



Policy Briefing: Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill – House of Lords

Introduction – Student Housing Crisis in the UK

Students are some of the most noticeably affected by the current housing crisis, with cities across the UK making headlines this year for failing to meet demand.^{i&vii} First-year students at [UWE Bristol](#), [St. Andrews](#) and [Manchester Metropolitan University](#) were all allocated accommodation in different city than their institution, and students at the University of Manchester were [offered £2500](#) not to take up their rooms. In Glasgow, students were left seeking homelessness support before the university stepped in. We witnessed this ourselves in Nottingham in 2019, with Nottingham Trent University resorting to [housing some first-years in Derby](#).

Student Accommodation Costs

'About 45%ⁱⁱ of student living costs are rent, compared to 23% of the median income for renters in England.ⁱⁱⁱ Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), rents are on average 40% higher than in Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs), with private providers taking up to 74% of the maximum student loan.^{iv} We expect this to continue to get worse, particularly as those maintenance loans are due to increase by only 2.8% for the upcoming academic year, despite inflation.^v

Student Accommodation – Planning

In 2010 the new class of C4 accommodation, specifically for HMOs,^{vi} was introduced to allow planning authorities to make use of Article 4 directions to control HMO numbers. Around 80 councils have since introduced some level of article 4 direction, primarily targeting student areas.^{vii} Coupled with Universities' increased aversion to risk,^{viii} there is an increased reliance on new, private sector PBSAs to keep up with student numbers.^{ix} These developments are often controversial,^x but deserve both proper scrutiny and consideration to ensure that adequate, quality bedspaces are provided for to meet the needs of students.

Partial Solutions

The Greater London Authorities' [London Plan](#) contains policy H15, which encourages more strategic planning for student accommodation, and incentivises developers to ensure a proportion of affordable rooms.

Nottingham City Council, the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University created together a joined-up plan to consider the impacts of having a high-student population. It has been hailed by some as a pioneering sign the city is 'on top of the issue',^{xi} although the [public consultation](#) has only just opened.^{xii}

Relevant sections of the Bill

There are no areas of the Bill which refer specifically to students or student accommodation, however, there are some clauses with some relevance:

Infrastructure Levy (Clause 113 + Schedule 11)

Negotiations over ‘Section 106’ contributions towards local infrastructure and affordable housing are one of the most significant delays to the planning process for PBSA,^{xiii} and the introduction of a flat Infrastructure Levy rate is likely to considerably increase the speed at which many applications are progressed.

Requirement to Assist with Plan Making (Clause 93)

Replacing the requirement for planning authorities to consult with the power to require assistance should provide the opportunity for better data sharing by universities, and therefore achieve a more joined-up local plan. It is important that this power is used, including by local authorities which may not have a university within their boundaries but do have sizable and/or growing student population.

Plan-Led Planning System (Clauses 83, 87 + Schedule 7)

The further prioritisation of local plans likewise increases the importance of making sure areas with a notable local student population factor the needs and impact of that population into their local plan. Although it can be difficult to predict the growth of student numbers years in advance, planning authorities should plan for a diverse mix of quality student accommodation, connected by proximity or good transport links to both their institution and local amenities.

Further Considerations for the Bill

1. Either for specific inclusion in the bill or in the Secretary of State’s further prescriptions, local authorities should be required to include matters relating to students in their local plans where there are notable populations.
2. Consider setting a definition for affordable *student* accommodation as a proportion of the maximum maintenance loan, to allow planning authorities to ensure students on lower incomes are not ‘priced-out’ of education.
3. A new clause could be added, requiring high-student population areas to prepare a Student Living Strategy, and setting a statutory framework including consultation with students themselves and universities.

Current amendments:

As of the third marshalled list (84-III, 28 February) only one amendment (219A in the name of Lord Bradley) specifically relates to students, requiring authorities to have regard for the housing needs of the student population, in conjunction with local universities.

Amendments 207 and 221 have similar intent for older people’s housing needs.

Amendments 241A, 242, 272 & 273 would alter definitions of Affordable Housing.

About us

University of Nottingham Students' Union is the student-led charitable organisation which acts as the representative channel for all students studying at the University of Nottingham. In 2022, together with Nottingham Trent Students' Union, we formed the Nottingham Students' Partnership to increase the voice of students in their local community.

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**Nottingham
Students'
Partnership**

Sources:

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<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/dec/26/uk-student-housing-reaching-crisis-point-as-bad-as-1970s-charity-warns>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.savethestudent.org/money/surveys/student-money-survey-2022-results.html>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/housing-in-england-issues-statistics-and-commentary/>
- ^{iv} <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8721/>
- ^v <https://www.savethestudent.org/news/increase-student-loans-petition.html#what>
- ^{vi} [Town and Country Planning \(Use Classes\) Order 1987, Sch. 1, Pt. C.](#)
- ^{vii} <https://www.nrla.org.uk/resources/licensing-and-local-gov/article-4-toolkit>
- ^{viii} <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2022/11/11/why-there-should-be-no-surprises-about-the-growing-student-housing-shortage/>
- ^{ix} https://www.unipol.org.uk/documents/publications/accommodationcostssurvey_2021.aspx
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