

Nottingham**A**ction**G**roup on HMOs

Midwinter 2009-2010

**National
Nottingham
Neighbourhood
News, Views
Information
Action**

***HMOs and possible planning responses
Talk & box ticking ... or real action?***

Town and Gown

Nottingham Action Group on HMOs

National HMO Lobby

NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

Autumn-Winter 2009-2010

Dates for Your Diary

... p.3

The Editor's Ramblings

Why the Boomerang Nebula?

... p.4

HMOs & Possible Planning Responses

An Ineffective Headline Grabbing Initiative ... p.6

A Tale ... Full of Sound & Fury ... p.7

New Powers to Limit Number of Student Homes

... p.8

A Simple Political Response to Disgruntled Locals

... p.9

CLG Consultation Options ... p.9

CLG Consultation Questions ... p.10

National Support for a Knee Jerk Reaction ... p.11

Invitation to Comment ... p.11

Lobbying for Legislation ... p.11

Hickory Dickory Dock:

What Happens Next? ... p.12

Talk & Box Ticking ... Or Real Action?

HMOs & the Housing Act 2004:

Float Like a Butterfly ... Sting Like a Bee ... p.13

Community, Landlords & Students Join Forces

... p.14

Student Landlord Failed to Maintain Homes

... p.14

Successful Prosecutions by Nottingham City Council
of Landlords & Agents ... p. 15

Doctor Fined for Failing to Ensure Safety of Tenants

... p.16

Council Proposes to Apply for Additional Licensing

... p.16

Landlords' Anger at Licensing Plan ... p.16

Council's Consultation on Additional Licensing
for HMOs ... p.17

Extension of HMO Action Zones... p.17

Public Realm Team: Grime Doesn't Pay ... p.18

Saying 'Good-bye': Tackling Anti-Social Noise

... p. 19

Students Disrupt Patients ... p.19

Pilot Night Noise Service ... p.20

Landlordism, Accreditation & Letting Boards ... p.20

Student Rents a Garage for a Bedroom ... p.20

Evening Post Website Comments ... p.21

Landlordism ... p.22

Approved Housing: Accreditation ... p.22

Control of Letting Boards ... p.23

Town & Gown

The Oxbridge Murder ... p.23

News from Nottingham's Universities ... p.25

Nottingham University Students' Union ... p.25

Nottingham Trent Students' Union ... p.25

An Introduction to:

Professor Karen Cox ... p.26

Professor Ann Priest ... p.26

New Director at University ... p.26

University to Host Neighbours ... p.27

Did You Know? ... p.27

Community Open Day ... p.27

Points of View:

Beyond the Grad ... p.28

Are we Losing Lenton? ... p.29

Nottingham Action Group on HMOs

Report to the General Meeting June 2009

... p.31

Balanced & Sustainable Communities:

Running Up the Down Escalator ... p.33

Student Housing on the Rise in City ... p.33

Balancing the Community ... p.33

Neighbourhood Perspectives

Neighbourhoods for Families:

Passing Traffic:

...p.34

Welcome to Purple Frog ... p.35

Lenton vs Mapperley ... p.35

The Candles on the Cake ... p.36

Moist Fruit Cake ... p.36

Apple Cake ... p.36

Lemon Drizzle Cake ... p.36

Walnut Cake ... p.37

Fresh Strawberry Cake ... p.37

Baked Cheesecake ... p.37

Rich Chocolate Cake ... p.37

National HMO Lobby

Report November 2009... p.38

Post Script

Student Landlord Fined ... p.39

And Finally

We Live in Interesting Times ... p.3

FRONT COVER

NASA/ESA Hubble Telescope image, taken in 1998, shows a young planetary nebula in the constellation Centaurus, some 5000 light years from Earth. First called the 'Boomerang Nebula' in 1980 when a large, ground-based telescope in Australia could only discern a curving, symmetric shape reminiscent of a boomerang, the high resolution Hubble image shows that 'Bow Tie Nebula' would be a more appropriate name. With a temperature of -272°K it is only 1° warmer than Absolute Zero, and, as such, is the coldest object found in the Universe to date.

NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP ON HMOs DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2009

Open Meeting of the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs

6.15 pm St. Mary's Church Hall

Wollaton Hall Drive, Wollaton Park

'NOTTINGHAM'S CORE STRATEGY: PLANNING & TRANSPORT'

Report on Progress with Grant Butterworth, Head of Planning, Transport and Intelligence Strategy, Nottingham City Council

WEDNESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2010

Open Meeting of the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs

6.30 p.m. St. Mary's Church Hall

Wollaton Hall Drive, Wollaton Park

'MEET YOUR CANDIDATES'

An opportunity to meet the candidates from the three main political parties who will be standing in the Nottingham South Constituency at the next General Election

WEDNESDAY, 17 MARCH 2010

Open Meeting of the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs

6.30 pm, St. Mary's Church Hall

Wollaton Hall Drive, Wollaton Park

'NOTTINGHAM'S UNIVERSITIES & THEIR NEIGHBOURS'

Prof. Karen Cox, Pro-Vice Chancellor with responsibility for Community Affairs and Stephen Dudderidge of the University of Nottingham will be joined by representatives of Nottingham Trent University

WEDNESDAY, 14 APRIL 2010

Joint Open Meeting of Unipol and the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs

6.30 pm, St. Mary's Church Hall

Wollaton Hall Drive, Wollaton Park

'U-NAG REVISITED'

A follow up to the meeting held in September, 2009

WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2010

Open Meeting of the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs

6.30 pm, St. Mary's Church Hall

Wollaton Hall Drive, Wollaton Park

HMO ACTION ZONES

The City Council's HMO Action Zones Team will be reporting on the extension of their work to new neighbourhoods

OTHER MEETINGS & EVENTS

Details have not yet been finalized, but it is hoped to have NAG open meetings on:

WEDNESDAY, 19 MAY & WEDNESDAY, 21 JULY.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP ON HMOs ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

QMC-RESIDENTS' FORUM MEETING

7.15 pm, St. Mary's Church Hall,

Wollaton Hall Drive, Wollaton Park

WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2010

Peter Homa, Chief Executive of Nottingham University Hospitals NHS trust will give a presentation about the Trust, its current position and the future, followed by a chance to ask questions

Councillors, other health organizations, university, police and fire & rescue service representatives have been invited

EVERYONE WELCOME

HOUSES TO LET

A selection of former family homes, now HMOs, currently advertised on the internet to let for the 2010-2011 academic year

DERBY ROAD

Lenton

NEW ON THE MARKET

5 bed, £75 pppw

£1,613 pm

DERBY ROAD

Lenton

7 bed, £72 pppw

£2,167 pm

DERBY ROAD

Lenton

7 bed, £75 pppw

£2,257 pm

CHARNOCK AVENUE

Wollaton Park

6 bed, £86 pppw

£2,236 pm

CHARNOCK AVENUE

Wollaton Park

6 bed, £86 pppw

£2,236 pm

ORSTON DRIVE

Wollaton Park

6 bed, £86 pppw

£2,236 pm

HARLAXTON DRIVE

Lenton

6 bed, £86 pppw

£2,236 pm

HARLAXTON DRIVE

Lenton

6 bed, £90 pppw

£2,335 pm

WELBY AVENUE

Lenton

7 bed, £90 pppw

£2,725 pm

ROLLESTON DRIVE

Lenton

7 bed, £90 pppw

£2,725 pm

HARRINGTON DRIVE

Lenton

8 bed, £87 pppw

£3,030 pm

DERBY ROAD

Wollaton Park

8 bed, £88 pppw

£3,050 pm

THE EDITOR'S RAMBLINGS

WHY THE BOOMERANG NEBULA?



Sorbus cashmiriana

The other week, my computer had the equivalent of an electronic 'hissy fit'. Of course, modern computers being what they are, the machine itself got on with the job of restoring the hard disk and reloading the programs with very little input needed from me. Consequently, with some unexpected time on my hands, I was able to indulge in a little guilt-free autumnal ponderings about 'the meaning of Life, the Universe and everything'.

Given the circumstances, I'm not surprised that I found myself remembering a visit I made to the NPL (National Physical Laboratory) some years ago, and my first encounter with a computer.

At that time the Jodrell Bank radio telescope often featured in BBC TV's *Sky at Night* as its probing of the mysteries of black holes and other cosmological peculiarities revealed more and more about the Universe and how it started. In contrast, the BBC's serialisation of *A for Andromeda*, a story by astronomer, Professor Sir Fred Hoyle, was almost, but not quite, pure science fiction. Hoyle's story concerned itself with a group of radio astronomers who detect a signal from the Andromeda galaxy and then set about implementing the signal's instructions to build a super computer.

The NPL's computer filled a large room, used copious amounts of electrical power, and hummed continuously. Probably somewhat influenced by the BBC serial, my recollection is that, like its fictional counterpart, it had an aura of 'otherworldliness' about it that, to a rather over-fertile teen-age imagination, was more than a little exciting.

The Jodrell Bank telescope still dominates the Cheshire landscape, and its dish (now Grade I listed) still sweeps the heavens. But the NPL's primeval beast was consigned to the scrap yard years ago. However, through today's PC's and laptops, it and its counterparts have left a legacy that is very much a part of life at the beginning of the 21st Century.

That's not to say there's anything otherworldly or exciting about the computer that sits on my desk. Far from it. It's straightforward to use and, best of all, it's largely glitch-free. Largely, but not entirely.

When a hiccup in one of its programs abruptly interrupted my daydreaming, what happened next calls to mind James Lovell's famous, but mis-quoted, transmission during the ill-fated Apollo 13 mission: "*Houston, we have a problem.*"

Personally, I've always envied Lovell's composure. The result of my Apollo 13 moment was far from a calm assessment of the situation, followed by resolution of the problem. However, and I'm still not sure how, my problem was resolved and, thankfully, my computer is now restored to full and mundane functionality.

This happens to be the 40th anniversary of Neil Armstrong's "...one small step for man: ... one giant leap for mankind.", and

also of the invention of the internet. On the surface facts that have no relevance to the NAG. However, without computers, e-mail, the internet and the way in which they all make it easy to communicate and exchange information, the NAG would not be able to be active nationally as part of the National HMO Lobby, or indeed in Nottingham to continue to highlight the problems that trouble us and our neighbourhoods.

Okay, but why put the Boomerang Nebula on the front cover of the NAG magazine?

First, because being editor has to have its perks, and I wanted to put it there.

Second, because having started my ramblings with a quotation from Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, I felt it's appropriate to end with something which, though it is science fact rather fiction, is nevertheless quite literally out of this world – the Hubble Telescope.



Hubble Telescope

The Space Shuttle Atlantis moves away from Hubble after the telescope's release at end of servicing mission, 19 May 2009

[NASA Hubble Site]

Hubble was launched from the space shuttle in 1990, and for most of the time since then it has been sending back iconic images of planets, stars, galaxies, nebulae and all sorts of other truly amazing astronomical objects.

The Boomerang Nebula is one such. I have used its image, and similar ones, in this issue not only because they contrast so vividly with the images that usually appear in the magazine, but also because, in the full sense of the word, what they show is awesome

Third, because what most of us always associate with boomerangs is their ability to return to their point of origin.

Not unlike the matters which, in one form or another, keep returning to the pages of this magazine: HMOs, their impact on our neighbourhoods, how to exercise control over them, and the tools needed to do it.

The Housing Act 2004 is one of those tools, and this autumn's magazine continues to follow up on how the Act is being used to tackle those landlords and agents of licensable HMOs who have exhibited a somewhat cavalier attitude towards the Law and, in some worrying cases, also towards the welfare of their tenants.

Because the Act restricts mandatory licensing to HMOs with three or more storeys and five or more occupants, the result in Nottingham is that owners of a significant number of HMOs have avoided the need to apply for licences for their properties, thereby also avoiding the extra controls over standard of management and maintenance that come with licensing.

However, there are provisions in the Act to give local authorities powers to extend licensing to more HMOs, and this issue also reports on the City Council's progress in making an application to central government for permission to do this.

A great number of Nottingham's HMOs are occupied by students. As this is the beginning of the new academic year, I've asked the new officers from the Students' Unions of both of our universities to introduce themselves.

The magazine also reproduces articles originally published in *Impact* (the magazine of Nottingham University's Students' Union). They provide interesting, even surprising, insights into familiar topics.

Wheelie bins, rubbish, litter, anti-social behaviour, letting boards are all familiar and recurrent themes from past issues of the magazine. This issue is no different with, amongst others, a contribution from the City Council's new Public Realm Team.

The HMO Action Zones have now been in place for two years. This issue of the magazine follows up on the work of the Action Zone teams, and has news about the extension of the zones to new areas.

The eclectic mix of topics in the last issue of the magazine seems to have been well received. I hope the assortment of bits and pieces that I've put together this time will be informative, interesting and even amusing.

As often as possible, the magazine includes contributions from NAGgers. I'm really glad to be able to publish in this issue pieces written by Group members about their neighbourhoods, how they feel about them, and the wider impact of HMOs on those neighbourhoods.

Which brings me back to the need for more tools to control HMOs. Although the Housing Act gives council officers useful, albeit limited, powers to deal with the physical conditions and management of HMOs, it cannot be used to control the conversion of family homes into HMOs, and thus manage the concentration of HMOs in any particular neighbourhood. That sort of control comes within the remit of planning legislation.

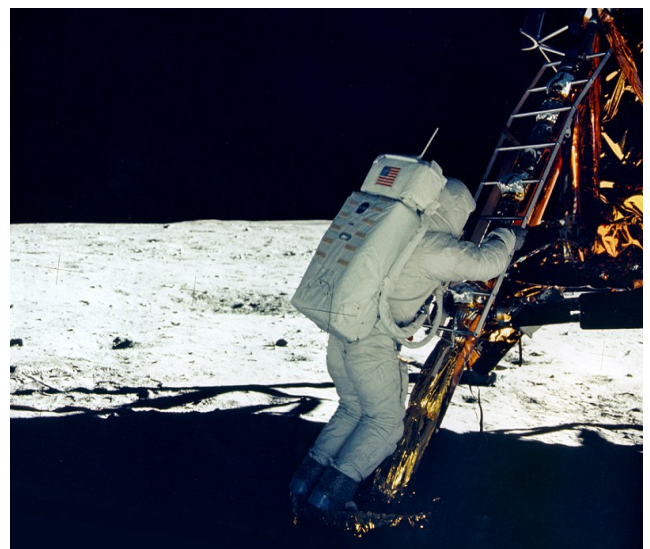
Over the past five years, the NAG has campaigned alongside other National HMO Lobby groups, the Councillors Campaign for Balanced Communities (CCBC) and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Balanced and Sustainable Communities (APPG) for powers to control the concentration of HMOs. Specifically, we have pressed central government to enact changes to the Use Classes Order (UCO) so that anyone wanting to change a family home into an HMO must get planning permission to do so.

It's now 18 months and more since the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) announced that it would consult on HMOs and possible changes to planning legislation, and the Spring 2009 magazine asked when that consultation was going to take place?

As it turned out, CLG published the consultation document soon after, and it is the starting point for this issue of the magazine.

Finally, thank you for persevering with my ramblings and, while you take a random walk through the following pages, may the Force be with you!

[Editor, November, 2009]



Apollo 11 Mission

Buzz Aldrin descends to the lunar surface from the LEM, July 1969
[NASA History Office & the NASA JSC Media Services Center]

TO CONTACT THE NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP ON HMOs

Telephone:

07762-525-625

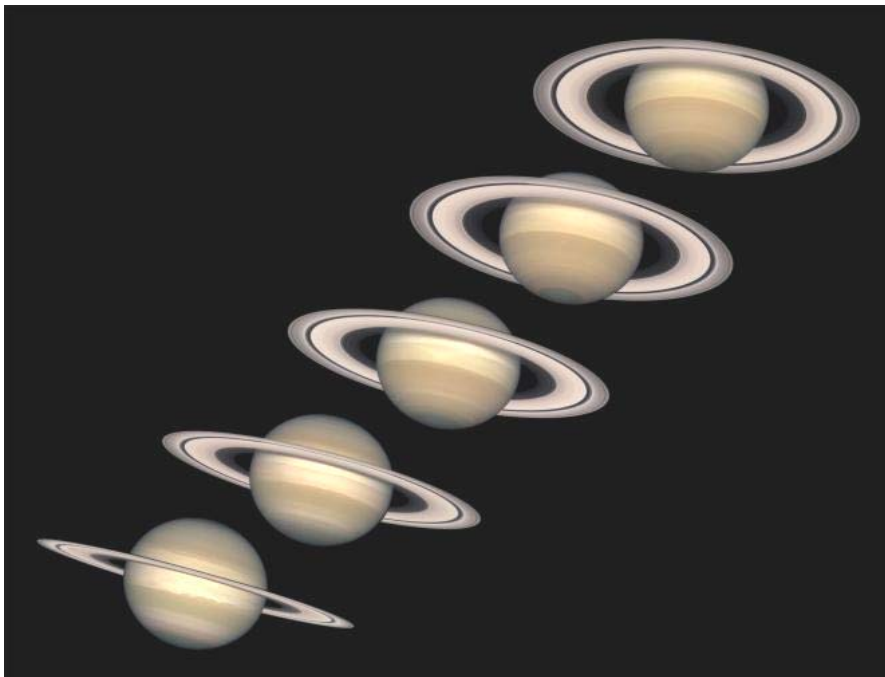
E-mail:

contact@nottinghamaction.org.uk

Write:

c/o St. Mary's Church Hall, Wollaton Hall Drive, Wollaton Park, Nottingham NG8 1AF

HMOs & POSSIBLE PLANNING RESPONSES

“ ... AN INEFFECTIVE HEADLINE-GRABBING INITIATIVE.”**A Change of Seasons on Saturn**

These Hubble Space Telescope images, captured from 1996 to 2000, show Saturn's rings open up from just past edge-on to nearly fully open as it moves from autumn towards winter in its Northern Hemisphere

[NASA & Hubble Heritage Team JPL]

The CLG's consultation on *Houses in multiple occupation and possible planning responses* closed on Friday, 7 August. It was almost immediately followed by this press release headed:

**“Anger Over Government's
'Nimby' Charter to Evict Students,
Immigrants and the Poor from
Affordable Homes”**

jointly put out by landlord organizations and the National Union of Students. ...

... Government proposals allowing councils to prevent people living in affordable shared houses have sparked furious opposition from landlords backed by the National Union of Students (NUS).

Ministers want to clamp down on houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) – homes rented by six or more unrelated people – as a part of a knee-jerk reaction to so-called 'studentification'. Problems with anti-social behaviour have arisen around high concentrations of HMOs, drawing complaints from locals about litter, noise and towns becoming empty during holidays.

With a new consultation, the government is pressing ahead with measures to clear students out of residential areas. But immigrants, young professionals and others who rent HMOs will also be affected.

Property experts say that using planning laws to restrict HMOs will raise rents and drive out the students, young professionals and immigrants who rent them because they are affordable. Local businesses, particularly those which rely on student custom, also face being hit if students are driven out.

The move is also a wholesale contradiction of social integration policies, which the government have promoted to ensure that 'sink estates' are not recreated.

The NUS has joined forces with property groups in condemning the plans as a 'nimby's charter' which would create student ghettos and dictate where people live based on their income.

The British Property Federation, National Landlords Association, Residential Landlords Association, and NUS all say the proposals will not help and that similar moves failed in Northern Ireland.

The property industry wants a local management option to tackle

the problems without further legislation. This could take into account local circumstances and offer a cost effective solution to the problem.

Liz Peace, chief executive of the British Property Federation, said: "You can't use the planning system for social engineering or to tackle anti-social behaviour. Only a tiny fraction of places suffer from a high concentration of HMOs and using a broad brush approach to deal with different issues relating to anti-social behaviour makes no sense. It's vital that the property market is left flexible and we hope ministers will heed our warnings and reconsider going down the legislative route."

Richard Price, director of operations, National Landlords Association, said: "Planning is about buildings; homes are about people. Changing HMO planning regulations in order to allow small groups of vociferous local residents to discriminate against certain parts of the community is not helpful. Students, migrant workers and other people looking for affordable and more flexible accommodation are already a part of normal community life. Where there are problems, the current proposals would encourage local authorities to use a sledgehammer to crack a walnut."

Wes Streeting, president of the National Union of Students said: "Students live and work within their communities and contribute hugely to their local areas through charity work and campaigning on local issues, not to mention the massive boost they give to the local economy. These proposals would marginalise students by forcing them to pay private companies to live in large

ghettoes away from the rest of the community. This would do nothing to improve community cohesion.

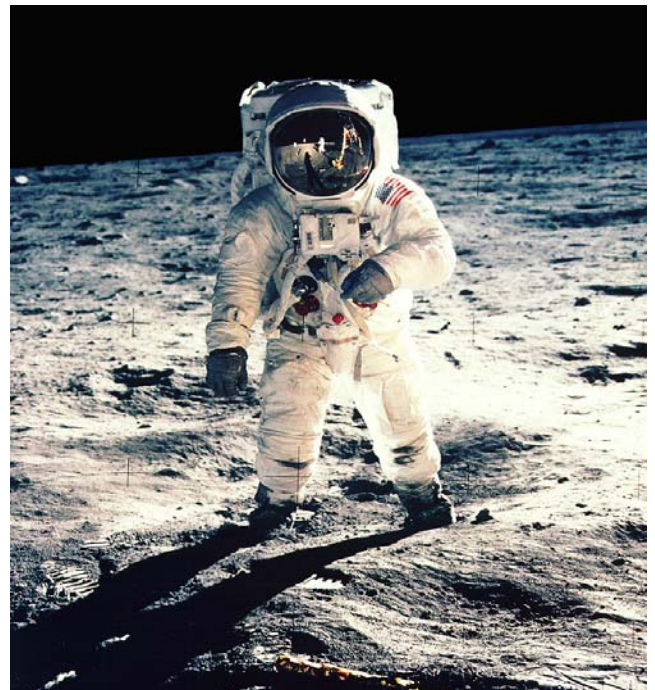
"We must also remember that it is not just students who live in HMOs. Many young professionals and migrant workers share houses – it is extremely foolish to propose that we displace all of these people in the middle of a housing crisis. It is critical that the Government takes a thoughtful and consultative approach to any problems that may have arisen in certain areas, rather than resorting to an ineffective headline-grabbing initiative."

Alan Ward, chairman of the Residential Landlords Association, said: "It's a classic case of nimbyism. Small but vociferous interest groups do not want students and migrants living near them. Their actions threaten the economic wealth of an area and the wellbeing of students, young people and the varied local businesses that depend on them. The move also threatens the mortgage value of rented properties. Planning permission can affect the marketability and value of property, forcing landlords to repay capital on their loans, or sell, resulting in loss of homes for tenants."

Richard Chesterman, 23, a Law graduate living in a shared house in Islington, north London, said: "It's a disgrace that students could face being barred from living in places just because they're students. There will always be a minority of people who cause trouble, but shipping everyone out of integrated society by banning the very shared houses that are affordable to young professionals would be massively damaging to everyone."

Chris Town, an HMO landlord in Leeds, said: "HMOs are often large and therefore difficult and expensive to convert into a different use, such as flats or family housing. The government's proposal will put a severe constriction on

the flexibility of property markets to adapt to local circumstances. As a result, it is possible that many derelict buildings will remain so as planning permission may be turned down on account of there being too many HMO properties in that area. The only result is likely to be decreased investment in local communities and increased blight."



Tranquility Base

Neil Armstrong's photograph of Buzz Aldrin at Tranquility Base
[Picture courtesy of NASA]

HMOs & POSSIBLE PLANNING RESPONSES

'A TALE ... FULL OF SOUND & FURY ...'

The press release precipitated a veritable media feeding frenzy that carried on intermittently well into late summer and early autumn with articles in national and local newspapers as well as TV and radio coverage.

Under the title and running heading: **'Anger over house-share cuts plan: Landlords and the National Union of Students (NUS) have rejected government proposals to limit house-sharing'**, BBC News reported on the end of the consultation and possible Government action. Extracts from the BBC's coverage are reproduced below.

The full report (including a supplementary report from the Headingley area of Leeds: **'Home-share plan sparks division: The government is considering plans to allow councils to limit the number of homes in multiple occupation - but will some areas really benefit from these proposals?'**) can be found at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/business/8192287.stm>.

'REAL PROBLEM' ...

A spokesman for Communities and Local Government said: "Students bring benefits to the places they live in, but too many residing in one area can impact negatively on a community."

"This is a real problem in many communities across England, which is why Communities Secretary John Denham

is committed to finding a long term solution to current rental practices."

The idea would be to limit the number of houses in a single area in which more than six unrelated people are living.

The government is currently looking at the responses to its consultation and will decide whether to make any changes to the plans "in the near future".

In a report about so-called studentification last September, John Denham [Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government] said, "Cities including Liverpool, Loughborough, Leicester, Nottingham, Southampton and Bristol have reported more empty properties during the summer meaning shops, businesses, community facilities and pubs simply close down creating 'ghost towns'."

"In addition there can be anti-social behaviour, litter and parking problems during term time."

'FANCY DRESS' ...

Dr Richard Tyler is from the Leeds HMO Lobby, which campaigns for legislation to control the number of shared houses, and has lived in Headingley since 1971.

He said: "What we have now in Headingley is students, students, students."

"It's not clean, there is a racket going on, day in, day out, and it is a target for burglars because of the large student population.

"We want fewer students and a balanced community with more families and long-term residents, instead of the majority being transient.

You have to queue in fancy dress in order to get into the local pubs. It's a travesty."

... 'INCREASED BLIGHT'

Hannah Greenslade, community officer at Leeds University Students' Union, said placing limits on HMOs would create needless "red tape and bureaucracy", when students and residents should be encouraged to talk with one another instead.

"Students don't have limitless amounts of money – they want cheap accommodation and will not be able to move

into city centre high rises if they are struggling with their finances.

"Assuming students are always going to be a problem and trying to keep them away from other people is a massive mistake."

Chris Town, a landlord in Leeds, said HMOs were often large and difficult and expensive to convert into a different use.

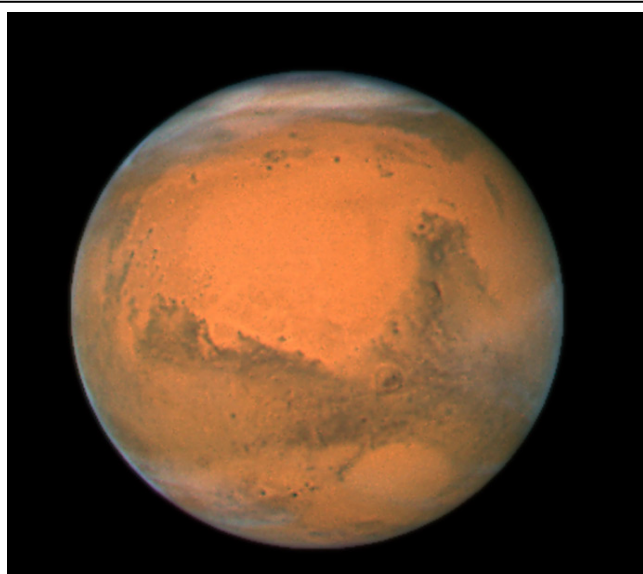
"The only result is likely to be decreased investment in local communities and increased blight," he said.

*Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.*

[William Shakespeare: Macbeth]

HMOs & POSSIBLE PLANNING RESPONSES

NEW POWERS TO LIMIT NUMBER OF STUDENT HOMES?



Mars

Hubble Telescope image of Mars, 17 December, 2007.

[NASA, ESA & the Hubble Heritage Team]

The city council and residents' groups in Nottingham have called on ministers to allow the local authority to limit the number of student homes.

The Government has been consulting on changes to planning law that would allow the council to prevent the conversion of more properties to accommodate students and other renters.

Nottingham City Council and some residents propose that landlords should have to apply for planning permission if they want to set up a property for multiple occupancy that is rented out to unrelated individuals.

The move would apply to all multiple occupancy properties, not just student houses.

The move has been prompted by the high number of student properties in and around Lenton.

Residents and the city council are concerned that a large number of students in an area results in a decline in

services, the condition of buildings deteriorates and the stock of family housing diminishes.

However, national bodies representing landlords and students have spoken out against the proposals.

Richard Price, director of operations, National Landlords Association, said: "Planning is about buildings; homes are about people. Changing HMO (houses in multiple occupation) planning regulations in order to allow small groups of vociferous local residents to discriminate against certain parts of the community is not helpful.

"Students, migrant workers and other people looking for affordable and more flexible accommodation are already a part of normal community life."

Wes Streeting, president of the National Union of Students said: "Students live and work within their communities and contribute hugely to their local areas, not to mention the massive boost they give to the local economy.

"These proposals would marginalise students.

But Maya Fletcher, a Lenton resident who campaigns for a more balanced community said: "Bringing houses in multiple occupation into the planning system is long overdue.

"They are the only form of housing development that doesn't need planning permission and landlords and developers have taken advantage of that fact.

"The result has been the emasculation of the local council and the disenfranchisement of residents who have not been able to resist developments detrimental to the amenity of their neighbourhoods.

"It's high time HMOs needed planning permission in the same way as a new conservatory or extension does."

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOUSING STATISTICS

83,600+ houses in Nottingham,

18,600 private rented homes,

6,000+ HMOs

1,700+ licensable HMOs,

50,000 students

[From Nottingham City Council Presentation to Area 8 Committee,
4 November, 2009]

HMOs & POSSIBLE PLANNING RESPONSES

'... A SIMPLE POLITICAL RESPONSE TO DISGRUNTLED LOCALS.'

[The Guardian, 6 October, 2009]

If the many reactions to the CLG consultation are anything to go by, HMOs (like Marmite) are something that you either love, or you hate. Certainly, there can be little doubt that the always strong, and often diametrically opposite, views expressed after the consultation ended, reflect the very different agendas of all the parties concerned and testify to the polarizing and divisive nature of HMOs themselves.

The language used tended to reflect this. Some which, amongst other things, depicted National HMO Lobby campaigners as *'small groups of vociferous local residents'* who want to use a possible change in planning law *'to discriminate against certain parts of the community'* was unfortunate to say the least.

Some, like the heading of the press release – *'Nimby' Charter to Evict Students, Immigrants and the Poor from Affordable Homes* – chose to ignore that changes in planning legislation will not be retrospective, will not change the amount of HMOs available in the market place today, and will not result in the eviction of anyone – student, immigrant, migrant, family, rich, poor, young, elderly – from the place they live in.

Some of it talks about creating *'student ghettos'*, thus failing to take into account the situation that already exists on the ground and how it came about. There are plenty of *dei facto* 'student ghettos' around already which arguably have been created by a lack of planning control, rather than too much of it.

In much the same vein, the claim that this so-called 'nimby's charter' would *'dictate where people live based on their income'* is almost risible. In the real world income – what people can and cannot afford to pay – largely dictates where they live. After all, that is in effect the basis of the whole of the commercial property market.

All in all, the media coverage has left an unpleasant taste in the mouth and a legacy of mis-understanding that has the potential to blight future communication between all the parties involved.

And it has not done much to explain the framework of the consultation or, indeed, its contents.

The consultation document itself was 37 pages long, too long to be published in the NAG magazine, though it is still possible to download it from the NAG website at:

www.nottinghamaction.org.uk.

However, what can be done is to focus on what you could call the business end of the document: the three options CLG decided to consult on and the questions that formed the basis of the consultation process.

The headings and the sequential numbering of the paragraphs that follow are as they appeared in the original CLG consultation document.

CONSULTATION OPTIONS

OPTION 1 – Non legislative option (local management option)

(29) There is an argument that the scale of the problem does not warrant legislative action. Relatively few towns and cities experience problems associated with high concentrations of HMOs. For example, in relation to student HMOs Rugg highlights that out of the 8,000 English wards the 2001 census data indicated that 59

wards had student densities where a student household reference person (HRP) comprised 10 per cent or more of all HRPs in all tenures, Rugg goes on to say that it could therefore be judged, that the student concentration is an issue in 0.7 per cent of wards in England. Even in those areas with heavy student population there is not always a problem.

(30) If changes were made to planning legislation it would also affect a number of local authorities who either wish to encourage HMOs or have no particular problem, particularly those authorities trying to house homeless and vulnerable people.

(31) There is also the possibility that the problem of high density HMOs may diminish in some areas if overall migration levels start to fall and the demography and make-up of the student population changes (a reduction in 19-20 year olds with older age groups and more part time study). ECOTEC considered in its report that in terms of student HMOs, the situation is likely to correct itself if left to the market to dictate, for example as more purpose built accommodation comes on board and as student numbers start to level off.

(32) The ECOTEC research work highlighted a number of non-planning mechanisms for dealing with the problems associated with high concentrations of HMOs occupied by students. These included, the development of housing and community strategies by HE institutions, the use of student liaison officers and student unions to work collaboratively with the local community, local authority landlord accreditation schemes, the ability of local authorities to target their resources and activities in specific locations and at key times and the use of stakeholder partnerships.

(33) This option would mean proceeding with the dissemination of good practice allowing local areas to find a solution for local problems and leaving planning legislation unchanged.

OPTION 2 – Amend the Use Classes Order to allow tighter planning controls over houses in multiple occupation

(34) Pressure for change to the Use Classes Order in relation to HMOs focuses on the need to amend the current Use Classes Order by providing a definition of an HMO along the same lines of the Housing Act 2004. It is believed that this could allow local planning authorities to have more control over the location and concentration of HMOs.

(35) Any change to the Use Classes Order would only make an impact in the longer term as it would not apply retrospectively.

(36) CLG consider that there are two main options for amending the Use Classes Order.

(37) First, the threshold in the Use Class Order in C3 could be amended to refer to 'not more than three residents living together as a single household'. This option would lower the 'trigger' for considering whether planning

permission is needed (currently at 6 people) lower. These considerations would operate in the same way as the Use Classes Order provisions currently work, but the lower threshold could give local planning authorities greater confidence in determining marginal or ambiguous cases.

(38) Alternatively, the Use Classes Order could be amended to provide a specific definition of an HMO (either by introducing a new Use Class or along the lines of the Northern Irish approach whereby HMOs have been taken out of the Use Class Order). This definition would be along similar lines to that in the Housing Act and would focus on properties where three or more people were occupying a property (who are not all members of the same family) and who share a bathroom, kitchen or toilet. This would bring the thresholds used in planning and housing legislation into line. As part of any implementation we would also amend class C3(b) so that it provides for *“use as a dwelling house by not more than six residents living together as a single household where care is provided for residents”*.

(39) This would provide greater clarity in the definition of an HMO but would still require LPAs to exercise discretion in determining whether a material change of use had occurred.

(40) The Government wishes to ask whether from a practitioner’s point of view one approach would be preferable to the other.

(41) This option would be likely to increase the number of planning applications for change of use to an HMO, although the number of dwellings being classed as HMOs would depend on whether a material change of use had been determined. This might be seen as an additional burden on landlords.

(42) A change in the Use Classes Order could enable local planning authorities, when combined with the use of planning policies, to restrain or encourage HMOs.

(43) The change proposed under this option could potentially impact on other types of development which is currently classed as a C3 dwelling. For example, it may result in some small scale care homes requiring planning permission for change of use. It could also restrict the supply of new HMOs which could have an impact on housing supply more generally.

OPTION 3 – The use of an article 4 direction to remove powers for properties to convert to HMOs

(44) This option would require amendments to the Use Classes Order to define an HMO in a new use class (we propose a definition based on that in the Housing Act 2004, see paragraph 38) and amendments to the General Permitted Development Order to allow for changes between a dwelling house and HMO to be permitted development. If in a particular area it was then considered that a local concentration of HMOs was giving rise to problems the local planning authority for that area could use existing powers and issue an article 4 direction removing the permitted development right for a defined area.

(45) This option would require local planning policies to be in place to support and justify the removal of permitted development rights in some localities.

(46) This approach would allow those authorities wishing to control HMOs to do so without extending the burden to those authorities without problems. It would also result in **all** HMOs becoming permitted development including those that currently require planning permission.

(47) It may be that removing the need for planning permission for conversion to an HMO (of any size) would in itself present unforeseen consequences.

(48) Under current legislation, owners of HMOs in an area covered by an article 4 direction, whose application for planning permission was turned down could claim compensation. Compensation could be claimed for items such as abortive expenditure (e.g. the preparation of plans for the purposes of any work) or for loss or damage directly attributable to the withdrawal of the permitted development right. It could also be claimed for any resulting depreciation of the value of the claimant’s interest in the land. Compensation cannot be based on speculation about future loss of profit or income but could cover any loss of anticipated future business profits under a specific contract.

(49) It may be that the risk of compensation claims would make local planning authorities adverse to making an article 4 direction and that this route would therefore be less effective in controlling HMO development.

(50) The Planning Act 2008 introduced provisions relating to compensation whereby if planning permission is withdrawn by way of an article 4 direction compensation will only be payable if an application is made within twelve months of the direction coming into force. It also provides that if a local planning authority gives at least twelve months notice of withdrawal of the permitted development right compensation will not be payable.

(51) As the risk of compensation could be a disincentive for the local planning authority wishing to use an article 4 direction to control HMO development we are specifically consulting on whether, if this option were to be implemented, the provisions contained in Article 189 of the Planning Act 2008 which relate to the payment of compensation should also be applied to the change of use between a dwelling house and an HMO.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Q1. Do you experience problems/effects which you attribute to high concentrations of HMOs ?

Q2. Do you consider the current planning framework to be a barrier to effective management of HMOs by local planning authorities?

Q3. Could promotion of best practice measures as opposed to changes in the planning framework sufficiently deal with the problems associated with HMOs, in particular those problems often associated with high concentrations of HMOs with student occupants?

Q4. If planning legislation is seen as a barrier to the effective management of HMOs in an area how should planning legislation be amended – along the lines of option 2 (introduce a definition along the lines of the Housing Act 2004) or option 3?

Q5. Do practitioners have a preference for one approach listed as part of option 2 over the other?

Q6. What effect would a change to the Use Classes Order as described in option 2 have on those local planning authorities that do not encounter problems with high concentrations of HMOs?

Q7. Would a change to the Use Class Order as described in option 2 or 3 have an impact on the homeless and other vulnerable groups?

Q8. Would a change to the Use Classes Order as described in option 2 or 3 have any unintended consequences, for example an impact on small scale care homes or children's homes, which are currently classed a C3 dwelling houses?

Q9. Would a change to the Use Classes Order as described in option 2 or 3 impact unfairly – directly or indirectly – on any equality strands?

Q10. Would a change to the Use Classes order reduce the supply of HMO accommodation in your area?

Q11. If amendments are made to the Use Classes Order, should a property that has obtained planning permission

for use as an HMO require planning permission to revert back to a C3 dwelling house?

Q12. Would a change to the Use Classes Order as described in option 3 place a new burden on local planning authorities?

Q13. Under option 3, would the removal of the current requirement for HMOs to seek planning permission pose a problem for practitioners in managing land use impacts in their area?

Q14. Should the compensation provisions included in Section 189 of the Planning Act 2008 be applied to change of use between C3 dwelling house and an HMO if option 3 were to be implemented?

Q15. How important would the risk of compensation be in the decision to use Article 4 directions under option 3?

Q16. Would the extra certainty of greater control bring benefits that outweigh the burdens placed by the need to process more planning applications?

HMOs & POSSIBLE PLANNING RESPONSES

NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR A 'KNEE-JERK REACTION'

INVITATION TO COMMENT

Having posed its 16 questions, the remainder of the CLG's consultation document dealt with an impact assessment, gave details about the consultation process itself, and information on how to respond. It also issued an invitation to comment:

(52) This is a public consultation and it is open to anyone to respond to this consultation. However, we would particularly welcome responses from:

- ◆ local planning authorities
- ◆ residents
- ◆ students and student bodies
- ◆ property developers and landlords
- ◆ those that represent groups likely to be affected.

'Neighbourhoods where families want to live ...not leave' is the title of the NAG's response to the consultation. This too can be downloaded from the NAG website.

With some minor adaptations, it has also been reproduced as a stand-alone supplement to this issue of the magazine.

Something that wasn't included in the document sent to CLG, (but is in the supplement) was an acknowledgement that it came about because of the efforts of NAG members and with help from a number of other people.

First amongst the latter was Richard Tyler, the Co-ordinator of the National HMO Lobby, who put together regular progress bulletins, organized a National HMO Lobby seminar on the consultation, was an invaluable source of much good advice, and, when most needed, some-one to lean on.

It is some 10 years since, through the work of Richard and others like him, the attention of government was first drawn to problems associated with concentrations of HMOs. So the CLG's consultation can hardly be described

as a 'knee jerk reaction'. Neither should it be depicted as a reaction to something that 'Only a tiny fraction of places suffer from ...'.

That argument was put forward in the Rugg Review of the private rented sector and has continued to be promulgated by landlord organizations, despite the fact that research carried out by Darren Smith and his colleague, Jo Sage, has not only questioned the validity of the data Rugg used to come to her conclusion, but has also exposed the flaws in the methodology Rugg used to analyse it.

Still, no matter what the pro's and con's of the arguments are, there can be no doubt that there has been a significant national response to the consultation from a wide range of different organizations and individuals as this article from the October 2009 issue of 'Headway', the newsletter of the Leeds HMO Lobby, indicates.

It also asks the very pertinent question: What happens next?

LOBBYING FOR LEGISLATION

Everyone who lives in and around Headingley knows about the negative impact of too many shared houses (houses in multiple occupation, or HMOs). HMO concentrations can be the most disruptive form of housing development. Yet they are also the only type of housing development which doesn't need planning permission. This is why it has got so out of hand, in and around Headingley.

And this is why Leeds HMO Lobby has been campaigning for a decade for new rules on HMOs, so that they do require planning permission. Earlier this year, the government at last recognised that there was a problem, not just in Leeds but around the country, not just in university towns but also in seaside and market towns. They published a consultation paper, asking whether there should be any change to the rules on HMOs.

There was a huge response from the community. The Lobby called for change, of course (copies of our 28-page response are available on request). So did local community associations, like Ash Road, Cardigan Triangle, Far Headingley, Headingley Development Trust, Little Woodhouse, North Hyde Park, South Headingley, The Turnways and Woodbine Terrace. And so did many individual residents. Leeds City Council called for change, and so did many of our local councillors, as well as our MP, Greg Mulholland.

Unfortunately, the university sector opposed any change. The University of Leeds was opposed, in spite of supporting it in their *Housing Strategy*. The student unions at both universities opposed any change. And Unipol Student Homes (which advertises shared houses) also opposed new rules on HMOs.

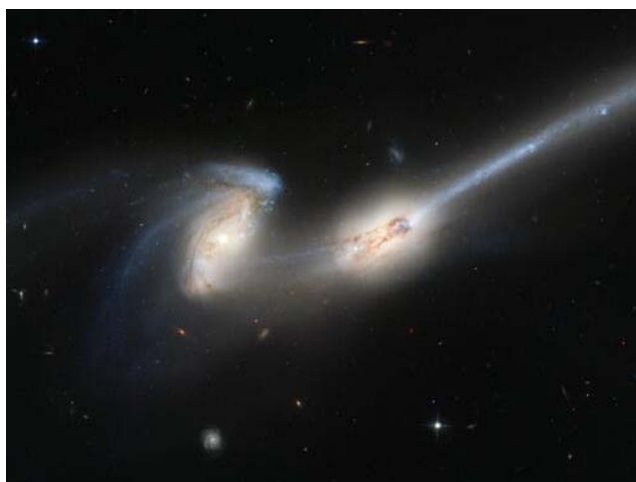
The same was true nationally. Opposition to change came from Universities UK, the National Union of Students and the British Property Federation (astonishingly, NUS supported the very landlords who are ripping them off!).

But the call for new legislation was supported by dozens of community groups in Bath, Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Chester, Chichester, Egham in Surrey, Leicester, Lincoln, Loughborough, Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Poole, Reading, Salford, Sheffield, Shrewsbury, Southampton and York. Controls were supported by most of the Core Cities, by the seaside towns, and (to its credit) by Loughborough University. And it was supported by professional organisations like the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Planning Officers Society, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the National HMO Network.

What happens now? Well, first we await the official report on the consultation, which is due later this autumn. And then the government will announce what it intends to do. We know the Minister, John Denham, understands the issues. The main concern is that legislation is enacted before there is a general election.

[Headway, Issue No.30, October 2009]

HMOs & POSSIBLE PLANNING RESPONSES HICKORY DICKORY DOCK WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



NGC 4676: 'The Mice'

Located some 300 million light years away in the constellation Coma Berenices, this picture (a composite of three pictures taken by the Hubble Telescope in 2002) is of two colliding spiral galaxies, together known as The Mice.

[NASA, ACS Science Team & ESA]

*'Hickory Dickory Dock, The mouse ran up the clock.
The clock struck one, The mouse ran down!
Hickory Dickory Dock.'*

Nottingham is one of the Core Cities that responded to the CLG's consultation in support of the need for a change to planning legislation (Option 2).

Alan Simpson, MP for the Nottingham South constituency and a member of the APPG, has been involved with the issues surrounding HMOs and studentification for well over a decade now. He has been a constant and active source of support in Westminster, writing to ministers, lobbying John Denham during a division before this summer's recess, and, very recently, meeting with John Healy, the Minister for Planning and Housing.

In September, this letter was sent from members of Nottingham City Council's Executive to John Denham.

Dear Minister

As elected members and portfolio holders for Nottingham City Council we have been extremely encouraged to read of your thoughts relating to the proposed changes in planning legislation. Like your experiences in your own Southampton constituency, we have seen on an annual basis the results of an ever increasing number of students and HMOs and the effects this has had on our neighbourhoods. Like you, we also recognise that local government needs additional powers to help make a difference and maintain some resemblance of a balanced and sustainable community.

Your recent speech on 21st July 2009 at the New Local Government Conference suggesting more powers and responsibilities to local government will hopefully lead to the situation where we will be able to respond to the needs and interests of all our residents. As well as recognising the economic and social benefits of two large universities, Nottingham needs the powers to deal with the social and environmental challenges caused by the same universities, and these can only come from central government.

Nottingham has used its existing powers, resources and regulations to manage the situation as best possible. We have encouraged the development of purpose-built student accommodation; introduced and supported the development of Unipol Student Homes and a brand new student accommodation accreditation scheme; worked pro-actively with local landlords on improvements to the local neighbourhoods; encouraged links between universities, student unions and residents; introduced HMO Action Zones; employed a Student Strategy Manager.

Yet without the necessary support from central government to deal with the consequences of its laudable policy of encouraging young people into higher education, nothing will change. We hope you will be the politician who will make the difference.

Yours faithfully

Cllr. Jon Collins, Cllr. Dave Trimble, Cllr. Dave Liversidge
Cllr. Alan Clark.

The case has been made, nationally and locally, and it is tempting to say that there is precious little more that can be done until (as the *Headway* article explains) Government reports officially on the consultation and there is an announcement about what it has decided to do.

When that is likely to happen is anyone's guess.

A recent rumour had it that an announcement was due any time in the first week in December.

The latest information is that Ministers are considering the results of the consultation and that CLG is aiming to publish the summary document by the end of the year ... Hickory, Dickory, Dock.

However, though sometimes the futility of mouse behaviour and clocks (let alone chasing of tails) comes to mind, that does not mean that members of the NAG can do nothing.

It is important not to let the subject drop off the proverbial radar.

NAGgers can help to stop this happening by writing to their constituency MPs and their ward councillors and asking what is happening, what is Government going to decide to do, and when?

Time is passing and there needs to be a conclusion to this matter before decisions and actions are overtaken by the paralysis of General Election fever.

[Editor, 4 December 2009]

TALK & BOX TICKING ... OR REAL ACTION? HMOs & THE HOUSING ACT 2004

'FLOAT LIKE A BUTTERFLY ... STING LIKE A BEE'



Hubble Image of NGC 6302: The 'Butterfly' Nebula,

The Butterfly Nebula lies within our own Milky Way, some 3,800 light years away from Earth in the constellation Scorpius. The 'wings' are made of gases heated to more than 36,000°F. The butterfly-shape is created by a doughnut of dust that constricts the central part of the nebula, and hides the dying star at its centre. The surface temperature of the star is estimated to be around 400,000°F, making it one of the hottest known stars in our galaxy.

[NASA, ESA, and the Hubble SM4 ERO Team]

positive and balanced outlook when you're not just an observer, but a participant (probably a reluctant one at that) in the problem?

Under those circumstances it is not easy to differentiate between talk and box ticking, and real actions that make a real impact on the situation.

The lead article in the Spring 2005 issue of this magazine highlighted that: *'Committees have been set up and groups talk and talk about what to do. But the only actions we see are: more family homes in more neighbourhoods becoming student HMOs; more garages, lofts, cellars changing into 'study-bedrooms'; more noise, more parties, more degradation of our environment; more expansion by both of Nottingham's Universities; more Council Tax demanded of us; fewer community facilities and amenities.*

That every one of those statements is as valid today as it was four years ago is a sad, but inevitable, reflection of the reality of the situation.

The inescapable fact is that, whilst it takes a matter of a few weeks (perhaps even only days) to change a family home into an HMO, and a little longer to erode the balance and sustainability of a neighbourhood, putting the process into reverse is much harder.

It takes longer and needs more in terms of money, effort and willpower to succeed.

How much is almost anybody's guess since no-one has managed to do it — yet.

But this is not the whole picture. National politics and national (in)action aside, here in Nottingham at least no-one is sitting around like a character in Samuel Beckett's *'Waiting for Godot'*.

Far from it!

A good example of what is happening is the action that Nottingham City Council's Environmental Health section has been taking to ensure that landlords and agents comply with all the requirements of the Housing Act 2004.

A sizeable part of the work has involved 'floating like a butterfly': in other words education and persuasion.

Coupled with a good deal of old fashioned pressure, it has begun to produce dividends for at least some HMO tenants and, hopefully, also for their neighbourhoods.

It is difficult enough to maintain a broad and dispassionate view of a problem when you are a neutral observer. So how much more difficult is it to maintain a

COMMUNITY, LANDLORDS AND STUDENTS JOIN FORCES

Campaigning residents are hoping to improve the quality of life in their area.

The Dunkirk and Old Lenton Community Association is leading an initiative to improve housing in Dunkirk by working with students and landlords.

This week, a group of landlords showed residents and students around homes they have renovated.

The aim was to spread the word about the standard students should expect in their rented homes – in the hope that it would marginalise scrooge landlords.

The community association is also making its facilities available to students, by running games and quiz nights, in an effort to promote a positive relationship with students.

Lesley Fyffe, chairman of the community association, says the number of students living in the area has expanded rapidly in the last ten years, which has caused problems.

But conditions are improving and the community is determined to encourage higher standards of housing and good neighbourly relations.

"Students have come into our community," said Mrs Fyffe. "There were issues, but we are learning to live with them rather than resenting and criticising them. Now we notice people talking about their neighbours saying, 'my students are lovely this year'."

"We include students in events, relationships are much better."

"We are trying to make contacts with landlords. We should not have young people living in conditions that are dangerous or where you would not keep a dog. And if we improve the physical area everyone will feel better about living here."

As part of this positive approach, the community association organised a tour of "good" and "bad" rented properties in the Dunkirk area.

Reputable landlords showed off some of their rented houses. Residents were amazed at the quality of some of the student housing.

Some homes have landscaped gardens, outdoor seating, gazebos, and barbecue areas, as well as fire doors and alarm systems inside.

Landlord John Buxton, who has 39 properties in Dunkirk, prides himself on the high standard of his homes.

He said: "We provide a high standard because it is the right thing to do. I feel better having a product like that. It costs more but it is right."

Mr. Buxton said the vast majority of students respect the houses and cause not trouble. However, students must provide a contact number for their parents as a condition of their tenancy and in extreme cases of misbehaviour he contacts them.

He said: "A chat with mum and dad always does the trick. They are always supportive but I only have to do it once or twice a year."

Mr. Buxton welcomes the introduction of a licensing system for student houses, which is operated by Nottingham City Council and requires landlords to meet basic standards and ensure the tenants do not behave in

an antisocial way. "There is nothing for landlords to fear," he added

[Charles Walker, Nottingham Evening Post, Monday, 24 August, 2009]



NGC 6543: The Cat's Eye Nebula

A planetary nebula in the constellation Draco. High resolution Hubble telescope pictures have revealed knots, jets, bubbles and sinewy arc-like features. At the centre of the nebula is a bright and hot, but dying, star. The dust from this star will become part of another generation of stars and planets, just as previous generations of stars contributed dust grains to our solar system and so have become part of Planet Earth. The nebula was first discovered by William Herschel in 1786.

[Hubble Telescope, NASA ESA 2009]

It is good to know that education and persuasion along with pressure – including that of the NAG and its 'vociferous', 'disgruntled' and no doubt also 'resentful' and 'critical' membership – do bring about results.

But not always, and from time to time the *Evening Post* has also reported on 'stinging like a bee': those instances when the Council has needed to take landlords and agents to the Magistrates' Court or, as in the case of one Dunkirk landlord, on to the Crown Court.

STUDENT LANDLORD FAILED TO MAINTAIN HOMES

A landlord has pleaded guilty to 17 charges relating to his management of student houses in Nottingham.

Anthony Carroll, of Highfield Road in the city centre, admitted he had let rooms in two houses without an appropriate licence.

He was also charged with failing to comply with regulations relating to management of the homes, including fire safety and the condition of the properties.

At one address, Mr. Carroll was accused of changing locks so his tenants could not get in.

It is the latest in a string of cases brought to court by the city council, which is trying to improve the quality of homes in multiple occupation in the city.

The council's solicitor, Naomi Matthews, told Nottingham Magistrates' Court: "There were five students living there. Three moved out and [the two remaining students] went out during the day and found the locks had been changed despite the fact they had paid their rent."

"He refused to allow them back in. They went to the university and the city council but he was not persuaded to let them back in and eventually a police officer was called."

The council claims the pair had all their belongings inside including medication and Mr. Carroll only allowed them in after he was told the police could force the door. They were placed in emergency accommodation.

While Mr. Carroll pleaded guilty to all charges, the case has now been referred to Nottingham Crown Court.

Mr Carroll will also be sentenced at that hearing.

In court Mr. Carroll, who defended himself, disputed some of the details of the events that led up to him locking out the students. The magistrate, Mrs Catchpole, told him he would have to raise his points at the next hearing.

Outside the court, Mr. Carroll claimed the incident resulted from a misunderstanding.

He said: "I assumed they had gone."

Mr. Carroll owns up to 35 properties and has let homes to students for 30 years.

At the hearing, he accepted that at 10 Greenfield Street, Lenton, there were loose carpets on the stairs,

railings on the landing were not secure, there was black mould on some ceilings, a hole in the floor of a bedroom, and a large bedroom window was in disrepair.

At 59 Highfield Road, Lenton, he accepted he had not supplied adequate fire fighting equipment and he had failed to ensure the way out of the building was clear should there be a fire.

After the hearing Mr. Carroll claimed he had not been made aware of the need to licence the houses.

A city council spokesman said: "Landlords are asked a number of times to apply for a licence before prosecution. Going to court is the last resort."

[Charles Walker, Nottingham Evening Post, Saturday, 15 August, 2009]

NOTE:

10 Greenfield Street and 59 Highfield Road are in Dunkirk and not in Lenton as stated in the Evening Post article.

Nottingham Crown Court is due to consider Mr. Carroll's case early in January 2010.

TALK & BOX TICKING ... OR REAL ACTION? SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTIONS BY NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL OF LANDLORDS & AGENTS

Mrs Naheed Brooking

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004.
Failure to comply with Section 16 Local Government
(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Notice

Mr Douglas De Vos

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004.
Failure to comply with Management of Houses in Multiple
Occupation Regulations 2006

Mr John Doyle

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004

Mr Simon Fields

Fire Service Prosecuted under the Regulatory Reform Order

Graduates Property Management

Failure to comply with Section 16 Local Government
(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Notice

Mr Tariq Hussain

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004.
Failure to comply with Section 16 Local Government
(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Notice

Mr Ajay Jaswal

Failure to licence the properties under Housing Act 2004

Mrs Susan Laing

Failure to comply with Section 16 Local Government
(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Notice

Mr Zahir Malik

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004

Dr Balvinder Singh Mehat

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004.
Failure to comply with Management of Houses in Multiple
Occupation Regulations 2006

Mr Rupert Roy Mellis

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004.
Failure to comply with Section 16 Local Government
(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Notice

Mr Barrington Oliver-Mighten

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004

David Rookes & Dawn Greenfield

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004

Mr Michael Mukhtar Singh

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004.
Failure to comply with Management of Houses in Multiple
Occupation Regulations 2006

Mr Michael Mukhtar Singh

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004.
Failure to comply with Management of Houses in Multiple
Occupation Regulations 2006

Mr Kanwal Singh Swali

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004

Mr Tajammul Tufail

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004.
Failure to comply with Section 16 Local Government
(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Notice

Miss Joy Weise

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004.
Failure to comply with Section 16 Local Government
(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Notice

Mohammed Farid Zaidi

Failure to licence the property under Housing Act 2004.
Failure to comply with Section 16 Local Government
(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Notice

DOCTOR FINED FOR FAILING TO ENSURE SAFETY OF TENANTS

A doctor who put his student tenants at risk must pay more than £20,000 in fines and costs.

City GP Dr Balvinder Singh Mehat has a portfolio of more than 35 houses.

Nottingham City Council found that his house in Derby Grove, Lenton, presented a "significant fire safety risk" to the seven students who lived there.

In a statement the council said: *"The property was inspected by officers from the city council and identified as a house in multiple occupation which needed a licence.*

"On inspection the property presented significant fire safety risks to the seven tenants and following the joint inspection by the city council and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service an Emergency Prohibition Order was served preventing the occupation of a basement bedroom.

"As a result of the prohibition order the seven tenants left the property."

The city council said it pursued Dr Mehat before taking the matter to Nottingham Magistrates' Court.

The statement said: *"Despite being given a number of warnings by the city council Dr Mehat failed to manage the property correctly or to apply for the appropriate licence."*

Dr. Mehat pleaded guilty by post and was fined £10,000 for failing to have a proper licence for the property and £4,000 in total for breaches of management regulations. He was ordered to pay £3,755.50 in legal costs, £2,763.56 in investigation costs and a victim surcharge of £15. The total amount in fines and costs was £20,534.06.

In 2006 it became a legal requirement for houses in multiple occupation to be licensed, where the property has three or more storeys and five or more unrelated occupants.

The prosecution reflects the tougher line the council is taking with landlords.

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.

The city council has focused its efforts on three areas – Sneinton Hermitage, Lenton and Burns Street, in the Arboretum area.

Coun Graham Chapman, deputy leader, said: *"The council has a firm commitment to ensuring that houses in multiple occupation in the city are operated legally and hold the necessary licence.*

"We are working with landlords to give them advice and support and we have issued over 850 licences and a large number of landlords have been found to provide good accommodation and to comply with the law.

"There are, however, landlords that break the law and in some cases provide poor accommodation.

"We try to work with these landlords but unfortunately in some cases they refuse to abide by the law and as a last resort prosecution is our only option."

[Nottingham Evening Post, Wednesday, 29 July, 2009]

TALK & BOX TICKING ... OR REAL ACTION? COUNCIL PROPOSES TO APPLY FOR ADDITIONAL LICENSING

So far the actions taken by Nottingham City Council have been limited to HMOs that fall within the mandatory licensing regime, i.e. those HMOs with three or more storeys and five or more occupants. However, the Housing Act 2004 also has provision in it for extension of licensing to other HMOs.

In marked contrast to the situation in Wales, where permission to extend licensing to other HMOs does not require the local authority to provide proof of need, in England an application to Communities and Local Government to extend licensing to other HMOs has to be accompanied by robust evidence to support the need for extension of the licensing regime.

To date Peterborough has been the only local authority to make a successful application to CLG for extension of HMO licensing.

Now, Nottingham City Council is making a proposal to Government to extend the licensing regime for HMOs under the provisions of the Act.

LANDLORDS' ANGER AT LICENSING PLAN

Landlords have hit out at city council plans to extend licensing regulations for rented property.

Under the system which has been in place since July 2007, rented homes in multiple occupation, where five or more people live, or where the house is three or more storeys, must be licensed.

But Nottingham City Council wants to extend the scheme to thousands more rented properties.

Shad Ali, a city landlord and member of East Midlands Property Owners (EMPO), said: *"We are against the extension of the scheme. There are already rules around health and safety and the environment [for homes in multiple occupation]. The powers are adequate but they are not using them as well as they should."*

Mr. Ali said he and other EMPO landlords did not object to the current licensing system aimed at larger houses.

The existing scheme affects 1,700 houses in multiple occupation out of a city-wide total of 6,000.

The council has said it would like to target an additional 3,701 rented homes in Arboretum, Radford, Lenton, Sneinton and Berridge wards.

The cost of licensing one property is £600, but is set to rise to £650. Mr. Ali, who has 10 properties, would face a charge of £6,500 if the change is introduced.

The city council has told Government that it would like to extend its powers in relation to licensing under the provisions of the Sustainable Communities Act.

The next step is for the council to prove that the scheme has been well used, that there is a link between the rented properties and neighbourhood conditions, and there has been a "robust consultation".

Mr. Ali says EMPO members are annoyed that they were not consulted. He said: "We have not been approached by the council for our views and neither have students or the universities, and the private business sector has not been consulted. The council has a poor record when it comes to consultation preferring to tick the right boxes as oppose to having genuine and sincere debate."

Mr. Ali added: "Even houses that have mandatory licensing are not being monitored effectively by the council. Our council does not appear to have adequate resources to manage existing legislation so their answer is to introduce more bureaucracy and unnecessary charges for landlords."

A spokeswoman for Nottingham City Council said: "Licensing is another way of ensuring effective management, housing condition and that houses in multiple occupation are suitable."

"It is a proposal for certain parts of Nottingham where it can be demonstrated that it will be potentially beneficial and the council is about to go out to consultation."

"A meeting has already been arranged for later this month to discuss what is the best way of reaching and consulting with landlords. We are also looking at how we engage with other interested parties including tenants and the local community to get real feedback on this important issue for Nottingham."

[Charles Walker, Nottingham Evening Post, Wednesday, 7 October, 2009]

HMO LICENCE FEES

At present the HMO licence fee is £600 per property. It is valid for five years. Therefore, it costs the licence holder £120 pa or £10 a month. In comparison, in the financial year 2009-2009, a TV licence fee, valid for one year only, cost £139.50, i.e. £11.63 a month, or 39p a day.

COUNCIL CONSULTATION ON ADDITIONAL LICENSING FOR HMOs

Before submitting the proposal, the Council's Environmental Health section has undertaken a consultation process:

Nottingham City Council is making a proposal to Government with regards to further Licensing provisions of HMOs, under the Housing Act 2004, parts 2 and 3. Before the proposal is submitted, Nottingham City Council invites you to take part in the consultation and let us know your views.

An HMO is a building or part of a building occupied as a main residence by more than one household. In summary, this means that properties occupied by individuals who are unrelated to one another and who share facilities, by definition, are houses in multiple occupation, including properties occupied by students.

HMOs are present across the whole of the city, with concentrations in key wards. The density of housing and the level of occupation of HMOs can mean that if they are not effectively maintained and managed, they can be detrimental to both the occupiers and to the neighbourhood.

The Housing Act 2004 provides legal powers to the Local Authority, to address some housing and management conditions, including the mandatory licensing of certain

types of HMOs of a prescribed description. Under licensing, certain sets of standards and management arrangements are required to be met. In Nottingham City fewer than 30% of HMOs are licensable under the mandatory scheme. The overall effect is that there is a limited ability to control the non licensable HMOs and the impact they have on neighbourhoods and on their occupants.

Although evidence held shows that the approach to mandatory licensing has had a positive impact within neighbourhoods across the city, there are still a significant number of sub standard and poorly managed non licensed HMOs.

The Housing Act allows for licensing powers to be extended to HMOs, which are currently excluded from the mandatory licensing scheme. As there are still identified problems with HMOs in Nottingham, it is proposed that application is made to the Government (Department of Communities and Local Government(DCLG)) for additional licensing powers. The benefit of additional licensing powers is greater control of HMOs in relation to the management and condition of the property.

In Summary:

- 1. Who:** Nottingham City Council Environmental Health invites all stakeholders and members of the public to take part in the consultation process to let us know your views.
- 2. What:** Should the Government grant the power of Additional Licensing to Nottingham City Council in order to extend the Licensing Scheme to include other HMOs, which are currently not licensable under the Mandatory Scheme?
- 3. When:** The consultation is to begin on **Monday 23rd November** and will continue until noon on **Friday 11th December 2009**. [Editor's Note: Extended to Monday, 21 December]
- 4. Where:** Nottingham City Council intends to seek Additional Licensing in the area of the **Arboretum** ward.
- 5. Why:** To address and remedy the problems of poor housing conditions, occupier safety, maintenance and the management of a wider range of HMOs.
- 6. How:** Questionnaires will be available from: Libraries; Dr's Surgeries; Community Centres; Community Groups; Neighbourhood Teams; Universities; Student Unions; Unipol; through letterboxes in the nominated area; mail shots to owners and agents; websites – including Nottingham City Council, GNELF (Greater Nottingham Electronic Landlords Forum), East Midlands DASH and our internal website.'

[Editor's Note: See www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/consultationhmo]

TALK & BOX TICKING ... OR REAL ACTION? EXTENSION OF HMO ACTION ZONES

The houses in multiple occupation (HMO) Action Zone teams have been working in the Lenton, Arboretum and Sneinton areas of Nottingham since July 2007.

In December 2009 the zones were extended and refocused to cover larger parts of the Arboretum, Hyson Green, Radford and Lenton and Dunkirk. The zones continue to work in areas where it has been identified that there are large numbers of mandatory licensable HMOs.

Since July 2007 the HMO Action Zone teams have been successful in achieving real neighbourhood

improvements. This has been done by working with landlords, tenants and the community.

During the past two years the teams have issued more than 200 HMO licences, improved more than 260 properties and responded to and dealt with over 3000 requests for our service.

A new Public Realm Team has been created recently and it has taken on the responsibility for dealing with refuse accumulations and properties that are eye sores within the action zone areas. This has allowed the HMO teams to refocus on housing issues and improving the private rented sector, particularly HMOs.

While the majority of landlords have complied with the law on licensing there have been some landlords who

have been unco-operative and have failed to licence and manage properties effectively. As a result of this we have, to date, prosecuted 15 landlords which has resulted in fines, in landlords having to repay rents back to tenants and in some landlords being considered unfit to manage larger HMOs.

Nottingham is one of the national leaders in prosecutions for failure to comply with the law on licensing.

We will continue to work with landlords, but where they are unwilling to fulfil their responsibilities we will not hesitate to use the powers available to us.

[Nottingham City Council, Environmental Health Team,
December, 2009]

TALK & BOX TICKING ... OR REAL ACTION? PUBLIC REALM TEAM: GRIME DOESN'T PAY

This is a newly-established team, based at the Council's Eastcroft Depot. Many of the so-called 'enviro-crimes' we are all too familiar with in our neighbourhoods come within their remit: overflowing wheelie bins left out on pavements, rubbish accumulating in front gardens, dumped mattresses and white goods, to name but a few. It's too early to know how successful, or otherwise, they will be in tackling these problems. But give them a chance and visit their website if you can, or give them a call.

Fed up of seeing litter on the streets and graffiti on the walls? So is the City Council.

The City Council believes that we all have a responsibility to help make Nottingham cleaner and that is why a new team has been set up to make sure that if you are caught making a mess you will be fined.

The new enforcement team investigate and fast-track prosecutions for littering, fly-tipping and other enviro crimes. The 'Griminals' that commit enviro crimes -- will be vigorously pursued and will end up paying the price for their grime crimes. Fines like £525 for littering and £1000 for fly tipping.

The City Council is adopting a name and shame approach to show clearly the consequences of enviro crime. A new web site shows the latest Griminal records and offenders will be advertised in local their areas.

If you do the grime you will pay the fine!

To find out more about the Public Realm Team call Steve Stott, their manager, on Nottingham 915-2247, or visit www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/griminals.

[Nottingham City Council Public Realm Team]




TALK & BOX TICKING ... OR REAL ACTION? SAYING 'GOODBYE': TACKLING ANTI-SOCIAL NOISE

COMMUNITY SUFFERING FROM END-OF-YEAR NOISE AND RUBBISH

STUDENTS DISRUPT PATIENTS

Patients at the Queen's Medical Centre were disturbed by students celebrating their end-of-term exams.

Staff at the hospital called Notts Police to complain as students celebrated finishing their exams before going home for the summer.

Nottingham Action Group, which campaigns on issues concerning houses in multiple occupation such as student houses, says the incident was just the tip of the iceberg of problems that persist despite concerted efforts by the council.

Anti-social noise, litter, overgrown gardens, parking problems and a gradual loss of community facilities are common factors in areas where growing numbers of students have moved in – and families are driven out.

Maya Fletcher, co-ordinator of Nottingham Action Group, lives in Derby Road, Lenton, and over the last seven years has seen almost all of the family homes in her street converted to student digs with up to eight people living in them.

She said: "Residents are concerned about what is happening with the noise and rubbish and the fact that, because we don't have any families living here any more, we are losing schools and core facilities that a community needs

"Landlords don't do anything about telling students how to live in a normal neighbourhood. They don't bother about the mess and filth until the council comes in and serves an order on them.

"The tenants themselves simply don't care. Recently they excelled themselves in making so much noise they have had the QMC complain.

"And it is like a Groundhog Day effect, because every nine months you get a separate set of tenants and it starts again."

A Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust spokesperson said: "The wellbeing and comfort of our patients is a high priority. I can confirm that a call was made by a senior member of staff on duty to the police earlier this month due to excessive and prolonged noise from a house in the local area."

Action Group member Patricia Flint, of Rolleston Drive, Lenton, said she had to sound-proof her living room.

"It is like living in a dead neighbourhood. You don't hear any normal sounds like children and people talking or church bells or dogs barking.

"It is just replaced by parties every night."

Coun Katrina Bull, portfolio holder for environment and climate change at Nottingham City Council, said: "We want students to enjoy the time they have left in the city but we don't want other residents to have to pay the price for this.

"Over the past weeks we have provided extra support to students and landlords who are clearing out their properties

by holding special waste collections to help prevent illegal fly-tipping and litter.

"Officers have been regularly patrolling areas with high numbers of students and we will always seek to prosecute those who don't respect the rights of residents to live in a clean, peaceful, rubbish-free area.

"We have been working with [the universities] and their student unions and landlords to get the message out to students to clear out their rubbish responsibly and legally before they leave and not fly-tip."

A.J. Souter, vice president for welfare and equal opportunities at Nottingham Trent Students' Union, said: "I can understand how there would be an increase in what people would see as anti-social activities recently.

"Last week the University of Nottingham finished for the year and the week before our university finished and students are unwinding after finishing their exams. For graduates it is their blowout to say goodbye.

"We promote a national campaign by the NUS called SSHH, which stands for Silent Students Happy Homes. It is a message about making students realise they are part of a community of established residents and they should respect their rights."

No one was available for comment from the University of Nottingham Students' Union.

[Jon Robinson, Environment Correspondent,
Nottingham Evening Post, 27 June, 2009]

The sort of enviro-crimes the Public Realm Team are here to tackle have a very immediate and visual impact on visitors to a neighbourhood as well as on residents.

Noise pollution, especially the type of sporadic and peripatetic noise nuisance generated by late night revelry (for want of a better word) is rather different.

It is arguable that its effects are insidious, and more detrimental to long-term health and wellbeing than many of the other stresses that come about in neighbourhoods with concentrations of HMOs and large, transient populations.

The end-of-term party reported in the *Evening Post* was by no means unique in the amount of noise and disturbance it caused. Neither was it unique in the fact that no-one (police, university, council) was available to do something about it: it just happened to end up in the *Evening Post*, whilst all the others didn't.

The NAG has always advocated that this sort of noise disturbance needs out-of-hours and rapid action. So, the pilot reported here has to be a welcome development. We can but hope it will result in a scheme that operates across all our neighbourhoods and throughout the week as well as at week-ends.

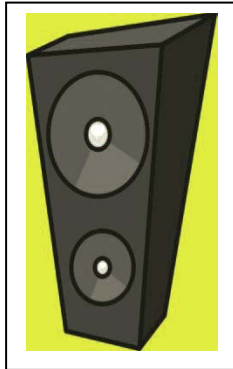
If it happens, it will not solve all noise-related problems, and certainly not the ones alluded to by Mrs. Flint. It seems to be wrong that the neighbour of an HMO should have to go to the expense of putting in soundproofing.

One would hope that in time 'good' landlords can be persuaded to do the job themselves, while their tenants come to appreciate that the levels of noise they find acceptable, may not be so for their neighbours.

[Editor]

PILOT NIGHT NOISE SERVICE

The Council's Noise and Pollution Control section delivered flyers by hand to 'The Drives' area of Lenton (Harlaxton Drive, Harrington Drive, Rolleston Drive, Welby Avenue, Allington Avenue, Harrowby Road and Galway Road). The flyer was also distributed in the Area 4 December issue of the *Nottingham Arrow*



The powers contained in the Noise Act 1996 enable authorised officers to enforce the Night Time Noise Offence which limits the noise emanating from domestic, licensed or other premises to certain permitted levels between the hours of 11.00 pm and 7.00 am the following morning. Where an authorised officer is of the opinion that noise from a premises is likely to be above the permitted levels, the

officer may serve a Warning Notice on the person responsible.

Should further complaints be made that same night, the authorised officer may carry out noise measurements using a sound level meter from within a complainant's premises, and, if the noise emanating from the premises is above the permitted level then a Fixed Penalty Notice for £100 (domestic) or £500 (licensed premises) may be served on the person responsible.

There are also options to prosecute the person responsible and obtain a warrant to seize equipment.

The Night Time Noise Pilot was designed to trial the use of the powers under the Noise Act 1996 to tackle out-of-hours noise issues within Arboretum, Berridge, Radford and Park Wards as well as the Drives Area of Lenton.

The results will also be used to assess the practical operational issues in the delivery of such a service. and will be reported back to Cllr. Katrina Bull (portfolio holder for environment and climate change at Nottingham City Council), and the Director of the Council's Environmental Health Service.

[From Pollution Control Team e-mail to NAG, 7 December, 2009]

TALK & BOX TICKING ... OR REAL ACTION? 'LANDLORDISM', ACCREDITATION & LETTING BOARDS

STUDENT RENTS A GARAGE FOR A BEDROOM

From outside it looks like any other garage. It's attached to a family home and there's an up-and-over garage door.

But this garage is attached to a house which is let to students, and it seems the landlord saw some earning potential.

A 19-year-old student of civil engineering is currently living in the garage bedroom, paying £280 per month.

While the landlord left the original door in place, the inside has been converted into a bedroom with shower, sink and toilet.

There is no connecting door to the main house and the tenant must go outside to access the kitchen and living room.

Labour MP for Nottingham South, Alan Simpson, believes this house is typical of the problems posed by student housing in the city.

"It seems to me we are in an age of exploitation," he said. "Anything goes if you can make money. The landlords increase their ability to make money at the expense of both the students and permanent residents."

Mr. Simpson claims students often pay good money to live in overcrowded properties. Meanwhile, residents are inconvenienced through pressure on parking spaces and services.

The house with the converted garage in Derby Road, Lenton, is certainly at capacity. A further five students live in the property. One lives in a tiny room with the boiler.



[From: NAG Magazine Ministerial Visit Supplement, Summer 2008]

In the Spring 2005 issue of the NAG magazine, Alan Simpson MP wrote: 'One of the most depressing aspects of the 'studentification' of areas is the extent to which people seem eager to convert even the wheelie bin into five bedroom student accommodation. It is a grotesque money-grab. Worse still, it drags areas into a downward spiral that exploits students and permanent residents alike. ...'

Turning a wheelie bin into an HMO is, hopefully, something of an exaggeration. But, as this recent piece in the *Evening Post* highlights, the use of every available space inside (and outside) an HMO as living accommodation is not.

Also – Government please note – it reinforces the argument for all-inclusive licensing of HMOs, and especially for changes in planning legislation. Needless to say, changing this family home into an HMO did not need planning permission. Neither did conversion of the garage into a bed-sit. And, of course, the owner does not require an HMO licence.

There is no room for a wardrobe so the student hangs his clothes on a rail and he sleeps beneath the dangling garments.

Mr Simpson, local campaigners and Nottingham City Council want the Government to change the law to give more control over student housing.

The MP has met with Housing Minister John Healey to press the case. Both Mr. Simpson and the city council are calling for:

A change in the law so that proposals to convert a family house into a student let require planning permission.

A more comprehensive licensing system, which covers all homes in multiple occupation rather than only those that are three storeys and where more than five people live, as is currently the case.

The Government is currently considering both these matters. A consultation on expanding the licensing system in Nottingham is currently subject to a consultation organised by the city council. The decisions will go to Mr. Healey, who has asked Mr. Simpson to submit a report to highlight the problems – and it is likely to include the garage conversion.

The landlord of the house in Derby Road was not available for comment. But Tom Kite, branch manager at the Lenton office of the letting agent Shields – which lets the house in question – said he thought the local authority should accept that some areas are popular with students and manage them on that basis, because he does not expect them to return to family housing.

"Why are they trying to limit it?" he said. "There are 90% students living here and that is not going to change. Why do you not look at ways to encourage the right sort of behaviours rather than reverse or contain it?"

Maya Fletcher, a Lenton resident who campaigns for a more balanced community, has identified other developments along Derby Road.

She said she was aware of three students living in converted garages on Derby Road alone –and one living in a room that was built on the site of a demolished shed, which had no connection to the house.

Ms. Fletcher said: *"We are going backwards. We talk about improving standards and yet we are allowing people to live in a garage."*

And what of the student living in the garage?

The 19-year-old civil engineering student said he is quite happy with the accommodation, but he added: *"The annoying thing is you have to go outside to get in to the house and it is cold."*

[Charles Walker, Nottingham Evening Post, Thursday, 10 December, 2009]

EVENING POST WEBSITE COMMENTS

At the last count, Charles Walker's article had resulted in 27 postings on the Evening Post website, some of which are reproduced here. The Evening Post website can be found at: www.thisisnottingham.co.uk.

I lived in Nottingham for four years as a student, and will likely be moving back there once my current secondment in Canada is finished. The problems being highlighted are very real.

Students may "choose" to rent these properties, but only because there is very little else available. My friends and I were squeezed into a run down, dirty house in West Bridgford with a major leak that took two years of pestering for our landlord to fix. There was also the rat problem that we had to call the council to get sorted, because our landlord ignored our requests. He was then furious that we had taken it into our own hands

There are obviously plenty of landlords out there who care about their properties, tenants and reputations. But unfortunately there are many opportunists who realise Nottingham has a massive student population, and because students often pay individually and on a weekly basis, this population can be cashed in on. Why rent to a whole family for £400 a month, when you can rent each individual room out for £70 a week? Why just have four tenants when you can convert a box-room or a garage into a fifth? And why worry about upkeep in the house and the living conditions of your tenants? After all, they're only students - no-one cares about them, and they'll be gone in a couple of years

And as it was pointed out in the article, the impact is not only on those who live in this housing. Public services such as garbage collection are put under extra strain, and streets become overcrowded with cars/

The main problem is clearly the unscrupulous landlords who are renting out crowded, unsuitable properties at grossly inflated prices. Unfortunately there will always be these people, trying to take advantage of what they can. The best solution is for the universities, property management companies and council to work together to ensure tighter controls on the people and the properties they are renting out.

[Andrew, Toronto]

Having worked at the University of Nottingham for 17 years, I met and befriended many students. The University should vet all accommodation before recommending it to students and in this day and age they could take photos of each room prior to letting. At the end of each year, the accommodation should be inspected to check that it is still suitable and if the place has been wrecked during occupancy, the cost of rectification should be the first call on the students next loan, or if they are final year, added to the loan. There should be standard documentation for the student and landlord to sign and abide by. The costs of this exercise should be shared between the student and the landlord. If students decide they don't want to use University/College approved accommodation then they cannot complain about the standards. This system would give more security to students and landlords and provide visual evidence of failures on either side

[Mike, Luton]

Ah, what we have here is a bunch of NIMBYS at work.

If you don't like living next door to a House in Multiple Occupation then don't buy a house in areas where they are common - for example Lenton, Arboretum, Sneinton.

The only reason these properties exist is that there is a market for them. If no one wanted to rent them, landlords wouldn't provide them.

Market forces also ensure that most of these places are actually decent - there's too much competition.

Evil landlords are largely a figment of the imagination of people who frankly don't have a grasp of reality. People simply refuse to live in poor conditions nowadays

The last thing we need is for the planning numpties to be involved. They are so utterly detached from the real world in their pursuit of ridiculous social engineering strategies.

What the article fails to mention is that the housing standards of these properties is already very closely monitored by the Public Health department of Nottingham City Council. Most people probably won't ever have come into contact with these people, but basically they are a bit like the love child of a Rotweiler and deranged sociopath. They hate landlords and spend their days

trying to impose draconian sanctions upon perfectly decent landlords.

The TRUTH of the matter is that there are a lot of Houses in Multiple Occupation in Nottingham because we have a large population of people who want to rent rooms. Most of these houses are in certain areas. It is easy to avoid them if you don't like what's going on. But there are a lot of people who want to buy cheap houses for themselves and then to oust the people who have owned and rented neighbouring properties for many years.

Just let landlords get on with servicing the market that exists. If the product isn't good enough the customers will go elsewhere - no one is forcing anyone to live in poor conditions.

[Landlord, Nottingham]

We have students living next door to us and they are no trouble at all very polite young men, but they are having to live in a house of disrepair due to a landlord not doing their duty and repairing leaking roof and whatever else needs doing, they take the rent but do no work how fair is that. so not all students are trouble or want to live like this but some have no choice once rent in advance and bonds are paid what they supposed to do just let the landlord keep it.

[Sue, Forest Fields]

Landlord Nottingham: surely it is against the environmental health regulations for someone to rent out a room in a garage

[Liz, Nottingham]

Liz: You say "Landlord, Nottingham, surely it is against the environmental health regulations for someone to rent out a room in a garage?"

Well the answer depends on how it has been converted.

Remember that garages usually have a link door to the main house. So if a suitable cavity wall with insulation can be provided, electrical, heating and lighting services installed there is no good reason why a garage could not be quite legally used.

Granted you'd usually dispose off the garage door, but the fact that one is still in situ doesn't render the accommodation unfit for human habitation per se.

Don't forget that a great many formal house extensions involve converting the garage for living accommodation.

I don't have anything to do with the student market but it is quite clear to me that the above article largely consists of spin by vested interests. There are half truths in abundance which are used to make student HMO housing appear a problem when in fact it is not.

I am also bound to point out that the council and central government are guilty of WORSENING housing standards. The law as it stands favours higher density accommodation and penalises low-density higher quality accommodation.

There are good and bad landlords but generally speaking the landlords I have met (and I have met LOT of landlords) are pretty reasonable. They have to be because a combination of market forces, council intervention and the requirement for credit ensures that for the most part landlords are a responsible bunch. They couldn't operate if they weren't. But landlords are very often blamed for society's ills - they are big easy targets and lazy journalism like the above only exacerbates the problem.

[Landlord, Nottingham]

LANDLORDISM

The 'Property of the Week' in the 'Homes to Rent' section of the Evening Post recently advertised a 'country home' in Kingston on Soar. The accommodation included: 'A York stone hall, off which is a large kitchen/family area, study, living room and additional sitting room. ... There is also a utility room, cloakroom and separate WC. On the first

floor are five bedrooms and a family bathroom - all accessed from a galleried landing. Two of the bedrooms have ensuite shower rooms. ... Outside there are gardens to the front and rear as well as a double garage and driveway parking.' All to rent for £1,750 pcm.

The Derby Road HMO featured in the 'Student Rents a Garage for a Bedroom' story is now being advertised to rent for the 2010-2011 academic session: 'Excellent six bedroom student house in a prime location. Must view! Furnished, Full double glazing, all double beds, Separate living room, Garden, Parking, Gas central heating, Water gas instant, Baths and showers, 2 bath/shower facilities, 2 wcs, Microwave, Washing m/c fitted, Fridge/freezer, Internet access, Cab/sat tv in living room, Set top box required. Burglar alarm'. Rental is £480 pw.

Another one nearby with a garage extended so as to house two tenants is now being advertised to rent for the 2010-2011 academic session: '7 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 2 receptions. ... Seven/eight lettable rooms with seven double and one single room. Ample parking area for a number of vehicles. Has a rear enclosed garden. ...'. Rent (7 tenants) is £553 pw.

So 'Andrew, Toronto' has a point: Why rent to a whole family for £1,750 pcm when you can rent out individual rooms for £80 pppw? And why not exploit every potential lettable space by converting it into a money earner?

That is what 'landlordism' is all about. As 'Landlord Nottingham' says: "The only reason these properties exist is that there is a market for them. If no one wanted to rent them, landlords wouldn't provide them."

He also asserts that "Market forces also ensure that most of these places are actually decent - there's too much competition."

To say the least, the veracity of that claim does not stand up to challenge. 'Andrew, Toronto', has highlighted the need for: '... the universities, property management companies and council to work together to ensure tighter controls on the people and the properties they are renting out.'. In essence this is also what 'Mike, Luton' is advocating.

APPROVED HOUSING: ACCREDITATION

Going on to five years ago now, the NAG joined with the City Council and Nottingham's two Students' Unions in an active, and at times acrimonious, campaign to bring Unipol to Nottingham.

One of the reasons for doing this was Unipol's proven track record and its commitment to raising the standard of student accommodation, along with what the Group recognized as a need to implement here in Nottingham an accreditation scheme that would provide students with decent, safe and approved housing.

It is perhaps worth reminding ourselves that getting Unipol to Nottingham too much longer than anticipated and that it only came about after pressure from Nottingham City Council (which continues to provide the major part of the funding for the project), the Students' Unions and the NAG. However, Unipol finally opened an office on Nottingham University's University Park campus

two years ago, and this year has expanded its services to Nottingham Trent University's students also.



Members of the NAG Committee took part in the working group set up by Unipol to formulate the standards for a new accreditation scheme – the Unipol DASH Code for Shared Student Housing – which was launched in August 2008.

'The Unipol DASH Code places emphasis on management standards and community matters as well as simplifying and clarifying the property standards required. If not all standards are met, Unipol will allow landlords to join the Code so long as it has agreed an action plan with the landlord/s on an agreed timescale. This is to allow landlords who are improving their properties within a reasonable period of time to join the Code.'

[Unipol Nottingham Website:
www.unipol.leeds.ac.uk/nottingham/accreditation]

At the U-NAG open meeting held in September, Scott Blakeway, Development Manager for Unipol, reported that 1,029 property inspections had been carried out, plus 83 re-inspections, and that there are 339 accredited landlords covering 2,231 student HMOs. He went on to say that Unipol statistics showed that accredited property was being let within 90-days, in comparison to 141 days for unaccredited property. Unipol believes this is a good indication that students are beginning to recognize the benefits of the Unipol DASH Code and, therefore, of choosing to live in approved housing.

It is to be hoped that this is indeed the case: better standards of management and maintenance of HMOs is of benefit to tenants and neighbours alike. But, as with all things to do with the NAG, optimism has to be tempered with a good deal of caution.

Increasing student numbers, changing demographics, politics, legislation, university engagement, purpose built accommodation and of course the economic situation, are just some of the factors that come into play.

What is clear is that a better informed and discerning student population, a credible, well-funded accreditation scheme, coupled to HMO licensing, and enforcement action is the one of the keys to success – or failure.

CONTROL OF LETTING BOARDS

The Spring 2009 issue of the magazine (p.5 to p.8) gave details about the proposed voluntary scheme for control of letting boards, as well as information about actions already taken in Leeds and Loughborough.

The feedback gathered during the consultation period was used to produce a final code of practice for the scheme and also a modified area where it would operate:

1. The use of letting boards will be permitted from 1 January to 30 September (inclusive) and prohibited from 1 October to 31 December (inclusive).
2. The display of one letting board will be permitted per property.
3. The letting board shall conform to the following conditions:
 - The board shall be 34cm x 48cm in either portrait or landscape layout

- The background of the board should be white
- Text is permitted in any colours provided that fluorescent colours are not used
- One company logo per board will be permitted provided that the logo does not exceed one third of the overall size of the advertising board.
- Logos will be allowed in any colours provided that fluorescent colours are not used.

4. Letting boards shall be mounted and fixed flat onto the buildings. Boards shall not be sited anywhere else within the grounds of the property except in the case of apartment blocks or properties where a restrictive covenant exists between the freeholder and the leaseholder that precludes the attachment of boards to the building. In these instances one letting board will be permitted per property and shall be mounted on a post within the grounds of the property parallel to building frontage. The boards used in these instances should comply with Conditions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7.

5. The use of 'let' or 'let by' boards or additions is not permitted.

6. Boards should be removed within 14 days of the property becoming let. (As per current Town and Country Planning Act regulations)

7. No other form of signage advertising any property shall be permitted including the use of window displays except for the Unipol DASH Code window sticker.

Since July the scheme areas have been monitored regularly by Nottingham City Council officers, Nottingham Action Group volunteers, and Unipol staff. Unipol is collating the photographic and other data that is being collected with a view to putting together a final report in the New Year.

NOTE

First, the Committee would like to thank members for putting so much of their time and effort into monitoring the Letting Boards Scheme, The massive increase in the number of letting boards since the end of October has turned the whole exercise into one of industrial proportions.

Second, Richard Tyler ended his piece 'Letting Boards in Leeds' by saying that Leeds was still waiting for a government decision on renewal of the scheme operating there. The Committee is glad to report that it heard recently that CLG has given approval for renewal (and extension) of that scheme.



TOWN & GOWN

THE OXBRIDGE MURDER



King's College, Cambridge

This year marks the 800th anniversary of the foundation of Cambridge University. *"Despite the ivory towers and despite the echelons of high learning that Cambridge now represents, it all started because of a violent brawl and a murder: most paradoxically that brawl and that murder happened in Oxford."*

Eight hundred years ago Oxford was a place where there were "a lot of students, a lot of drink, some fighting with the townspeople and some fighting amongst the students themselves. There was a traditional enmity between people from the north and people from the south. It was just quite rowdy."

"There have been riots going on here for centuries. There was this animosity which existed right from the early days because the townspeople were here first."

In order to understand how all this fighting and brawling leads to the establishment of Cambridge University one has to go back to 1209 and to the killing by a student of an Oxford woman.

The best record of events is to be found in the account given by Roger of Wendover in the chronicles kept in the University Archives in Cambridge.

According to Roger of Wendover, a clerk studying at Oxford killed a woman who may have been a prostitute or his mistress, or indeed she may have been his landlady. All of these people would have come into contact with one another in medieval Oxford, with the students seeking accommodation wherever they could find it.

Oxford in 1209 had scholars and townspeople living in close proximity to one another. In comparison to the life led by the scholars and their pupils, that of the townsfolk living around the university was one of relative poverty. The houses were little more than hovels, disease was rife, but the scholars and their students lived well-nourished and 'easy' lives. With this as a background, it is easy to understand how tensions could build up and how those tensions could lead from one riot to another. The one that happened in 1209 was no different from all the others.

The student himself fled, but when the dead woman was discovered, the townsfolk went to the house where the student had lived. They found three of his companions and without any further investigation they took hold of them and they were put in prison there and then. A few

days afterwards, even though the students knew nothing about the dead woman, and by order of the King of England, they were hanged.

At that point in time King John (who had a reputation for tyranny) had quarrelled with the Pope and England was under interdict from Rome. This meant that no ecclesiastical services could take place. With conflict between the King and Rome as a setting, possible persecution of the clergy may explain why three apparently innocent members of the clergy were hanged without trial and in contempt of ecclesiastical liberties.

It is by no means clear what actually happened, or why. The events may have come about as a result of conflict between King and Church, or they may have been simply the result of conflict between 'town and gown'.

Whatever the motivation, the Oxford County Registry has in its archives a record that, because the University of Oxford had been harmed by the actions of the townspeople, on the Feast of St. Nicholas (5 December) a hundred of the poorest scholars were to be given a free meal by the Burgesses of Oxford, and penance was to be done by the Burgesses at the students' graves.

After the hanging, the scholars of Oxford went on strike and migrated out of the City in protest. The students left Oxford fairly rapidly and it seems that they were driven to do this by the Masters. It was not the case that a group of students took fright and left, but rather that there was a deliberate decision taken by the Masters to leave Oxford, though some did remain illicitly.

The medieval clergy very zealously guarded what they called 'ecclesiastical liberty' – which basically meant their right to regulate themselves and, in most respects, to be free from the control of the laity. That, of course, included the Crown. So, apart from anything else, the events in Oxford in 1209 were seen by the clergy as an infringement of their liberties. The only way in which they could protest against it was to leave. The account of Roger of Wendover records that several of the scholars (and presumably their students) left Oxford, some going to Cambridge and others to Reading. In any case, medieval universities were very mobile and history records many migrations from one place to another.

The reason why a group of Oxford clerics chose to go to Cambridge is assumed to be because their leader was a man who had come from Cambridge. At that point there were no university buildings yet. Cambridge University as such was no more than a bunch of scholars who had fled from Oxford and who had started to teach their students in rented houses in the neighbourhood around St. Mary's Church which they also used for their ceremonies.

One of the annual ceremonies required the Mayor and Aldermen of the town to kneel before the Vice-Chancellor and swear obedience to him in all matters relating to business in the town. In other words, a ceremony in which the Mayor had to enact his subordination to the university on pain of excommunication.

Imagine the situation: here was a body of well-fed, well-educated scholars assuming superiority over the

townspeople, claiming the right to police themselves, and essentially to act as they pleased.

The University had all sort of privileges. For example, it could arrest any woman walking down the street if she was considered by it to be a 'lewd' woman. The university ran Cambridge and the history of Cambridge is a long and colourful one of town versus gown rivalry that could, and did, spill over into riot and violence.

"You only have to walk past any of the college buildings and look at the great big thick gates which were not put there to keep the students in, but to keep the townspeople out. The walls around the colleges have jagged pieces of

glass in them, put there to stop townspeople from climbing in".

Although the complete truth about the events in Oxford in 1209 and how they led to the foundation of Cambridge University will always be subject to conjecture: "... there is something immensely colourful in the idea that such a deeply cerebral, bookish place of learning was born in blood and politics – and even possibly sex. It makes a change from how things are done nowadays – by committee or government quango."

Which is as it should be. After all "what one really wants from history is colour."

[Based on a Radio 4 programme broadcast in 2009]

TOWN & GOWN NEWS FROM NOTTINGHAM'S UNIVERSITIES

Of one thing we can be sure. In 1209 there were no universities in Nottingham, though, if legend is to be believed, Nottingham did have its own source of riot and mayhem in the form of Robin Hood and his band of 'merry men'.

Today, we have two universities in Nottingham and their 50,000 or so students make up about 12 per cent of the City's population.

Just before the beginning of this academic year, the two Students' Unions were asked if they would like to contribute something to the NAG magazine by way of an introduction to themselves and their year

The voluntary work that students do in the local community is a priority for our Students' Union. Students already give up huge amounts of their time to volunteer for many different projects throughout the community: The Lenton Centre, Crocus Café and Care Link, to name just a few. I would like to see the number of student volunteers who go into the local community increase, and that the invaluable work that they do is truly recognised.

At the Students' Union we recognise the importance of having strong and productive links with the local communities in which students live. There are many issues that arise from students living in a small community, and I know the Students' Union and NAG can work together to tackle these issues. Both organisations are committed to improving the local area, and with student support I believe we can be extremely successful in doing this. By influencing the University and the local council to take students in the community seriously we can, together, effect real change.

NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

Hello: My name is Sam Wilkinson and I am the newly appointed Accommodation & Community Officer for the



Students' Union at Nottingham University. My role is primarily a representational one and I am appointed to make sure that student views are listened to in areas affecting their housing and community standing. This involves making sure that student housing is affordable, accessible and of good quality; making sure that

students are having a positive impact in their community and that the community views students positively; and helping students involve themselves in community events through volunteering opportunities.

This year I would like to see a continuation of the good work that students and long-term residents have been doing to improve the local community. I will be working extremely closely with Unipol to make sure that standards are continually improving for student housing, as well as trying to tackle issues such as the poor condition of gardens and the forest of letting boards.

NOTTINGHAM TRENT STUDENTS' UNION



David Walker
President

My main responsibility is to ensure that Nottingham Trent Students Union is effectively representing its students. The relationship between local residents and NTU students is a very important one; I firmly believe we can live in the same neighbourhoods, side by side without conflict.

Students at NTU contributed over 4000 hours of volunteering to the local community last year and we will continue to make these positive contributions throughout this year. If you're reading this and have any questions or would like to get in touch for any reason at all then please contact me on david.walker@su.ntu.ac.uk.

Thanks!

Sarah Mason

Vice President Welfare and Involvement

It's my job to work on all aspects of students Welfare. This year taking particular notice of student's safety in Taxi's around the city and students health. Another important part of my job is Initi8 (volunteering at Trent) and RaG (Fundraising at Trent). This includes getting students involved in the community and helping to improve the city.

Earlier on in the year the members of the new Board of Elected Directors (a.k.a the executive committee) took part in a volunteering project to clean a canal in Nottingham. We spent the day in and out of the canal scooping algae and pond weed off the surface of the water. It was a great day and a great way to help the environment.

During the academic year that has just ended Nottingham Trent University students have contributed over 14,500 hours of unpaid time to helping the community and local area.

James Exton

Vice-President Societies

My main role is to supervise and develop the 80 current Societies we have within the Students' Union, however, I am involved in other areas such as Environment and Ethics Committees. This year we aim to make Societies more central within the Students' Union, and the local community. Societies work closely with the local community, whether it be pond clearing, carried out by the Conservation Society in Southwell, or Christian Union putting on a Carol Service. Do keep an eye out for an event coming to your local area.

expertise also deals with quality of life and end of life issues for those with terminal illness. Her projects have been supported by Cancer Research UK, Macmillan Cancer Relief, CancerBACUP, the Department of Health and a number of NHS Trusts. She studied at King's College London and the University of Nottingham, and has been a Visiting Professor at Yale University in the United States.

Professor Ann Priest

Pro Vice-Chancellor Nottingham Trent University



Professor Priest is Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of College, Art and Design and Built Environment.

In addition to leading the College of Art and Design and Built Environment, as Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs, Ann Priest has responsibility for all non-course-related student matters, including liaison with the Students' Union, student conduct matters, and Student Support Service.

Professor Priest's career began as a designer and pattern cutter in the fashion industry and then as a buyer and product developer responsible for a significant range of products sourced internationally for the Mulberry Company. She moved into education as a Principal Lecturer in Fashion Design and Marketing in 1987. She joined Nottingham Trent in 2006 as Dean of Art and Design, having previously been Dean at London College of Fashion for 13 years.

TOWN & GOWN NEW DIRECTOR AT NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY

Members will remember Philip Dalling who, as Nottingham University's Director of Communications came to a number of open meetings arranged by the NAG. You will also recall that on his retirement, he was replaced by Jonathan Ray.

Mr. Ray has now moved on and the University has appointed a new Director of Communications and Marketing, Emma Leech, who joined the University at the beginning of September.

Ms. Leech was formerly the Director of Marketing, Communications and Development at Manchester Metropolitan University.

During five years in this role she developed and implemented a new corporate identity, oversaw the creation of multi-award winning web and new media projects, established a reputation management strategy and developed an alumni and development office from scratch.

She has more than 20 years of experience in the sector, including senior roles in marketing and communications at the University of Salford, the University of Bradford and Leeds Metropolitan University.

Ms Leech gained an MBA from Bradford University School of Management in 2003.

TOWN & GOWN AN INTRODUCTION TO ...

NOTTINGHAM'S UNIVERSITIES & THEIR NEIGHBOURS

Professor Karen Cox and Professor Ann Priest are Pro Vice-Chancellors. Both have roles that include students and the wider community. In advance of the NAG open meeting at St. Mary's on Wednesday, 17 March, 2010, here is a brief introduction to them.



Professor Karen Cox Pro Vice-Chancellor Nottingham University

Karen Cox is Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Staffing and the Community. A Professor in Cancer and Palliative Care, she is a former Head of the School of Nursing at the University of Nottingham, and her research assesses the experiences of patients and their families involved in clinical trials. Karen's academic and professional

As Director of Communications & Marketing at The University of Nottingham, she will lead a 25-strong multi-disciplinary team based at the University's King's Meadow Campus, reporting to the Registrar. The role encompasses internal and external communications, marketing, media relations, web provision, brand management, public relations and corporate communications.

Ms Leech said: *"The University of Nottingham is an outstanding institution with an exceptionally strong international profile. I am looking forward to working with colleagues to strengthen further that reputation and to ensure that Nottingham is recognised as a global leader."*

Dr Paul Greatrix, Registrar of the University of Nottingham, said: *"I am delighted that Emma will be joining the University to lead our first class Communications and Marketing team. This is a key role for us and with the substantial experience and professional expertise which Emma brings I am confident that we will make significant progress in developing and implementing our global communications and marketing strategy."*

[Nottingham University Press Release]

TOWN & GOWN UNIVERSITY TO HOST NEIGHBOURS



Residents within a five-mile radius of University of Nottingham campuses will be able to book a free meeting room.

The Hemsley Restaurant, on the main University Park campus, will soon be available for community groups.

A room will be provided subject to availability and limited to one booking per group per calendar month. It will be free to use and refreshments and audio-visual resources can also be supplied, at a charge.

Spokeswoman Melanie Futer can take bookings up to six months in advance.

"The university would like to share access to its facilities with neighbours in Nottingham who may need access to a space to gather," she said.

"In the evenings, it will also be free to park on campus for those attending meetings or events."

The Hemsley was built in 1904 as a private house for William Sydney Hemsley, then managing director of Hemsley and Co. From 1926 it was owned by Captain John Eric Greenwood, finance director for Boots, and for half-a-century, until May 2006, it was home to the University of Nottingham Club. The Hemsley Restaurant was then opened to the public after refurbishment.

Melanie can be contacted directly by organisers on a first come first served basis on Nottingham 951 4649 or by email at melanie.futer@nottingham.ac.uk.

[Nottingham Evening Post,
Tuesday, 25 August, 2009]

TOWN & GOWN DID YOU KNOW?

The University of Nottingham is ranked in the UK's Top 10 and the World's Top 100 universities by the Shanghai Jiao Tong (SJTU) and *Times Higher* (THE) World University Rankings.

More than 90 per cent of research at The University of Nottingham is of international quality, according to RAE 2008, with almost 60 per cent of all research defined as 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent'. Research Fortnight analysis of RAE 2008 ranks the University 7th in the UK by research power. In 27 subject areas, the University features in the UK Top Ten, with 14 of those in the Top Five.

The University provides innovative and top quality teaching, undertakes world-changing research, and attracts talented staff and students from 150 nations. Described by *The Times* as Britain's "only truly global university", it has invested continuously in award-winning campuses in the United Kingdom, China and Malaysia. Twice since 2003 its research and teaching academics have won Nobel Prizes. The University has won the Queen's Award for Enterprise in both 2006 (International Trade) and 2007 (Innovation — School of Pharmacy), and was named 'Entrepreneurial University of the Year' at the Times Higher Education Awards 2008.

[Nottingham University Press Release]

TOWN & GOWN COMMUNITY OPEN DAY

Saturday, 24 April, 2010

Everyone is welcome to come to this free, fun and interactive event that throws open University Park and showcases a range of activities: from science to arts; from maths to the environment.

[See www.nottingham.ac.uk/community]



Stephan's Quintet

This group of five galaxies lies about 270 million light years away in the constellation Pegasus, and is named after Edouard Stephan who discovered it in 1877

[Hubble Telescope, NASA/ESA]

TOWN & GOWN POINTS OF VIEW

Looking back (admittedly a very long way) at my time as a student, it seems to me that one of the good things about being young and a student was that you had the enthusiasm, passion and energy to throw yourself wholeheartedly into whatever it was you were doing. And hang the consequences.

I have included the articles by Jonathan Stevenson and Lucy Hayes, both originally published in *Impact*, the magazine of Nottingham University's Students' Union, not only because they have something to say that is interesting – even amusing at times – but because I enjoyed their sometimes unfettered use of language and the brashness of some of their opinions.

And, because, though I don't necessarily agree with all they have written, or how they've written it, sometimes it is good to take a look at things from a different perspective

[Editor]

TOWN & GOWN BEYOND THE GRAD STUDENTS OF NOTTINGHAM UNITE!

Unite in shame, and feel bad. You need to be culled. Since graduating last year I have rapidly developed an understanding of why it is that the majority of the adult population (Turning 18 does not make you an adult - students are children) resents and hates you. You cost them a lot and you do them very little good.

British students take a three-year holiday from reality, a self-indulgent break from any real work, the cost of which is largely underwritten by the taxpayer. Yet what does the country receive for their money? For every doctor or drainage engineer that graduates they must subsidise a thousand sociologists, art historians or 'students of film'. It is a colossal waste of money to indulge the fantasy that everybody needs and deserves to go to university. I myself have none of the moral high-ground here; I studied History, I did no work, and I got a 2:1. I like History, but nobody (least of all myself) has benefited from my spending three years and accruing the (relatively modest) £15,000 of debt to indulge my hobby. I was told, "yes, do history if that's what you're interested in, you can do anything with a degree like that." As it is, nine months and five hundred job applications later, I remain unemployed and continue to be a burden on the welfare system. If I had learned how to plaster a wall or drive a fork-lift truck I would not be. As it turns out, you can do nothing with a degree like mine.

So, Class of 2009, think on this. You may not get a job when you graduate. I know you entertain the illusion that your degree from the illustrious University of Nottingham will bring a horde of clamouring employers to your door, wrestling each other to the ground to be the first to offer you a starting salary of £27k. It will not happen. Most of you are not useful, and you will quickly realise it. The unemployment rates for recent graduates are running at 21%, compared to less than 5% (even six months into

recession) for the population as a whole. I would suppose that, like me, you had not considered the possibility that you will not find employment soon after you graduate. Perhaps you should begin to plan for the worst.

Even those of you who do get jobs will have to work a lot harder, and for a lot less money, than you probably anticipated – probably doing something you hate, that benefits nobody (like probably 450 out of the 500 jobs that I've applied for). Furthermore, it is getting worse. So don't worry about your coursework, or your finals – worry about how much your degree in whatever-it-is will be worth after capitalism crumbles. It would also benefit you to realise that trying to scrape by on Jobseekers' Allowance is not fun, and makes a student loan feel like winning the lottery. I fear that, like me, you will receive a harsh education when you begin to study for your Masters in Real Life

It's not just the financial cost that makes human beings hate students. It is the pusillanimous vanity and childish over-indulgence that defines so much of student behaviour. How long did you spend on Facebook last week? How many joints have you smoked today? Have you done anything wholly unselfish and genuinely productive for as long as you can remember? I would guess the answer to be, "no." I haven't, and I've been trying.

Because of laziness, and the pointless shit that students now find to occupy their time (if they are not simply being lazy), universities have ceased to be the centres of radicalism and revolutionary thought that they once were. They are no longer the crucibles in which are forged the ideas and movements that can change things for the better. Students here no longer believe that they can change the world, and if they did believe it they'd rather get drunk anyway. In Greece students still care about politics and still know how to riot. In Britain they are too hung-over.

Most students here have too much time on their hands, so they find relief from boredom in vodka-sodden nights out, the consequences and detritus of which are left to be appreciated and dealt with by the people who actually live and work here (and Christ help the next one of you that I see lugging home a triangular road-sign). This is understandably abhorrent to the man who works a 40-hour week and cannot afford to spend most of his income on booze and drugs.

Sadder still is the fact that, like an unwilling whore dependent upon the income from her syphilitic punters, the city is dependent upon the money that the students bring. Observe Lenton without students, as I did in the summer of 2008, and you will agree that 'ghost town' does not nearly do it justice. The local businesses suffer greatly from this periodic exodus. Furthermore, the studentisation of certain areas of cities is very damaging to the existing local populations. The value of the houses as rentable student accommodation is much greater than if they were sold as family homes, the result being that those who wish to buy a house to live in are priced out of the market. Those who can afford it, or who already lived there, must

suffer, too, from the anti-social behaviour of students — loud music or vomit puddles, for example, or the Lenton student ritual of throwing all of one's possessions into the street come the end of June. And let's not forget the increased levels of crime that a large student population attracts. Students are an infection that can make a community very ill indeed.

You may ask what right I have that gives me the moral high ground from which to judge. I have none. I hate myself as much, if not more, than I hate all of you (and I'm not even a student any more). But do not let the fact that I'm a hypocrite blind you to the truth of what I say. Ask yourselves what your life as a student costs (and I don't mean to you or your parents), and ask yourself honestly whether or not you are good value for money. I think you will find that you are not. So contemplate the improvement of the world and act on your conclusions. Work out how, because of or in spite of your education, and you will make yourself worthwhile. Above all, start trying to be useful, for we are entering into a new world that will have no place for those who are not.

[Jonathan Stevenson, *Impact* magazine, June, 2009]

TOWN & GOWN ARE WE LOSING LENTON?

In the 'Student Rents a Garage for a Bedroom' report, Tom Kite, branch manager at Shields' Lenton office, said, about Lenton, that: "... There are 90% students living here and that is not going to change." This article, also about Lenton, is one student's assessment of the present situation and the possible future.

DEBATING THE COUNCIL'S PLANS TO COUNTER STUDENTIFICATION

"They need to grow up, frankly. There's a lot of talk about rights – a student's right to live wherever and in what way they choose – but with rights come responsibilities. If you claim you're an adult then act like one."

Maya Fletcher, of Nottingham Action Group, has strong views on the high concentration of students in Lenton. Over the past few years new legislation has been introduced concerning Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), largely to tackle the effects of students on areas in many university cities.

Her words may seem harsh, but the facts are on Ms. Fletcher's side. Students are undeniably locust-like; we have all but destroyed respectable neighbourhoods by driving out families, forcing the closure of local shops in favour of takeaways, bringing with us a wake of burglars in pursuit of our laptops and iPods. The flitting nature of our tenancies has led to residents finding themselves in an area with rising costs, priced out of the housing market, with their schools and churches closing through under-use. Alan Simpson, MP for Nottingham South, pointed to the school closures in Lenton and Radford as evidence of how badly the communities are being affected. *"If a family with three children move out and are replaced by five students the impact is immediately obvious on the school – with less per capita payments they eventually can't fund a*

proper curriculum." Once schools start closing down the area becomes even less appealing to new families.

The student population of Lenton expanded when the number of Nottingham University students increased at a rate that outstripped the provision of accommodation. Now, we're comfortably established here, and by most accounts, don't intend to leave. Clearly we need to live close to the University and for years Lenton has been the most popular choice, with Dunkirk and Beeston in close pursuit.

For the residents of Lenton, an area whose origin goes all the way back to the Domesday Book, the influx of students has been a real concern. As the student population has increased Lenton has undergone vast changes. *News of the World's* charming 2006 description of Kimbolton Avenue ran: "The rows of rundown red-brick Victorian houses in a road strewn with rubbish and burnt-out cars are a stark and embarrassing image of Blair's Britain today."

Over the past few years, there has been considerable local response to what Lenton has become. Ms. Fletcher, a Lenton resident since 1978, is a prime mover of the Nottingham Action Group which was founded over concerns about the high concentration of HMOs in the area. *"NAG was started because residents needed a voice. We weren't being listened to by the University or the Council, and we certainly weren't being listened to by students"*.

NAG's aim was to decrease the amount of HMOs in order to rebalance the community. *"We aim for Lenton to be a place where people and families want to live and work, rather than the doss-house of Nottingham."* Ms. Fletcher denies that NAG is anti-student, pointing out that the organisation has brought many benefits to students over the past few years. Bad landlords were often more to blame than students for the problems faced by Lenton, and Unipol was established partially due to the campaigning of NAG.

It is our absence as much as our presence that causes problems for locals. Caroline Flint MP said, *"It is not acceptable that current rental practices allow unplanned student enclaves to evolve to such an extent that local communities are left living as ghost towns following the summer student exodus"*. Anyone who has stayed in Lenton during the holidays will have seen the effect of this. Streets on which every available parking space is usually filled stand empty; the shops are eerily quiet and at times you feel as if you've strayed onto a Nottingham-based version of *28 Days Later*.

But change is on the horizon. In other university cities in Britain an SHRA (Student Housing Restriction Act) has been introduced, limiting the areas and volume in which students are permitted to dwell. In Nottingham, the City Council has used existing policy to limit additional student accommodation in some areas. This also aims to restrict additional pubs, bars and takeaways. Since 2006, landlords have been legally required to register HMOs with the Council. This is to help them assess and maintain a threshold of 25% HMOs per neighbourhood.

Practically, what does this mean for us? In areas such as Lenton, where the population of students already makes up far more than the 25% threshold, new HMO conversions will not be permitted. The legislation is clearly

being enforced; Tariq Hussain, of Graduates Property Management, has now been fined twice (to a total of over £4,000), most recently after failing to apply for an HMO licence in April 2009. Also, tenants living in an HMO that should have been licensed but was not can apply to the Residential Property Tribunal to claim back up to 12 months rent for the period in which the home was unlicensed.

As a slight aside (before everyone rushes off to reclaim their rent), at present the legal definition of an HMO requiring a license must have three or more floors and five or more tenants. Clearly this does not apply to all student homes. Alan Simpson, MP for Nottingham South, described this definition as “a loophole in the law”, which requires alteration from central government as it cannot be changed by the Council.

While the threshold will theoretically stop other areas from becoming as student-dominated as Lenton, the legislation itself will not alter the fact that the proportion of HMOs in Lenton already stands at well above 25%. Different tactics are needed in order to relocate the student population to elsewhere in the city. The City Council is encouraging greater provision of purpose-built accommodation (generally self-catering flats), to exceed the growth in student numbers. They are only granting planning permission either on campuses or in areas without an existing high concentration of students. Between 2004 and 2005 the number of new bed spaces first exceeded the number of students, and the surplus has continued to increase faster than the student population. Guy Welton, accommodation bureau manager of Unipol, commented that it's hard to tell exactly how big the surplus is as Unipol only advertise University-accredited properties. However he was certain that the surplus would remain throughout the next year even if the number of students increases. Currently there are over 8,000 bed spaces still being advertised on Unipol, over half of them for large developments.

This sounds like a lot of empty beds. The Council anticipates that the shift of students into purpose built accommodation should accelerate as new schemes become available over the next few years. The fast increase in the construction of purpose-built student accommodation has been taken as a demonstration of their potential. However critics have pointed to new city-centre flats standing empty as a result of developers who are interested only in selling flats to amateur landlords, rather than meeting real housing requirements.

In Leeds, building halls of residence in other parts of the city in order to regenerate areas in need has proved successful. The new location – next to the river and close to the city centre – is apparently proving popular with the students. The pre-existing residents have no complaints, in part due to the now more frequent bus services to and from the area.

There are various proposals as to where Nottingham students should go if we are to be ousted from Lenton. The Council stated that further provision of purpose-built accommodation would be encouraged in sites close to university campuses which require regeneration, such as Chettles Yard in Radford. It is also encouraged in specified ‘regeneration zones’. Particularly recommended for potential student accommodation are the Eastside (St.

Ann's and Sneinton) and Southside (The Meadows' Gateway) zones.

This idea has been objected to by some students, who claim it is unfair to use students as a ‘cash injection’ to an area in need of redevelopment. The general consensus is, *“I don't care how nice the flats are, if I'm likely to get shot it's not my cup of tea.”* However, student accommodation usually has much better security than private housing, and the ability of students to create local business (albeit largely off-licenses and takeaways) is huge. Perhaps more importantly public transport is likely to become more efficient in an area of high student demand. The crime rate in some of these regeneration areas is because they're run down, not why they're run down. A boost to the economic health of the area would be likely to assist a reduction in crime.

However it seems that these developments have been impressive master plans followed by inactivity. There were concrete plans for a new community of 2,000 homes to be built on Waterside, another redevelopment zone; they have been shelved, largely due to the recession.

The real question is how the Council intends to discourage existing students from living in Lenton and similar areas. Mr. Welton of Unipol commented, *“It's impossible to determine whether students will go live somewhere just because there are properties there, or if developers will want to build student flats just because it's possible to get planning permission. It's entirely market-driven.”*

Alan Simpson MP believes a “rigorous routing out” of badly managed student properties will happen through the new licensing and planning requirements. The restriction of HMO licenses will become even more effective when stricter rules around energy efficiency ratings are introduced, combined with the current environmental health requirements. This *“will squeeze out the poorer landlords and the poorer properties; faced with the choices, [the students] will be much more likely to take the properties that offer them something more.”*

He defends the current property surplus as *“helpful and healthy”*, and hopes the new legislation will challenge *“the myth that students only like to live in decrepit, derelict properties”*. He pointed out that the greater security offered by the city apartment blocks is an important factor to consider.

A pertinent objection many have voiced is that students are concentrated only in areas that are conveniently close to University. Mr. Simpson argues that: *“The convenience for the universities is clear, yet there is no real student social focus [in student areas] like there is in the city centre apartment blocks or on-campus accommodation”*.

He believes that *“the market for buy-to-let student housing is drying up... [Houses] are going to have to be re-sold and I suspect it will slowly encourage more families into the area”*. Looking around Lenton now, there seems to be little evidence for a market on the decline, but one point everyone is agreed upon is that this will be a gradual change, not a student exodus.

There are, of course, objections to these proposals from students. Lillian Greenwood, Labour parliamentary candidate for Nottingham South, partially agrees: *“You can't characterise all students as inconsiderate neighbours”*. She acknowledges the efforts of the Students' Union to promote involvement in local community action and

impress on students the importance of being considerate neighbours. However she pointed out, "The expectation here that you live in [halls] in your first year and then you move out isn't the case in all the universities... Whilst the idea of having more students living in university-owned property may seem unfair to current students, over a period of time I think it's possible without people feeling they're being contained."

Aside from the accusation that we are bad neighbours, some students have argued against the other charges that we face. Our lifestyles can't be driving prices up. Many of us have reached that point in our overdraft where we realise weeks of nothing but Sainsbury's Basics Baked Beans stretch bleakly ahead of us. The local demand for caviar is, if not non-existent, at least extremely low.

However there is a majority preference for 'convenience' stores such as Tesco Extra and Sainsbury's Local, which offer higher priced basics. Local shops have shut down to make way for a huge variety of takeaways, limiting the residents' choice. On a larger scale, the demand among landlords for easily rentable properties has pushed house prices up, as has the trend among parents of students to buy-to-let in the Lenton area. And in all honesty, the stereotypical 'impoverished student' is only hard-up because of shockingly bad financial management. While there are a few students who genuinely struggle to make ends meet through no fault of their own, these are very much in the minority.

The strongest argument against the suggestion of student accommodation rather than HMOs is that students want an 'adult' experience. Staying in halls right up until graduation makes university seem like glorified boarding school. But look at Lenton: with entire streets made up of student houses, it has become nothing more than an unplanned hall of residence. Living in a self-catered flat would afford the same degree of independence, without the detrimental effects on the wider community.

Mr. Simpson pointed out, "I would say that students will still have an opportunity to gain that adult experience – the threshold is 25%, which could still be 1 in 4 student houses... The arguments around this are often about respecting the individual liberties of students; living in a balanced community is what that's about, not about living in a student enclave". Lenton would not be completely lost to students, just significantly different to how it is today.

He emphasised that these new legislations should not be viewed as restrictive, but a collective process which would give students access to better properties and ensure that there are genuine communities in which students will be able to gain a proper experience of adult life.

Whilst I love living in Lenton, the overwhelming evidence points to the fact that the students of tomorrow should not shy away from purpose-built student flats. We need to admit that the majority of students will continue to act loudly, immaturely and messily (and I don't doubt that they will enjoy it). It seems a little unfair to inflict this on other city residents, at least on the scale in which we currently do.

However, with the present lull in redevelopment and perhaps more crucially the average student's current preference for private housing, it is hard to say when Lenton might noticeably change. If the Council are to effectively enforce the changes they are trying to make, they should work in tandem with University accommodation bureaus to promote purpose-built accommodation over private housing. As it stands, it is too late to defend the possibility of students living in such large groupings as they do now. Changes are in motion which will balance the demographics of future communities, and Lenton as it is now will remain only in memory. We should be open to the idea that this may not be a bad thing.

[Lucy Hayes, *Impact Magazine*, June, 2009]

NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP ON HMOs REPORT TO THE GENERAL MEETING JUNE 2009

BACKGROUND

In the five years since the Nottingham Action Group on HMOs (NAG) was formally constituted, its work has concentrated in three, often overlapping areas: national (as a member of the National HMO Lobby); Nottingham (as the group representing the interests of Nottingham residents who live in areas with concentrations of HMOs); neighbourhood (working to improve the quality of the environment for residents living in areas with concentrations of HMOs).

NATIONAL

The National HMO Lobby's aims can be summarized as: **Housing** – licensing of all HMOs, **Planning** – control of HMOs (Use Classes Order change), **Fiscal** – recognition that owners of HMOs are running businesses and should be subject to business rates. In support of these aims, NAG representatives have taken part in a number of national conferences and seminars, and joined Nottingham City Council delegations to meet with Housing and Planning Ministers.

The NAG has been involved in the formation of two national organizations: the Councillors' Campaign for Balanced Communities (CCBC), which has held two meetings in

Nottingham (also attended by the NAG) and is due to hold its third annual meeting in Brighton in September; and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Balanced and Sustainable Communities (APPG) which has Nottingham MPs amongst its membership.

In 2008, the NAG was represented on a tour of some of our neighbourhoods when Iain Wright MP, then Under-Secretary of State for Planning, visited Nottingham, and also hosted a meeting with Iain Wright after the tour. NAG members also took part in a focus group organized by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) as part of the fact-finding leading up to the publication of the ECOTEC Report on HMOs and planning issues. Earlier this year, NAG representatives met with Grant Shapps (Conservative Shadow Minister for Housing) and took him on a short tour of Lenton. Currently, the NAG Committee is preparing responses to CLG on two consultation papers on the Private Rented Sector, and on HMOs and possible planning responses. A representative of the NAG has also been invited to join a delegation from the National HMO Lobby to meet with senior Civil Servants in CLG in connection with the consultation on HMOs and planning.

NOTTINGHAM

The NAG represents residents' interests on two groups chaired by Nottingham City Council: the Student Strategy Leadership Group and the Student Co-ordination and Delivery Group. In connection with the former, the NAG has been closely involved in the development of Nottingham's Student Housing Action Plan (SHAP) and has hosted two sets of consultation meetings at different venues across the city where all interested parties have been able to comment on and contribute to the development of the SHAP and its revisions. The NAG was instrumental in the appointment by the City Council of a Student Strategy Manager, with whom NAG representatives regularly liaise. In addition, the NAG has established good working relations with Nottingham City Council officers in Environmental Services and Waste Management. Officers from these and other sections of the Council have attended a number of open NAG meetings where they have been able to explain their activities to attendees, answer questions, and get feedback about the work they do and how it affects our neighbourhoods.

The NAG has also been credited with the fact that the University of Nottingham has appointed an Off-Campus Student Affairs Manager. The Group has a good relationship with Nottingham Trent University and its Students' Union. The NAG supports Trent University's Students' Union in the work it is doing to establish a community liaison officer, and has actively supported Trent University's Students' Union (and the City Council) in establishing Unipol at Nottingham Trent University.

That Unipol is now established at both of Nottingham's universities is in no small part due to partnership work between the NAG, the City Council and the two Students' Unions.

NAG representatives served on a Unipol Steering Committee which formulated the Unipol-DASH Code for student housing in the City. Earlier this year, Unipol and the NAG concluded a formal agreement to work together (UNAG) with two open meetings already planned for September 2009 and April 2010.

The NAG also worked with the City Council and Unipol to formulate the code of practice for the voluntary control of letting boards, and members of the Group are actively engaged in monitoring the implementation of that scheme.

NEIGHBOURHOOD

From the beginning, the NAG has tried to provide support for residents who live in neighbourhoods affected by concentrations of HMOs. This support varies from ensuring that problems associated with HMOs (their owners, agents and their tenants) are reported to the appropriate authorities (Council, Universities, Police, etc.) and acted on, through to providing a listening ear whenever needed. It is for the membership of the Group to judge how successful (or not) the NAG has been in providing help and support.

THE NAG AND THE MEDIA

The NAG has worked at a neighbourhood level with national and local media groups (e.g. radio, TV and newspapers) in order to highlight problems caused by HMOs. BBC Radio Nottingham has carried two 'Groundswell' debates on student issues. These have also been covered by the Today programme on Radio 4 and the Jeremy Vine Show on Radio 3. BBC and ITV in the East Midlands have also covered the issues, the most recent coverage being a BBC Inside Out programme broadcast last year. In addition to extensive national coverage (including Daily Telegraph and Guardian articles), the local press has continued to print pieces about HMOs, studentification and our neighbourhoods. Most recently, the *Nottingham Evening Post* has highlighted problems with end-of-session litter and noise, as well as the impact that HMOs have on the future of our neighbourhoods.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Group's accounts for the period 25 May 2004 to 31 December 2008 have been examined. They are available for inspection provided notice of 21 days is given to the Treasurer and/or the Co-ordinator.

The third trench (£5,000) of a £15,000 support grant awarded by Nottingham City Council must be claimed before the end of the current financial year (March, 2010). Over the five-year period, the major recurrent expenditure has been on printing costs for the NAG magazine, the website, room hire, postage costs and stationery. Most of these have increased substantially over the period in line with increased charges made by suppliers.

If the NAG is to continue its work, it will be necessary for the Officers (Co-ordinator/Chair and Treasurer) to begin to seek additional funding within the next 3-4 months.

FUTURE WORK

It is anticipated that the NAG will have to continue to work:

Nationally: to support the work of the National HMO Lobby in whatever way it can. If, as it is hoped, Government will act to implement a change in Use Classes Order legislation, there will still remain a need to focus national attention on the issues surrounding HMOs, particularly with regard to the third of the National HMO Lobby's aims, i.e. for Government to implement fiscal changes that will require the owners of HMOs to pay business rates.

Nottingham: It is disappointing that in Nottingham although the groundwork was done at least four years ago and Nottingham City Council has implemented various strategies designed to alleviate the problems associated with HMOs in the City (e.g. HMO Action Zone teams, increased waste management and refuse collection schemes), there has been little corresponding forward movement on the part of the universities and their students unions. This is particularly true in the case of the University of Nottingham and its students union. There continues to be little acceptance on their part that the number of HMOs in our neighbourhoods must be substantially reduced if the aim of returning them to balanced and sustainable levels is to be achieved. It has to be said that the Student Housing Action Plan, currently under review, is still far too aspirational and contains no measurable targets. This situation is mirrored by the continuing lack of development of strategies to deal with rebalancing our neighbourhoods. More positively, Unipol is now established in Nottingham with both universities having finally agreed terms of contracts. In connection with this it has to be said that it is Nottingham City Council which has provided by far and away the major part of the start-up funding for Unipol Nottingham. The Council is to be congratulated on the efforts it has consistently made to persuade the two universities to begin to honour their moral commitments to their students.

Neighbourhood: Improvements in the environments of our neighbourhoods have occurred, but they are patchy, sporadic and inconsistent. They are expensive in terms of manpower and finances and we continue to be faced with a declining permanent resident population.

CORE ACTIVITIES

In the light of what has been said in this report, it is proposed that the core activities of the NAG in the coming year are:

1. Ensuring that the national profile of the issues surrounding HMOs is enhanced. This will include supporting the National HMO Lobby, supporting and helping the Councillors Campaign for Balanced Communities and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Balanced and Sustainable Communities, along with

maintaining and expanding our links with other groups and individuals across the country.

2. Lobbying for a balanced community strategy within the Greater Nottingham Core Strategy and the City's Local Development Framework. This strategy must have the tools necessary to address the need to: (a) substantially reduce both the total number of HMOs in Nottingham and the concentrations in individual neighbourhoods; (b) develop plans that tackle the necessity for renewal and restoration of affected neighbourhoods; (c) identify and protect those neighbourhoods which are under pressure from further HMO development.

3. Ensuring that the Student Housing Action Plan is revised to reflect the balanced community strategy above with measurable targets and definite timescales.

4. Ensuring that the universities set and meet short-term goals with respect to students' anti-social behaviour, and that the processes of investigating and acting on reported instances of

anti-social behaviour by students are transparent and accountable.

5. Persuading the universities to consult more widely with local residents on issues that greatly affect them.

6. Investigating and quantifying evidence relating to the environmental, social and economic impact of HMOs on our neighbourhoods, e.g. cost to the council in cleansing and waste collection, loss of Council Tax. Related to this is:

7. Working to strengthen the links recently established with Unipol through the UNAG panel.

8. Supporting 'neighbourhood spirit' by fostering links between residents in different parts of our neighbourhoods, through meetings, the magazine and other publications, the website, social events.

[Co-ordinator, Nottingham Action Group on HMOs
30 June, 2009]

NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP ON HMOs BALANCED & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES RUNNING UP THE 'DOWN' ESCALATOR

STUDENT HOUSEHOLDS ON RISE IN CITY

The number of student households in Nottingham has risen by nine per cent in the last year

The increase has dismayed residents who have homes in areas where a large number of students live.

Nottingham City Council analysed the number of council tax exemptions it has issued to student households

It found the number of student homes in the five most popular districts increased from 2,572 in October 2007, to 2,801, in October 2008, the beginning of this academic year.

The increase comes despite the construction of a significant amount of purpose-built student housing.

The city council has attributed the unexpected rise to increases in the number of students enrolling at Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham this year. This has been disputed.

The council says Trent took on 1,000 additional students and the University of Nottingham an extra 700, this year. The council claims these are the largest increases in the past six years.

Maya Fletcher, chairman of the Nottingham Action Group on Houses in Multiple Occupation, and a Lenton resident, said that recent progress in tackling 'studentification' could be reversed.

She said: "This is upsetting and dispiriting.

"Unless the universities curb their intake, we will be right back where we were five years ago."

Jacqueline Flude, of Sherwin Road, Lenton, said: "It is the same now as it was five years ago. The density (of student accommodation) is still the same."

Coun Alan Clark, portfolio holder for housing, said: "It is important that the city council works closely with both

universities so that we understand their planned student numbers in order to accommodate students well and minimise the worst of their impacts on local communities."

Nottingham Trent University, said that the vast majority of its new intake of students this year were accommodated in purpose-built flats, with only 100 homed in privately-rented rooms.

A spokesman said: "Less than two per cent of all new students (about 100) were placed into private rented accommodation.

"The university continues to work very closely with key stakeholders across the city and is making significant contributions to the new Student Accommodation and Balanced Communities Strategy."

Melanie Futer, manager, off-campus affairs at the University of Nottingham, said: "We work closely with the City Council, Unipol and a range of third-party accommodation providers to achieve a balanced community."

[Nottingham Evening Post, Tuesday, 21 April, 2009]

BALANCING THE COMMUNITY?

In her article, Lucy Hayes came to the conclusion that, for the Council's Student Housing Strategy to work, it was going to be necessary for council and universities to work in partnership with one another in promoting purpose built student accommodation as an alternative to HMOs.

Lucy's conclusion is valid – to a point.

YES, the universities, the council, and the students' unions all need to promote purpose built accommodation.

BUT, developers need to be persuaded to build the sort of accommodation that appeals to students. And that accommodation has to be priced at a level where it is in direct competition with HMO rentals.

AND: ‘... last year both universities took more than 1,000 students over and above what they had stated they would.’

This overshoot will almost inevitably increase the demand for HMOs and, if it is repeated, the cumulative effect over the next two or three years will return us to where we were five years ago – with too many students looking for somewhere to live, the private rented sector responding by converting yet more family homes into HMOs, and landlords with little or no incentive to improve the quality of management and maintenance of their properties.

‘Not a prospect that anyone – established resident, student, council and university – should be happy about.’

[Quote taken from Nottingham Evening Post Comment Column: ‘Progress made restoring neighbourhoods but more students is concern’, 23 April, 2009]

It is too early to know accurately how many extra students Nottingham’s universities took in at the beginning of this academic year (2009-2010), but rumour has it that the numbers mirror fairly closely those taken in at the beginning of the 2008-2009 session.

Eight hundred years ago, the Mayor and Aldermen of Cambridge were required to abase themselves before the Vice-Chancellor. Thankfully, this is the 21st Century, not the Middle Ages, and co-operation and partnership working have replaced ritual subordination.

But, isn’t it tempting to ask not ‘What is the partnership doing’, but rather:

‘IS THERE A PARTNERSHIP THERE AT ALL?’

NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP ON HMOs NEIGHBOURHOOD PERSPECTIVES



Lenton Recreation Ground

Having lived in this comfortable residential area of the city for over 30 years I ponder about the changes to Nottingham, its academic institutions, and its continued efforts to be Queen of the Midlands attracting many visitors and persuading many young people to study here. Visitors come for a day or two, perhaps a week, and then move on.

Students, like the visitors, are passing traffic. Admittedly, students stay a while longer, three years or possibly more, but then they scatter into a wilderness of work, finance and travel. There is little heard of any wanting to be part of the Queen of the Midlands. On the other hand, perhaps there are some who do want to stay, but little is written or heard

about newcomers – students who stay on and make their homes in our Drives.

The Drives become a ghost town in the summer months. The silence is golden and, to be perfectly honest, it is heaven. No rubbish, no empty lager bottles and half eaten pizzas litter the Drives. The rubbish bins stand empty and proud on the front (overgrown) lawns. No rowdy gangs returning from student raves, or the crashing of taxi doors as they stumble out in the early hours blindly searching for their abode.

The Lenton Drives are, in effect, a residential campus because Nottingham’s academic institutions cannot cope with providing accommodation for the ever increasing numbers of students. In this leafy area (Harlaxton, Harrington and Rolleston Drives) out of approximately 360 detached and semi-detached properties, only a handful (and I really mean a handful) are homes for established residents. The rest are houses in multiple occupation, primarily taken over by students.

I think to myself – damn it!

NEIGHBOURHOODS FOR FAMILIES PASSING TRAFFIC

The summer is slowly coming to a close and autumn with its balmy days is coming into its own. On the Drive where I live there is frenetic activity by builders, plumbers, electricians, all doing something drastic to the properties: altering kitchens, presumably updating central heating, putting in an extra bathroom or two and even burrowing into cellars to make them (possibly) habitable. Some have even extended living quarters well into the gardens at the back.

I wander along the other streets of the Lenton Drives and notice that a similar fate is awaiting many more. The ‘House To Let’ signs which, in June, peppered most of the Drives either in the front windows or notice boards, are all but gone, with only one or two hopefully hanging on among the builders’ rubble.

Why don't Nottingham's academic institutions **BUY** the Drives and be done with it! At least they could then perhaps impose a certain standard of upkeep instead of the mishmash of uncaring landlords, squeezing the last drop of financial juice from a downtrodden property. I can honestly say that I have seen only half a dozen properties in the Lenton Drives where the landlord appears to be keen about upkeep and appearance.

The handful of us who refuse to go away NAG the council, the university and other institutions in an effort to ensure that properties are properly maintained and habitable, streets are cleaned and rubbish kept to a minimum.

I suppose that is what 'community spirit' is all about, caring for your area and making it a pleasant place to live. But it is hard work when there is only a handful of us in an area full of passing traffic.

Before I close, I would like to state how well equipped the Lenton Drives are for family living. The Lenton Leisure Centre, the attractive Edna G. Olds primary school, as well as the pleasant park on Church Street are all places that a young family looks for when searching for somewhere to live. The houses on The Drives are typical family houses with gardens to front and rear.

What a pity that not more families are being encouraged to return to live here, and that letting agents selling or renting these properties give prime emphasis to: 'Houses suitable for student living, e.g., five, six or seven lettable rooms'. What has happened to family living? Could not the word 'family' come in somewhere when advising properties for sale or rent?

Come on, you newcomers to Nottingham, have a look at the Lenton Drives! It would be a great place to live if more of you came here to stay.

[Lenton Drives Resident, September, 2009]



WELCOME TO PURPLE FROG

THE NEWEST LETTING AGENCY IN LENTON'S LILY POND

'Purple Frog are a property letting and management agency. We founded the company in 2007 after living in student accommodation near the University of Birmingham. We successfully set up a busy office in Selly Oak and in 2009 opened new offices in Nottingham and Bristol, right in the heart of the student areas.'

'If you are interested in buying a property in view of letting it to your son/daughter and their friends, we can help you find a suitable property.'

'STUDENT LIVING JUST GOT EASIER'

[Purple Frog website]

At the last count, there were around a dozen letting agents in the Lenton area, possibly outdoing the number of bars and take-aways. Clearly a 'growth industry'.

NEIGHBOURHOODS FOR FAMILIES LENTON VS MAPPERLEY

Yesterday, the 30 September 2009, I spent from 10.45 am until 4.00 pm visiting someone living in Mapperley, Nottingham. I walked along the side roads, to see clean, bin free pavements and tended frontages.

I saw an assortment of houses old and new, but residential. Clearly owned by people who cared what their homes, gardens and general area looked like.

I walked along the parade of shops, and tried on good quality clothes. Took my time around a shop that predominantly showcases the talents and artistry of the people living in the surrounding area, coupled with an assistant that was pleased to see me, and just talk.

I ate lunch of home made chilli and wholemeal bread, on a clean and tidy pavement in one of the four restaurants I could have chosen, not just 'take-aways' and fast food outlets.

I purchased good quality, fresh, locally grown fruit and vegetables and flowers from two beautifully laid out shops and frontages, then talked to the independent butcher and his customers, who incidentally spoke to me first, not having seen me before.

I purchased a pair of good quality leather shoes for £6.95, a matching suede handbag for £3.50, and a large jig-saw for £1.85. All from a really lovely charity shop affiliated to a local hospice. I also had a watch strap fitted in the jewellers.

All these things might well be normal to anyone else, but not to me living in Lenton. I have unfortunately in the 26 years I have lived in Lenton, become accustomed to less and less, until the point has been reached that there is now little or nothing for me here. The place is a campus and catering for such.

I, as a prospective home buyer, looking around for somewhere to live, would find little to attract, or compel me to buy, in this dirty, studentified, disproportionate and unbalanced area, of once lovely properties, now run-down, if I didn't already live in Lenton.

I did not want to come home from my visit, as I had seen how I should be living, having and needing neighbours and making friends, and I shall be giving it more than a passing thought.

Much has been taken away from me in Lenton in my time here, not least of all, my friends and friendly neighbours, only to be replaced with something insidious.

R.I.P Lenton. You deserved better.

[Resident of Old Lenton, October, 2009]



NOTTINGHAM ACTION GROUP ON HMOs

THE CANDLES ON THE CAKE



“At Wimbledon, the ladies are simply the candles on the cake.”

[John Newcombe]

Sharing hospitality, no matter how basic, is one of the glues that binds society together.

The terms of the NAG's funding has never allowed the Group to hold a meeting at which the business of the day is carried on before, during, and after food and drink. However, and by accident rather than any grand planning, the 'candles on the NAG's cake' have managed to acquire something of a reputation for turning their hands to all things domestic – at least to baking 'exceedingly good cakes' – as well as causing mayhem and riot.

Not the candles on the cake, I think, but rather the cake itself, and not quite 'Jam and Jerusalem' ... but there was a suggestion made the other year that perhaps a calendar might be in order!

My thanks to NAGgers and their friends for passing on the recipes. If you have any you'd like to contribute, please let me have them and perhaps we'll have another selection in one of the 2010 NAG magazines

[Editor]

MOIST FRUIT CAKE

4 oz butter
6 oz muscovado sugar
6 oz currants
10 oz sultanas
8 oz glace cherry (halved)
8 fluid oz water
1 level tsp bicarb soda
1 heaped tsp mixed spice
2 standard (3 small) eggs beaten
4 oz plain flour
4 oz self raising flour
pinch of salt.

8- or 9-inch loose bottomed cake tin

Mix butter, sugar fruit, water, bicarb and spice in pan. Bring to the boil, stirring all the time. Simmer for a couple of minutes. Remove from heat and cool in the pan (with lid on to prevent loss of liquid). When cool enough so as not to cook the eggs, add sifted flour and salt and then add the beaten eggs. Stir lightly until blended.

Bake for approx 40-45 minutes in the 9 inch tin and 1 hour in the 8 inch tin at Gas 4, 350°F, 180°C, 140-150°C (fan assisted).

Allow the cool for 10 minutes, then remove from cake tin and leave to finish cooling on cooling rack.

APPLE CAKE

18 oz (500 g) apples (dessert or cooking), peeled, cored and sliced

grated zest of 1 lemon

9 oz (250 g) plain flour

3 teaspoons baking powder

pinch of salt

4 ½ oz (125 g) butter, softened

5 ½ oz (150 g) caster sugar

½ teaspoon vanilla essence

2 large eggs

2 tbsp milk

1 oz (25 g) chilled butter

1 ¾ oz (50 g) Plain flour

1 oz (25 g) demerara sugar

1 tbsp chopped & roasted hazelnuts

2 tsp grated lemon zest

pinch of cinnamon

Toss the apples in lemon zest and leave to soak for about ½ an hour. Sift the flour, baking powder and salt.

Grease and line an 8 inch (20 cm) round, loose-bottomed or springform cake tin. Heat oven to Gas Mark 3, 170°C, 320°F.

Beat the butter and sugar with the vanilla essence until creamy and fluffy. Then gradually mix in the eggs, beating well between additions. Fold in the flour and finally the milk. Stir in the apples when they have absorbed the flavour of the lemon zest.

Make the topping by rubbing together the chilled butter and the flour until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.

Spoon the mixture into the prepared tin and sprinkle over the topping.

Bake for 1 to 1¼ hours until risen and golden brown. Cool for 10 minutes and then turn out onto a wire rack to cool.

Serve freshly baked with whipped cream or yogurt.

LEMON DRIZZLE CAKE

6 oz butter/margarine

6 oz caster sugar

2 eggs

4 tbsp milk

6 oz Self raising flour

finely grated zest and juice of 1 large lemon

1 tsp icing sugar

Heat the oven to 180 C (350 F), Gas Mark 4. Lightly grease and line a 2-lb loaf tin. Cream the margarine/butter and caster sugar together until light and creamy, then gradually beat in the lightly whisked eggs together with the milk. Lightly fold in the sieved flour and lemon zest.

Place in the prepared tin and smooth over the top. Bake for 30 minutes, then reduce the oven temperature to 170°C (325°F) Mark 3 for a further 30 minutes or until the cake is golden brown, firm to the touch and beginning to shrink from the sides of the tin.

Mix the lemon juice with the icing sugar and pour over the cake as soon as it has been taken out of the oven.

Allow the glaze to set, then remove the cake from the tin and place on a cooling rack.

WALNUT CAKE

4oz margarine or butter
3oz caster sugar
1 tablespoon of Golden Syrup
2 eggs
6oz self raising flour
2 tbsp of milk
2oz chopped walnuts

Butter cream icing

2 oz of butter or margarine
4oz sieved icing sugar
flavouring and colouring as required

Cream the margarine or butter, sugar and syrup until light and creamy. Beat in the eggs with a little flour.

Gradually add remaining flour, milk and nuts.

Spread the mixture into a greased and floured 7-inch cake tin.

Bake in a moderate oven Gas mark 3-4, 170°C, 320°F for 50 minutes (or when the cake is cooked inside) depends upon the oven temperature.

When cold, cut into two halves and sandwich with either coffee butter cream icing or just butter cream icing.

Decorate the top of the cake with white glaze icing and walnut halves on the top of the cake.

For the butter cream icing, cream the margarine or butter and icing sugar together, then add flavouring.

FRESH STRAWBERRY CAKE

175g (6 oz) unsalted butter, softened
175g (6 oz) caster sugar
1 tsp vanilla essence
3 large eggs, beaten
175g (6 oz) self-raising flour
150ml (¼ pint) double cream
2 tbsp icing sugar, sifted
225g (8 oz) fresh strawberries, hulled and chopped
Few extra strawberries for decoration

Preheat the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5, 10 minutes before baking.

Lightly grease and flour the bases of two 8-inch round cake tins (If you prefer you can grease the tins and place greaseproof paper inside instead.)

Using an electric whisk, beat the butter, sugar and vanilla essence until pale and fluffy.

Gradually beat in the eggs a little at a time, beating well between each addition.

Sift half the flour over the mixture and, using a metal spoon or rubber spatula, gently fold into the mixture. Sift over the remaining flour and fold in until just blended.

Divide the mixture between the tins, spreading evenly. Gently smooth the surfaces with the back of a spoon. Bake in the centre of the preheated oven for 20-25 mins, or until well risen and golden.

Remove and leave to cool before turning out on to a wire rack.

Whip the cream with 1 tablespoon of icing sugar until it forms soft peaks. Fold in the chopped strawberries.

Spread one cake layer with the mixture and place the second layer on top. Thickly dust with icing sugar and decorate with the reserved strawberries.

Carefully slide onto a serving plate and serve.

BAKED CHEESECAKE

25 cm (10-inch) sponge flan base (prepared beforehand)
2 x 250 g tub Quark (or cream cheese)
284 ml carton soured cream
284 ml carton double cream
200 g (7 oz) caster sugar
3 large eggs, beaten
juice of 1 lemon
2 tsp vanilla essence
sultanas (optional)
sifted icing sugar to serve

Heat the oven to Gas Mark 3, 170°C, 320°F. Lightly grease the sides of a 23 cm (9-inch) springform cake tin. Using the base as a template, cut out the sponge flan to fit inside the tin.

Line the base first with a disc of baking parchment and then press the cut sponge round on to the base of the tin. Make sure it is a snug fit so that the liquid mixture does not seep out during baking.

Beat together the Quark, two creams, sugar, eggs, lemon and vanilla essence to a smooth cream in a food processor or by hand in a large bowl. If using sultanas, add a good two handfuls at this time.

Pour the mixture on top of the sponge flan base and bake for about 40 minutes until the top is golden brown. Turn off the oven and leave the cake inside to cool for another hour to stop the surface cracking.

Chill the cake in the fridge overnight until very firm. Then run a table knife round the rim of the tin to loosen and remove the cake.

Slip the cake onto a flat plate, Dust the top with sifted icing sugar and serve.

RICH CHOCOLATE CAKE

100 g (4 oz) butter, diced
140 g (5 oz) high cocoa content dark chocolate broken into pieces
6 eggs, separated
140 g (5 oz) ground almonds
1 tbsp Cointreau (optional)
85 g (3 oz) caster sugar
cocoa powder for dusting

Heat oven to gas Mark 3, 150°C, fan 150°C. Butter and line the base of a 9-inch (23 cm) springform cake tin. Dust the sides with a little flour.

Melt the butter and chocolate over a water bath and stir until smooth. Leave for about 5 minutes to cool slightly. Then stir in the egg yolks, ground almonds and the liqueur, if using.

Put the egg whites in a bowl, add a pinch of salt and whisk until soft peaks form. Continue whisking, sprinkling in the sugar, a little at a time, until stiff peaks form. Stir 2 tbsp of the whites into the chocolate mixture, then carefully fold in the remainder.

Spoon the mixture into the prepared tin and bake for 30 to 35 minutes until well risen and just firm. Cool in the tin.

Remove the cake and peel away the lining paper. Dust with cocoa powder and serve with whipped cream or crème fraîche.



NATIONAL HMO LOBBY REPORT NOVEMBER 2009

The National HMO Lobby began informally in 2000, and was formally constituted in 2004. The Lobby is now an association of over fifty community groups in over thirty towns in all parts of the UK. Its aim is to redress the impact of concentrations of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) on the cohesion and sustainability of local communities. The Lobby offers its members solidarity in adversity, exchange of information and collective campaigning.

The past year has been dominated by the government Consultation on our key objective, planning control of HMOs. After the ECOTEC Report of last year, we spent the first five months of this year waiting for the Consultation. In this period, our members in Loughborough and Southampton lobbied the then Planning Minister, Iain Wright, and Alan Whitehead and Andy Reed asked questions in the Commons.

Then in May, the Consultation paper was published, and for three months, the Lobby moved into full campaigning mode. First of all, we circulated a number of Campaign Bulletins, mapping out the issues raised (Bulletins 01, 02, 05, 06). Then on 12 June in Birmingham, we held a *National HMO Seminar*, where two-dozen delegates spent the day working through the Consultation paper — exhaustively! (Bulletins 03, 04, 07). Finally, further Bulletins outlined model responses to the Consultation (08-12). Many of our members sent in responses, and so did many allies. The Lobby's campaign culminated in a delegation to Communities & Local Government, where we discussed the issues with the officer responsible for the Consultation, and we presented the National HMO Lobby's formal response (a 32-page booklet) (Bulletin 13). Bulletin 14 gives a more detailed account of the campaign.

The Consultation closed on 7 August, and since then, we have been waiting, first for a Report on the Consultation exercise, and then for a decision by the government on what action it will take. After four months, both are still awaited. Meanwhile (ironically, once the Consultation was completed), the media took considerable interest in the issue. Immediately following the close, there were items in the *Sunday Times*, the *Times*, Channel 4 News and *Planning* magazine. In September, there were a trio of articles in the *Guardian* and the *Observer*. And then in October, there were reports on *You & Yours* (Radio 4) and the *Politics Show* (BBC1), as well as an irritable piece on 'disgruntled locals' in the *Guardian*.

Meanwhile, the Lobby continued to grow. New members joined in Bristol (Kingsdown Conservation Group), Chichester (RA Co-ordinating Group), Manchester (SE Fallowfield), Newcastle (Brandling Village RA) and Salford (E Salford CC). And the Lobby contributed to conferences held by BURA (*Turning the Tide of HMOs*, London, 27 January), by Unipol (*Rugg Review*, London, 28 January) and by the Northern Housing Consortium (*Private Sector Housing*, Harrogate, 23 April).

Finally, it's worth noting that the August issue of the journal *Environment & Planning A* (Vol 41, issue 8), edited by Darren Smith, was devoted to 'Student Geographies',

a series of academic analyses of studentification - all of which confirmed the need for our lobbying.

Now we wait for government action!

Further details of the National HMO Lobby's activities are available on the 'History' and the 'National Developments' pages, on the Lobby's website.

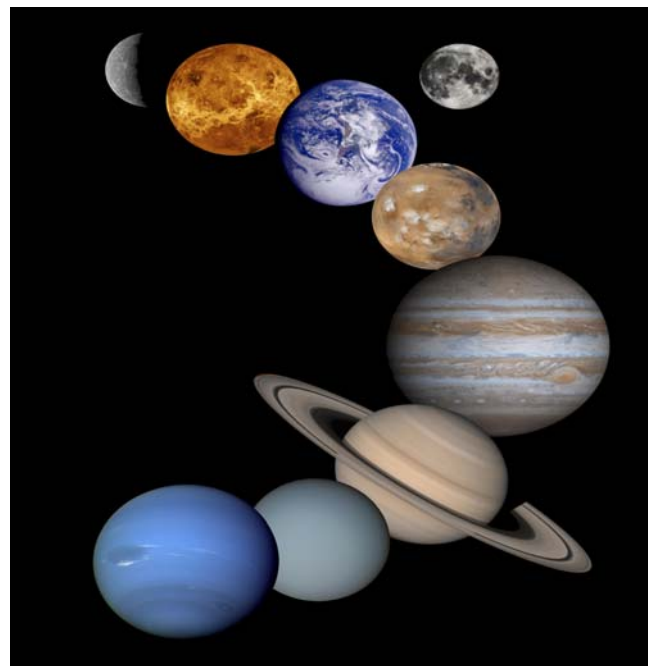
[Dr. Richard Tyler, Co-ordinator, National HMO Lobby]

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JPL-NASA Montage of the Solar System

The one outstanding feature of the almost six years that the NAG has been in existence (and the ten years and more that some of us have been involved with what we now call 'HMOs' and 'studentification') is the National HMO Lobby.

That it is still in existence, let alone that it is growing in membership, more than anything else gives the lie to the conclusion reached by Julie Rugg and David Rhodes in their report to CLG (*The private rented sector: its contribution and potential*, 2008) that destabilization of communities, pricing out of owner-occupiers, especially first-time buyers, noise and rubbish nuisance, etc. is at worst a problem confined to a small number of neighbourhoods with concentrations of HMOs in an even smaller number of towns and cities around the country.

Tardy though Government's response continues to be to the problems Rugg and Rhodes affirm do not exist, the simple fact is that it is the 'small groups of vociferous' locals of the National HMO Lobby who have meant that, even if only in a small way, the NAG has done something useful.

The exchange of information along with the support given to us by individuals like Richard and by the Lobby as a whole, really does mean that

WE ARE NOT ALONE

POST SCRIPT

STUDENT LANDLORD FINED

A landlord must pay £62,200 in financial penalties after he failed to maintain and licence two homes rented out to students in Dunkirk.

Anthony Carroll, known in the business as "Uncle Tony", let the properties to students without a licence from Nottingham City Council.

At a Greenfield Street property, an inspection found black mould on walls, no certificate of inspection for the electrical fittings, loose carpets on the stairs, a damaged sash window and hole in a floorboard.

Two students who had found the property infested with mice had been illegally evicted when Carroll changed the locks in December 2008 and demanded money from the pair to cover the rent owed by three tenants who had moved out.

"He said until the money was paid they would not be able to get in," Christopher Geeson, prosecuting, told Nottingham Crown Court.

"There was one short-hold tenancy agreement, so they jointly owed £1,500. The two tenants that were locked out contacted the university and Anthony Carroll again, who refused to let them in. They eventually called police. Under

the supervision of the police they recovered all of their property."

A second house, in Highfield Road, had a washing machine and freezer in the hallway blocking a stairwell in the event of a fire.

A smoke alarm had been disconnected and electric wiring had not been checked or tested within five years.

Carroll, 66, of Highfield Road, pleaded guilty to 17 charges.

He admitted he had let rooms without an appropriate licence and had not complied with regulations.

He was fined £14,700 and had more than £37,500 confiscated in rent during the time the two properties were not licensed. He must pay £10,000 towards court costs.

For the unlawful eviction he was given a four-month prison sentence, suspended for one year, with supervision from a probation officer.

Mark Kelly said in mitigation that Carroll ran his business on his own and had literacy problems.

"He's spent £15,000 having work done to these properties.

[Nottingham Evening Post, Saturday, 9 January, 2010]

AND FINALLY

WE LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES

In the message he sent with the National HMO Lobby Report, Richard Tyler said he'd delayed writing it in the hope there'd be some news about the outcome of the CLG consultation on *HMOs and possible planning responses*. I've been doing much the same thing, and that's the main reason why this issue of the magazine has been particularly difficult and frustrating to edit.

Having started with the CLG consultation and the fact, fiction and fabrications that came in its wake, I suppose it's not all that surprising that this not-so-random walk has led back to it. A report on the consultation should have appeared within three months of the end of the consultation period. One reason that it hasn't could be that Government did not anticipate the large volume of responses to it and only assigned a civil servant part-time to the task of preparing the report. On the other hand ...?

Your answer to that question possibly depends on whether your glass is 'half empty' or 'half full'.

Whatever your conclusion, this is a new year – an election year – and we're living in interesting times. Alan Simpson has been the MP for the Nottingham South Constituency for quite a while now. He is one of the people who was instrumental in getting the NAG going and six years on the NAG and its members have been well served by the work he has done on our behalf. However, he is not standing for re-election. So, some time in the next six months Nottingham South will have a new MP.

For the first open meeting of the year, the NAG committee has invited the candidates from the three main political parties to come along so that you can find out

about them, what they are thinking, and, of course, let them know what you think they should be thinking!

I hope you'll be able to make the time to come to that meeting and to all the others: not just because the committee has put time and thought into the programme; not just because the people who have agreed to come are giving up some of their time; not even because the turn-out reflects well (or badly) on the NAG itself; but simply because these meetings are occasions when your voice can be heard.

I digress – back to HMOs.

Towards the beginning of this issue I flagged up that the Crown Court was due to consider the case of Tony Carroll, one of our Dunkirk landlords, early in the New Year. Well, his case came up on Friday and though the outcome isn't the news I've been waited for, it'll do. I, for one, am delighted that 'Uncle Tony' has found out that what one landlord has called the '*love child of a Rotweiler and a deranged sociopath*' has a sting to its tail. (Apologies for mixing my metaphors.)

And finally, what better way to end than with a beginning? Congratulations to David and Helen on the birth of their twin daughters on 31 December 2009, and many thanks to David for writing the piece on the '*Extension of HMO Action Zones*' when he most certainly had more important things on his mind.

[Editor, 10 January, 2010]

BACK PAGE

Crescent Earth photographed during the return trip of Apollo 11, July 1969

[Apollo 11 Image Gallery, Courtesy of NASA History Office & NASA JSC Media Services Center]



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

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