABOUT A DOZEN STUDENT HOUSEHOLDS NOW MORE THAN 50

One of the bungalows has been having a total 're-make'



Days of noise and dirt!
Rumour has it that 8 students will occupy

THIS AREA WAS ONCE VERY PLEASANT



Suitable for small families, children and disabled people

We don't see any improvement is likely now It would seem now to be too late to reverse the trend.

'Studentification' has won the day.

—HOW SAD!—

NOTE: Planning application recently posted on Council's website to demolish two-bedroomed semi-detached bungalow in the Wollaton Park Estate and rebuild it as a five bedroom house. Application refused

TO LET

SUTTON PASSEYS CRESCENT WOLLATON PARK

This house is one of the most attractive in the market • with a magnificent view to the Golf Course at Wollaton Park • where you can also see the deer grassing • 8 minutes walk to Jubilee, main Campus, QMC, and 10 to Lenton, Three large bedrooms, with an attractive living room • Totally renovated house, new central heating, new windows, new kitchen, bathroom. Very popular among students, as it economical on bills. For female or mixed group • A very nice garden. Internet connection. 5 minutes walk shops, takeaway, and off-licence Co-op. Very close to buses, minutes to City Centre •



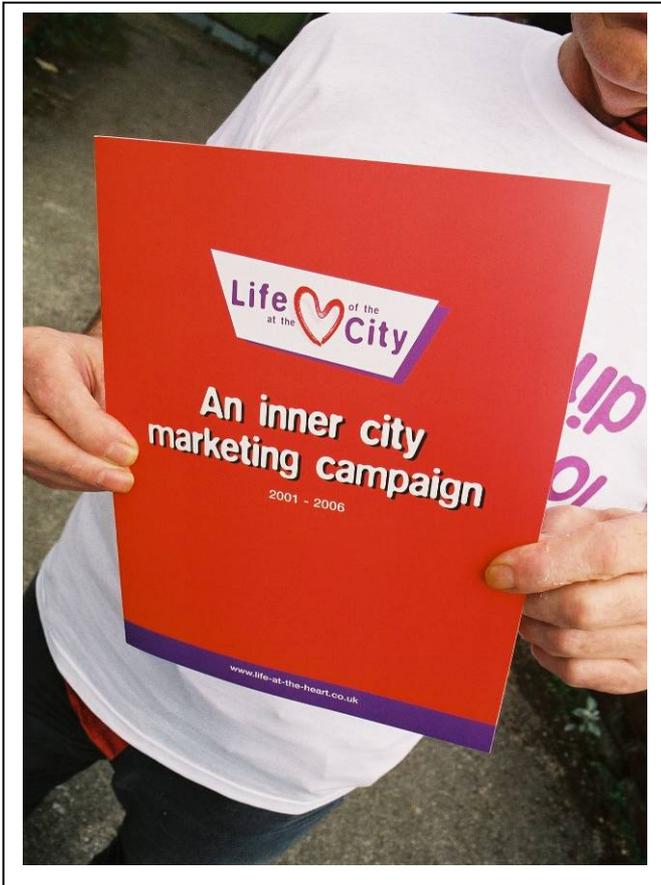
Taken from website details

RADFORD – HYSON GREEN - FOREST FIELDS 'THE LENTON TRIANGLE'

People from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds have made their homes here. Neighbourhoods with large Nottingham Trent and University of Nottingham student populations

RADFORD – HYSON GREEN – FOREST FIELDS

Rich diversity of cultures including Afro Caribbean, Polish, Vietnamese and Asian
Informal social networks are strong, particularly on those streets where moderate population turnover enables such contacts to develop and mature



Areas of long-standing multiple disadvantage with a negative image in the city
Local residents take considerable pride in their area.
Complex ethnic and social mix: 'diverse', 'vibrant', 'easy-going' and 'classless'



The local shops are much more plentiful and varied than is the case in many outlying estates and suburbs





Nottingham Express Transit's first tram line runs through these areas
 Convenience for the city centre and excellent public transport much appreciated
 Recreational and leisure spaces, including The Forest



Amongst other things home to the annual Nottingham Goose Fair



'THE LENTON TRIANGLE'
 Canning Circus, Derby Road, Lenton Boulevard, Ilkeston Road form a triangle with the highest concentration of student HMOs in the City.

'PLEASE DON'T BOTHER US!'

'Any resident living next to groups of students could not have failed to miss the irony on reading signs that were posted up during the peace and quiet that was 'exam week'. "Do not bother us..." was met by a wry smile by those few remaining long-suffering residents who still live on my street in the Lenton Triangle.

Aside from the noise from even more building, renovating and house alarms, I have been allowed my first solid week of calm since moving in seventeen months ago.

Last night, however, it was back to business as usual. My family was woken up at two o' clock by drunken singing, shouting, arguing, slamming doors and stomping footsteps.

I am beginning to feel a bit like a guest who has overstayed their welcome.

Firstly I had one year of banging. You presume it will be short-term.

On coming home from the hospital exhausted with my first born, I had to listen to horrendous noise and put up with shouting and dust until almost ten at night. Christmas Day was no exception.

When this renovation was over, six students immediately moved in and partied all week without caring about the fact that they had a family who lived next door.

Finally I elicited the help of the University who went around to speak to them. They came around to apologise.

What we then had were parties ... but with a polite warning fifteen minutes beforehand.

I am told that Lenton was once an area full of residents who looked out for each other. The ones that remain or who have recently moved out have given me a taste of that.

What a shame that this sense of community is fast becoming just a memory. ...'

[Letter from a resident of the Lenton Triangle, first published in the Spring 2005 issue of the NAG magazine]

TO LET

ROTHESAY AVENUE

Ideal for 5 students £65 pppw

This house has five large bedrooms (with double beds).The kitchen and bathroom were both completely refurbished in 2005. A fridge/freezer, washing machine and dishwasher are provided in the kitchen and the bathroom has a shower as well as a bath. The property has Gas Central Heating, with a radiator in each room..



Taken from website details

GOVERNMENT · COUNCIL · UNIVERSITIES · STUDENTS ·

Now all agree with us that there is problem.
THE CHALLENGE IS HOW TO SOLVE IT



IF GOVERNMENT TRULY WANTS ...

... Our neighbourhoods to contribute to strong, healthy and sustainable communities, it must make sure our local elected representatives and their officers have the right toolkit to do the job.

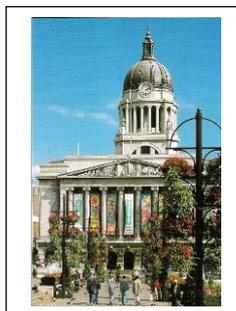
- 1 **HOUSING** – Licensing of all HMOs, not just those with the magic 3 +5 (three or more storeys and five or more tenants)
- 2 **PLANNING** – Change of Use Class Order so that, as in Northern Ireland, conversion from family home to HMO requires planning permission.
- 3 **TAX** – HMOs liable to a local business rate. They are businesses and should be treated as such.

THEN IT'LL BE UP TO US TO MAKE SURE THE TOOLKIT IS USED!

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL...

... Has acknowledged that the health and viability of our neighbourhoods are at risk. It:

- 1 Has appointed an Executive Member to lead on student issues
- 2 Has a Student Strategy Manager
- 3 Is developing student housing strategies, e.g. Building Balanced Communities Supplementary Planning Document)
- 4 Has active Neighbourhood Services and Public Health Sections
- 5 Is sponsoring a branch of UNIPOL in Nottingham
- 6 Continues to lobby Government for changes in legislation



Our neighbourhoods are part of the City. They are being exploited by landlords renting out second homes – dormitories for a transient population. As they have themselves shown, their true worth is as homes for families and others who want to be a part of the City every day of the week.

**OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS ARE PART OF THE CITY.
THEY ARE IMPORTANT AND SO ARE WE!**

THE UNIVERSITIES ...

... Claim to want to be our 'good neighbours'. They are responding and have:

- 1 Accepted responsibility for off-campus student behaviour
- 2 Revised their Codes of Discipline
- 3 Appointed off-campus student affairs officers
- 4 Developed framework community strategies



All of this is a welcome first step. But it is only a beginning. Both universities need to go a lot further and a lot faster. They've got a lot to catch up on. A good start is if they:

- 1 Publicly join with the Council and residents to lobby Government for changes in legislation
- 2 Fight openly alongside the Council and residents to prevent developers and landlords from further exploiting our neighbourhoods
- 3 Build so-called 'student villages' on their campuses
- 4 Don't expect us to take on the pastoral care of their students



RESPECT OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS: THEY ARE NOT EXTENSIONS OF YOUR CAMPUSES

THE STUDENT UNIONS ...

... Claim they want to live alongside us in our neighbourhoods. They too are responding with schemes like:

- 1 The Silent Students Happy Homes (Sshh) Campaign
- 2 Housing advice talks and booklets
- 3 Community Action projects
- 4 'Clean Up' campaigns
- 5 'Street Rep' scheme



We are glad to see these. But they do not begin to address the problems caused by too many HMOs, short-term tenancies, population imbalance, fewer and fewer permanent residents.

However, the solution is not neighbourhoods without students living in them. Rather it is neighbourhoods where there are fewer, better managed HMOs with tenants who don't appear in September and are gone again by June. The challenge for students is to remember their home neighbourhoods and remember that

**OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS ARE OUR HOMES,
NOT STUDENT VILLAGES**

THE MAD HATTERS' TEA PARTY

DEAR MINISTER ...

This is an extract from a letter sent recently by a Council planning enforcement team member to a resident who, last Autumn, passed on information to the Council's Planning Section about the occupancy of a number of houses which, under the terms of the Housing Act 2004, are now HMOs.

These properties do not have a history of being HMOs or being used as student lettings. No.3 is the only one to have been let to students prior to 2000. No.1 and No.2 became HMOs in September, 2002, and No.4 in September, 2004. The number of tenants at No.1 increased from six to seven at the beginning of the 2005-2006 academic session. Occupancy at No.2 was reduced from seven to six during 2004-2005, but returned to seven at the beginning of the 2005-2006 session. Despite an agreement to reduce the occupancy to six, No.3 has had eight tenants in each of the sessions since 2004. No.4 had six tenants in its first session as an HMO. This was increased to seven in September, 2005. All are two-storey buildings and will not be subject to the mandatory licensing provisions of the Housing Act 2004.

The house numbers and street name have been changed, but the essential content of the letter has not.

PLANNING & HMOs

'Further to our previous communications regarding the above properties, which historically have been used as student lettings.

As you are aware I have investigated and made observations on each of the properties since early March 2006. I feel it is an appropriate juncture to update you on the planning position with regard to these properties.

- *No.1 – a large detached property with a large garden area. Planning permission was granted in 2004 for a single storey rear extension, no occupation condition was attached. The former lounge has been used as a bedroom and 7 persons have previously occupied the property.*

- *No.2 – a large detached property with a large garden area. Planning permission was granted in 2002 for the conversion of garage to rear to living accommodation and a first floor extension. No occupation condition was attached. Enforcement action was authorised in May 2004, subject to evidence being available. However, the number of occupants was subsequently reduced to 6, therefore, no enforcement notice was issued at that time.*

- *No.3 – a large detached property with a large garden area. The owner had previously agreed to reduce the number of occupants to 6.*

- *No.4 – a large detached property with a large garden area. 7 persons have previously occupied the property.*

In general terms enforcement action can be taken to remedy unacceptable breaches of planning control and to pursue successful enforcement action we have to satisfy two tests - the evidential test and the public interest test.

With regard to the public interest test we are required to prove that demonstrable harm, over and above what might be expected at a residential dwelling house, is being caused by the breach of planning control and that a material change in the character of the property from a dwelling house to a house in multiple occupation has occurred. Observations made at the above properties have not, in our opinion, provided substantive evidence of demonstrable harm or material change in their character.

The importance of the latter test is borne out by the recent decision of a Planning Inspector when 2 enforcement notices relating to properties in Sheffield were quashed. The Inspector held that occupation by 7 or 8 persons was not materially different from occupation by 6 persons.

Returning to the specific properties investigated I have written to the owners of each reminding them of the authorised use of their properties (i.e. Class C3 Dwelling House) and advising that any departure from that Class may constitute a material change of use requiring planning permission.' ...

WITH RESPECT, MINISTER ...

We believe this example illustrates the very real need there is for Government to do two things:

- ① Introduce into planning legislation the definition of HMO used in the Housing Act 2004. This clearly differentiates between use by the much used example of a 'family home with two adults and four teen-age children' and use by a group of unrelated people sharing.
- ② Use the above definition to enable HMOs to be separated from Use Class C3 by creating a new Use Class (e.g. Use Class C4) so that change of use from a dwelling house/family home to an HMO requires planning permission.

At the Westminster seminar in June we pleaded for Government to begin to enact this legislation. In Northern Ireland it has been possible to define an HMO in planning terms and the need for new Use Classes Order legislation has been recognized and acted on. It makes no sense to for Westminster to continue to refuse to do the same for us here in England.

Without this simple, but fundamental, change in planning legislation, we will continue to have a situation where councils are reluctant to take action and neighbourhoods like this one are open to exploitation by 'clever' people who are prepared to manipulate inconsistencies in legislation and reliance on subjective judgement.

THE NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP

OUR ROLE:

challenge, monitor, work with

- Government Council Universities Students
- the National HMO Lobby

OUR GOAL:

Neighbourhoods that are balanced cohesive sustainable

WHICH MEANS:

- Fewer HMOs Rebalanced demography Improved environment and
- *Neighbourhoods where families want to live ... not leave!* —

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ...

WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER, 2006

7.15 p.m., The Hillside Club, Derby Road, Lenton

WE NEED ...

- ◆ People to take on the posts of Co-ordinator, Deputy Co-ordinator, Secretary, Treasurer ◆
- ◆ Committee members & others who would like to be involved on a less formal basis ◆
 - ◆ Editor for the magazine, Webmaster for www.NottinghamAction.org.uk ◆
 - ◆ People to contribute to or help with publishing and distributing this magazine ◆
- ◆ People who know about websites, desk top publishing and databases ... or want to learn ◆
- ◆ Anyone who wants to help in whatever way they can with the work of the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs ◆

If you are interested and would like to know more ... give us a call on 07762-525-625

The Committee of the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs is happy to acknowledge funding support from:
The Nottinghamshire Community Foundation and Nottingham City Council's Area 8 and Area 4 Committees

We would particularly like to thank :

Everyone who has contributed the photographs and the words without which this issue would not have been possible, especially The Partnership Council, Gregory Boulevard, Hyson Green for the photographs of neighbourhoods in Radford, Hyson Green and Forest Fields

The *Nottingham Evening Post* who have from time to time given permission to reproduce letters and articles originally published by them

The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Committee of the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs

We endeavour to ensure that our reports are accurate, but from time to time mistakes may occur. If you feel we have made such an error, please write to us at the following address.



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