

1632 Students Need Homes – Campaign Against Article 4 Restrictions

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Union notes:

- 1) Norwich City Council is in the process of consulting on options for planning for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Norwich.
- 2) An HMO for the purpose of this consultation is all accommodation shared by 3 or more unrelated individuals who share basic amenities. Even if they have a shared (joint) tenancy they are regarded for planning purposes as having separate households.
- 3) In the ten years between 2001 and 2011 the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in Norwich grew by 53.5% and the percentage of HMO's increased from just over 5% to 7%. In this period the number of student only HMO's doubled from 675 to 1423 and the student market was seen as the key driver in the growth of HMO's in the city.
- 4) Some local authorities, particularly those in areas that have a sizeable student population have introduced planning policies in an attempt to restrict the increase of HMO's, (Canterbury, Bath, Oxford, Nottingham and Leeds); these are considered under an Article 4 Direction
- 5) There are several issues that concern local residents and that have prompted this consultation; waste management, the aesthetic nature of student properties (HMO's), noise and nuisance and parking. These are all issues that the Union does not believe will be effectively dealt with by an additional Article 4 Direction and there are existing ongoing initiatives aimed at tackling all these issues. (See appendix 1 for more detailed information)
- 6) There are 4 options included in the consultation:
 1. A blanket restriction on all HMO's across the city
 2. Introducing a percentage threshold equivalent to 20% - limited Article 4
 3. Introducing a ban of additional HMO's in a specific area
 4. Supporting specific developments and city-wide accreditation

Union believes:

- 1) In the positive benefits students bring to Norwich; economically, socially and culturally. UEA and its student body of 14,500 make a significant contribution to the local economy. Student spending in Norwich contributes to the economy as well as generating countless prospects for volunteering and job opportunities.
- 2) An introduction of Article 4 affects not just students but those who are most vulnerable in society and for whom choice is limited due to their economic circumstances such as young people and migrant workers.

- 3) In light of the Local Housing Allowance particularly regarding under-35s and the shared accommodation rate, Norwich City Council needs to have an adequate supply of shared housing and accommodation to meet expected demand
- 4) Nationally, it has been shown that Article 4 Directions have a considerable effect on the rental prices of shared properties, which have been shown to increase quite dramatically. In this sense, the only party that benefits from Article 4 Directions are landlords with existing HMO's.
- 5) If restrictions are placed on the conversion of homes to HMOs, this will lead to both higher rents in pre-converted student houses and a likelihood of students being pushed out of traditional student areas
- 6) Option 4 of the consultation document to expand the number of purpose built development types to slow the conversion rate of HMO's and the adoption of a citywide accreditation and licensing programme is preferable to all others
- 7) That this is the only option that will increase standards and improve the quality of private accommodation in Norwich for all. This option also results in no current reduction in housing choice for those with fewest housing options and requires no new planning requirements.

Union resolves:

- 1) To mandate the Welfare, Community & Diversity officer to submit a formal response to the consultation supporting option 4.
- 2) To mandate SOC to run a campaign to encourage students to engage with the consultation process in light of the above policy
- 3) To launch a high profile campaign to ensure that an Options 1, 2 and 3 are not enacted by the City Council