

Notes of the Unipol-Nottingham Action Group on HMOs (U-NAG) Meeting: 'Current Trends & Future Developments in the Student Housing Market'

**Thursday 21 February 2019, 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm
Lecture Room, New Mechanics Institute, Nottingham**

APOLOGIES received before the meeting from: Professor Shearer West (Vice-Chancellor, Nottingham University); Cllr. Sally Longford; Cllr. Sam Webster; Mike Cole (Nottingham City Council); Anton Menzies (Nottingham City Council); Lorraine Raynor (Nottingham City Council); David Walker (Nottingham City Council); a number of residents.

SPEAKERS: Martin Blakey (CEO Unipol Student Homes); Steve Denton (Registrar Nottingham Trent University); Paul Greatrix (Registrar Nottingham University); Paul Seddon (Director of Planning & Regeneration Nottingham City Council).

UPDATES given by: Aran Hennessy (Principal Environmental Health Officer, Nottingham City Council); SCPO Rupindar Kooner (Community Protection Central North); SCPO Tom Lynk (Community Protection Central West).

ALSO PRESENT: Nottingham University: Jamie Dickinson, Melanie Futer, Kirsty Rackstraw, Andy Winter; **Nottingham Trent University:** Eleanor Cosh, Tim Jones, Michael Lees; **Nottingham City Council:** Cllr. Dave Trimble, Graham de Max, Matthew Grant, Julie Liversidge, David Scothern, Steve Stott; **Unipol (Nottingham office):** Charlotte Roch; **Residents from** the City Centre, Dunkirk & Lenton Ward, St. Anns Ward, Radford & Park Ward.

INTRODUCTION: A NAG representative announced the sad death of Sue Crossman (Nottingham City Council Environmental Health) whose sympathetic ear, sound advice, and prompt actions will be very much missed. We all share her family's loss. Also touched on was that it is 15 years since the NAG was formally constituted representing residents (individuals who also may or may not be members of residents' associations) from across the city and beyond sharing the same concerns about HMOs and their impact on their neighbourhoods. The NAG is a member of the National HMO Lobby. A brief outline of proposals for NAG meetings in 2019 was given (three seminars, maximum 15 participants: topics to be planning, housing, waste management toolkits); the relationship between Unipol and the NAG was noted; and a short summary of the ground to be covered in the evening's meeting was presented. The meeting was then turned over to the speakers.

Martin Blakey (CEO Unipol Student Homes) **NOTED** that:

- There has been a Unipol/NAG link for the last 10 years
- A city wide strategy involving both universities is required
- There is evidence to show a mixing of traditional student areas, with 11% of students choosing to live in the city centre
- Developers need to build a variety of size flats rather than increasing numbers of expensive studios
- Unipol's Accommodation Cost Survey 2018 was now complete and showed a 6.1% rise in Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) rent levels
- Upcoming developments equal 1,429 bed spaces that will not meet the planned expansion in student numbers from the two universities
- By 2020- 2021 3,000 additional bed spaces will be required (excluding post graduates)
- Consequences of this shortage will include; higher rents; current professional properties will move in to the student accommodation sector; illegal HMOs are likely along with developments outside of the Article 4 restriction area

In collaboration with the Students' Unions Unipol may roll out 'Rate your Landlord' a landlord rating system that sees students rating their landlord against a number of parameters that other students would be able to use to find good accommodation providers in Nottingham.

Paul Seddon (Nottingham City Council Director of Planning & Regeneration) **NOTED** that:

- 40-50% of all applications coming through planning are for PBSA developments

- There are 59,500 full time students currently enrolled at both Universities, around 70% would require accommodation in the city.
- Students make up 12% of the total population of the city
- The new University of Law will have 800-1000 students and while not all will have a residential need this will add further pressure for bed spaces
- 16% reduction in the number of student households since 2012 in HMOs.
- Nottingham Local Plan (Part 2) would be adopted in autumn 2019. This will strengthen planning policies to restrict HMOs with the aim being to encourage students out of traditional housing into PBSA

Paul Greatrix (Registrar Nottingham University) **NOTED** that:

- There will be some financial challenges ahead. Politicians are addressing student fees; however it is a sensitive political topic.
- The Civic University Commission Charter was launched this month in Houses Of Parliament Nottingham University has signed this. As universities, we have a responsibility to our students and our staff, but we also have a responsibility to the places around us. Our Civic University Agreements will be an opportunity to set out clearly, coherently and creatively how we will fulfill these responsibilities.
- The university is committed to provide a wide range of student properties in the city.
- The university wants to continue to work together with Nottingham Trent University and Nottingham City Council's planners to achieve joint goals.

Steve Denton (Registrar Nottingham Trent University) **NOTED** that:

- The immediate future is positive, Nottingham Trent is a popular university; Undergraduate applications are up by 11%, applications from students from overseas are up by 9% and the quality of applicant was high
- Many were awaiting the report from the post-18 education and funding review, which may include a cap of the number of students that they can recruit. The Chair of the review is Phillip Augar.
- 1,200 EU students are currently enrolled
- Prefer students to be housed in good quality, affordable PBSA with wrap around support. Pastoral and Mental Health support are recognised as increasingly important
- Across agency working is key, NAG play a crucial part.
- Unipol's role is crucial in assist with improving standards.

Aran Hennessy (Nottingham City Council Principal Environmental Health Officer) **NOTED** that:

- The Government has redefined what's Mandatory licensable, by removing the storey test, but adding a test that only those not in purpose built blocks of 3 or more flats would be licensable.
- The Governments Rogue Landlord database is up & running.
- The council can now apply for a banning order. The minimum term is 12 months up to indefinite. It is an imprisonable offence to breach a banning order offence.
- A new 5 year additional licence scheme has started on the 1st January 2019, and the area has expanded in size.
- The licence fee structure has been reviewed to ensure that less complaint landlords will now pay the highest licence application fee.
- Continue to work closely with CPO colleagues. ASB reports are considered when varying and granting licenses.
- There has been a marked reduction in the number of CPNs and CPNWs issued in the Lenton Triangle and the Drives area of Lenton. This is believed to be due to the new working relationship with the CPOs, and informing licence holders of CPNWs and CPNs issued at their property.
- Only 12 month licences granted where there is a lack of planning evidence for lawful use as C4 HMO. This gives the licence holder time to apply for planning permission and to go through any appeals to the Planning Inspectorate.
- A new pro-active team is in operation looking for unlicensed properties.

- Funding has been received from the Central Government for the development of an intelligence model to find unlicensed HMOs.
- Happy to take direct complaints regarding licensed HMOs: please email hmo@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Tom Lynk (Senior CPO, Community Protection Central West) and **Rupindar Kooner** (Senior CPO, Community Protection Central North) **NOTED:**

- That they are a front line service. Funding is received from both Universities to run patrols from 10.00 pm – 3.00 am.
- That they are there for the welfare of the students, but find bins on the street is an on-going issue.
- Data on CPO activities (CPNWs, CPNs, alcohol confiscation, etc.) in Central West and Central North for the academic year to date, viz:
 - **Central West:** CPNWs = 690; CPNs = 88, Alcohol confiscations = 399 (recorded); Section 46s (for bins on street enforcement) = 839.
 - **Central North:**
 - Noise – CPNWs = 129; CPNs = 12
 - Fly tips investigated = 36
 - Bins on streets – Section 46s = 77, CPNWs = 16
 - Alcohol confiscations = 333.

DISCUSSION AND QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION: Martin Blakey, Steve Denton, Paul Greatrix and Paul Seddon, along with Aran Hennessy and Tom Lynk and Rupindar Kooner took part in an open session with attendees. Matters raised included:

- *3.00 am is too early to stop patrols by CPOs as it is after this time that the most disturbance occurs.*
- *Anti-social behaviour is getting louder, later and more severe.*

Steve Denton confirmed that Nottingham Trent University is happy to provide more funding in order to make sure that CPOs can be out on patrol after 3.00 am.

- *Is it sensible to continue to build more purpose built student accommodation?*
- *Purpose build student accommodation is not helping to reduce the requirement for HMOs in Lenton.*

Paul Seddon responded that

- An oversupply of bed spaces in the city is needed in order to address many issues including rent levels, choice and putting pressure on landlords offering poor quality accommodation.
- Student purpose build accommodation is helping. Without it the pressure on neighbourhoods such as Lenton would be worse. The question arises as to where to build this accommodation to attract Nottingham University students? Because of the excellent public transport links, the area around Nottingham Railway Station is one possibility.

Paul Greatrix explained that Nottingham University wants to continue to recruit EU staff and students in order to maintain a diverse working environment, but warned that this will become harder to achieve in the aftermath of Brexit.

- *Difficulties continue to exist in reporting anti-social behaviour as and when it occurs.*

Tom Lynk and Rupindar Kooner outlined how CPOs receive reports of anti-social behaviour.

- *When to report evidence of conversion from use class C3 ('family home') to C4 (small HMO) and sui generis (large) HMO, and increased occupancy, and what action can be taken by the Council?*

Aran Hennessy emphasised that it is important to report concerns as soon as possible (e-mail hmo@nottinghamcity.gov.uk). It was also explained that it is not possible for the HMO Licensing and Enforcement teams to take action before the conversion has taken place. Conversion from C3 to C4 and C4 to sui generis requires planning permission to be sought (and given).

NAG: reiterated that seminar-style meetings with no more than 15 participants are planned this year – one on HMO-related planning legislation and one on HMO-related housing legislation – which will aim to explain the toolkit available to Council officers and the limitations on what they can and cannot do.

SUMMARY: There are emerging points of agreement between the different parties present at the meeting regarding student purpose build accommodation, especially focussed around the design and the need for a range of different types and styles and rentals. These must form the basis of informed strategic planning for the future.

The frustration of residents with a wide range of activities, which can be grouped together under the heading 'anti-social behaviour,' was obvious. The work of the universities, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire Police was acknowledged, but these problems, continue to have a detrimental and corrosive impact on the lives of residents and on the neighbourhoods in which they live. The evidence is that the actions being taken are not providing satisfactory solutions.

The out-of-hours (late night/early morning) activities of CPOs are welcome and strongly supported by residents, but are limited in their effectiveness by the amount of resources available. The offer by Steve Denton to provide more funding for CPO work is welcome as a continuing step in the right direction.

After thanking everyone who had taken part in the evening, the NAG representative closed the meeting at 8.00 pm.