

NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP EVENTS

SPRING 2009



**ST. MARY'S CHURCH HALL
WOLLATON HALL DRIVE, WOLLATON PARK**

Unipol & Nottingham Action Group

OPEN MEETING

**CONTROL OF LETTING BOARDS
PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING**

WEDNESDAY, 15 APRIL

7.15 pm – 9.00 pm

Nottingham Action Group

OPEN MEETING

UNIPOL:

REPORT ON WORK IN PROGRESS

WEDNESDAY, 20 MAY

7.15 pm – 9.00 pm

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FOREWORD – THE EDITOR'S RAMBLINGS –



When I last started putting together the NAG magazine, a forgettable summer was just turning into autumn. Six months on and over the last couple of weeks I've been getting back to doing the same task – assembling all the bits and pieces for this, Spring 2009, issue of the magazine.

The articles on 'Nottingham's Blooming Neighbourhoods', the proposed development of a MediPark on land adjacent to the QMC, and the Nottingham Trent University and Partnership Council collaboration on an eco-house project are something of a departure from what we usually carry in the magazine. Nevertheless, to my mind at least, they are very much in keeping with this time of year as well as with what the NAG is all about: neighbourhoods and the practical things that can be made to happen and that give us some hope that one day they will become again places where ordinary families want to live.

Because this is Spring 2009, it means that the Nottingham Action Group has been around now for five years. Perhaps an appropriate time to remind ourselves, and others, how and why the Group started, and to review what it has and has not achieved. Consequently, though it is somewhat narcissistic, I have given over a section of the magazine to the NAG itself.

The NAG is a member of the National HMO Lobby. Last May, Iain Wright MP, Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Communities and Local Government visited Loughborough and Nottingham. Since then, he has been back to Loughborough and, very recently, visited Southampton.

The NAG's counterparts in Southampton have written up the visit, and it is reproduced in the magazine, along with a short article by one of the Southampton MPs, Dr. Alan Whitehead, who, as a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), has been campaigning actively in Westminster on changes to the Use Classes Order (UCO).

As for the rest of the magazine – it's a mixture of what's happening (or isn't happening) in our neighbourhoods, and other odds and ends which have

either strayed across my desk of late, or which I have squirreled away on the off chance that they might come in handy, and that you might like to share with me.

Of course, as always I hope you're going to want to read the magazine from cover to cover. However, I would like to draw your attention especially to the piece by Guy Welton, Unipol Nottingham's new bureau manager, and the feature on 'Control of Letting Boards' that follow directly on from this rambling of mine.

Guy's article outlines some schemes that Unipol are working on and which we all hope will enhance the appearance of our neighbourhoods and improve the way we all feel about them, whilst the feature on 'Control of Letting Boards' highlights some of the activities that are going on and in which the NAG is very much involved.

Today, 'To Let' boards and 'Let By' boards, all of which remain in place for the next 12 months and so become a permanent feature, are an extremely intrusive fact of life in our studentified neighbourhoods. But are they a fact of life we have to live with?

I think not! And this isn't just wishful thinking on my part. In Leeds and in Loughborough there are schemes in place which ban 'Let By' boards and which, by limiting the size, style, number of 'To Let' by boards on any one street, as well as the amount of time they can be left in place, have greatly reduced the impact of these boards and improved the appearance of neighbourhoods like ours.

Now, we in Nottingham have a chance to do the same thing. Unipol and Nottingham City Council want to bring in a scheme to control lettings boards in a designated area of the City.

In the first instance, this scheme will be voluntary. However, if the Leeds and Loughborough experiences are anything to go by, the probability is that after a trial period, the Council will need to apply to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for permission to operate a mandatory scheme.

So, where do we, the established residents, come in and why?

The answer is that we have a pivotal role to play in all of this. We all need to come out and take part in the consultation process that is going on now – make our ideas and views known. By doing that we will have real influence on the shape of the scheme and how it is implemented.

I very much look forward to seeing you all at the final consultation meeting on:

WEDNESDAY, 15 APRIL
7.15 pm
ST. MARY'S CHURCH HALL
Wollaton Hall Drive, Wollaton Park

Meantime, back to where I started this ramble – the Spring 2009 issue of the magazine. Read on and I do hope you enjoy it.

[Editor, April, 2009]

UNIPOL WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE YOUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

NOTTINGHAM'S FORESTS

A forest of 'To Let' boards, followed by another forest of 'Let By' or 'Let Agreed' boards do nothing to improve the appearance of our streets. It's a put-off to potential family buyers and renters.

It pinpoints HMOs to would-be burglars. And it reinforces the transient nature of the community. It is one of those issues that established residents and students agree on.

As a past President of Nottingham Trent's Students Union wrote for this magazine in 2007: 'We too are sick of the numerous TO LET signs left up permanently, preventing the student residents from ever feeling at 'home. ...'

NOTTINGHAM'S JUNGLES

Another fact of life is so-called 'gardens', often little more than a patch of overgrown grass and weeds, well seeded with litter and rubbish, or, if it's big enough to take a car or two, covered in rubble and hard core with a few hardy nettles and thistles to accompany the takeaway boxes, cans and bottles. The Unipol-DASH Code states that:

- All boundary walls and fences will be maintained stable and in good repair;
- Where a garden exists, the path to and from the external door(s) to the house will be kept in good repair and free from obstruction;
- Where a garden or paved area exists this shall be kept in good order and free of waste and litter, so far as is reasonably practicable;
- Where a front garden already exists, it is not converted, in accordance with Local Authority recommendations and planning policies, into a hard standing area and, where possible where a garden already exists this shall be retained as a soft planted area (this includes low maintenance gravelling with planting)

In Leeds, where Unipol has been based for more than 20 years, garden surveys have become a regular occurrence. Unipol in Nottingham carried out its first garden survey last summer.

In this article Guy outlines some the work that Unipol is planning to do to tackle our 'Forests' and 'Jungles'.



Unipol is a not-for-profit student housing organisation aiming to raise the standard of properties through a landlord accreditation scheme called the Unipol DASH Code. Unipol works closely with Nottingham City Council, the University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University, the Universities' Students' Unions, and the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs.

Through its work with the Nottingham Action Group, Unipol hopes to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with all residents living in our local neighbourhoods.

This spring, Unipol is working on two initiatives to help improve the appearance of neighbourhoods in Dunkirk, and Lenton Ward, Wollaton Park and parts of Radford & Park Ward.

From May, in conjunction with Nottingham City Council, Unipol will be developing a scheme to control the use of 'To-Let' boards displayed on properties. Also, with assistance from the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs (NAG), Unipol will be carrying out its second Garden Survey of accredited properties in an effort to give them a good spring clean.

'To-Let' boards are a blight upon many streets in neighbourhoods with large numbers of shared houses (HMOs) making them unattractive to established residents and students alike. Unipol is currently consulting with the Council, residents, landlords and students to devise a voluntary scheme to restrict the use of lettings boards.

For a six-month trial period beginning in June, landlords will be asked to join the scheme and agree to limit their usage of boards. The scheme has the full backing of Nottingham City Council.

Cllr Dave Trimble, Nottingham City Councillor for Dunkirk and Lenton Ward, said that "Nottingham City Council will be giving its full support to this new proposed scheme and we hope it will also find the support of Nottingham's landlord community."



In conjunction with the City Council and the Nottingham Action Group, Unipol are holding the following open meetings where residents can make their views known before the voluntary scheme takes effect in June:

MONDAY, 16 MARCH:
7.15 pm, St. Mary's Church Hall, Wollaton Hall Drive,
Wollaton Park

WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH:
6.30 pm, Thomas Helwys Church, Church Street, Lenton

WEDNESDAY, 15 APRIL
7.15 pm, St. Mary's Church Hall, Wollaton Hall Drive,
Wollaton Park

In particular, Unipol wants feedback from local residents about the details and restrictions of the scheme. For example, restrictions could include regulating the number of boards any one agent/landlord can display per street, the size and type of boards used, the way that the boards are displayed and the time of year that boards are permitted to be in place.



The second initiative is the Unipol Garden Survey. So far around 1,300 properties have been accredited under the Unipol DASH Code. On Thursday, 7 May, Unipol will

be inspecting hundreds of gardens at accredited properties in local neighbourhood to make sure they comply with the Code.



Faye Powell, Unipol's Accreditation Officer is looking forward to the Garden Survey and said, "After the first round of inspections last summer, there were some real transformations of poor gardens, and it's hoped it will have the same impact this time too."

[Guy Welton, Unipol Nottingham Bureau Manager,
March, 2009

HELP NEEDED & INFORMATION GIVEN

The Nottingham Action Group is looking for volunteers to help Unipol with the Garden Survey, so if you are free on the day and would like to help, please get in touch

Tel: 07762-525-625

E-Mail: contact@nottinghamaction.org.uk



For more information about these schemes or about any of Unipol's activities, please contact:

Guy Welton

**Unipol Accommodation Bureau Manager
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E-Mail: info@nottingham.unipol.org.uk

CONTROL OF LETTING BOARDS

VOLUNTARY SCHEME CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

This document provides the framework for the various public consultation meetings taking place in March and April of this year.

There are a significant number of privately rented properties in the Lenton, Dunkirk and Radford areas. This has resulted in a proliferation of 'To Let' boards in recent years, having a detrimental impact upon the visual appearance of streets in the area.

In order to control the density of boards and improve the appearance of the area, Unipol and Nottingham City Council have devised a voluntary scheme on the erection of boards. The scheme aims to control the visual impact of 'To Let' boards, whilst allowing landlords to legitimately advertise their properties.

The details of the scheme are as follows, and will operate within the boundaries of the attached map:

- Each landlord or property owner shall not display more than one board per street, per type of property
- The board shall conform to the following layout:
 - ♦ 34cm x 48cm either in portrait or landscape
 - ♦ White background with text in a single colour
 - ♦ Up to 20% may be occupied by a logo
- There shall be no 'let by' signs
- The board shall be removed within 14 days of the property being let
- Boards should be mounted on buildings and should not be placed on posts in the gardens or the grounds.

TIME FRAME

Unipol has agreed to take the lead on the voluntary scheme which will be operational from 1 May, 2009 for a period of six months after which it will be evaluated.

JOINING THE VOLUNTARY SCHEME

All landlords and managing agents with properties in the area will be formally invited to commit to joining the scheme.

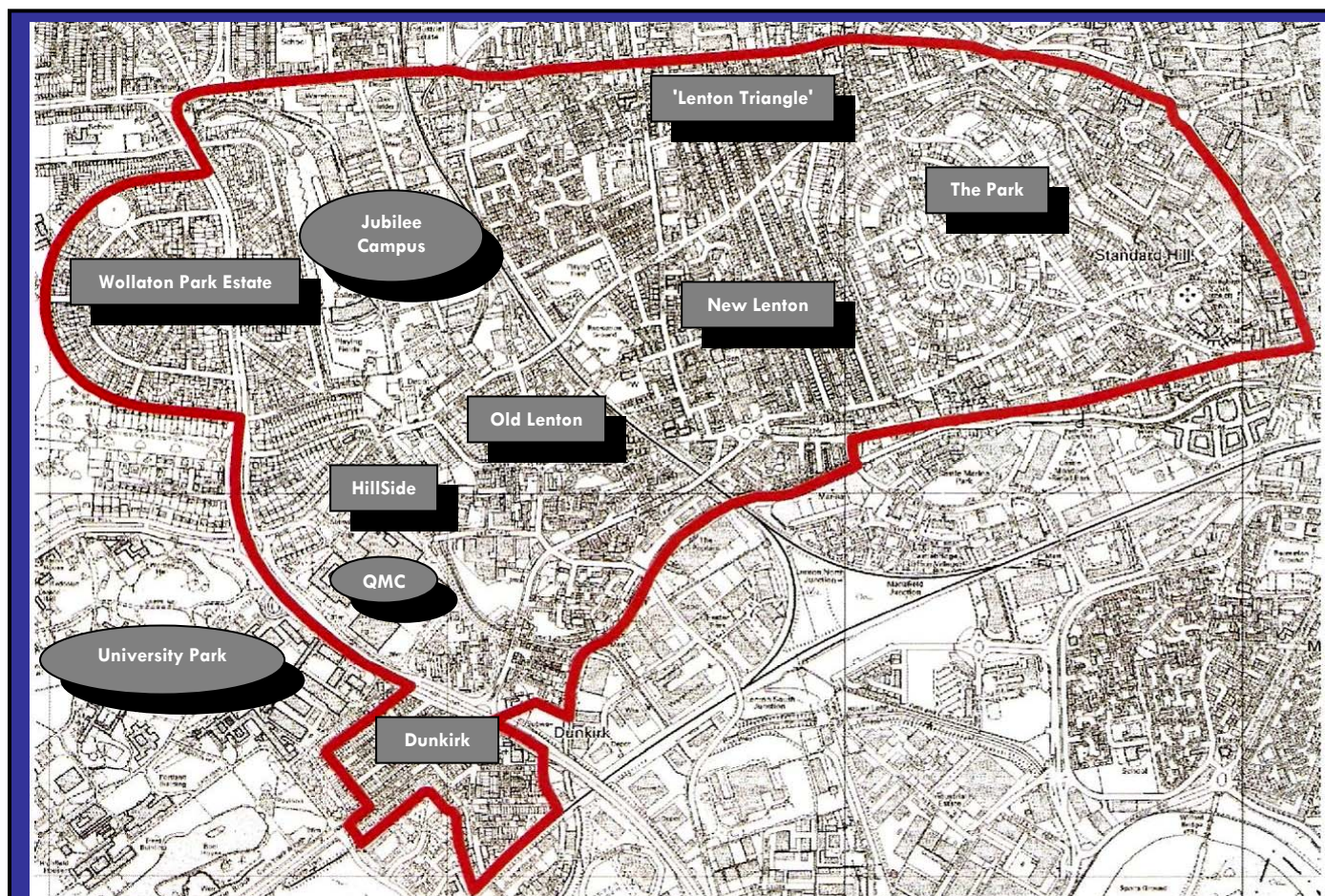
MONITORING THE VOLUNTARY SCHEME

Unipol will engage a number of partners and they and Unipol will monitor the use of Letting Boards within the boundaries of the restriction area.

REVIEWING THE SCHEME

A review will take place in November, 2009. If the voluntary scheme has not been deemed successful, Nottingham City Council has agreed to apply for further mandatory powers to control boards from the Department for Communities and Local Government. It is envisaged that the mandatory scheme would use the same conditions as the voluntary scheme as detailed above, with the important addition of a moratorium on all boards, likely to take place during the month of November each year.

During this period, no letting boards should be displayed on any properties in the control area.



PROPOSED AREA OF SPECIAL CONTROL OF LETTING BOARDS OUTLINED IN RED

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL GUIDANCE FOR LANDLORDS

You may find it useful to take a look at extracts from Leeds City Council's new draft 'Guidance for Landlords on the Erection of Residential Letting Boards in Inner North West Leeds, January 2009' and compare the conditions it imposes with those proposed for Nottingham.

WHY IS THERE A CODE?

Leeds City Council has produced this document to help landlords/agents of residential properties comply with the special restrictions in place in part of inner north west Leeds.

The Area of Special Control has been designated following approval by Communities and Local Government (CLG). There are a significant number of privately rented properties in the Headingley and Hyde Park areas. Whilst there has been a proliferation of 'To Let' boards in the past, a successful Code has been in place since 2006 which has improved the visual appearance of streets in the area.

In order to continue exercising the powers granted by CLG, the City Council has revised the previous Code in consultation with key stakeholders. The Code aims to control the visual impact of 'To Let' boards, whilst allowing landlords to legitimately advertise their properties.

WHAT IS THE CODE?

The code states:

- **Only one board per building will be permitted.**
- **Each board will conform to the following layout:
34cm x 48cm or 48cm x 34cm.**
- **The board shall be mounted flush to the wall above/around the front door, or if that is not possible, it shall be mounted flush to the wall on the street frontage elevation. In either instance, no part of the board shall be higher than first-floor window sill level.**
- **The board shall have a white background with black text. Up to 20% of the board may be occupied by a logo (which may be in colour).**
- **One board shall be permitted per landlord/agent per street. However, if a landlord/agent specifies on the board, the number of bedrooms in the advertised property, one board shall be permitted per type of property, up to a maximum of three per street. ...**
- **There shall be no 'Let By' signs.**
- **'To Let' boards shall be removed not later than 14 days of the granting of a tenancy for the room, house or flat in question.**
- **All 'To Let' boards shall be removed by 1st November each year with no new boards being erected until 1st January. ...**

... WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

'To Let' boards usually benefit from deemed consent i.e. they do not require permission. Within the Area of Special Control, 'To Let' boards will be subject to control by the City Council. Only those boards which are in accordance with the code are likely to be considered acceptable. ...

... WHAT ENFORCEMENT ACTION CAN BE TAKEN?

The Council's Compliance Team are carrying out regular surveys of the Area of Special Control and pursuing prosecutions where appropriate. The Council can immediately bring a prosecution in the Magistrates Court. The maximum fine on conviction of an offence is presently £1000, with an additional daily fine of one-tenth of the maximum penalty on conviction of a continuing offence.

...

LEEDS HMO LOBBY LETTING BOARDS IN LEEDS

Leeds City Council's conclusion is that: '*... Whilst there has been a proliferation of 'To Let' boards in the past, a successful Code has been in place since 2006 which has improved the visual appearance of streets in the area. ...*' However, in the final analysis success has to be down to whether the people on the ground – the residents – have found that the scheme has improved the situation in Leeds, or not.

Richard Tyler's short article 'Letting Boards in Leeds' provides some background to the Leeds' scheme and also an assessment of its usefulness in tackling the problems in Headingley.

A decade ago, when Leeds City Council began to take seriously the concerns of the residents of Headingley about the impact of concentrations of HMOs (what has now come to be known as 'studentification'), one of the particular issues was Letting Boards. The streets of Headingley presented an infestation of these boards, particularly at the time of student 'house-hunting'.

After local consultation, in 2000 the Council agreed to carry out a pilot scheme, in which landlords were asked to observe a voluntary code of practice, restraining the use of the boards. The scheme was introduced at the beginning of 2001, and monitored partly by the Council and partly by local community associations in a trial area. The pilot was an abysmal failure.

Accordingly, the Council resolved to apply to the government for powers to impose a compulsory scheme. An application was made in 2002, but in the Spring of 2003, the government rejected it (The grounds were never entirely clear.).

Undaunted, the Council tried again. An exhaustive case was prepared, and re-submitted in December 2004. A Public Inquiry was held in February 2005, and in July, the government approved the Council's application.

In January 2006, the scheme came into effect. Deemed consent for Letting Boards within a designated area was withdrawn. This meant that anyone wishing to erect such a board required planning permission. However, the Council agreed a Code with landlords and residents: boards which respected this Code were permitted without planning permission. Initially, some landlords flouted the Code – but enforcement and prosecutions meant that in due course the Code became widely observed. In fact, in addition to the compulsory area, members of Leeds Property Association volunteered to establish a much larger voluntary zone, which they undertook to police. The effect has been the transformation of Headingley's streets.

The government gave permission for a period of three years, which expired at the end of 2008. Accordingly, the Council applied for a renewal in the summer of 2008, proposing some amendments to the Code and an expansion of the compulsory area, with the agreement of the LPA. Regrettably, delay by the government has meant that we still await a decision on renewal. In the mean time, the scheme as a whole operates on a voluntary basis.

[Dr. Richard Tyler, Leeds HMO Lobby, March, 2009]

LOUGHBOROUGH SARG & WITHDRAWAL OF DEEMED CONSENT — A HISTORY —

Richard Tyler and the Leeds HMO Lobby are not the only members of the National HMO Lobby to have been successful in applying for permission to withdraw 'Deemed Consent'. Our colleagues in Loughborough (SARG) also have an area of letting board control, and this is the story of how it came about and what impact it has had on the streets where SARG's members live.

Our thanks to Hilda for putting it together for us.

The trouble began in 1999 when our least caring letting agent started putting up 'To Let' signs over the Christmas vacation. An avalanche of signs from other agents followed until our streets were festooned with 'flags', though there was nothing for residents to celebrate!

On the contrary, we were up in arms, because these unsightly additions to the local environment remained up for months with the excuse that contracts had not yet been signed! Enforcement was non-existent. Helped by Ward councillors, we had our first hearing at the Environment Scrutiny Committee in August 2002. A unanimous vote pressed for the "Withdrawal of Deemed Consent" in both Conservation Areas. Maddeningly, Cabinet kept blocking and deferring a decision on the proposal!

January 2003 and hundreds of signs were again downgrading the streets with no indication that the Council would ensure their legal use. We did some research on what Westminster had achieved with respect to signs. We invited Council leaders to take a walk round the area and resolved to keep the pressure up for Withdrawal of Deemed Consent. In March Cabinet again rejected the idea. This decision was "called in" by Ward councillors. It went back to Scrutiny Committee, who unanimously supported our proposal and sent it to Full Council in April 2003. It did not escape councillors' notice that a large number of the public from various areas of the town attended. There was overwhelming support for this item!

During the next few months, agents were invited to meet with Cabinet and officers to look at a 'gentlemen's agreement' regarding use of signs. This procedure was a total washout as very few agents responded. In June 2003 a planning officer was designated to begin enquiries with the ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister which has since been replaced by the Department for Communities and Local Government). Meanwhile residents kept their eye on the boards'

situation and reported back on any up for more than 14 days. Finally in September 2003 Cabinet instructed officers to apply to the ODPM for the Withdrawal of Deemed Consent in one part of the area covered by SARG (only eleven streets). This should have been a warning signal to estate agents.

'To Let' boards in large numbers arrived even earlier in the year!

By January 2004 Charnwood Borough Council's submission to the ODPM was underway, drawing heavily on evidence from SARG. People were encouraged to send individual letters of support to the Inspectorate and copies of a proforma letter were made available. SARG also wrote a supporting letter as part of the Council's submission. In April 2004 an Inspector visited the area and found over 160 signs still up. After over four years of hard work by the community, Withdrawal of Deemed Consent was finally granted in August 2004. The ODPM pronounced that the restricted area was of special enough character to deserve this ruling. It became effective from 1 September 2004. At that time we became one of only three authorities to be granted Withdrawal of Deemed Consent status – a great victory for the community and the council working together!

Thanks to the persistent vigilance of the community and the response of enforcement officers, things have worked well. The Council is now applying for a renewal of the ruling for another five years.

Some residents were disappointed that the ruling only included eleven streets, but Charnwood Borough Council chose the smallest, tightest area to maximise the possibility of approval, the intention being to gradually apply to protect other areas. While this has not happened, the Council has worked patiently with agents to come to a gentlemen's agreement not to put up signs in the other Conservation Area.

Vigilance by the community continues to be of the utmost importance in controlling this arrangement, but it does seem to be working.

[Hilda Puttick, April, 2009]



NOTTINGHAM: WILL CONTROLS WORK HERE & WILL THEY IMPROVE OUR STREETS?

There do not appear to be any reasons why controls should not work in Nottingham.

The situation in the proposed area of special control here is substantially no different from that in Headingley in Leeds or, for that matter, in the Storer and Ashby Road parts of Loughborough.

Of more than passing interest is the knock-on effects reported by Richard Tyler in Leeds and colleagues in Loughborough that their areas of special control have had elsewhere.

In both Leeds and Loughborough, areas of voluntary control have now sprung up outside those covered by DCLG's permission to remove deemed consent. It begins to appear that landlords and letting agents, having been compelled to adhere to a code, have started to operate the same code elsewhere, and without compulsion. Though, as the Loughborough report warns: *'Vigilance by the community continues to be of the utmost importance in controlling this arrangement.'*

This supports research carried out recently with Nottingham's student population which indicates that 'To Let' boards outside properties are a relatively minor way of advertising properties to students looking for accommodation. The internet in general, and specialized websites like that operated by Unipol in particular, are far more likely to be used by students when house-hunting.

It also supports the theory that landlords and agents use letting boards more as a means of advertising themselves or, especially in the case of lettings agents, the amount of work they do for the fees they charge their clients. In other words, the perennial display of letting boards in our neighbourhoods can be compared to the sort of 'fitness' displays and territorial marking indulged in by a variety of different animal & bird species!



Looked at in this light, it's something to make you laugh, albeit that the laugh is somewhat hollow.

As to whether they will improve our streets – here are two photographs taken in Lenton:



Letting Boards: Mettham Street



Letting Boards: Park Road

And here, for comparison, is one taken in a street where the Leeds' Area of Special Control is in operation:



Burleigh Lodge Road:
The 'traditional' boards on view are two 'For Sale' boards. Letting boards are small, above doors, flush to the walls and relatively unobtrusive

WHICH DO YOU PREFER?

NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP FIVE YEARS OF THE NAG

It's difficult to pinpoint exactly when the momentum that led to the formation of the NAG began to build up. A lot of what happened came about almost by accident rather than intent, with contacts being established between people who, as a rule, one would not have expected to meet up, but who did.

By pooling their resources they set up the circumstances that brought together a diverse group of individuals from very different neighbourhoods in Nottingham who had in common the same sort of concerns about the erosion of those neighbourhoods by large numbers of shared houses (HMOs as we since learned to call them).

No doubt, opinions will vary as to exactly when that momentum became sufficient to trigger the formation of the NAG. In February, 2003 the University of Nottingham hosted the launch of a report commissioned by the City's Area 4 Committee on the effects of what we now call 'studentification'. That launch brought together some of the people who helped to bring about the NAG. A meeting with Alan Simpson MP followed on the 14 August 2003. Although it had been arranged at relatively short notice, more than 70 people came together at the then Western Club. But in my mind, the meeting on the 18 November, 2003 of the QMC Forum is the event that finally triggered the formal constitution of the NAG a few months later.

I've done some hunting around in the NAG's archives, and I've come up with two articles in the *Evening Post*, one by Joanna Kowalski reporting that QMC Forum meeting, and one written by Guy Woodford about the inaugural meeting of the Nottingham Action Group on 7 February, 2004. Together, they begin to set the scene for what has come about since.

Editor

FEARS ON STUDENT 'INVASION'

Residents aim to form an action group to give them a say about Nottingham's growing student population.

More than 100 people from Lenton packed a public meeting last night where they met representatives from the University of Nottingham and the city council to grill them over worries about student numbers.

Residents said the growing number of students in private accommodation was eroding traditional communities and leading to problems of anti-social behaviour, crime and environmental health.

And the accused the council and the university of not doing enough to halt the situation.

Maya Fletcher, 50, of Derby Road, said: "Students are not in the community – they are replacing it.

"The student population is now 12% of Nottingham's population and in some streets the population of students is just about 100%.

"When they are in the community they are treating it as an unregulated playground."

Alan Schofield, a member of the Arboretum Residents' Association, said: "We are losing our schools and shops and our communities are being blighted.

"But the university is still planning to have more students. We have got a crisis and they are going to increase it. Their first step should be to say until we sort out this problem, no more students."

University registrar Keith Jones said that they were building more purpose-built student accommodation and in the next two years there would be 2,000 more bed spaces, 800 of which would be on campus sites.

He said: "We are aware of the concerns that have been expressed about the growth of the student population. We are concerned to be seen as good neighbours and we want our students to act as responsible citizens."

He added that the university was also working on a number of schemes to educate students about their social responsibilities and to work with other agencies to try and

improve the quality of student accommodation in the private sector.

Barry Horne, director of development at the city council, also outlined what the local authority was doing about the issue which included increasing street cleaning in high student population areas, operating warden patrols in such areas and using its maximum planning powers.

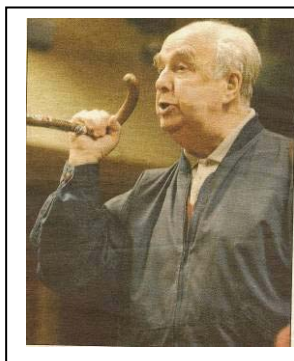
He said: "We believe there is in some parts of Nottingham an imbalance in the community that is not just about an impact on anti-social behaviour and litter but also about the viability of community resources and public services."

At the end of the meeting, at the Western Club in Derby Road, residents were asked to fill in a questionnaire about forming an action group.

Organisers are planning to hold another meeting to formally set one up.

[Joanna Kowalski, *Nottingham Evening Post*,
19 November, 2003]

ACTION DEMAND OVER STUDENT HOMES REGISTRAR TO TOUR AREA WITH RESIDENTS



The registrar of the University of Nottingham is to be shown at first-hand problems which it is claimed are caused by students in parts of the city.

It comes after 50 people attended the first meeting of a residents' pressure group set up to tackle the problem. The Nottingham Action Group on HMOs (houses in

multiple occupancy) met for the first time on Saturday at the Western Club in Derby Road, Lenton.

Maya Fletcher, of Derby Road, who runs a Neighbourhood Watch scheme, said: "Mr. Jones will spend

about three hours walking around our communities and I hope by then he will have a better idea of where we are coming from. I'm sick and tired of talk.

"We need action to improve our communities. We are working closely with the Leeds HMO Lobby.

"They have worked very closely with the city council there and other bodies to identify an agreed area of student housing restraint, where certain areas are not allowed more student accommodation."

Ms. Fletcher is joining a deputation of councillors, council officers and residents who are meeting Minister for Housing and Planning Keith Hill in London on Thursday to discuss the issues raised during the meeting.

Another group member, Jacqueline Flude of Sherwin Road, Old Lenton, said: *"Only two weeks ago there were more than 50 students on the road outside my house running around blowing whistles and making a huge noise.*

"The girls were urinating behind cars and the boys were urinating in bins.

"I'm having to go outside and clean up my street every day. There's hardly anyone who lives in my area who isn't transient."

There are 25,000 students in the city and a city council study estimated there would be more than 40,000 by 2009.

University of Nottingham public affairs director Philip Dalling has previously said that the university expected an extra 3,000 students over the next three years.

Mr. Dalling has said the university is working with the city council about the possibility of creating more student villages, after building similar sites such as Raleigh Park in Triumph Road.

He has highlighted how the Government funds students but not student accommodation – which means universities have to find the resources to build it.

[Guy Woodford, Nottingham Evening Post, 8 February, 2004]

EDITORIAL COMMENT TAKING ACTION

The photo at the head of the article by Guy Woodford is of Mr. Enoch Rollo who had come to the QMC Forum meeting and then to the inaugural meeting of the NAG.

It will be a long time before I forget being very strongly reminded by Mr. Rollo, as he waved his walking stick at me, that the Group is the Nottingham ACTION Group, and, from where he was at the back of the room, there wasn't a lot of action going on – just a lot of talking.

Mr. Rollo died a couple of years ago, but as was said at the meeting with Dr. Darren Smith in March, I, for one, very much hope that his plea for this to be an action group, not a talking shop, has been heeded.

One of the things I know the NAG has done quite effectively over these past years (and sometimes to the annoyance of the 'powers that be') is to raise the profile of the issues, both nationally and locally. What I had forgotten is how early on in the NAG's existence that started to take place. Again by delving into the archives, I found that at the end of June, 2004 I had put together a three-page news sheet – the precursor of this magazine. Here's an extract from it which gives a catch up on NAG activities since it formed and how successful the Group

had been in getting the problems noticed – nationally, in Nottingham and in our neighbourhoods.

NATIONAL ACTION ... DEPUTATION TO WESTMINSTER

Two of the Group joined Council representatives and Richard Tyler of the National HMO Lobby in a meeting arranged by Alan Simpson MP with Keith Hill, Minister of State for Housing and Planning.

The background to the meeting was the Housing Bill and legislation that will affect HMO's.

We took the opportunity to describe to the Minister the effects on our neighbourhoods of increasing numbers of student households and absentee landlords who have no concern for the welfare of residents or students, and what we need to have in the legislation to begin to help this situation.

We also tackled him about planning legislation and the situation where residents pay Council Tax while landlords and students are exempt. He could not have been left in any doubt about the strength of feeling of the delegation as well as a number of MP's whose constituents also have 'studentification' problems.

At the moment the Bill is going through the House of Lords and it seems as if the Government is not minded to listen.

So, although the new definition of HMO will include student houses and is to be welcomed, a substantial number of them will fall outside the proposed licensing scheme – not good news for residents and students, but no doubt music to the ears of many landlords who resist any kind of regulation of their businesses.

For us it means nagging on until the Government does listen and does act!

THE NAG AND RAISING THE PROFILE OF THE ISSUES ...

Although we're all painfully familiar with the issues, lots of people elsewhere in Nottingham, even in neighbourhoods only just across the road from ours, aren't, even though many of them are likely suddenly to find that a house in their street has been sold to a landlord and students have moved in – shortly to be joined by other houses and more students as the 'word' gets around.

Well, if they read the Evening Post or listen to Radio Nottingham, they should be getting a little more aware of what we're nagging on about.

The Evening Post did the best job I've come across of exploring the, often complex, problems in a reasonably balanced way.

By coincidence, Radio Nottingham's Groundswell 'adopted our cause' and arranged an 'Any Questions?' style broadcast with representatives from the two universities, the Council, the two Students' Unions, the East Midlands Property Association, Alan Simpson MP and the NAG.

Taken together, the two events have had a powerful impact both locally and nationally, and, for example, have helped crystallize some recent decision making.

If you missed them, you'll be able to take a look at the Evening Post articles, along with Letters to the Editor and website comments on the Groundswell programme at the meeting on the 6 July.

NOTTINGHAM SPRING 2009 SITUATION NORMAL: ALL FOULED UP?



OR ARE THINGS CHANGING?

There is no one satisfactory answer to this question. So much depends on where you happen to live, who your neighbours are this year, what the weather is going to be like after Easter (and the start of the barbeque season), whether at this moment in time you are a *half-glass-empty* or *half-glass full-person*, and so on.

The fundamental issues, national and local, have not changed.

The same arguments are still going backwards and forwards around more than enough tables to keep the stockroom of a furniture store permanently in business.

Under these circumstances it is all too easy to say that the past five years have not achieved very much, and that the situation is painfully 'SNAFU'.

However, there is an equally strong case to be made for saying that the Nottingham Action Group has made a difference; that the publicity created by James Kay's articles in the *Evening Post* and the *Groundswell* programme acted as the stimulus to everything that has happened since.

And, more importantly, that the NAG is continuing to have an impact nationally, as part of the National HMO Lobby, and here in Nottingham.

One of the Nottingham Action Group's failings appears to be that the Group is not particularly adept at shouting about its achievements.

That situation seems to have been somewhat corrected at the Hillside Club meeting on the 25 February.

There, Councillor Trimble stated that:

'... If it wasn't for the NAG, there wouldn't be a Student Strategy Manager at the City Council, because it is pressure from residents that got that. There wouldn't have been an Off-Campus Manager for the University because it's pressure from residents that got that also. ...'

Certainly, before the NAG started to raise the profile of student issues in general and concentrations of HMOs in particular, the response from both universities was along the lines of: Not us Gov. We're not responsible. Students are young adults out in community ...

As Councillor Trimble said, the universities *'... changed their minds on that ...realized that they were getting bad*

publicity... so they thought they'd have to get out there and do something.'

Well, now that the NAG's cover has been blown, so to speak, let's go the whole hog with its achievements.

To the City's appointment of ♦ a Student Strategy Manager and ♦ Nottingham University's employment of an Off Campus Student Affairs Manager, we need to add: ♦ Nottingham Trent University becoming fully and actively engaged with community issues for the first time; ♦ Nottingham now has a student housing strategy, the cornerstone of which is the City's Building Balanced Communities Supplementary Planning Document; ♦ the City Council has set up a number of HMO Action Zones; ♦ The first steps are being taken to control what Richard Tyler has called an 'infestation' of letting boards. ♦ Also, in no small measure, that same pressure has resulted in Unipol setting up a bureau in Nottingham with the hope that this will lead to benefits for established residents as well as student tenants. ♦ There is even a strong case to say that the same pressure eventually brought the Minister to Nottingham last May and helped to put changes in planning legislation on Westminster's agenda.

Support from the NAG has led to the formation of ♦ the Councillors Campaign for Balanced Communities; ♦ the All Party Parliamentary Group for Balanced and Sustainable Communities.

Finally, here's what Richard Tyler has to say about ...

THE NAG & THE NATIONAL HMO LOBBY

Even before the formal constitution of the NAG, the National HMO Lobby (based in Leeds) has enjoyed a productive symbiotic relationship with the residents who came together to form the NAG. Since then, Nottingham and the NAG have played a key role in the Lobby's activities.

The NAG has promoted solidarity within the lobby, exchanging visits in 2005. Then, in 2006, 2009 and in 2008, Nottingham City Council hosted conferences on HMOs, and the NAG, for its part, welcomed members of the National HMO Lobby from all over the country.

The NAG has assisted in the dissemination of information, especially by setting up a dedicated website in 2007. From this have emerged publications like *'Postcards from ...'* in 2008.

And of course, the NAG has been active in lobbying. In 2004, the NAG helped arrange the Lobby's first meeting with a Government minister. In 2006, the NAG represented the Lobby at a UUK Seminar at the House of Commons.

Last year, the NAG joined two delegations to London to lobby the Government, as well as hosting a visit from Iain Wright MP, the Planning Minister.

Finally, at the beginning of this year, the NAG represented the Lobby at a conference on private housing held in London.

[Dr. Richard Tyler, National HMO Lobby, March, 2009]

Editor: Thank you to Councillor Trimble for, quite rightly, supposing that I would not have said what he did say about the NAG. And thank you to Richard Tyler for always being a 'good neighbour' to the NAG.

NATIONAL HMO LOBBY NEWS FROM SOUTHAMPTON

HMO LEGISLATION: SLOW PROGRESS?



It is almost two years now since I introduced a 'Ten-Minute Rule Bill' into the House of Commons to make the changes in planning law that would enable local authorities to ensure that

proper planning arrangements would have to be made if a house were to be purchased and rented out to a number of unrelated people (an 'HMO'). The present position is only a partial improvement on what went before. Larger HMOs must now be licensed by the Local Authority, and they can apply for special arrangements to licence all HMOs. This, though, only works for existing houses, and only if the Local Authority actually wants to go the extra mile in introducing universal licensing, which Southampton City Council at present seems not to want to do. Being able to have a say in what happens to a house when it is purchased, and in effect its use is completed changed still doesn't exist in planning law and urgently needs changing.

'Ten Minute' Rule Bills in Parliament unfortunately never become law; but they are a good way of bringing an issue to Parliament's and Government's attention. I think the Bill succeeded in that respect. Subsequently there have been not one, but two reports commissioned by the Government on the problems of, and possible solutions for, areas with high numbers of HMOs, and a promise, early last year, of consultations on mechanisms to change the law. One of the reports made very specific recommendations on how the law could be changed and it is this that I understand will be the basis for consultation and hopefully new legislation. Of course the Bill I put forward, the follow up correspondence and the subsequent meeting with Ministers (most recently before Christmas last year) has just been a part of the pressure to move the issue on. There has been a subsequent debate in the House on HMOs led by Andrew Smith the Oxford MP, in which I participated and the National HMO Lobby, in which the Highfield Residents Association plays a very active role, has been important in keeping attention concentrated.

So where is the 'consultation'? I have been told that it is shortly to emerge, but it is proceeding far slower than I would have liked. I have recently put down some questions aiming to get a clear date established, in addition to the unofficial assurances that it is on its way. It is good that the focus still remains on how to change the law to better control HMOs rather than whether to. I hope to have news on this in the very near future. I will of course keep HRA posted!

**[Dr. Alan Whitehead MP,
Highfield Residents' Association Newsletter,
Spring 2009]**

SOUTHAMPTON TEST REPORT ON MINISTERIAL VISIT

17 MARCH 2009

A meeting took place with the Housing and Planning Minister Iain Wright at the Civic Centre at the invitation of Dr Alan Whitehead MP (Southampton Test). In attendance were representatives of the Council's Planning and Housing Departments plus the respective Cabinet Members and Leader of the Council, the University's Accommodation Dept and Students Union, plus a delegation from Highfield RA and the local HMO Lobby.

The format was an informal discussion chaired by Alan Whitehead, rather than formal presentations

The Minister was keen to find out the problems HMOs were causing to communities in the city, with particular reference to the effects on infrastructure and community cohesion and sustainability. Loss of family housing, poor maintenance, parking pressures, noise and litter, seasonality and balance of local shopping were mentioned.

There was unanimity of view amongst the delegates, with the exception of some reservations on the part of the Students Union, on the need for a change in the Use Classes Order (UCO) to bring HMOs under local planning control and to have the same definition of a HMO for planning purposes as already applies in the Housing Act 2004. It was pointed out that in Southampton 24% of all housing was in the private rented sector compared to 11% nationally, while 9.3% of our Private Rented Sector was in HMOs and this is four times the national average. Highfield has concentrations in excess of 45%.

Whilst having reservations on any change to the UCO, the Students Union accepted there was a need to be able to deal with and control the few unscrupulous landlords who caused problems for their members and the settled community alike. It was also accepted there had been greatly improved relations between the Students Union, University and local community in recent years. The late night Marshalling scheme was cited as an example of good practice and community co-operation.

Highfield Residents' Association representatives stressed that the Association recognised the considerable contributions to the community made by both students and private landlords.

There was much talk by The Minister of seeking 'good practice', examining 'existing levers' and any other measures which fell well short of what the community were asking for.

Highfield Residents' Association pointed out the problem of the ongoing loss of family homes, HMO concentrations, general feeling of disempowerment and the imbalance and unsustainability this continued to cause. Highfield Residents' Association were disappointed to sense an apparent reluctance of Government to accede to the national request for changes to legislation, as

already exists for Northern Ireland, to enable Local Authorities to have more control over this problem and that undue emphasis may be placed upon the Rugg Report, which used out of date data (2001) and gave little consideration to the impact of HMOs.

It was recommended that the ECOTEC Report was more balanced and relevant in addressing our concerns. It was also pointed out that recent relaxation of Planning Regulations for Permitted Development were now exacerbating the problem even further. Possible changes in the right to request a Public Inquiry also needed careful consideration.

Delegates stressed that a change in the UCO and alignment of planning and housing definitions of HMOs were essential in the interests of balanced and sustainable communities, decent property maintenance and health and safety for tenants, not least students. The Minister's suggestion that it might be too late for such changes to secure balanced communities in many areas was rejected: it was stated that in Highfield many streets were now at a tipping point, and the need for action was increasingly urgent. The 'other measures' favoured by the Minister would be ineffective unless underpinned by changes in planning law.

The Council's Head of Planning and Sustainability voiced his view that it was essential there should be a lower level at which planning permission is required. There was general agreement with the Minister's view that a 'light touch' licensing scheme, which would not alienate good landlords, was desirable. Interest was expressed in the suggestion that non-owner occupiers might not be entitled to benefit from permitted development rights to the same degree as owner occupiers. The Minister said it was Government policy to expand the Private Rented Sector and they would be reluctant to interfere in the free market. Additionally, they were concerned about 'unintended consequences' and that any announcement of an impending change to the UCO would initiate a 'stampede' of landlords to force people to sell up in advance of legislative change. It was pointed out this was already happening and indeed had been the case for at least the last two years locally. However, he hoped a Consultation would be announced shortly.

It was agreed that Selective Licensing, as currently defined was unlikely to apply widely in Southampton. The Minister's suggestion of a wider range of factors to be taken into consideration might however be more relevant to local circumstances. The Cabinet member for Planning and Sustainability indicated that the present administration did not favour pursuing Additional Licensing powers due to concerns over bureaucracy, upward pressure on rents and the possibility of driving rogue landlords 'underground'.

It was suggested Government assistance to universities in providing appropriate purpose-built accommodation for students would be beneficial (though the Students Union doubted this would be attractive to many beyond the first year).

In conclusion, in response to a direct question reflecting concern at the tenor of the Minister's observations, the Minister assured the meeting there had been no Government 'cooling' with regard to the issue of UCOs.

[J. Gillen, Highfield Residents' Association,
21 March, 2009]

'UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES'

Thanks to Jerry Gillen, Chair of the Highfield Residents' Association, for permission to reproduce these articles in the NAG magazine.

The Minister has now had fact finding visits to Nottingham and Loughborough (twice) as well as the recent one to Southampton. You would have thought that by now he would have had more than enough first hand evidence to enable him to realize that 'good practice' and 'existing levers' are just not enough to overcome the consequences (unforeseen or otherwise) that our neighbourhoods live with. It's particularly worrying to have it reported that the Minister is prepared to suggest that it may be too late to do anything about rebalancing neighbourhoods affected by large numbers of HMOs. The Minister is the MP for Hartlepool. I wonder if he is going to be quite so relaxed when, as has been proposed, Hartlepool also acquires its own university and he becomes more closely familiar with the issues we are all too familiar with ourselves?

Jerry's report refers to ECOTEC. You can read the full ECOTEC Report by logging on to the National News section of our website: www.nottinghamaction.org.uk, and downloading the Report from there. However, here are some of its key recommendations.

Editor

ECOTEC REPORT KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

'... In terms of our recommendations to Communities and Local Government, there appear to be two responses to the issues around concentrations of HMOs.

●to tackle the social and environmental symptoms (non planning led approach; ●to stop the symptoms from emerging by restricting control (planning led approach)

We would suggest that a range of good practice is in existence in the form of non – planning and planning related mechanisms which are dealing with the symptoms arising from high concentrations of HMO properties and concentrations of certain social groups, most notably students. These mechanisms, ... have the potential for wider application and can be adapted to address the needs arising in particular localities in the short to medium-term.

... However, despite these processes being in place it is our view that they have limited impact upon the longer-term issues surrounding houses in multiple occupation, particularly where properties are classified as a dwelling house under the C3 Use Classes Order but are occupied by up to 6 people living together as a single household. For this reason, it is suggested that Communities and Local Government undertake wider consultation on proposed amendments to the current Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and that consideration be given to providing an amended and clearer definition of HMOs, potentially along the same lines as that of the 2004 Housing Act. ...'

The Report was published in Autumn 2008. So, we ask Government: when is the Consultation on Use Classes Order amendment going to take place?

A NEW STRATEGY FOR STUDENTIFICATION?

Dr. Darren Smith and his co-worker, Jo Sage, who have been working on Nottingham's revised student housing strategy, are no strangers to Nottingham. Darren has been to several NAG meetings now, the last one being in May, 2008.

Their latest visit to Nottingham coincided with a NAG open meeting, and Darren and Jo suggested that it would be useful if they came along, talked about the revisions to the student housing strategy and got feedback on it from the NAG.

Also, they wanted to let people have some feedback from them about their take on the Rugg Report: the methodology used in the research carried out by Rugg and Rhodes on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government, and, very relevant to the Use Classes Order campaign, the validity of the conclusions reached by Rugg and Rhodes.

Here is Darren's concise report of the presentation given that night.

Darren Smith and Joanna Sage of the University of Brighton delivered a presentation to a meeting of the Nottingham Action Group on the 25 February entitled 'A new strategy for studentification?'. Outlining some recent national developments (such as consultation on Use Classes Order and the changing parameters for student recruitment), it was noted that DCLG have now explicitly acknowledged the issue – stressing that: '*Studentification* of university towns is a *real concern*'.

Smith and Sage, however, emphasized the need to view the findings of commissioned research (Rugg and Rhodes) by DCLG in a cautious way. In particular, Rugg and Rhodes' contention that: '*the limited nature of the problem [studentification] has been exaggerated by well-organised lobbying groups*' was refuted.

Arguing that Rugg and Rhodes' findings are methodologically flawed, based on out-dated data, and on a limited methodology, Smith and Sage dismissed the conclusion: '*census data demonstrates that intensive student habitation is not common*'.

Instead, Smith and Sage presented their own analysis of the 2001 GB census, showing a more accurate representation of student concentration in 2001 – although it was noted that there have been major changes since 2001.

It was revealed that there were 687 and 1,287 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) with a student population of 20% or more and between 10-19% in 2001 in England and Wales, respectively. 325 LSOAs included 500 or more resident students, and 519 LSOAs included between 250-499 resident students in 2001.

It was also noted that there were 47 university towns and cities with one or more LSOAs with a student population of 50% or more in 2001.

Expressing the wide-scale of studentification, Smith and Sage showed that in 2001 there were 28 English university towns and cities with four or more LSOAs with student populations of 25% or more.

These findings, coupled to the subsequent increase of buy-to-let mortgages (120,000 to 849,900) between

2000-2006, the rise of buy-to-let mortgages as a percentage of total private rented housing stock (4.9% to 28.4%), and the expansion of the total student population (+31%) over the last decade, demonstrate that the scale of studentification will have extended in marked ways since 2001.

Smith and Sage asserted that this social change will not have been captured by Rugg and Rhodes' analysis – and thus their findings should be challenged.

Rather, Smith and Sage pointed to the value of another DCLG-commissioned report (ECOTEC) as a valuable starting point to address the issues of studentification.

Most notably, Smith and Sage quoted the ECOTEC report, and cited: '*in order to deal with the causes and the issues associated with houses in multiple occupation it was felt by many that there was no alternative but to amend the current Use Classes Order by providing a definition of HMOs along the same lines as the 2004 Housing Act*'.

Smith and Sage finished their presentation by outlining the proposed new key Objectives of the Student Accommodation Strategy in Nottingham, which is currently being drafted by them

[Dr. Darren Smith, April, 2009]

NEWS DESK LATE NEWS

The 'grapevine' has just passed on a hint of how DCLG may respond to the Rugg Report.

It seems that the intention is to combine a consultation on reviewing the criteria for selective licensing with possible changes to the UCO (linked to the ECOTEC Report).

DCLG also intend to consider the findings of other research due for completion this month.

There is no confirmation of when the consultation is likely to take place. It may now be late Spring or even early Summer 2009.

Some other news is that the National Union of Students has published *Neighbourhood: Partnerships and Planning*, which they say is: '*a document identifying key partnerships that students' unions should develop and how to strategically build your profile in the local community*.' This has come on the heels of an NUS briefing document on an earlier NUS publication: *Students in the Community*.

All three publications continue to show a lack of appreciation on the part of NUS of what the issues really are and why groups like the National HMO Lobby, the Councillors Campaign for Balanced Communities, and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Balanced and Sustainable Communities have come about.

Perhaps that is why the National Union of Students is actively opposed to any further legislation – including a change to the UCO and, somewhat surprisingly, Additional Licensing. What they do support is the ubiquitous 'light touch' of the Rugg Report.

All of which must be music to the ears of those agencies which are lobbying hard against the recommendations of the ECOTEC Report and very much for what Rugg and Rhodes have said.

Therefore, Smith and Sage's arguments are timely and appropriate. However, what is happening is more than an academic discourse. The outcome will have a very definite and long term effect on every one of our neighbourhoods.

Editor, April 2009

NOTTINGHAM HOUSING ACT 2004 – LICENSING & ENFORCEMENT

ADDITIONAL LICENSING

The comments made by the Southampton Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainability that Southampton is not likely to want to extend its HMO licensing powers indicates a radically different attitude from the stance taken so far by Nottingham City Council.

The last issue of the magazine reported on the Council's work to put together a good case for applying to Government for Additional Licensing powers. This preparatory work is continuing.

In the meantime, news has come through that Peterborough City Council has been successful in its application to the Department for Communities and Local Government to make a designation for an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme – the first Local Authority to have been granted this permission. Paul Kerr, Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Team Leader for Peterborough City Council has said that the designation has now been made and is with Communities and Local Government (CLG) for formal approval. It is anticipated the scheme will take effect in the designated area on about 1 July and will allow for licensing of all HMOs of two and more storeys, containing three or more persons in two or more households where at least one basic amenity is shared.

This is good news, and not just for Peterborough where the conditions in HMOs used by migrant workers have featured in recent TV and radio reports. Information and advice gleaned by officers who are working on Nottingham's application should help to ensure that when an application is made by Nottingham to CLG, it will have every chance of succeeding.

As for Peterborough, let's hope that the Secretary of State in CLG, Margaret Beckett, is minded to give formal approval to their application, and soon, so that Paul Kerr and his colleagues can get on with their job.

Here in Nottingham, even though the City has yet to apply for Additional Licensing powers, action on HMOs has continued, as you can see from the following reports in the *Nottingham Evening Post*

CITY GETS TOUGH ON UNLICENSED LANDLORDS

Four landlords of student houses have been fined nearly £13,000 for failing to licence their properties.

The action is part of Nottingham City Council's crackdown on landlords.

They have been focusing their efforts on three areas – Sneinton Hermitage, Lenton and Burns Street, in the Arboretum area.

Now four landlords operating in Lenton have been fined, bringing the number of successful prosecutions to eight since the new laws came in.

Derek Martin, the council's director for physical regeneration in neighbourhoods, said their efforts were beginning to have an impact.

"We have seen a change where we have concentrated our efforts," he said. "Residents are saying the areas are cleaner and we know that the court judgements have shocked local landlords."

By law landlords have to licence homes in multiple occupation – where there are at least five occupants – or if it has three storeys.

The licence requires landlords to make commitments about maintaining their properties and ensuring rubbish is removed and tenants behave.

In the summer of 2007, the council recruited 14 officers to enforce the law, which was introduced in 2006.

The latest action by the council saw Barrington Oliver-Mighten fined in connection with a property in Mettham Street, Lenton. He must pay a total of £5,967.82, including a £5,000 fine, £161 legal and £791.82 investigation charges and £15 victim surcharge.

Zahir Malik was ordered to pay a total of £5,572.50, including a £5,000 fine, £161 legal, £396.50 investigation charges and £15 victim surcharge in

connection with a home in Teversal Avenue, Lenton. Both landlords have now applied for the relevant licence.

Meanwhile, Rupert Roy Mellis and Tujammal Tuffal were also found guilty of failing to have the correct licence and failing to provide information on who lives in their property in Arnesby Road, Lenton.

Mr Mellis was fined £1,100, and ordered to pay £80 legal costs and a £15 victim surcharge.

Mr Tuffal was fined £100, ordered to pay £80 legal costs and a £15 victim surcharge.

He was also given a six-month conditional discharge for failing to have the correct licence.

Coun Alan Clark "We are committed to ensuring that these properties are operated legally and hold the necessary licence."

[Charles Walker, *Nottingham Evening Post*, 20 January, 2009]

PROPERTY COMPANY FINED



A firm of property managers has been fined after failing to give the city council basic information to ensure tenants' safety.

Graduates Property Management, which provides student accommodation in the city, was fined £1,986.

The firm failed to provide names and addresses of owners, co-owners, occupiers and mortgage holders of properties it runs in the city.

Nottingham City Council needs the information by law to ensure its tenants' safety. Officers have been trying to get details from Graduates Property Management since early 2008.

Magistrates said the company should be aware of its responsibilities.

The company has offices in North Sherwood Street, The Arboretum, and Lenton Boulevard, Lenton.

[*Nottingham Evening Post*, 4 April, 2004]

THE HOUSING ACT 2004 RENT TRIBUNALS

As part of the National HMO Lobby, the NAG regularly passes on information to the Lobby and others about goings on in Nottingham.

The magazine and NewsDesk are sent out to a limited number of people over and above the members of the NAG: (Our funding is such that we just cannot afford to print and then post more copies than we already do.) However, as both are available for download on our website, they reach a lot more people in electronic format than they do by 'snail mail'.

Consequently, we get quite a bit of feedback from around the country about what is happening in our neighbourhoods.

The City Council's HMO enforcement activities have produced a fair amount of complementary (and envious) feedback, along with requests from HMO Lobby members, their councillors and council officers for more information.

What is perhaps not so clear is that the Housing Act 2004 gives the tenants of HMOs the ability to seek repayment of rent paid to landlords who have been convicted of offences under the terms of the Act.

Mr. Michael Singh and Mr. Maurice Doyle will be familiar names to you already since both of them have been fined at Magistrates' Court hearings for various offences relating to HMOs they own in Lenton.

NewsDesk reported in January, 2009 that the ...

Student tenants of the three-storey house at 69 Lenton Boulevard owned by Mr. Singh have applied to the Rent Assessment Panel of the Residential Property Tribunal for repayment of rent they had paid to him.

At a meeting of the Panel on the 24 October, 2008, Mr. Singh was ordered to return 80% (£7,628) of the rent he had received from the five students during the year they had lived at the property

The Tribunal report of the proceedings indicated that it had not been '... impressed with [Mr. Singh's] explanations for not licensing the property as an HMO, and for failing to submit valid applications. His excuse that he did not know that the property required licensing rang hollow. He was by his own admission a professional landlord with a portfolio of 30 properties, who had a responsibility to keep up to date with the legal requirements for property letting. his handling of the application [for an HMO licence] was cavalier. ...'

The Tribunal also stated that Mr Singh '... showed a blatant disregard of his legal responsibilities as a landlord. The property was an unlicensed HMO throughout the tenancy, exposing the Applicants to unacceptable risks to their health and safety ...'.

In March, this year, the Rent Assessment Panel of the Residential Property Tribunal heard another application for a rent repayment order, this time by the student tenants who lived at Mr. Doyle's HMO at 74 Sherwin Road, Lenton, which he had been renting out for the last 10 years.

The Tribunal's report highlighted the view that Mr. Doyle '... had displayed no appreciation for the purpose for HMO licensing, which was to ensure a safe environment for the tenants. [He] had not carried out a fire risk assessment on the property. He was reluctant to install fire doors in the property in case the Council considered the work inadequate which would incur him in extra cost. ... The aggravating feature of this case was [Mr. Doyle's] conduct in respect of the licensing of the property. ... on his evidence alone ... he demonstrated a blatant disregard of the licensing requirements which put the [tenants'] health and safety at risk. ...'.

However, in the event, and for a number of different reasons, including the fact that the tenants and their representative did not attend the hearing, the repayment order was limited to 30% (£3,240).

NOTTINGHAM THE 'WHEELIE BIN BLUES'



A recent report, 'Changing UK', commissioned by the BBC (and extensively quoted in this piece), concluded that community life in Britain has weakened substantially over the past 30 years.

Researchers at Sheffield University created what they called 'loneliness indices' which they then used to assess how rooted people are in their neighbourhoods and to identify those neighbourhoods where people had a 'feeling of not belonging'.

Professor Daniel Dorling, who headed the research team at Sheffield, was reported on the BBC's website to have said: "Even the weakest communities in 1971 were stronger than any community now. ..."

The research also showed that the South West has undergone a substantial amount of social fragmentation, which has been attributed to the number of holiday homes and the way in which they undermine community life.

It is not stretching logic too far to draw parallels between holiday homes and what is happening in neighbourhoods where there are concentrations of HMOs, regardless of whether these are occupied by students, so-called young professionals, migrant workers or other transient populations. So, it is not surprising that amongst a number of contributing factors, the research identified having a large student population as one of the key factors in reducing the sense of belonging in a community. Headingley in Leeds and the university area of Cardiff were specifically mentioned as places exhibiting poor community roots.

None of this is 'news' for NAG members, but it is confirmation, if it were needed, that the fragmentation of our neighbourhoods is in no small measure due to the massive increase in HMOs and the wholesale conversion of some streets in places where almost no-one has a feeling of belonging.

One of the manifestations of this lack of rootedness is what can be called the 'Wheelie Bin Blues'.

No issue of the NAG magazine ever seems complete without some mention of them and of what is being done about them. Quite rightly so, for waste management and waste disposal are important matters. Mis-management and inappropriate disposal of rubbish ruin the appearance of streets, cause obstructions to pavements, encourage vermin and flies which then spread disease. So, not a subject to be dealt with lightly.

But, sometimes a 'light touch' (there we have that phrase again) is as good a way as any to get a message over.

OLD LENTON THE TALE OF FOUR BEARS



Are you sitting comfortably? So let us begin.

This is a story about four cuddly bears, named **EVERYBODY**, **SOMEBODY**, **ANYBODY** and **NOBODY**, who lived happily together in the same house in a little village called Lenton.

There was an important job for our four bears to do on a Monday, that of putting wheelie bins back off the pavement and within their property after the Council had come round in the morning and emptied them.

Can you guess what happened next?

EVERYBODY was sure **SOMEBODY** would do it.

ANYBODY could have done it, but **NOBODY** did.

SOMEBODY got angry about that, because it was **EVERYBODY'S** job.

EVERYBODY thought **ANYBODY** could do it, but **NOBODY** realized that **EVERYBODY** wouldn't do it.

It ended up that **EVERYBODY** blamed **SOMEBODY**, when **NOBODY** did what **ANYBODY** could have.



[Adapted from a story written by a 'Old Lenton' Resident, January, 2009]

One of the NAG members made a comment not so long ago that problems caused by wheelie bins on pavements are getting worse – not better. They accept that the Council have fined some residents, but they argue that there is no consistency.

A good observation, especially when you compare what is happening in one neighbourhood in Lenton where apparently bins on pavements are tolerated, while in another neighbourhood, action is being taken – as the next article shows.

THE LENTON TRIANGLE CLEANING THE CITY

Keeping the city clean is a top priority for the Council, and something that local people say is important to them.

The Council is working hard to improve the appearance of your neighbourhood by discouraging fly-tipping, bins left on streets, and bags of waste being left unmanaged. We wish to encourage responsible waste management, participation in recycling collections and keeping the neighbourhood neat and tidy for everybody to enjoy. Bins that are left out on the street are unsightly, and can cause an obstruction to people, particularly those with disabilities.

We have been working with students and residents in the area to try and make sure that the following issues are addressed:

NO SIDE WASTE

All properties have been provided with bins that have been designed to provide adequate storage for the waste produced. All waste presented for collection must

be placed within the appropriate bin only. Additional waste which does not fit in the bin should not be presented. If any property cannot manage to contain their waste in the appropriate bins provided to you then please contact Waste Management on (0115) 915-2000 for further advice.

REMOVE YOUR BIN FROM THE STREET

In recent times the number of bins left out on the street after collection day has increased and the Council wants to address this problem for the benefit of all its inhabitants and visitors. Therefore, waste presented for collection on the street must be presented in the appropriate bin no earlier than 4.00 pm the day before your collection day, and removed from the street by 8.00 am the day after your collection day. All properties should have already received a bin collection calendar with information on which bin should be presented on which day. Most of Lenton's collection day is a Monday so the Council asks that: you place the relevant bin on the street no earlier than 4.00 pm on Sunday and remove the bin by 8.00 am on Tuesday unless advised of any change by the Council.

DO NOT CONTAMINATE RECYCLING BINS

Most properties in Lenton have a second wheelie bin (grey lid) for paper, cardboard, cans, tins and plastic. Some also have a box insert for glass collections and a kitchen waste bin and caddy for collection of food scraps. Properties with gardens may also have a third wheelie bin (brown lid) for green garden waste. These containers are provided in addition to the green wheelie bin for anything that cannot be recycled. The Council is ambitious about increasing the amount of waste we recycle so it is important that these bins contain the correct materials for collection. When recycling containers contain the wrong materials they are described as contaminated. We cannot empty contaminated containers because this also contaminates the collection vehicle too, and the efforts of all other residents may go to waste as we cannot remove the contamination and have to landfill everything collected! Householders have been provided with detailed instructions regarding which waste should be placed in which container, but if you require any further information please telephone (0115) 915-2000 or email waste.management@nottinghamcity.gov.uk. We are only too happy to help you get it right.

In an effort to improve our recycling efforts the Council has been monitoring waste left out for collection in the Lenton Triangle area (the properties between Derby Road and Ilkeston Road). Where the monitoring programme has shown that a household is not complying with any of these three simple rules – no side waste; no bins on streets, no contamination – the Council has looked to take further action. This could result in a legal notice being served requiring compliance with the Council's waste collection requirements, breach of which could result in a £100 fixed penalty notice or prosecution (maximum fine on conviction £1,000).

When the monitoring programme began, 120 properties put side waste out on collection day. After the publicity launch in February the number of properties with side waste reduced to just 30! The Council will continue to educate tenants and residents in the area on what to do with their waste and take further action if needed. Please

help us by informing the Recycling Team if you are having any problems with getting your bin off the street, recycling your waste or produce excessive amounts of rubbish for collection.

Please let us know if there are any properties near you that you think could do with some extra help or information.

IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE!

Wheelie bins overflowing with rubbish, bags and boxes of all sorts piled up alongside, are a 'feature' of too many of our neighbourhoods, including my own.

I often wonder (especially on Mondays) why waste management doesn't seem to be part of the mental furniture of so many of the residents of our HMOs. After all, putting the right bin out with the right contents on the right day isn't exactly rocket science – most of us manage to do it!

I also have some idea of how much effort goes into trying to keep our neighbourhoods clean – over and over and over again. The sort of endless task I wouldn't have the strength of character to keep on with.

And, I am left asking once again 'How much does it cost to keep on doing this job, and who pays?

Any answers, please?

[Editor, April, 2009]



BALANCED & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

TRANSFORMING NOTTINGHAM'S NEIGHBOURHOODS

'... Empty homes represent a considerable wasted resource and have an adverse impact on a neighbourhood. To address this, Nottingham City Council is committed to ensuring that empty homes of all tenures come back into occupation as soon as possible.'

...

'... A short term empty property is one that has been vacant for less than six months. Although the property may only have been empty for a short period of time, they can still cause problems. The City Council, therefore, expects owners to ensure properties are maintained during the period that they are vacant. ... NCC during the normal course of business [will] encourage owners of short term empty properties to bring them back into beneficial use as soon as possible.' ...

'... Once a property has been identified as being empty, empty homes officers will try to find out who the owner is by using land registry data, council tax data or writing to the address. Once the owner has been identified, they will try to make contact with them to ensure that they are taking steps to bring the property back into use. It is only if co-operation is not forthcoming that formal action will be considered.'

[Extracts from *The Housing Strategy for Nottingham City 2008-2011*]

'... Explore ways to promote the deconversion of HMO to family housing, where appropriate.' ...

'... Explore ways to promote the conversion of 'empty homes' to family housing, where appropriate. ...'

[Extracts from a draft of the revised *Student Housing Action Plan 2009*]

●HMO ●CANNABIS FARM ●EMPTY PROPERTY ●NEIGHBOURHOOD EYESORE THE END OF A FAMILY HOME



You may be thinking you have seen this photograph before. You have. it appeared in the Summer 2009 magazine along with the accompanying agent's blurb.

When that photograph was taken it had been an HMO since 2002, and was home to seven students. They left at the beginning of June, 2008. Shortly afterwards there was the sort of outbreak of 'housekeeping' that people living next to HMOs have come to expect during the long summer vacation – junk (everything from mattresses to TV, and even a set of mobile traffic lights!) being dumped at the front or burned at the back

Of course, as it turned out, things were not quite as they seemed. In fact, it had turned into a cannabis farm.

That is where the story had got to when the NAG magazine came out in September: the house was empty and no-one seemed to be interested in doing anything useful with it, or about it.

There was half a hope that it might be one of those properties the Council have said they have been looking to acquire and convert back into a family home. It fell into the category of family homes that Nottingham is so short of. And, even though there had been some dubious conversion work done and a minimal amount of maintenance, it would not have been impossible to return it family use.

Fast forward to the end of March, 2009 and this is what it looks like now.



Most of the roof has gone and the timbers that are left are blackened and charred. Only the front gable is still intact. The heat has shattered some of the windows, melted window frames, guttering and down pipes. It is structurally unsafe and is waiting to be boarded up and fenced off.

Not just a neighbourhood eyesore with an uncertain future ... also a lost family home.

[Editor, April, 2009]



TRANSFORMING NOTTINGHAM'S NEIGHBOURHOODS IT'S GOOD NEWS WEEK!

It's not all doom and gloom and hopes turned into ashes. There are some interesting and stimulating projects under way in our neighbourhoods – those proverbial little green shoots – which can in different ways act as the stimuli that may transform our neighbourhoods. Some, like the Eco-House and Nottingham in Bloom, are relatively small and simple in concept. Others, like the QMC MediPark, are huge, complex, very expensive and relatively long-term. All of them, like the demolition of the QMC's multi-storey car park which in itself is not particularly transforming, have the potential to lead on to something new and better.

THE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL ECO HOUSE PROJECT

HELPING HOUSES & THEIR HMO NEIGHBOURS
BECOME ECO-FRIENDLY HOMES



Examples of the type of property that the project will convert into eco houses

Hyson Green based charity, the Partnership Council, has joined forces with local residents and Nottingham Trent University to help home owners, tenants and students face the credit crunch, whilst doing their bit to reduce climate change.

Starting with a traditional Victorian terraced house, the group plan to establish an Eco House that will be used as a base for all kinds of community-led projects, aimed at tackling issues such as fuel poverty, carbon emissions and recycling.

Converting the property into an environmentally-friendly Eco House will be a community project in its own right too, so that local people can get involved and learn what kind of building improvements and DIY skills are needed to 'green' their own homes for example. One of the project leaders, Amanda Smith, is a lecturer at Nottingham Trent University and also sits on the Partnership Council's Board.

Amanda explains: "According to Government research, homes account for around 27% of the UK's carbon emissions and as a result the Government's long-term goal is to progressively improve the way that new homes are built, so that by 2016 they're producing zero carbon.

"This is great of course, but the reality is that current examples of low carbon homes require expensive technology for instance, plus of course, the Government is focusing on new homes. Many people in Nottingham are likely to be living in older properties for many years to come so we wanted to show how our Eco House could be a

model for people to improve their existing homes, without the need for lots of space or costly technology.

"In addition, we're keen for the Eco House to inspire tenants and students, as well as home owners, encouraging them to make the kind of small, simple improvements that will make a big difference to their fuel bills and to the environment."

Ruth Greenberg, Chief Officer of the Partnership Council agrees: "We've worked with volunteers in Nottingham for over ten years now and found great enthusiasm for this new project. People on low incomes, pensions or in rented accommodation are already more affected than most by rising fuel costs. With the recession, they are keen to find savings where they can. When our volunteers can show people an Eco House working in accommodation like their own, we will help owner-occupiers and tenants to make their home affordable, warmer and more eco-friendly at the same time."

Moby Farrands from the Partnership Council continues: "We're keen for the Eco House to be a centre for a wide range of projects. For instance, we're planning a 'Realcycle' shop where people can donate or choose items, diverting stuff from landfill sites (or worse still, simply being dumped in gardens or streets).

"Many people don't know what local charity shops will take, or don't have the means to get bulky items there or don't have internet access to recycling websites like 'Realcycle'. So items like magazines, children's clothes, plant pots and even computer tables often get thrown out when recycling them could help other people save money. We're hoping the Eco House will help to change this.

"We're also aiming to help local people reduce their food costs, by showing them how to grow food in small gardens or backyards and how to buy and cook food more economically. Plus, we'll be running skill sharing DIY and repair workshops at the Eco House so that older people can share their experiences, whilst learning from the new skills brought in by students and new arrivals to the area. We'll also be helping people to apply for useful sources of funding to help them pay for home improvements such as insulation.

"I'm really hopeful that the Eco House will help to build links between different sections of the community too, acting as a focus for people from all walks of life."

Amanda concludes: "The Eco House project will give us a way of testing and demonstrating traditional or 'folk' remedies to typical DIY tasks and problems. Most of all, because the Eco House is about showing people how they can live greener lives, in a very realistic and affordable way, it will benefit everyone in our community – especially those on low incomes."

To find out more please contact Ruth Greenberg:

Tel: Nottingham 970 8200, or

E-mail: ruth@partnershipcouncil.co.uk

ECO HOUSE HINTS & TIPS

Here are just some of the practical DIY measures the Eco House project will be putting into action – all of which can be carried out by home owners and tenants for very little money.

FOIL BACKING RADIATORS TO CONSERVE HEAT

Placing aluminium foil behind your radiators is a very inexpensive way of conserving heat.

It works by reflecting heat back into the room and it works especially well on radiators located on outside walls, where heat can easily escape outdoors and be lost.

You can use ordinary tin foil or for even better results you can buy specially designed radiator foil from DIY stores.

Simply place foil behind your radiator(s) with the shiny side facing outwards and the dull side facing the wall. To secure foil, try use double-sided sticky pads.

INSULATING FLOORBOARDS

You may be surprised to know that you lose more heat through your floorboards than you do through your roof!

Insulating your floor will reduce your carbon footprint by 350 kg of CO₂ a year whilst helping to keep your home warm and your heating bills down.

You only need to insulate your lowest floor too, as that's where the heat is lost. You can insulate under your floorboards for around £90 yourself, or if you don't fancy taking your floorboards up, you can insulate between them and a carpet, using underlay.

A cheap option for renters is to fill floorboard gaps with thin strips of newspaper and then seal with a clear silicone sealant (available from DIY shops). Naturally, covering floorboards with carpet or rugs will help too.

DIY SECONDARY GLAZING

Secondary glazing is a cheaper, simpler alternative to double glazing and although not quite as effective, it'll still keep heat in and help keep noise out.

A fifth of your home's heat is lost through your windows so it's well worth taking the time to sort them out.

The cheapest form of secondary glazing involves fixing plastic film to your window with double sided tape, leaving a gap of around 100 mm between the film and the original window pane, then applying heat from a hairdryer to ensure the plastic is 'shrunk to fit'.

Closing your curtains at dusk will also help to keep heat in!

For more green DIY ideas visit:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bloom/>

[Amanda Smith, Ruth Greenberg & Moby Farrands
March, 2009]

Thanks to Amanda, Ruth and Moby for telling us about a very down-to-earth and practical project.

Nothing high-powered here. No specially constructed experimental eco houses and no fanfares of publicity.

Just some very good ideas which, although they are aimed at a particular type of house, can just as easily be adapted to suit other properties and other circumstances.

All in all, we could do with seeing a lot more of this sort of nice, collaborative project



NEIGHBOURHOODS IN BLOOM GET YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOOMING!

Are you and your neighbours interested in making your street a greener and friendlier place to live? Nottingham in Bloom is working with local people to brighten up the city's neighbourhoods and would like to hear from anyone who is keen to get involved.

Several communities have already discovered huge benefits in working together to make their street greener. One of them is Eckington Terrace in the Meadows, where for the past few years residents have brightened up the street with planters and hanging baskets. The gardening bug has now spread to nearby terraces, and the area is inspiring other parts of the city to have a go, too.

Jackie Le Huquet, one of the Eckington Terrace residents, says: "Our planting scheme has brightened up the area and enhanced community spirit. People talk to each other now! More planters are popping up on window sills, because people notice that the vandals are leaving the plants alone now and so they are keen to join in."

As a result of Nottingham in Bloom's neighbourhood campaign, more than 40 communities in the city including sheltered housing complexes, streets and community gardens have already signed up to enter the East Midlands in Bloom Neighbourhood Awards this year.

These awards are a unique initiative for small, resident-led communities aiming to achieve long-term improvements to their local area through horticultural, environmental and cleanliness initiatives.

The Neighbourhood Awards are non-competitive, welcoming groups taking the first step towards community regeneration. While entries are not judged against each other, they are visited by environmental and horticultural experts over the summer months who provide valuable feedback and helpful advice on how to develop current activities and encourage ongoing improvements.

Communities who participate report an increased sense of pride in the area, greater community spirit, and cleaner and greener surroundings for a healthier community.

Each community receives an Award of Improvement, Merit, or Outstanding Achievement.

Judges look for a variety of things including teamwork and community effort, floral displays, good maintenance, environmental quality, i.e. absence of litter, dog fouling, graffiti, fly-posting and weeds, and overall impression.

To find out how to get started – and how Nottingham in Bloom can help – call:

Nottingham 915 2745

or visit www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/bloom.

More information is available on the Britain in Bloom website:

www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom/GettingStarted/neighbourhood_awards.html

[Julie Walker, Nottingham in Bloom, March, 2009]

THE BLOOMING OF NAG NEIGHBOURHOODS



The achievements of the residents of Eckington Terrace in The Meadows aren't going to be easy to emulate.

Of course, in our neighbourhoods we have the considerable difficulties caused by absentee landlords and a highly transient population to deal with. But, that is not to say that NAG members shouldn't think of having a go.

Some already have taken part in Nottingham in Bloom. As the photograph shows, there are enough lovely gardens, parks, roads and hidden corners (as well as people passionate about where they live) left in our neighbourhoods which should get the recognition they deserve.

It's not easy, but when was anything the NAG tried to do easy?

At Hillside NAG members are hoping to have a try. Although it has not been possible to get things organized

in time for this year's Neighbourhoods in Bloom initiative, the QMC and its neighbours, with help from Julie Walker from Nottingham in Bloom have started to work on plans for next year and further into the future. If they work out, over the coming years Hillside might just be able to match the University's deservedly highly-acclaimed North Entrance as a gateway to the City.

An unexpected bonus for the QMC's neighbours is that the site left by the demolition of the QMC's car park (see the next story) is to be landscaped and left as a green space.

It is hoped it will become part of the collaboration between the QMC and its neighbours and the 'blooming' of the Hillside neighbourhood.

QMC-RESIDENTS' FORUM DEMOLITION OF A NOTTINGHAM LANDMARK



The multi-storey car park (MSCP) on the QMC campus weighs in at around 11,000 tonnes and has been a landmark on the site since the hospital was built more than 30 years ago.

The swift closure of the MSCP in September 2008, came about when the Health and Safety Executive confirmed it was unsafe to leave it open.

To compensate for the loss of parking spaces on the QMC campus, the Hooley's car park was then adapted for patients and visitors. Staff were encouraged to make alternative travel arrangements, and new permits were issued for parking on site.

An exclusion area round the building has been installed to ensure the health and safety of all. This includes the Hillside section of the cycle and pedestrian route alongside the River Leen linking Abbey Street with Derby Road.

Since the closure of the MSCP, the Health and Safety Executive and the Trust have been monitoring the structure. It has now been decided that it must be demolished for health and safety reasons, and to ensure the best use of resources.

The 750 space car park is now ready to be carefully dismantled and the land on which it currently stands is to be landscaped into green space.

Although the work began on 23 March, the ultra high lift machines which will be used to pull the car park down

in small chunks, to prevent danger, damage or disruption, will not be used until a few weeks into the project.

The work is expected to be finished in late summer.

John Simpson, Director of Estates and Facilities, said: *"While negotiations are concluding I would like to take this opportunity to again thank all residents for dealing with the closure in such a supportive manner. The demolition is expected to cause very little disruption but if you have or hear of any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Trust directly through our PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service)."*

Freephone QMC campus: 0800-183-0204

E-Mail: pals@nuh.nhs.uk

FAST FACTS

- *Medicinq in joint venture with Simons Construction Ltd are the contractors responsible for the demolition of the MSCP, Turner & Townsend are Project Managers and Cost Advisors and Coleman & Co. are the demolition sub contractors.
- *The closure notice to the footpath between the MSCP and the River Leen will be in place until June to ensure the health and safety of all.
- *Dustbuster machines will be used throughout the demolition to reduce the amount of dust.
- *Work utilising demolition machinery will only permitted to be carried out between 8.00 am and 5.00 pm - though the site will be operational between 7.30 am and 6.00 pm.
- *There will only ever be around ten workers on site.
- *There are no planned road closures expected or delays but if you experience any problems please let the Trust know the details.

For more information:

Telephone: 0115 924-9924 Ext. 61001

E-mail: nuhcommunications@nuh.nhs.uk

THE MEDI PARK PROJECT FUTURISTIC VISION — REAL FUTURE —



It does seem as if, having lost one landmark, over the next twenty years or so there will be another one taking shape nearby: and there is no getting away from the fact that the vision unveiled by David West, the urban planner for the £100m MediPark research project, is strikingly different from what is now on the site.

That David West is passionate about his work and his vision was very obvious from the presentation he made at

the public meeting at St. Mary's Church Hall, Wollaton Hall Drive, on the 30 March. More than 30 residents attended the meeting and heard that the project, sited alongside the River Leen and adjacent to the QMC, will accommodate some 200 companies – existing and new businesses – and will generate hundreds of new jobs.

Also, if the vision is fully implemented, it will result in a genuine park landscape alongside an improved River Leen, with trees, shrubs, grass and paths through it open to everyone. If this is coupled with making sure that the jobs created are 'real', good quality and permanent, and that car parking and traffic generated by the site does not exacerbate problems already caused by the QMC and the University, the MediPark project should go a long way towards attracting to Nottingham people who are prepared to put down roots and invest in a city that is a good place to live in as well as place to go to work, shop and relax in.

The key question is whether the vision is one that can also work for the benefit of the neighbourhoods around the QMC.

Lenton, Dunkirk and parts of the Wollaton Park Estate all suffer from the rapid changes brought about by 'studentification'. They have some of the highest concentrations of HMOs in the City. Most important is the painfully accurate perception that these are neighbourhoods dominated by HMO owners and their agents, and, of course, their tenants.

The potential link between the MediPark project and their regeneration as neighbourhoods where families want to live, rather than leave, is that, if the political will is there, the project can act as the nucleus of a regeneration plan covering the whole area.

These neighbourhoods have so much to offer the City:

- A range of good quality housing suitable for everyone – first-time buyer, established family, down-sizer, elderly;
- They are 'leafy suburbs' within a mile or so of the city centre, and adjacent to some of the nicest green spaces in the city;
- They are well served by public transport;
- The motorway system and international airports are easy to reach;
- They are no more than a short walk from the MediPark, the QMC and the University – no need to worry about traffic jams and parking spaces. ... And a lot more besides.

So, we wait to see if Nottingham's 'movers and shakers', are going to show some of the same vision, enthusiasm and passion for the regeneration of our neighbourhoods that David West shows for the regeneration of a car park!



NEIGHBOURHOOD REGENERATION A TOUCH OF SPRING FEVER



To say the least, for its staff, many of whom had been at the Club for a long time, the sudden closure of the Hillside at the beginning of March was a grey and unhappy time.

The NAG has been relatively lucky. Although we are not sure what is going to happen when St. Mary's Church Hall regulars come back in the Autumn, we have been able to relocate all our spring meetings to St. Mary's without too much difficulty. Others groups have not been so successful. Some, like the Hillside Bowls Club which has a lease on the bowling green until the end of this season, face an uncertain future. All of which shows what a blow it is to the community at large to lose a venue of this calibre.

However, for residents in the Hillside neighbourhood, there is the added concern about what will happen to the site itself

Rumours abound. One of the front-runners is that it will be redeveloped as student housing. Not so long ago, Unite who own the purpose build nearby behind the Three Wheatsheaves on Derby Road, showed considerable interest in the potential of the site and its size and proximity to Nottingham University's campuses, add legs to the rumour.

Hillside is adjacent to the MediPark site and this gives a clue as to how it may be possible to make sure that whatever happens to Hillside will benefit the local neighbourhoods.

The MediPark site is earmarked for employment use. One of the drivers behind the master plan for it was to ensure that there would be no piecemeal and inappropriate developments there.

Hillside has no such protection. The neighbourhoods around it need that protection to be put in place – and very soon.

Alongside protection, Hillside also needs to be part of the overall regeneration plan for the area (muted elsewhere in this issue) which would build on the sports, social and meeting facilities already there, and develop the remaining green space into a park for local people, as well as the people who work at the QMC, and, of course, those who will come to work at the MediPark as it begins to take shape.

Pie in the sky ... or just a touch of Spring Fever?

Well, urban planners aren't the only ones who can get passionate about things ... and maybe a little passion about our neighbourhoods, what they are and what they should become, is what keeps the NAG going!

Have a good Easter break and I hope we'll see you soon afterwards at the Letting Board Consultation Meeting at St. Mary's on the 15 April.

Editor, April, 2009



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

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If you feel we have made such an error, please contact us by:

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