

Aspia Jannat

From: Len Mackin [REDACTED]
Sent: 11 March 2019 10:52
To: Planning Policy
Subject: Comments on SPD for Purpose Built Student Accommodation

I have read the Supplementary Planning Document on PBSA's with some interest and wish to comment.

Whilst I am pleased that the issue is being considered, the document itself is more of a work of fiction and not well presented one at that (have you noticed the document front cover? Even a draft should not go out like this?).

It is interesting that it begins in its introduction, by giving us a promotional piece on Warwick University and how the students offer so much for the town. This message about how we have Warwick University students living in our town in ever increasing numbers is a Godsend to us all has been constantly pushed over the years and now seems to be desperate. I am sure that if there was a proper consultation you would soon learn that the negatives of 'studentification' outweigh the positives?

Other commentators have responded to this SPD with some quite technical observations that show it to be both a misleading document and hopelessly naive. For example the assessment of student numbers that are less than those quoted by the university, the idea that purpose built blocks will reduce the pressure housing stock without evidence, that HMO's will return to family homes despite being seen as low risk high yield investments. I could go on but I won't. What I will do is take a more personal position based on actually living in a high student area and ask that our councillors consider (and ask at committee) the following questions;

- What evidence exists or, have the councillors seen, that shows that a PBSA will reduce the number of HMO's and return these properties into residential ownership?
- Given that Warwick University has stated publicly to SoLAR that their intention year on year is to grow their student base and not reduce it, and given that apparently most of their students wish to live in Leamington Spa, just how many PBSA blocks are going to be required and more to the point, where are they going to go? How will they ensure that there is no 'excessive concentration', along the canal for example? What about the growth of foreign students who are more than likely to be the ones that live in PBSA?
- Has any work been done to investigate how well the current PBSA's are doing, what their student tenants think of living in them, how many are international students etc?
- I know of only one house that has returned from an HMO to a residential property because I live in it having purchased it in 1986 when student numbers were much lower than today. How will the building of PBSA reduce the number of HMO's? Isn't there a risk that HMO's will spread through the rest of the town and we will also see the growth of more of these blocks? How does the council intend to mitigate this?
- Following on from that question, will the WDC have a policy of creating a hostile environment for HMO development by reducing the % total of the H6 policy down from 10% to 5%, removing the 'main thoroughfare clause of H6 so that we are not left with the problem of 'definition' as seen in the recent Clarendon Street application?

- How are planning and licensing departments, who have failed miserably in every way (SoLAR has plenty of evidence on this) actually going to ensure that the proposed standards and policies are met by developers?
- How exactly is the Council going to increase public transport for all these students? Given that my nearest bus stop on Tatchbrook road often has as many as 60 students waiting for a bus at 9am and they often can't access a bus due to it filling up higher up the road where another 60 students get on the bus first? What conversations are taking place with local bus companies about this issue?
- Can WDC tell us what is the take up of students cycling to the University? I can bet it is not very many if any! Would our Councillors and officers enjoy cycling up the A46?
- Why is there no real factual evidence presented in the **Residents View** of the many issues that have been presented over several years now that certainly take the gloss of the rose coloured glasses worn by WDC officers and how this policy of encouraging more of these young people (living alone for the first time) will be mitigated so that there is a duty of care for we, the council tax paying residents? More students, whether in PBSA or HMO's will mean more late night ASB noise.
- The document talks about the dream that many students will remain in Warwick District to live and work. Where will they live exactly? My own two daughters moved away because they could no longer afford to live in this town as all the starter homes around here are HMO's. Last summer I hosted a new lecturer about to start work at Warwick University, In July she was told by property agents, to come back in the autumn when the students had been accommodated, they have priority. Previously I hosted a French student, she was offered plenty of places to look at and found her desired student flat share within two days! How many affordable homes will need to be built to accommodate the hundreds of graduates that we will have living here?
- Can one of our councillors please ask why are students such a 'protected group'? The tone of the document is that we cannot do without them and the town will sink into oblivion if they leave? Why is WDC considering their needs in such a way and why is the University outsourcing to the private sector 9 miles away? Every shop seems to offer a student discount yet unwaged young people, the homeless and disabled are not offered this? So why are we not insisting that Warwick University builds these blocks and student infrastructure (bars) on campus rather than their income generating conference blocks?
- How will the results of this consultation including the view presented be disseminated?
- My final question – would you as an officer of WDC or a Councillor of WDC be happy to live next to a PBSA or indeed a HMO? Would you like one with 200 metres of your house?

Len Mackin

