

HOLYLAND TRANSITION

A Study examining the effects
of new build purpose built
managed student accommodation
on the Holyland area

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HOLYLAND TRANSITION STUDY AT A GLANCE

BACKGROUND

Along with the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland has seen a boom in the higher education sector in recent decades. Similar to other areas that have experienced an influx of high student numbers, tensions have arisen between permanent residents living in the Holyland and students. A relatively recent change in Belfast has been the development of Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA). Numerous stakeholders are involved in some way in the Holyland, with various policies aimed at tackling the issues involved. The area has, however, lacked an overall regeneration policy, and whilst the Forward South Belfast (FSP) has been tasked with regeneration, this has been hampered in the past by lack of policy.

The Belfast Agenda- Belfast's first community plan which sets out its vision until 2035, provides an opportunity to consider the emerging issues of this unique area and how it can be included as part of the regeneration of the city. The community planning duties as set out in the 2015 Act invites partners to work together to develop, agree and achieve objectives for creating and ensuring inclusive growth and improve wellbeing through the community planning process and the city's community plan. The community planning process aims to put the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the city at the heart of joined up planning between agencies working together to better meet those needs. It is against this backdrop that Forward South Partnership commissioned this study to consider this unique area with its (long-term and new) emerging issues and consider how it can connect it to the outcomes within the Belfast Agenda.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of the new build Purpose Built Student Accommodation might have on the existing student population in the Holyland. The study will investigate opportunities to increase the availability of affordable housing through partnerships with relevant organisations such as housing associations and the NIHE. It will assess the extent to which the area as a whole can be revitalised and encourage a balance of social and residential mix. The study will identify what the key drivers are in regenerating an area subject to demographic changes and the likely effect on HMOs will be of particular significance if demand decreases for these types of properties. It will investigate if there will be an increase in empty properties and if so will this have a negative effect on the area as a whole.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the contributors, funders or publisher.

THE RESEARCH: OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The study has the following objectives and will:

1. Create a foundation to build on in terms of future research into the impact on the city of Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), changing housing trends among students and destudentification of the Holyland.
2. Examine processes of destudentification that are likely to happen given student developments in other parts of the city as understanding of this population restructuring is underdeveloped.
3. Establish a definition of the concept of destudentification encapsulating the complexities and diversities of the processes at work in the local neighbourhood bearing in mind that destudentification is not an inevitable outcome.
4. Explore how studentification and destudentification can unfold in concurrent ways and within and between different parts of the city.
5. Create a foundation for understanding the trends of how and where students choose to live.
6. Increase knowledge on the complex and diverse relationships between geographies of destudentification and studentification and increase our understanding of the processes of urban change in university towns and cities in general.
7. Provide a valuable knowledge base on an area that has not been studied in great detail and develop knowledge not only for our own city but for other cities and towns that may be going through similar processes.
8. Examine how Welfare Reform and reduction in housing benefits will impact on the Holyland.
9. Create a series of recommendations for the local community and its partners to take forward its plans for developing the area, and help counter negative effects of destudentification.

METHODOLOGY

In order to meet these objectives, a number of research strategies were employed. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups took place with the key stakeholders involved in the area. This included residents, landlords, students, University representatives, Student union representatives, key stakeholders in various statutory bodies, PSNI and representatives from the voluntary / community sector, representatives from Higher Education Institutions and managers / owners of

PB(M)SA. We would like to give a special mention to students from the Post Graduate Diploma in Housing at Ulster University who assisted with some of the fieldwork.

Two further surveys were included in the study; a survey of housing associations (to gauge interest in the area), and a large-scale survey of students, assessing their motivations, experiences and intentions. This is the first time such a survey of students in the Holyland has been carried out and resulted in 549 surveys being completed.

Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) & De-studentification

This report set out to look at the possible impact of the new Purpose Built Student Accommodation and the effect this might have on the Holyland area of South Belfast. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects that the new build Purpose Built Student Accommodation might have on the existing student population in the Holyland and explore what would happen to the area with depopulation of students.

Throughout the study there was conflicting evidence on whether or not students will move en masse from the Holyland and into the newer PBSA.

A student survey suggested that a main obstacle was price though comparisons suggest that the differential may be overestimated due to differing conditions with PBSA and private rental such as inclusion of social facilities, inclusion of basic services such as heat and light etc.

Other issues included wanting to live with friends in the Holyland (80% of those interviewed had a family history with the area, i.e. past generations renting in the Holyland). Student feedback also indicated a dislike of formal rules that are associated with PBSA.

A number of studies have been carried out specifically looking at the wider university area which are listed in the introduction. Since the beginning of this study commissioned in 2017, Government measures have been introduced to tackle specific issues such as the rise in HMOs and how these can be restricted as well as ambitious plans for the wider Belfast area through the Belfast Agenda. QUB has invested significant funds into the development of PBMSA, operational from 2018 and which are now fully occupied.

The introduction of PBSAs is relatively new to Belfast where traditionally purpose built housing was in the form of halls of residences located within or close to university campuses. In 2015 Belfast City Council set the pace for new PBSAs. Some have been completed and let, with others in the pipeline. Ulster University has been in the process of moving most of its courses to its new campus at York Street from Jordanstown. With this move a number of PSBAs had been planned near the new campus which was to be completed in 2018. However, the University has now announced that it will not be moving until at 2022 which will certainly have an impact on the occupancy of these new blocks.

The research examined processes that led to studentification and destudentification, terms that have recently emerged in the study of student populations. It noted the rise in students attending universities throughout the UK over the past 20 years and it was noted that many of these students sought out the private rented sector for their accommodation needs. The result has been a higher concentration of students in particular neighbourhoods which has been termed studentification. It has been suggested that this is not a neutral term but it carries a pejorative undertone which relates to the perceived destabilisation and decline of communities where it has taken place. It has been established that studentification involves the replacement of 'settled' resident groups with 'temporary' student groups, and a reconfiguration of local population structures with increases in the production of unrelated living together in shared housing. This of course is very relevant to the Holyland where there is a sizable majority of students with a small minority of established residents. One unique factor in this area, however, is that there is also a considerable population of ethnic minorities particularly the Roma community.

There are benefits to studentification in that it sustains a young and educated population, enhancing overall spending power and boosting the local economy. This in turn sustains a high demand for local commercial services such as cafes and pubs.

On the negative side, however, students are often viewed as problematic, perceived by the local, more established residents as introducing behaviours and issues not normally associated with their areas. Issues such as noise pollution, anti-social behaviour, alcohol intake and unkempt gardens are common complaints. High concentrations of students can also lead to the closure of schools, nurseries and crèches, due to low numbers of pupils as families are replaced by young singles. This can lead to a change in services in the area with the closure of long standing businesses at the expense of a growth in student-oriented retail and leisure provision.

De-studentification is described as a potential 'aftermath' of studentification and is a process that has not gone unnoticed in UK towns and cities with more attention being given to the impacts such population transfer may have. It can lead to population loss, the closure of retail and other services, devalorisation of property prices and abandonment of housing. It is a term synonymous with the proliferation of PBSA built outside of the traditional student areas.

There has been consideration by Holyland residents as to what would happen to the area if there was a major exodus of students. They have expressed a strong desire for this to lead to a more shared community with vibrant families and young children included. They believe there will be a gradual rebalancing of the community due to changes brought about by new PBSA.

The research explored this in detail and noted both from the qualitative and quantitative evidence, that there are mixed opinions on what is likely to happen in the near future. Some respondents were of the opinion that students would remain in the area due to the differences in price and the relative freedom they have in the Holyland area. However, respondents such as Estate managers and Landlords clearly have a vested interest in expressing this belief.

In the survey of students, the main findings suggested that students were happy to remain in the private rented accommodation rather than move to PSBAs citing similar reasons.

PBSA is a new concept to Belfast so the Study has not had time to consider its effects to date. Ulster University has had major delays in the development of their Belfast campus and associated student housing, so the Study does not have a full picture yet and may not have for some time.

The case for transition

However, it is clear that there will be a process of transition and change whether or not students leave the Holyland in large numbers now or in the future. All government policy, Belfast Agenda and the T:BUC policy point to the need for balanced and sustainable neighbourhoods.

The change process could include greater interaction between students and traditional residents and a joined up policy that challenges antisocial behaviour. The Study established that a more balanced neighbourhood could be created through encouraging families and/or professionals back into the area. Housing Associations are keen to get more involved and are actively looking for sites to rent to professionals. Some have already moved into the area and they do not have to house people from the waiting lists depending on which vehicle they use to purchase dwellings.

There is an established need for housing in the surrounding areas particularly for single people. Waiting lists for social housing confirm this. Given the perception that the area is largely nationalist it would seem to be a sensible proposition to introduce a T:BUC Shared Housing scheme to the area. Furthermore, many respondents favoured the area being designated as a shared neighbourhood area. The NIHE could be a main driver for change through its community cohesion unit which aims to create safer and cohesive neighbourhoods whilst facilitating and encouraging mixed housing where it is practicable, desirable and safe. This could support and enhance the housing opportunity for the very diverse demographic population in this area.

CONCLUSION

The research has highlighted a fragmented approach to the area with no one organisation being able to take responsibility due to a lack of resources and investment. Whilst FSP as a strategic and connecting organisation for the community and voluntary groups in South Belfast, has been working with PACT and other local groups to improve the image of the area and protect the rights of the residents, this has been sporadic due to lack of funding. Many of the response by the statutory agencies are reactive to problems rather than preventive.

Throughout the research it was acknowledged that there is a lack of intelligence in the area of who actually lives there, the conditions of the properties, household types, the concentrations of HMOs, overcrowding etc. There is a lack of enforcement and an unwillingness to take responsibility. This will need to change and a coordinated approach is required if the area is to become attractive to live in with a more balanced tenure mix. Only two notices have been served since April 2015 regarding overcrowding in Central Ward.

Key Findings

- There are approximately 7,000 bedspaces in PB(M)SA in Belfast.
- Little evidence was found to support the view that there will be large scale movement of students out of the Holyland to the new PBSA. Students' preference for the Holyland related to cheaper cost of accommodation and also the ability to live with their friends.
- Tensions between permanent residents and students exist, focusing around issues such as noise, anti-social behaviour, external upkeep of student properties, rubbish and parking.
- Residents are of the view that agencies, and the Universities in particular, have "abdicated their responsibilities" in relation to the issues in the Holyland.
- Landlords believe it is a student precinct / village, which should be run by a management board.
- The area contains a broader diversity of residents than students and permanent residents. There is a relatively large ethnic minority population, including a large group of members of the Roma community.
- Residents would like the area designated as a T:BUC (Together Building a United Community) area, regeneration area or shared neighbourhood.

- There are several positive examples of resident and student interaction, including Wildflower Alley, The Spring Gathering Festival, the Horsey Hill pop-up village green, and environmental projects and neighbourhood clean-up activities.
- There are many different organisations / representative groups involved in the Holyland: HEI's, statutory agencies, resident groups, private landlords, representatives from the voluntary / community sector, PSNI, Student Union representatives, etc. However, many respondents felt that there was a lack of a strategic responsibility / plan / direction for the area – with no overall “shared vision” for the area.
- The Holyland Strategic Study 2012 had an objective to rebalance the pattern of tenure. However, it is felt that whilst HMOs were restricted there was no serious effort to reduce the number in order to achieve the 30% threshold nor was there any serious effort to reintroduce affordable single household accommodation. Some statutory representatives believe that the key issue is the intensification of housing in the area resulting from the subdivision of larger properties into flats, hence making the area one of the most densely populated in Northern Ireland.
- Different areas of the UK and Ireland, which contained a large student population, were examined to identify any examples of good practice in dealing with a student population. Some good examples included:
 - Brighton's emphasis on multi-agency working and a Student Housing Strategy. More recently Brighton introduced a Reserved Rooms Scheme. These properties are privately owned which the university leases from a local estate agent and sublets to students. The University manages the properties on behalf of the private owners and is, in effect, the landlord, therefore any issues around ASB are directed to the university.
 - In Leeds, a variety of initiatives were introduced, including accreditation of student housing (operated by Unipol). A Neighbourhood Helpline was also introduced, which recorded a fall in the number of complaints.
 - Halls 2 homes, an initiative created by Manchester University promotes best practice in student areas. They work to educate students on their responsibilities living in communities, and implement activities to encourage student engagement with local residents.
- Some housing associations have expressed an interest in getting more involved in the Holyland area and indeed this has already begun. This is not necessarily through the provision of more social housing, but may be through assisting landlords with the management of their properties, or providing properties in the private rented sector themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Multi agency Working

Many respondents highlighted the fact that whilst agencies have been working together in the past no one seems to be driving this. Taking a multi-agency approach is about agencies working together to better understand the needs of, and achieve the best possible outcomes for, families and individuals living in the area. There needs to be improved ways of sharing and making better use of information, expertise and resources to provide seamless, holistic services for the area. Agencies working together should regularly meet in the area with local representatives with actions agreed at each meeting. Housing associations have indicated that they would like to be involved. Within this multi-agency approach, the inclusion of a centralised database for complaints, with all the partners collectively taking on responsibility is required.

Shared Vision

The interviews highlighted the fact that the Holyland cuts across so many agencies yet there hasn't been a shared vision of what it will look like in the future. Landlords have a vision, so do residents, so does QUB and others. These need to be brought together to establish an agreed shared vision.

Develop a partnership vehicle

Consideration could be given to how a partnership vehicle might be developed. Such a vehicle could, in theory, enable effective coordination of actions and finance to recycle empty properties; funding of property and environmental improvements; consideration of the feasibility of converting large empty terraced housing to flats for starter households; and the provision of assistance to first-time buyers. It could work with organisations such as Co-ownership housing association to encourage the purchase of properties in the area by first time buyers. It could also work at leveraging in private finance from housing associations and private investors.

Building and Supporting Community Capacity

Successful regeneration to date has been driven by grassroots community development (Wildflower Alley, street improvements and Residents Parking Scheme). Forward South Partnership and other relevant agencies should continue to support and develop this bottom up regeneration throughout the wider Holyland area. This will require a dedicated and comprehensive funding package with a full time staff complement housed within the Holyland.

Governance and enforcement.

The research has highlighted that there is no established governance nor oversight of the area, and enforcement needs to become more effective. There needs to be a proactive approach to enforcement by the relevant authorities even for small things such as litter. It is broadly felt that very little enforcement happens in the area. There is no point in putting in new laws until the current ones are enforced and used effectively. There was a sense that no one was taking control of the area.

Early Intervention

There is a need for early intervention with prevention in mind rather than reaction. Intervening early can reduce the costs.

Preventative measures could include:

- the extensive reintroduction of CCTV in the area. This should help to diminish occurrences of anti social behaviour by monitoring large groups of students or capturing those responsible for ASB.
- Extra security presence through the reintroduction of wardens.
- Re-imaging the area as a positive area to live. The area gets negative press particularly during events such as St Patrick's Day. A proper communications strategy should be put in place to turn around the image to a positive one.
- Discourage the wearing of sectarian symbols in the area such as football shirts. Whilst this would be difficult to enforce it could be encouraged through a process of educating those signing tenancies in the area.

Good Neighbour Agreements

These are encouraged in shared housing schemes that have been introduced across NI under T:BUC and should be enshrined into all tenancy agreements by landlords. It would have to be strictly enforced with immediate eviction for any breach.

Encourage Housing Associations

Two of the larger housing associations are already in the area and are seeking more properties. Many associations have now special vehicles that don't confine them to draw from the housing waiting list, although they still can through their core business. As they develop their activities in buying houses for sale and for rent they could bring much needed investment into the area by bringing properties up to standard. They also have a track record of good housing management and dealing with anti social behaviour. Housing associations could provide accommodation for young starter households, young workers looking for shared housing, migrant families seeking decent and affordable housing, homeless households or other households on the waiting list in housing need and households on the waiting list with a general housing need only. If students do move out in the next few years as PSBAs become more established then housing associations would have a major role to play in the transformation of the area.

Encourage Community Engagement for Students

Students could be encouraged to interact with the residents in the area through volunteering schemes and joint events. Students unions could encourage more awareness of what students can do in the area. In the literature review it was highlighted that the "social and cultural well-being" of all the people living in student areas is enhanced through the "effective dissemination" of good practices. These can be through "student-led" initiatives such as "conferences and seminars", and campaigns initiated by students around noise, litter, and car-parking which have been effective in "fostering a context of mutual trust, transparency and joined-up communication" between cities, students and permanent populations. It should be noted that there are currently full time Student Volunteer staff at QUB who have made a start to assisting with local voluntary initiatives, such as creating a group of student volunteers who support local projects, called Handy Helpers. They hope to further develop long term initiatives involving Holyland students with Holyland residents.

Halls 2 Homes, an initiative created by Manchester University, works closely with Manchester City Council to promote Best Practice in student-heavy areas. The intention is to educate students on their responsibilities whilst living beside local communities, and teach them how to be good neighbours. It also encourages and implements student involvement in community activities, implements activities which ensure student engagement with local residents and supports students who are moving from on-campus accommodation to off-campus. Successful events and fun days have been organised by this initiative which has promoted community cohesion and improved relations between the student and non-student residents such as a Fun Fest.

University Grants for Community Projects

In Leeds the university set up its own grant that awards monies to students to develop and implement their own community projects, further involving students in the community and encouraging their creativity and altruism. The grants have funded a range of impactful community projects, many of which have dealt with vulnerable populations, such as young people in areas of high deprivation and victims of race hate crime. It is recommended that all Universities here follow a similar approach. QUB currently has a limited sum of funding which they have contributed towards projects such as Wildflower Alley (compost, gardening expertise, pop-up tree nursery and 'Hello Neighbour' events). This could be further developed .

Reserved Room Scheme

Brighton Council introduced a new social lettings scheme for students called "Reserved Room Scheme" (RRS). RRS properties are privately owned which the university leases from a local estate agent and sublets to students. The University manages the properties on behalf of the private owners and is, in effect, the landlord so any issues around ASB are directed to the university. The benefit of the scheme is that tenants have more stringent tenancy conditions which aim to reduce antisocial behaviour and encourage better integration between students and local residents.

It also gives the University more control over where students are housed. For landlords who sign up to the scheme they will get long-term contracts, guaranteed rent and full lettings management. Housing Associations could also get involved in this as they have a good track record of managing anti-social behaviour.

Tenancy Registration Scheme

Introduce a tenancy registration scheme for the area which would provide up to date information on who is living there at any one time and the number of students and non-students. Respondents called for a census in the area to establish who is actually living there and the breakdown between students and non-students. A tenancy registration scheme would provide this information at any given time.

Better management of the amount of HMOs

Currently Belfast City Council has set a limit of 30% HMOs but this is for the wider area of Holyland, Rugby Road and Botanic. Although the proportion is much higher at 64% it refused any new HMOs expecting the area to eventually return to 30%. This clearly has not happened and many respondents were of the opinion that there were far too many. The council should explore methods to reduce the numbers of HMOs particularly in those streets where the proportion is very high. In Brighton for example planning permission is refused if 10% of homes within a 50 metre radius are already HMOs.

Create Incentives for Landlords who want to move out of the area

During the interviews it was mentioned that some landlords in the area may want to move out but are trapped. Housing Associations should be encouraged to actively seek out this group with a view to purchasing their properties and bring them up to standard for families or young professionals.

Increased Resources provided by BCC to the area.

Many respondents criticised the resources that Belfast City Council puts into the area. There was also criticism that there is a lack of political will to do anything in the area given that the majority of residents are students who are registered to vote in their home towns.

In 2016 Leeds City Council targeted more resources in Hyde Park than any other part of the city. This was in response to the 'impassioned plea' from permanent residents in the area to not ignore the hidden deprivation of Hyde Park. By positioning more resources in the area, a new Neighbourhood Board was formed which consisted of local councillors, permanent residents, students, and managers from across the council and other public services. Short term solutions to ongoing problems in Hyde Park included improving security awareness, out of hours dog warden patrols and carrying out annual deep cleans to bin yards, back alleys, removing graffiti, spraying weeds and maintaining green spaces.

In both Headingley and Hyde Park, and other surrounding student areas, there have been out of hours patrols by foot and by van to deal with noise and nuisance complaints known as the Leeds Antisocial Behaviour Team (LASBT). Patrols took place close to the start of term on dates from 15th September 2016 – 23rd September 2016. These patrols officers are in the area and can deal with complaints, break up parties and help members of the community. The officers also attend home visits to issue warning letters and in two particular cases, confiscated noise equipment in the first term of 2016 and issued 90 noise abatement notices to student properties.

Increase awareness of accommodation available

The student surveys highlighted the number of students who intended to go to the private rented sector either after leaving Halls or leaving home. The lack of awareness of PBSA is an issue and more information could be channelled to school leavers and those in first year in Halls of Residence as to what options are open to them. If more students are encouraged to go to the PBSAs then this might reduce overcrowding in the Holyland and change the profile of those residing there. Housing Rights, the NIHE and Housing associations could increase awareness at Schools as well as the Universities as both visit schools on a regular basis.

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Introduce a New Build Shared Housing Scheme

The NIHE should work with housing associations to actively seek a site in the area to facilitate the building of a shared housing scheme under T:BUC. It has indicated a willingness to do this if a site can be identified. It may mean demolishing some very poor housing and replacing this with a new scheme.

Shared Neighbourhood Programme

The NIHE should include the area onto its Shared Neighbourhood programme which has to be community-led. The NIHE could drive this by engaging with communities both within the Holyland and in the surrounding communities to create community cohesion.

Students Unions promoting the “rate your landlord” website.

This would rank the landlords / accommodation services and provide feedback for students when they are choosing where to live.

Education Campaigns: Silent Students Happy Homes

This would involve regular community awareness campaigns all aimed at teaching the students their responsibilities for being part of the community. Loughborough University implemented a strategy to try and strategically manage neighbour relations and this led to the formation of the Loughborough Campus and Community Liaison Group. It also situated wardens in areas of high student population to address issues of anti-social activity. One example of an educational campaign included SSHH! (Silent Students Happy Homes). Both universities have demonstrated that they regularly run campaigns but a more consolidated and strategic approach should be encouraged.

Compulsory module at Universities

Introduce a module at universities and colleges on studentification similar to the one introduced in Manchester.

NIHE schools awareness campaign

The NIHE should expand their programme of going out to schools to raise awareness about housing issues for students. Over the last couple of years 4 schools have been visited (based on a specific request from them).

The following issues are covered:

- how to obtain suitable accommodation
- tenancy/letting agreement
- issues to be considered before accepting a property – condition of the property/conditions within the agreement/checking inventory etc.
- Houses in Multiple occupation – Registration and standards eg fire safety.
- Safety – personal safety when looking at properties/Fire alarm systems and equipment/ carbon monoxide alarms/smoke detectors.
- Tenants responsibility – care of the property/disposal of refuse and litter/securing the property due to risk of burglary etc.
- Be a good neighbour – anti social behaviour and the possible consequences.

This should be rolled out, and be aimed at 6th year pupils in schools, with the objective of promoting an understanding of what is required by new tenants amongst the pupils before they move to Belfast. In the past the NIHE wrote out to schools offering them a visit – this should recommence. QUB also visit school leavers but has limited resources for this. An educational tool kit and more resources should be introduced to create an effective preventive method. Visits could be expanded to include housing associations and organisations such as Supporting Communities.

House Condition Survey

A comprehensive house condition survey should be carried out by the NIHE to establish which properties are fit and those that are not. This was mentioned by a number of respondents. This might also collect demographic and socio-economic information on those living in the area.

Refurbishment of terraced housing:

In order to make small terraced housing more attractive to potential purchasers consideration of needs should be given to the refurbishment, and how to improve the street environment. This may need to be done through a partnership vehicle. Purchase and refurbishment by housing associations could be encouraged. Indeed, the heritage value of red brick terraces and sources of investment in this could be explored.

Inspections of Non HMOs

A regular inspection of non-HMOs to establish the levels of overcrowding that exists using criteria that is set out in the way the NIHE assesses housing need. Overcrowding was cited throughout the research.

Assess levels of poverty in the area

With a transient community with many newcomer families, which seems to be continuing to grow, the levels of poverty may have increased and this might provide the basis for applications for funding to improve the area, and access to services.

A Wider Plan for newcomer and BME communities

As this community increases so does the level of children living in the area, currently estimated at around 600. There are no facilities nor road crossings available. A much wider plan to include children is required as this community grows. The lack of adequate school provision was also mentioned within the research. The children are now getting older and have become a sizable proportion of those living in the area. Their needs will change and this has to be recognised and forward planning put in place.

Accreditation Schemes

Landlords and PBSA developers and managers should be encouraged to join accreditation schemes. Student Unions should continue to support students to know their rights and promote living in accommodation provided by an accredited landlord.

The removal of lettings boards with strict compliance

Letting signs are present for considerable periods of time after properties have been let, and act as de facto advertisements for landlords / letting agencies. These are unsightly and work against improving the area.

Marketing and publicity

Action is needed to counteract any negative image of the area. It should be actively promoted as a good place to live. In particular the area and living options within it should be promoted to young couples/ families and young professionals.

INTRODUCTION

This section will set the context for the study. It will explore some of the current issues around the Holyland area of Belfast and will then examine the policy context within which the area is placed. The focus of the study will be outlined with the list of objectives.

Louise Brown Associates (2012), in: Belfast: Learning City, Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Area Study outlines the geographic area of the Holyland and the wider University Area (Figure 1). It should be noted that the name is not an official one, but a folk name developed because of the street names of Jerusalem, Palestine, etc. The name once referred only to these streets but now Holyland is generally considered to be the area bounded by:

- University Street
- Ormeau Road
- River Lagan
- Botanic Gardens
- Queen's University Belfast

The smaller original streets are occupied mainly by students and the bulk of the long term residential population is contained within College Park Avenue, Rugby Road environs (referred to in previous reports as the residential core area.)

Wider University Area (WUA)

The Wider University area is bounded by:

- River Lagan at the Ormeau Embankment
- Holyland down to University Street (South Side)
- Ormeau Road
- Botanic Avenue up to McClure Street (excluding Powerscourt Place and Essex Street and including Cameron Street, Cromwell Road and Westminster Street)
- The Stranmillis area is also included from Stranmillis Cemetery to Ridgeway Street, on both sides of the Stranmillis Road.
- And likewise included is the lower Malone Road area of Lennoxvale, Chlorine Gardens and University Road area (between Botanic Gardens and Lisburn Rd)

Figure 1: Map of the Holyland and Wider University Area



Figure 2: Map of the character are



8.1.Census Analysis

This section provides an analysis of Census data, focusing on the South Belfast area. The most recent census was carried out in 2011. Since 2011 Belfast has experienced a significant increase in its student population, and caution should be applied in the interpretation of such data.

The Holyland area falls within the Central Electoral Ward, which is part of Botanic District Electoral Area (DEA). Table 1 below shows that the population in Botanic DEA increased by 63% between 1991 and 2011, and Table 2 also reflects the increase in population in the area, showing an 20% increase in the number of households in Botanic DEA over the same time period.

Table 1: South Belfast Wards Population Changes 1991-2011

Ward	1991	2001	2011	20 Year Variation %
Ballynafeigh	4925	5223	5928	+ 20.36%
Blackstaff	5005	3943	3998	- 20.11%
Botanic	5496	9736	8945	+ 62.75%
Finaghy	6715	4983	4555	- 32.16%
Malone	7466	5716	5555	- 25.59%
Musgrave*	n/a	5251	4927	- 6.1%
Rosetta	5222	5086	6564	+ 25.69%
Shaftesbury	5357	5745	7214	+ 34.66%
Stranmillis	6742	7616	8139	+ 20.72%
Upper Malone	6362	4898	4841	- 23.90%
Windsor	5110	7133	8141	+ 59.31%
Total	58402	65330	68807	+ 17.81%

Sources: 1991, 2001 and 2011 Census

*Musgrave was a new ward created in 1994 from parts of Malone, Upper Malone and Finaghy.

Table 2: South Belfast Wards Household Numbers Changes 1991-2011

Ward	1991	2001	2011	20 Year Variation %
Ballynafeigh	2239	2527	2800	+ 25%
Blackstaff	2240	2025	2017	- 9.9%
Botanic	2876	3708	3429	+19.2%
Finaghy	2213	1849	1821	- 17.7%
Malone	2780	2139	2195	- 21%
Musgrave*		1990	1999	NO CHANGE
Rosetta	2044	2210	2915	+ 42.6%
Shaftesbury	2490	2940	3616	+ 45.2%
Stranmillis	2800	2400	2606	- 6.9%
Upper Malone	2328	2134	2129	- 8.5%
Windsor	2806	3162	3351	+ 19.4%
Total	24816	27084	28878	+ 16.3%

Sources: 1991, 2001 and 2011 Census

*Musgrave was a new ward created in 1994 from parts of Malone, Upper Malone and Finaghy

Table 3 outlines the changes in tenure structure within the overall South Belfast housing market between 1991 and 2011. Whilst the owner occupied sector has remained the largest tenure, it has decreased from 57% in 1991 to 48% in 2011. The social sector has also declined, whilst the private rented sector has increased from 17% of the total stock in 1991 to 33% in 2011.

Table 3: South Belfast Household Tenure Analysis 1991-2011

Census Year		Owner Occupation	Social Rented	Private Rented
1991	All Belfast	53%	38%	8%
	South Belfast	57%	25%	17%
2001	All Belfast	57%	32%	11%
	South Belfast	56%	21%	23%
2011	All Belfast	52%	25.5%	19.5%
	South Belfast	48%	17.5%	32.5%

Table 4 illustrates the changing age profile in South Belfast between 2001 and 2011. In this 10 year period, the proportion of households aged between 18-44 increased from 31,326 to 36,138. Conversely, the proportion of children (aged 0-17) and the proportion of older people (aged 60+) remained largely the same with a small increase.

Table 4: South Belfast Population Age Structure 2001-2011 Census

Census Year	Age	0 - 17	18 - 44	45- 59	60+	TOTAL
2001	All Belfast	68563	111269	43041	54518	277391
		25%	40%	16%	20%	
	South Belfast	10388	31326	8072	10293	60079
		17.5%	52%	13.5%	17%	
2011	All Belfast	59602	117404	50506	53450	280962
		21%	42%	18%	19%	
	South Belfast	11088	36138	10627	10954	68807
		16%	52.5%	15.5%	16%	

Table 5 demonstrates that in 2011, a higher proportion of those living in Botanic DEA were born outside of N. Ireland, 25% compared with the overall figure of 11%. For those born outside of N. Ireland, their country of birth was recorded as: Other Country – 9%, Rest of the UK – 6%, Republic of Ireland – 4%, EU Post 2004 – 4% and EU Pre 2004 – 2%.

The Holyland is unique in terms of its demographic and its level of challenges. It has become increasingly fragmented with high levels of crime. Fear and lack of cohesion among the groups of residents and stakeholders coupled with low capacity and absence of a joint direction in terms of future developments is causing friction.

The area has traditionally housed the majority of students living in Belfast and has a disproportionately high concentration of HMOs. It is widely accepted that the majority of tenants are students, not only Queen’s University students, but also students attending Ulster University, Stranmillis College, St Mary’s College and Belfast Metropolitan College.

WARD	TOTAL POP	Born N.I.	Rest U.K.	Rep of Ireland	E.U. pre 2004	E.U. post 2004	Other Countries
ALL N. IRELAND	1810863	1608853 88.84%	82724 4.56%	37833 2.09%	9703 0.54%	35704 1.97%	36046 1.98%
ALL BELFAST	282962	245839 87.5%	11267 3.9%	5422 1.93%	2001 0.71%	6014 2.14%	10419 3.71%
Ballynafeigh	5928	4388 74.02%	346 5.83%	258 4.35%	87 1.47%	329 5.5%	520 8.71%
Blackstaff	3998	3234 80.89%	225 5.62%	26 0.65%	48 1.2%	291 7.28%	174 4.35%
Botanic	8945	6722 75.15%	568 6.34%	382 4.27%	174 1.95%	318 3.56%	781 8.73%
Finaghy	4555	4037 88.63%	154 3.38%	100 2.2%	25 0.55%	21 0.46%	218 4.79%
Malone	5555	4668 84.03%	325 5.85%	230 4.14%	42 0.76%	41 0.74%	249 4.48%
Musgrave	4927	4344 88.17%	156 3.16%	122 2.48%	34 0.69%	36 0.73%	235 4.48%
Rosetta	6564	5467 83.29%	360 5.48%	298 4.54%	61 0.93%	105 1.6%	273 4.16%
Shaftesbury	7214	5572 77.24%	309 4.28%	164 2.27%	115 1.59%	199 2.76%	855 11.85%
Stranmillis	8139	6330 77.77%	691 8.48%	379 4.66%	98 1.20%	86 1.06%	555 6.82%
Upper Malone	4841	4203 86.25%	250 5.16%	96 1.98%	37 0.76%	46 0.95%	209 4.32%
Windsor	8141	5858 71.96%	543 6.66%	313 3.84%	147 1.81%	349 4.29%	931 11.44%
ALL SOUTH BELFAST	68807	54823 79.67%	3927 5.7%	2368 3.44%	868 1.26%	1821 2.65%	5000 7.26%

8.2. Current Issues in the Holyland

Similar to the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland has seen a boom in the higher education sector in recent decades. Student housing did not develop apace in Belfast until the end of what is commonly referred to as ‘the Troubles’ in the mid 1990s, after which landlords began to purchase properties, not just in the Holyland area close to Queen’s University, but also in the wider university area, to let out as HMOs to students, who now felt safe enough to rent rather than commute, and whose population was swelling even further due to the Labour government’s higher education policies (Rugg, et al. 2000; BCC, 2012). This led to an increase in students living in the Holyland and Wider University Area.

The Holyland area is popular with landlords, and it is viewed as a lucrative investment opportunity. There is a tendency to maximise investment by inviting multiple residents to live together in one property otherwise known as Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) – see below for a discussion on HMO’s. The result is that a large number of students have been compacted into a relatively small area, and friction between students and local established residents is common.

The Holyland is similar to other areas that have experienced an influx of high student numbers, and tensions have arisen between permanent residents remaining in the Holyland and students around issues such as rubbish accumulation, difficulties with parking, and the external upkeep of student properties (Rugg, et al. 2000). However, primary among these tensions are issues of student lifestyle or, depending on one’s perspective, student anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Although there is no one definition for ASB, it is generally considered to refer to relatively minor criminal activity and ‘nuisance’ behaviour that affects the environment both physically and/or socially (PSNI, 2017). Although PSNI data indicates that ASB incidents recorded for the Belfast City area have decreased (PSNI, 2017), research suggests that ASB within student areas of Belfast is a continuing cause for concern, especially around the beginning of the new academic year and many cases go unreported.

According to South Belfast MLA Clare Bailey:

“these are not new problems and there is an annual spike in reports of anti-social behaviour during Fresher’s Week” (Green Party, 2017).

The Holyland and Wider University Area, with its high concentration of students, has an historic reputation for ASB, which is a key concern for stakeholders, including some students (Belfast City Council, 2012). According to Singleton it is reasonable to anticipate behavioural changes in students when they leave home, for example, “with respect to the propensity to purchase beer” (Singleton, 2010). In fact, it is thought that alcohol has a significant influence on ASB (Belfast City Council, 2012; CJINI, 2017).

The Holyland area has had more than “30,000 alcohol units confiscated by Council staff in the last three years. Moreover, the recorded complaints of ASB in the Holyland area “topped 1,800 over the past three years” including drunken behaviour, partying, graffiti and group loitering” (Irish News, 2017). Consequently, local residents have called for greater penalties, and some local businesses under agreement with the PSNI, now close for several hours over St Patrick’s Day in an effort to help tackle ASB (Irish News, 2017). Additional measures have also been implemented by local authorities such as surveillance cameras on Rugby Road, Belfast and ‘Alcohol Free Areas’. However, the effectiveness of these measures is questionable given the continuation of ASB and reported incidents of retaliation against neighbour complaints (Irish News 2017). The CCTV in the Holyland has since been decommissioned. The following reasons were given:

- None of the funders or partners of the original scheme currently have any financial resource to contribute towards the urgent upgrade needed to ensure the Holyland CCTV system operates at an acceptable level.
- PSNI who had taken responsibility for the recording and monitoring of cameras are no longer able to do so at the original level and are only prepared to commit to recording capacity for five strategically placed cameras. Live monitoring of these cameras would only take place over key dates throughout the year e.g. St. Patrick’s Day, Fresher’s and Halloween.

Source: Belfast City Council People and Communities Committee, 16th January, 2016.

Whilst some residents may have concerns about the Holyland student population, it appears that students have also helped create positive changes. For example, in 2015, in attempts to regenerate the area, it was reported that local residents and students collectively created ‘Wildflower Alley’ (Irish Times, 2015) which was shortlisted for a UK wide competition and has been acclaimed by both local authorities and political representatives. However, this was a one-off initiative and, like so many student volunteering schemes in the area, it did not involve local students resident in the Holyland.

But perhaps unique to the Belfast student housing context, the Holyland has developed in such a way as to reflect residential segregation in the rest of Northern Ireland, as it is generally perceived to be Catholic/Nationalist student residences (BCC, 2008).

Research carried out by Belfast City Council (2008) indicates that established residents, including young people, in nearby Protestant / Unionist areas such as Donegall Pass feel uncomfortable entering student streets to avail of the businesses, services and facilities that student demand has brought to the area, due to presence of GAA shirts, Celtic Regalia and flags. This also blocks access to supposed shared spaces such as Botanic Gardens (BCC, 2008). Without a proper census of the area, however, it is not possible to make assertions as to the religious breakdown other than anecdotal evidence. Events such as St Patrick’s day, which attracts extensive media coverage show Irish tricolours being displayed which gives off a perception that the area is dominated by nationalists.

8.3. Policy Context

In the Belfast: The Masterplan, 2004 (often referred to as the Buchanan report), the city is referred to as a Learning City in one of its key themes. The plan proposed a framework for the revival of Belfast in the period to 2020. The intention was to use its education assets for the benefit of the city and the economy. It referred to Belfast's higher education institutions as being 'recognised as important city assets which have a considerable impact upon the city and regional economy'.

Since the publication of the Buchanan report, Belfast City itself has been undergoing an extensive period of change with the implementation of Review of Public Administration and the Local Government Review. In addition the NI Assembly was reinstated in 2007 with a new Minister for Social Development responsible for housing. There is now a new council, additional geographical areas, new powers for planning and regeneration and new responsibilities around economic development.

The issues surrounding the Holyland area have been well documented, and the Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study (2012) aimed to identify long term solutions to the issues facing the Holyland and Wider University Area, within a city-wide context. Two parallel strategies had been recommended:

1. To make Belfast a Learning City and destination of choice for students requires a city-wide strategy for student housing that will promote choice and fit-for-purpose accommodation.
2. To restore the Holyland by gradually reintroducing affordable, single household accommodation and improving the quality of the environment whilst working towards developing a new approach to managing the area.

The 2012 Holyland Strategic study stated that there was agreement that the root cause of the difficulties is the high concentration of HMOs in the area. Part of the solution must be to reduce the extent of their impact. This will only work, however, if it is part of a wider strategy and action plan that is concerned to;

- Rebalance the pattern of tenure in the area relative to owner occupation, private rented and social rented and encourage types of development that contribute to this
- Manage and reduce any impacts of those HMOs that will continue to be a feature of the area
- Respond to potential displacement effects by meeting the housing needs of students in fit-for-purpose accommodation elsewhere in the city.

The Holyland Strategic study highlights that the challenge is to bring about changes in a way that;

- Doesn't compromise the choice of accommodation available to those who wish to reside in the area whether on a temporary or a more permanent basis
- Provides opportunities for the gradual re-introduction of affordable single household accommodation for purchase, renting or co-ownership through the re-conversion of suitable stock in appropriate locations.

The report recommended;

- Introducing a new management initiative in the Holyland to collaboratively engage with key stakeholders and clarify roles and responsibilities to collectively restore the area;
- Supporting an accreditation scheme and establish a code of standards for student housing to improve the quality of housing in the private rented sector;
- Supporting landlords to adopt a proactive approach to improving housing and responsibility for managing tenant behaviour, including encouraging landlords in exerting peer pressure on fellow landlords to take this approach;
- Collectively targeting the Holyland for proactive enforcement to increase awareness of landlord responsibilities. This could be extended to other areas where there are high concentrations of HMOs.

(Louise Brown Associates 2012)

8.4.Key Stakeholders

Forward South Partnership in its recent Wider University Area Scoping Study (2016) identified the key stakeholders in the area as follows:

Northern Ireland Council for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS):

NICRAS is a refugee community organisation based in University Street and seeks to support the integration process of refugees and asylum seekers into local communities throughout N. Ireland. It offers advice and consultation services, coordinates and organises events and is the drop in centre for those seeking support and guidance. It does not cover a geographical area as such but is a drop-in facility working in partnership with other organisations to deliver their aims. NICRAS has strong links with the Migrants Forum and the developing City of Sanctuary model. NICRAS estimate that 47 refugees and asylum seekers live in the WUA. Romanian Roma Community Association of Northern Ireland (RRCANI):

RRCANI is a community based organisation in University Street which provides a space to develop programmes, build capacity and share and celebrate cultural activities. They work in partnership with a range of agencies. RRCANI's workers are managed by LORAG and a number of their youth and spiritual activities are based in Shaftesbury Recreation Centre. It is estimated that over 50% of the Romanian Roma community in Northern Ireland live in the Wider University Area.

South Belfast Roundtable (SBR) & Friendship Club:

South Belfast Roundtable is based in University Street and represents a partnership of 85 groups who seek to break down barriers, tackle racism and promote diversity. Their work falls predominantly into 3 main areas: Good Relations, Education & Learning and Sustainability. More recently South Belfast Roundtable's expertise is being used on a regional basis. This has an impact on the organization, causing stress on the capacity to deliver locally. The Friendship Club was set up by South Belfast Roundtable on Racism to give people from Belfast and beyond a chance to come together in a neutral setting. It provides a safe space for people from all over the world and for Belfast's long-term residents to meet in a diverse, relaxed atmosphere, get information and make friends and help each other. They meet in Common Grounds Café, University Avenue and receive firm support from the Executive Office and charitable donations.

Partners and Communities Together (PACT):

Wider University Area PACT, represents a number of stakeholders, including:

- Stranmillis Residents' Association (SRA) based in St Ives Gardens and Sandymount St. It has been running for 26 years and been involved in community/grassroots activities to improve the local environment and community relations.
Belfast Holyland Regeneration Association (BHRA) a lobbying group working on behalf of local residents.
- Landlords Association (LA), local representatives, a lobbying and support group for landlords.
PACT is a strategic interagency group dedicated to tackling antisocial behaviour, noise, on street drinking and general nuisance in the area over high risk periods (i.e. Freshers, St. Patrick's Day and Halloween).

College Park Avenue Residents Association (CPARA)

This includes College Park Avenue and University Avenue. Their aim is to protect the residential core. Key projects: Wildflower Alley, SUDS, Spring Gathering, environmental improvements such as street trees and hanging baskets, and the Residents Parking Scheme.

Rugby Residents Association (RRA)

This group campaigns for retention of local historical features and environmental improvements. Together with CPARA they were involved in a long and successful campaign to develop a residents parking scheme which was implemented April 2018.

Botanic Holyland Regeneration Association (BHRA)

A group of residents and stakeholders concerned with physical regeneration and environmental improvements of the area.

Sans Souci and Lennoxvale Residents Association

Residents Association focussing on heritage, conservation and environmental improvements.

Stranmillis Residents Association

A group of residents and stakeholders concerned with physical regeneration and environmental improvements of the area.

Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group (LORAG)

This is a 'needs led', community development organisation, founded in 1987 to support the residents and community of the Lower Ormeau area of South Belfast.

LORAG is committed to supporting and assisting the diverse community from 'the cradle to the grave' in a multitude of areas from personal development, family support, employment and training support, community cohesion and innovative health initiatives. LORAG also runs the Shaftesbury Community Recreation Centre.

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Queen's University Belfast Students Union (Queen's SU):

Queen's SU represents the students at Queen's, lobbying on their behalf. It is run by and for students and comprises an advice centre, music venues and bars, enterprise centre and shops. It also runs over 190 clubs and societies for students.

Ulster University Students Union (UUSU)

Ulster University (UU) is a multi-campus public university with its largest campus in Belfast. It is the largest university in Northern Ireland and the second-largest university on the island of Ireland.

Queen's University Belfast

Queen's University Belfast (QUB) is one of the leading universities in the UK and Ireland with a distinguished heritage and history. QUB offers academic degrees at various levels and across a broad subject range, with over 300 degree programmes available. It is based in South Belfast's Wider University Area.

Landlords Association NI

The Landlords Association for Northern Ireland (LANI) is the only organisation specifically representing landlords in the private rented sector in Northern Ireland.

Migrant Centre Northern Ireland

The Migrant Centre provides advice and advocacy through bilingual support workers in financial health and wellbeing and supporting victims of racist hate crime and incidents. The Migrant Centre NI provides translation services funded by PSNI. In the past five years, the centre has recorded and provided support for 276 cases in the Wider University Area alone on housing, immigration, asylum and debt among many issues, these include 47 cases directly referring to hate crime and incidents.

Lawrence Street Workshops

This is an old stable yard near Queen's. It is home to a group of 20 artists and craft producers. Established in 1988, it is run independently and without public funding. The committee is involved with the local community, supporting the elderly residents and ethnic minority residents on a voluntary basis.

Forward South Partnership (FSP), previously known as South Belfast Partnership Board

describes itself as a vehicle which drives regeneration through soft power – attracting, persuading, influencing. It is 1 of 5 area partnerships in Belfast which is one of the main government planks to target social need and address many of the legacy issues required to build resilience and moving forward into a more peaceful and prosperous society. FSP has driven the development of this Transition Report and associated Capacity Building in South Belfast Holyland through employment of a part time worker funded by the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PSCP).

In 2019 a newly formed group of residents and stakeholders taking a strategic approach to the longterm social and physical regeneration of the area emerged as the [Holyland Trust](#).

8.5.Strategic environment (graphic)

Student Housing and Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)

In 2014 Belfast City Council, keen to make Belfast a destination of choice for students, and to address the low quality of existing HMOs, developed a framework for Student Housing and Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) in response to an increasing amount of planning applications for PBMSA in the city. The Framework document outlined key criteria that should be considered as part of the planning process for PBMSA applications, based on Proximity to Education Institutions, Design Quality, Management, Impact and Need.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAC) 2015

This is the development plan that covers the council areas of Belfast, North Down, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey and Lisburn. It sets out a number of strategic visions for the Belfast area and its main focus is to promote the regional capital in terms of commerce, administration, cultural amenities, specialised services and employment opportunities. It had six planning actions to achieve its strategic vision including promoting urban renewal, enhancing quality of life, equality of opportunity, protecting the area's natural environment, promoting an inclusive and integrated transport system and providing a focus for economic development in the city. It promotes proposals that increase the amount of housing stock that exists within the city centre.

Queens University Belfast

Following the publication of the "Belfast: A Learning City" report by Louise Browne Associates in March 2012, Queen's University took the strategic decision to expand its Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA). This involved an investment of £71.15 million to create two new accommodation blocks in the City Centre; Elms BT1 located at College Avenue with 747-bed spaces and Elms BT2 located at McClintock Street with 490-bed spaces; these both open in September 2018. These two new buildings complement the existing accommodation at Elms BT9, taking the University's total number of Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation spaces to 3,484.

Crucially, the University owns and manages its Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation, providing a comprehensive package of pastoral and welfare support for students, including teams of residential life coordinators and assistants who live on site and engage with their student peers.

Ulster University Belfast Campus

Ulster University intends to significantly expand its campus in York Street, Belfast. This will see most courses transfer from Jordanstown and student numbers in the city rise from 2,000 to 15,000. This has increased interest from developers providing PBMSA in the vicinity of the campus (Ulster does not intend to provide its own University accommodation nearby.)

The first stage of the Ulster University Belfast site is already completed, and late 2018 was an agreed "key milestone". However, there are issues and delays surrounding the second phase, with disputes between the University and the contractors. In February 2018 work on the site halted, in May 2018 it was announced that work on the project would be restarted.

There are concerns that delays could have a sizeable impact on the university's intake of students, given a lack of clarity on a final completion date. The university had said that construction work would finish in 2019, with a full teaching term starting in 2020. However, in January 2018 it was reported that completion of the work could be delayed until 2022 (Belfast Telegraph January 2018 and Irish News May 2018), and this was confirmed more recently the Irish News reported that it is unlikely to be ready before 2022 (Irish News October 2019). The impact of this is already becoming apparent, with local media reporting that the company behind one of the largest new student accommodation projects next to Ulster University in Belfast is seeking to turn most of the building into a temporary aparthotel. The new Student Roost, an 11 storey 430-bed block on Little Patrick Street will operate 62 per cent of the project as an aparthotel until the university completes its new city centre campus project on York Street.

Belfast City Council Local Development Plan.

The Council is currently developing a Local Development Plan which will be published in 2021. According to BCC it will:

provide a 15 year plan framework to support economic and social needs in the city, in line with regional strategies and policies, while providing the delivery of sustainable development

- facilitate growth by coordinating public and private investment to encourage development where it can be of most benefit to the wellbeing of the community
- allocate sufficient land to meet the needs of the city
- provide an opportunity for all stakeholders, including the public, to have a say about where and how development within the local area should take place
- provide a plan-led framework for rational and consistent decision making by the public, private and community sectors and those affected by development proposals
- deliver the spatial aspects of The Belfast Agenda the city's community plan.

BCC published a Preferred Options Paper (POP) for consultation between 26 January 2017 to 20 April 2017. It outlined:

- the vision, objectives and key planning issues affecting the city,
- possible options on how to deliver new development and planned growth,
- what our preferred options are, and the rationale for that preference

In this report student housing, HMOs, flats etc come under the heading Shared Housing Provision (This is not to be confused with mixed religion housing which many commentators refer to as shared housing). There is a proposal to manage shared housing provision to maintain balanced communities, focussing on the future supply of Houses in Multiple Occupation, flats, apartments and Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA).

The POP Consultation report was published in July 2017. It stated the following:

'We acknowledge that a robust, evidence-based approach will be required to identify areas with existing concentrations of shared forms of housing and are currently developing additional evidence to help inform future decisions. However, it is clear that the evidence can sometimes differ from perceptions of those most acutely affected by the problems that can arise. The suggestions of areas to be targeted therefore provide a valuable indication of locations to consider when developing future policies.'

Community Plan

The Belfast Agenda- Belfast's first community plan which sets out its vision until 2035, provides an opportunity to consider the emerging issues of this unique area and how it can be included as part of the regeneration of the city. The community planning duties as set out in the 2015 Act invites partners to work together to develop, agree and achieve objectives for creating and ensuring inclusive growth and improve wellbeing through the community planning process and the city's community plan. The community planning process aims to put the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the city at the heart of joined up planning between agencies working together to better meet those needs. It is against this backdrop that SBPB commissioned this study to consider this unique area with its emerging issues and consider how it can connect it to the outcomes within the Belfast Agenda.

8.7. This Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the possible effects the new build Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation might have on the existing student population in the Holyland. Will it lead to the depopulation and decline of the Holyland if students move out? And if it does, what steps will be needed to prevent this process of decline. This process is commonly known as destudentification.

The research will seek to establish information on the housing market in the area and in particular tenure transfer if there is less student demand. Working on the premise that students might leave, the research will investigate if housing associations would be interested in investing in the area to provide social and affordable rents and if there might be demand for co-ownership or equity sharing to encourage lower income groups to purchase. It will also examine if existing properties that are no longer let to students will be attractive to other groups such as migrants. What might happen to landlords in the area particularly those with small portfolios with high loan to value ratios who may find it difficult to survive if rooms are empty for longer periods?

The study will investigate opportunities to increase the availability of affordable housing through partnerships with relative organisations such as housing associations and the NIHE. It will assess the extent to which the area as a whole can be revitalised and encourage a balance of social and residential mix. It will identify what the key drivers are in regenerating an area subject to depopulation and the likely effect on HMOs will be of particular significance if demand decreases for these types of properties. Will there be an increase in empty properties which will have a negative effect on the area as a whole? Or will the current Welfare Reforms make these types of rental properties attractive to single under-35 tenants who are claiming housing benefit?

It will also consider what impact this change in population may have on the community.

The study has the following objectives and will:

- Create a foundation to build on in terms of future research into the impact on the city of Purpose Built Student Accommodation, changing housing trends among students and destudentification of Holyland.
- Examine processes of destudentification that are likely to happen given student developments in other parts of the city as understanding of this population restructuring is currently underdeveloped.
- Establish a definition of the concept of destudentification encapsulating the complexities and diversities of the processes at work in the local neighbourhood bearing in mind that destudentification is not an inevitable outcome.
- Explore how studentification and destudentification can unfold in concurrent ways and within and between different parts of the city.
- Create a foundation for understanding the trends of how and where students choose to live.
- Increase knowledge on the complex and diverse relationships between geographies of destudentification and studentification and increase our understanding of the processes of urban change in university towns and cities in general.
- Provide a valuable knowledge base on an area that has not been studied in great detail and develop knowledge not only for our own city but for other cities and towns that may be going through similar processes.
- Examine how Welfare Reform and reductions in housing benefit will impact on Holyland.
- Create an action plan for the local community and its partners to take forward its plans for developing the area and help counter the negative effects of destudentification.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed method approach to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods was taken in order to complete this research project. The details of these are outlined below:

Qualitative research – Semi-structured interviews and focus groups

As part of the research semi-structured interviews and focus groups were carried out with key stakeholders who have some link to the Holyland. Focus groups were carried out with residents, landlords, key stakeholders within statutory bodies and the voluntary sector, with University representatives, and student representatives. A number of semi-structured interviews also took place with individuals who are involved with the Holyland in some way.

The stakeholders consulted as part of the research were:

- Residents
- Landlords
- NIHE
- Belfast City Council
- Ulster University
- Students Union Ulster University
- Queen's University Belfast
- Queen's University Students Union
- Queens University PBMSA Team
- Students
- PBMSA residents
- PBMSA developers
- PACT (Partners and Communities Together)
- LORAG (Lower Ormeau Residents Action group)
- Roma Community Representative
- Clanmil Housing Association
- Choice Housing Association
- NI Co-ownership Housing Association
- Radius Housing Association
- UNIPOL Representative
- Independent Consultant (Leeds)
- Yorkshire Planning Aid
- Resident Architect

A study trip to Dublin, to examine an example of Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation took place. A case study of Leeds was also undertaken. This involved semi-structured interviews and desk-based research

Quantitative research – surveys

Two surveys were carried out as part of this project. The first was a survey to students in further and higher education in Belfast.

A questionnaire was designed and distributed via SurveyMonkey. Students from Queens University, Ulster University and Belfast Metropolitan College were emailed a link to complete the questionnaire by their respective institutions. Queens University and Belfast Metropolitan College sent the questionnaire to all students, whilst Ulster University sent the questionnaire to students registered at Belfast and Jordanstown. In total, 549 students completed the online questionnaire. It is not possible to give a response rate due to confidentiality requirements with student email addresses (therefore the total number of emails sent is unknown).

A second questionnaire was sent to Housing Associations. A SurveyMonkey questionnaire was distributed to housing associations operating in Belfast, via emails to selected individuals, which contained a link to complete the survey. In total 14 housing associations responded.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Successive governments have made a strong commitment to growth in the higher education sector which has in turn resulted in an increased proportion of school-leavers entering higher education in the latter decades of the 20th century. The number of students has grown and demand for accommodation has increased.

In the year 2016/17, a total of 41,015 students were enrolled in universities in Belfast. This included 23,850 enrolled at Queen's University Belfast, at Ulster University 14,700 students were enrolled at Jordanstown (12,790) and Belfast (1,910), 1,475 students were enrolled at Stranmillis and 990 at St Marys (Department for the Economy, 2018).

Government commitment, however, has not extended to housing these students. Meeting student housing need is generally regarded as the responsibility of higher education institutions themselves – a need which they have failed to meet (Rugg, et al. 2000).

Students have, therefore, relied primarily on the private rented sector for accommodation. Malpass & Rowlands (2010) refer to the significant increase in privately rented student housing since 1988, with a substantial three-fold increase in students renting privately in just a couple of decades (Kemp, 2004). Students have now become a sizeable niche 10% of all tenants, and this has had an inevitable impact on the balance of the rented housing sector in many university towns across the United Kingdom (Rugg et al, 2002)

This growth has also had an impact on other sectors such as owner occupiers, first time buyers and other renters who have found themselves priced out due to the collective buying power of students. An example of this is in Cambridge where, according to Wiles (2014), since 2006, 4,501 student bedrooms have been built and a further 2,335 have planning permission compared with only 2,480 family homes over the same period leaving these in short supply and priced at a premium.

Balancing the demand for student bed spaces with the needs of the wider housing market in other university towns such as Leeds, Newcastle and Manchester, higher educational institutions and private developers of student accommodation are now compelled to work with local authorities when planning to build (Jones & Brown, 2013). In considering planning applications, local authorities consider priorities other than market demand, including detriment to the amenity of existing and neighbouring residents of an area caused by an influx of students.

The (over) concentration of students, and the formation of 'student areas', is not an intentional consequence of the expansion of higher education but it has been a key factor in the rapid growth of the private rented housing in particular, and the proliferation of Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Rhodes, 2006). According to the National HMO Lobby: 'The chief cause of concentrations of HMOs is currently the expansion of Higher Education. No provision has been made for the accommodation of increased student numbers, so the shortfall has been made up by the private rented sector - hence, concentrations of shared student houses, now defined as HMOs' (National HMO Lobby, 10/5/05).

3.1. Studentification

The term studentification has emerged in recent years as a result of the higher concentrations of students in particular neighbourhoods in the UK due to the significant increase in student numbers attending higher education colleges and universities.

The process of studentification can have a wide-ranging impact on the social, economic, cultural as well as physical landscape of an urban area (Nakazawa, 2016) and is "manifested in changes to local age profile, household and family structures, social class composition, and the rising prominence of localised lifecourse-specific cultures of youth populations" (Hubbard, et al. 2012)

However, many commentators highlight that studentification is not a neutral term, and it has been variously cited that it carries a pejorative undertone which relates to the perceived destabilization and decline of communities where it has taken place (Munroe, et al.; Smith and Holt, 2007; Murtagh, 2011; Smith and Hubbard, 2014).

Kinton et al 2016 refer to the processes of studentification becoming more engrained in established residential areas, and university on-campus accommodation struggling to cater for increased student numbers. As a result, as clusters of students areas have emerged, the process of studentification has been referred to as the replacement and/or displacement of established residents with a transient, generally young and single social grouping' (Smith, 2006), or the substitution of a local community by a student of

community. Smith points out that it is not simply a rise in the number of students in a town/city but it is manifested in a more specific phenomenon: the recommodification of single family housing into Houses Multiple Occupation.

Kinton et al (2016) describe studentification as a process whereby high numbers of university students move into established residential neighbourhoods. Brooks et al. (2015) refer to the social, cultural and economic effects that can emerge as a result. According to Kinton et al (2016) studentification involves the replacement of 'settled' resident groups with 'temporary' student groups, and a reconfiguration of local population structures with increases in the production of unrelated living together in shared housing. They describe a 'studentification frontier' that has rolled out across new urban neighbourhoods and key here is the agency and opposition from resident groups to student neighbours, which has placed pressures on local politicians and planning departments to enable Purpose Built Student Accommodation to be developed in other parts of towns and cities, often with the aim of dispersing students out of these classically 'studentified' neighbourhoods.

Rogaly and Taylor (2015) refer to the processes of studentification becoming embedded in local neighbourhoods, the out-movement – or displacement – of established resident populations (most commonly families with children), combined with student depopulation during vacation periods, that can lead to the creation of 'ghost towns'. Especially within media discourses, studentification is blamed for the closure of schools and community services, their replacement with student oriented services, and the formation of 'student ghettos'.

Greg Clark MP referred to the term studentification as 'probably one of the ugliest terms in the English language and it is unfortunate that we have to use it, but it captures a phenomenon that we recognise' (quoted in Hansard, 5/6/07). An official from the Department of Communities and Local Government in England (DCLG) described studentification as a rather clumsy term to describe the fact that, in some areas, market forces have led to a predominance of student housing in which services like schools have declined' (DCLG, 2006).

Students can become a defining characteristic of certain urban neighbourhoods, and this has been demonstrated in Headingley in Leeds, Sellyoak in Birmingham and Fallowfield in Manchester. One of the key impacts of studentification is on local property markets, with neighbourhoods becoming dominated by 'houses of multiple occupation' as local commercial landlords seek to cash in on the rise in student populations (Munro and Livingston 2012)

Smith and Hubbard (2016) examined the supply side and see studentification as a form of neighbourhood change driven by potential profits to be made via buy-to-let and HMO markets. Student housing emerges as a profitable niche with specific practices of subdividing, renting and marketing housing. It is geographically concentrated: in areas close to HEIs where housing stock lent itself to conversion.

The Holyland area is a clear example of a rapid growth of student numbers and it bears a further hallmark of studentification in that an existing working class community was displaced as students moved in, creating housing supply issues in nearby areas (Murtagh, 2011).

3.2. The benefits of studentification

The benefits that come as a result of areas containing high numbers of students have been highlighted in much of the literature. They sustain a young and educated population, enhancing overall spending power and boost the local economy. This in turn sustains a high demand for local commercial services such as cafes and pubs.

It supports the hotel/hospitality industry via parental/ guardian/family/friends visits and sustains the provision of sporting facilities and sport-related services (e.g. physiotherapy). It leads to economic growth, improvements to infrastructure, increased diversity and increased culture (Allinson, 2006).

The economic benefits from studentification can be seen in a report carried out by UK universities in 2008 where it mentions, 'Concentrations of student flats can bring the benefits of 'critical mass' so as to support related services and facilities, including shops and restaurants available to the wider community' (Universities UK, 2008).

Another case study that supports the argument of improving infrastructure, comes from Bridging Newcastle Gateshead. This report showed that with the high standard of student properties resulted in more investment into older residential properties, this was a stimulus for rising house prices and benefitted local businesses (Emms, Harvey. 2007).

Nakazawa (2017) found that inflows of students create neighbourhood diversity and that 'relationships between students and local residents are not always as hostile as some studies describe'.

Sage et al. (2012) identified through focus groups that despite local residents' objections to the high volume of students living in a former council estate in Bevendean, Brighton, many enjoyed the unintended consequences of shops staying open longer as well as an ever improving transportation system to cater to the students' need. In subsequent work the authors highlight this as a 'central tenet of 'positive' gentrification that seeks to stimulate urban rejuvenation via social 'diversification' in declining areas' Many of the shops benefited from regeneration following their new found success. The authors also cited secondary benefits from the students' presence in the area, with many involved in volunteer schemes, providing moral growth to the area.

The issue of economic growth is explored in greater detail by Bleaney et al. (1992) who, through mathematical analysis were able to predict and verify that Universities have a marked impact of the local economies surrounding them.

Harris (1996) assessed the impact the University of Portsmouth had on the local economy and found that the University was responsible (either directly or indirectly) for as many as 3375 jobs in the immediate vicinity, with the local economy benefiting from approximately £38.5m in goods and services trading amongst staff and students in the academic year 1994/5. Whilst the local population often view students as a menace, it is a bittersweet sentiment when such a contribution to the local economy is taken into account.

Therese Kenna, paraphrasing Allinson (2006) states: 'students spending power and contribution to the local economy were viewed as their strongest positive attributes'. (Kinney 2011)

In an article in The Guardian in 2008 it was suggested that social exclusion could result if students were to move out of an area. In the article Ian Fletcher, Director of Residential Policy at the British Property Foundation, stated that whilst studentification can be an issue in some areas, the affordable HMOs offered by private landlords have "given kids who might otherwise not have got the opportunity to go to University the chance to, through affordable rented housing."

3.3. The negative effects of studentification

'Studentification' is generally associated with a large and often transient community. Student populations are often viewed as a problematic population, often perceived by the local, more established residents as introducing behaviours and issues not normally associated with their areas. Issues such as noise pollution, anti-social behaviour, alcohol intake and unkempt gardens are common complaints from established residents whom students live amongst an average of 25 weeks per year.

The negative effects include noise nuisance; overspill/non-collection of refuse bags/ bins and litter; fly-tipping of unwanted furniture and beds, boxes, and white-goods; lack of car parking spaces, and increased traffic congestion on the streets. It can also lead to the closure of schools, nurseries and crèches, due to low numbers of pupils as families are replaced by young singles. This can lead to a change in services in the area with the closure of long standing businesses at the expense of a growth in student-oriented retail and leisure provision.

The effects of property in student areas have also had a negative effect particularly on the indigenous population and on other groups who may wish to move into the area. For instance, a reduction in the availability of affordable housing due to property prices having been inflated by investors. Families can also be priced out of the rental market due to properties being turned into HMOs. (Hubbard 2008). Rising rental costs due to high demand for rented housing, and a substantial increase in shared accommodation through HMOs can mean other independent households find it too expensive for single occupancy. Areas with high student population become segregated, often based upon socio-economic grounds and age divides, as pointed out by Chatterton (2010). The urban landscape can be transformed through housing extensions and loft conversions and a proliferation of to-let signs, and the non removal of signs and there are lower levels of voting in the area as many students return to their home towns to vote which in turn leads to a loss of political representation.

Kenna (2011) also pointed out that a large concern amongst settled residents was the impact of students upon the market value of their properties. A case study in Loughborough recently showed the negative impact studentification can have. The residents were so concerned about students ASB that they formed a residents group called the Storer Road Residents Association. The group have suggested the sheer number of students coming into the area has separated the community. ASB reached such levels that the residents group started to record all the incidents relating to noise after 11pm. This received great publicity and was eventually shown on regional television news. Incidents such as this had led to the group spearheading a petition to stop new student housing being built in the area. One of the tenants said the following regarding the ongoing ASB;

Who do these people think they are, coming into this town, taking our houses, causing mayhem and chaos around the town and disturbing residential neighbours, some of whom are at retirement age and do not want midnight parties ... we have to get up to do a day's work whilst they can sleep it off all day" (Hubbard, P 2008)

Hubbard's (2009) discussion of studentification in Loughborough, identifies more diverse local student housing markets. He identifies the negative social impacts of studentification in university towns and cities fuelling on-campus developments, including the building of new PBSAs as well as the extensive refurbishment programmes to upgrade existing accommodation.

Smith and Holt (2007), categorise the negative effects of studentification around four areas: physical, social, economic and cultural

3.3.1. Physical

A complete detachment from the area given the transient nature of students. Sage et al. (2012) found that high among the concerns of more permanent residents was the disregard that both students and their landlords had for the aesthetics of their area; highlighting gardening, littering, cleanliness and tidiness as issues.

Higher levels of population churn results in a loss of respect or ownership of the area and a rise in antisocial behaviour. There are also lower levels of social capital and participation in local community initiatives or groups and no willingness to improve the physical image of the area.

3.3.2. Social

It is argued that a culture of "them vs us" can arise when existing residents of an area feel that they have become the minority in their own neighbourhood, giving way to resentment of students (Allinson, 2006; Smith and Hubbard, 2014).

This is exacerbated as those unable to afford rising rents are pushed out and families choose to move out to avoid student culture; remaining residents perceive that there is a declining sense of community and support structures for them within the neighbourhood (Sage, et al. 2012).

In a case study in Loughborough the main finding from a survey of the local residents group was that the students had no interest in connecting with their neighbours and they destroy any sense of community (Hullard, P. 2006).

Smith (2005) takes this further and highlights one of the key social impacts of studentification as being the replacement or displacement of a group of established permanent residents with a transient, generally young and single grouping, entailing new patterns of social concentration.

3.3.3. Economic

As student populations increase and other household types decrease, certain services and businesses e.g. day care for children and elderly, are no longer sustainable and must close. Furthermore, student areas can become 'ghost towns' during long university holiday periods and businesses must be able to adapt to this seasonal demand (Sage, et al. 2012). As student areas tend to empty during academic vacations this may lead to reduced services for residents e.g. skeleton transport timetables.

Smith (2005) refers to the inflation of property prices, which is linked to the recommodification of single family housing (or a repackaging of private rented housing) to HMO accommodation for students. This restructuring of the housing stock results in a change of tenure profile which is dominated by private rented housing and decreasing levels of owner-occupation.

3.3.4. Cultural

Some areas have been turned into "student zones" where the lifestyles of the residents can be at odds with that of students. Research by Rugg, et al. (2000) found that in such instances higher education institutions had to deal with local residents who were unhappy about the impact of student "ghettoisation" on local amenities which were becoming reoriented to the student market.

Students also tend to socialise often, partake of alcohol and keep late hours including on week nights which has negative bi-products such noise and disturbance (Allinson, 2006).

A common thread across all of these perceived negative impacts is that students, a (usually) single, childless, non-local population are transient i.e. non-permanent residents, and as such they have low commitment to the area and community, or establishing neighbourliness, and this is facilitated through (or at least compounded by) HMO type tenure.

3.4. Destudentification

In recent years dynamics have been shifting in the supply and demand of student accommodation and there are now lower proportions of students living off-campus and lower population densities in some classically studentified neighbourhoods.

This process of transformation is referred to as 'de-studentification', describing a potential 'aftermath' of studentification, "which leads to social (for example, population loss), cultural (for example, closure of retail and other services), economic (for example, devalorisation of property prices) and physical (for example, abandonment of housing) decline" (Smith, 2008: 2552). De-studentification is a process that has not gone unnoticed in UK towns and cities with more attention being given to the impacts such population transfer may have. This is illustrated by a study carried out by the Tribal Group in 2009 where it states:

"Anecdotally ... we understand there has also been 'de-studentification' of some areas such as Longsight and Levenshulme. Some of this is likely to have been driven by these market changes together with the increased development of purpose-built student accommodation, which has led to an increase in supply in other areas, which are more attractive to students. and nearer the core areas"

(Tribal Group, 2009: 58)

There is also growing recognition of the potentially far-reaching consequences of destudentification in a second Northern, formerly industrial city, where the process of abandonment is clearly not new in these types of areas:

“A mass exodus of students from their traditional Leeds heartlands (areas like Hyde Park, Headingley and Kirkstall into purpose built flats in the city centre) could push down property prices – but there are fears that it could also send the numbers of empty properties in those areas spiralling upwards ... The continuing flight of students has led to a situation of transition for some neighbourhoods”

(Yorkshire Evening Post, 2015).

De-studentification in the UK has been fuelled by an increase of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA); this change in the dynamics in the supply and demand of accommodation for students has led to fewer living in traditional student neighbourhoods (Kinton, et al. 2016). Yet, for all that, de-studentification is recognised as a driver of population change in towns and cities, it remains a poorly-understood process of urban change (Sage et al., 2013).

Research, to date, has been narrowly focused on the outcomes and hallmarks of destudentification (What is de-studentification? Where is de-studentification occurring?) and/or the supply and demand dynamics which create the conditions for de-studentification to occur. Kinton et al. (2016) have identified several indicators that a neighbourhood has entered a period of de-studentification. After a phase of partial occupancy within student houses, properties then become empty, which is an important stage, as it indicates that a neighbourhood is experiencing de-studentification. The loss of rental income for landlords is linked to an increased number of properties for sale in the area as they try to mitigate their losses.

While interested parties may hope that the neighbourhood will be repopulated by families and young professionals, there is also a fear that landlords will have to target different rental groups), such as migrant workers or ‘problem’ individuals, affecting not only house prices in the area, but also its reputation (Hubbard 2009. Indeed, Kinton et al. (2016) assert that ‘many residents and landlords are coming to realise that the negative impacts of studentification are far less consequential to the negative impacts of de-studentification’. While one of the desired outcomes of PBSA is the dispersal of students from areas with high concentrations of HMOs, they can result in exaggerated expressions of studentification when they are near existing communities. The location of PBSA is therefore essential to the success of housing policies to resolve the negative impacts of studentification (Sage, et al. 2013)

3.5.Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)

In the past decade PBSA has had a rapid rise in the UK primarily mainly due to student accommodation promoted as the fastest growing sector in the property market (Levene, 2007) and the strain on pre-existing infrastructure not designed to house such high numbers of students.

PBSA is accommodation built for the purpose of housing students exclusively where a high volume is expected near colleges and universities. It is provided not only to relieve the pressure on local housing and rental markets, but more importantly to better manage the often transient nature of student accommodation. In some cases the college itself provides the accommodation whereas in other instances it is provided by a private investor/developer outside the college grounds, but in the general vicinity normally with close proximity to the city centre

For many local authorities and universities facing pressures to address the problem of studentification, PBSA appears to be a solution to the issues linked to high levels of student rentals in close proximity, by dispersing student populations and creating more balanced, less transient communities (Smith, 2008). Since its inception, the PBSA market has been characterised by structural supply. The National Union of Students (NUS) estimate that, across the UK, approximately 1 in 5 students are guaranteed a private sector or university owned bed with the balance either living at home or having to secure private rented residential units (NUS 2014). The total number of full time undergraduate and post graduate students rebounded to pre-tuition fee increase levels of 1.69m in the 2014/15 academic year helped by a growing number of international students. (HESA 2014)

There is emerging evidence to suggest that PBSA blocks may provide the best practice of housing students in cities across the U.K. and Ireland. Chatterton (2010) writes that, in the UK, many councils have set limits on the number of Housing of Multiple Occupations (HMOs) in particular areas in response to the deterioration of these urban areas and lifestyle conflicts between students and established families and residents'. Therefore, PBSA blocks may provide a realistic solution to these problems.

In 2015, the sector experienced unprecedented investment volumes according to Savills, with c. 75,000 PBSA beds transacting at a total value of c. £5.9bn, double the volume seen in 2014. (Savills 2016). Figures suggest that the number of students living in these PBSA blocks has over the past decade risen significantly (Silva, M. 2017). In 2016 over £3.1 billion was invested in purpose built student accommodation in the UK. To put this in context it is double the amount invested in both 2013 & 2014 (Properties, C. 2017).

There has been a continual shortfall in the provision of student accommodation, as well as the changing housing preferences of students, and these, alongside the international demand for Higher Education in the UK, has in turn appealed to institutional investors/developers in the private sector to involve themselves in the student accommodation market.

Student accommodation/housing has been labelled as the most rapid growing division of the property market, so therefore this interest is not surprising (Hubbard, 2009). The development of Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) by institutional investors has been enabled by local authorities, universities, and leading stakeholders who wish to alleviate the negative perceptions that come with studentification by integrating students into neighbourhoods (Hubbard, 2009; Kinton, 2013).

The PBSA is often developed on off-campus locations, usually in/around city centres or on 'brown-field sites' (Hubbard, 2009; Sage et al. 2013) for students who are prepared to pay more for living in the inner city as they wish to have a 'metropolitan habitus' (Kinton, 2013). The location of this PBSA is negotiated by numerous stakeholders, including; commercial providers of PBSA, universities, and local authorities who all are seeking different outcomes (Hubbard, 2009).

The rise of PBSA in the city of Cork, Ireland has been illustrated in a study by Kenna. PBSA in Cork was welcomed by the City Council, which saw the developments as potentially reviving areas of the city that needed gentrification, while also facilitating the return of previously student occupied homes in and around the city to family occupation. The development of PBSA blocks also allows for the lifestyles and noise of students to be contained within that particular area, reducing community concerns about concentrations of large groups of students and the anti-social behaviour which they may be responsible for.

In the study it was demonstrated how, through long term planning and investment of infrastructure, relatively few instances of resident/student friction occur. There are over 30 PBSA blocks each within the immediate vicinity of a third level institution. The emergence of PBSA has relieved much of the pressure on the PRS in Cork, as well as combating negative perceptions of students by local residents. They are well maintained and many have attractive features to students such as independent living quarters, good facilities and access to local amenities such as shops and transport links. The blocks are largely securitised and monitored extensively through CCTV intended to monitor large groups of students and ensure safety on the grounds of the developments. These preventative measures will help diminish occurrences of anti-social behaviour within and around the grounds of the PBSA blocks and although there is little evidence to justify this, may consequently increase the students' grades. The author argues that this extra security presence is an advantage which residential housing cannot provide.

A further benefit is that the majority of PBSA blocks in Cork provide on-site private and secure parking (Kenna, 2011). This reduces any potential annoyances to the local community in the sense of limited on-street parking. There is a lack of evidence of any major community resentment toward the PBSA blocks which are established in Cork, suggesting that they provide a beneficial alternative to HMOs in residential areas. The author also found, however, that some of the new complexes were exclusively occupied by international students, and their creation produced new residential geographies in the city. (Kenna, 2011).

Kinney identifies how Universities often attract inward investment by a number of different sources, most notably investing landlords and is often a necessity due to the strain large numbers of students can exert on a community not designed to accommodate such a population.

The rise of PBSA complexes has been attributed to growing pressures on the private rental stock within urban centres as student populations have grown, and indeed the inadequacy of the available HMO. (Kinney P.195)

PBSA can have a positive impact on the existing housing market. According to Universities UK, these properties create less student demand in local private housing. This means that in these areas there is less competition in the residential property market and settled residents are generally happier.

There are also benefits of PBSA for the students who choose this type of accommodation. Hubbard (2009) pointed out that they can benefit from all inclusive bills, high security, high quality accommodation and ensuite access amongst other things. Developments can sometimes include pristine aesthetics and modern architectural designs; the presence of gyms, fitness centres, swimming pools, private car parking spaces, coffee and wine bars; cutting-edge technology; high levels of surveillance; 24/7 security and concierge services (Hubbard and Smith 2014).

It is important to acknowledge that not all PBSA's offer all of these services, however, student developments offer a minimal service of security of building, cleaners and other managed facilities. Kenna (2011) reinforces the fact that "Many PBSA developments are all-inclusive complexes, providing parking, laundry facilities and convenience stores".

3.6. Negatives of PBSAs

Research has shown that PBSA can still have all the same negatives associated with studentification. A study in Brighton found that one particular PBSA had a high tendency to house 1st year students who were most likely to be the most rowdy. This led to residents living in the area still reporting high levels of ASB (Sage et al, 2013). If PBSAs are segregated this can mean some of the positives mentioned before are totally negated, and some of the negatives are exacerbated.

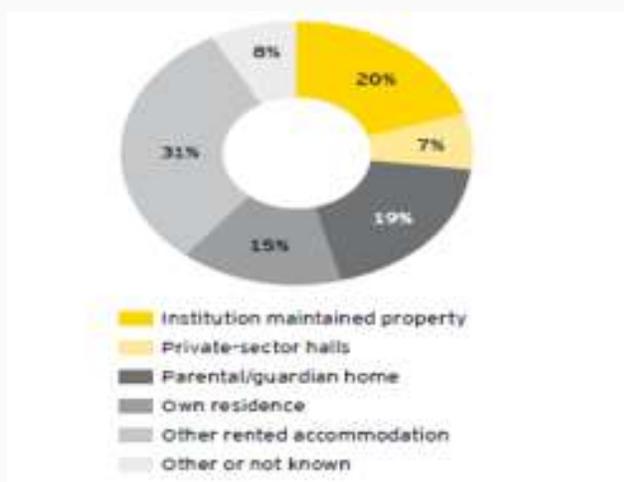
One of the main drawbacks when students are considering PBSA is undoubtedly the high expense. Part of this is down to the all inclusive benefits and extra services provided as discussed previously. In the Cork study prices typically range from €4,000 to €5,300 for a 40-week lease over the academic year (September to May). Whereas, the cheapest single room on the market in Cork was leased at €70 per week (around €2,800 for the academic year). It is worth noting that these prices were obtained in 2011 and may not truly reflect current prices. In the cases where students cannot afford to lease the PBSA blocks then HMOs are the next best alternative. (Kenna 2011)

NUS (2007) has recognised this and has warned that PBSA risks making student accommodation unaffordable to most, and only the most affluent students will be able to consider it as an option in the future. Belfast provides a perfect illustration of this where rooms in John Bell accommodation range from £144 per week to £200 per week whereas HMOs in the Holyland can cost from £35-£60 per week. As mentioned before students in PBSA can often become segregated and miss out on opportunities to integrate into local communities. Fincher and Shaw (2009) conducted research in Melbourne, Australia into this very issue and found that PBSAs were often occupied by international students only and hardly ever mixed with the wider society. Overall it has shown that the experiences of students within PBSA and their wider impact in communities is a largely under researched area (Kenna, 2011). Most of the research has focused on the negative impacts of studentification and totally ignored the thoughts and feelings of residents of PBSA.

During the mid-2000s it was acknowledged that there was a problem in areas with high concentrations of students, and accompanied with the continuing demand for student accommodation it had led to the rapid development of PBSA. They all provided more than 50 bed spaces which was actively encouraged by many local authorities with their planning policies (Smith 2009). PBSA provided a mechanism for dispersing students away from established neighbourhoods and this was achieved by developing numerous blocks of flats exclusively for students off campus. An example would be the City Heights in Leeds which provided circa 3500 beds on sites away from established neighbourhoods (Hubbard 2009). Unipol Student Homes had analysed the student residence pattern in Bradford and found that 26% of 1st year students live in institutional or commercial purpose-built accommodation, with only 13.7% living in private rented housing. The report also found that the proportion of postgraduate students living in PBSA had increased substantially from 24% to 39% (Unipol 2015). In another study, Unipol Student Homes (2014) indicated that parents prefer purpose-built accommodation for its facilities and security, but cannot afford it for the full student lifecycle. Some of the features popular with students and their parents have been mentioned in the literature review (ensuite facilities, internet access, security, on-site gyms and proximity to the city centre and the universities). A survey was also carried out which found that students tend to prefer living in PBSA in their first year but envisage moving out for their remaining studies. Amongst first-years 37% preferred private rented accommodation compared to 53% of students in their second/ subsequent years. This is because students viewed moving into the private rented sector as a natural progression from the PBSA.

According to (Aird 2017) the total PBSA stock has increased by 5% over the recent years whilst bed spaces provided by private operators has risen by a substantial 43%. A contributing factor to this increased supply is that there is a substantial amount of overseas students and postgraduates who are opting for PBSA. One factor is that they are less likely to have family in the UK or their own home and the very nature of PBSA is easy to understand and organise from abroad. KPMG (2017) states that non-UK students are 65% more likely to live in PBSA than UK students. A recent report from EY also indicates that international students are “disproportionally large users of the PBSA”. Figure 3 depicts the proportion of full time students who are currently living in PBSA.

Figure 3: Term time Accommodation of all full-time students in the UK 2014/2015



EY (2016 pg 18)

Kinton et al (2013), found that the large scale of PBSA can cause difficulties when creating shared environments and building communities amongst student populations. Similarly, Chatterton (2000) proposed the theory of a division between “gown” and “town”, which suggests that students are “in” but not “of” their local communities. PBSAs have been criticised for ingraining segregation, marginalisation, polarisation and exclusion in communities (Munro, Turvok & Livingstone, 2009). This is something that would especially need to be avoided in Northern Ireland due to its history of segregation between Catholic and Protestants.

Gaffikin et al (2008) state that segregation has already extended to the student population in Northern Ireland, pointing out that large numbers of Catholic students tend to reside around the Holyland, while Protestant students are more inclined to live in and around the Lisburn Road area. Although this study was produced a decade ago there is still a perception that Catholic/Nationalist students dominate the area which is reinforced by large scale media coverage of the St Patrick’s Day events.

3.7.Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) in Belfast

The continued growth in the number of students wishing to enter third level education in the universities in Belfast and further education colleges; the re-location of the Ulster University to the north of the City Centre and growth in the international student market all present significant changes for Belfast’s student housing market.

Belfast is different to most other large university cities in that the proportion of available PBMSA is considerably lower than elsewhere in the UK. However, in recent years, Belfast has experienced an influx of planning applications for PBMSA, predominantly in the City Centre, with a resultant increase in PBMSA developments (see Tables 1 & 2).

Belfast City Council has published guidance documents on PBMSA for developers and planners. These are: The Supplementary Planning Guidance and Best Practice Guide (see below for more detail). The inclusion of the word ‘managed’ highlights the importance of such accommodation being centrally supervised by the developer/landlord to provide welfare support for students and to ensure compliance with any code of conduct or tenancy agreements, etc. (Belfast City Council, 2016, PBMSA Supplementary Planning Guidance). These management arrangements are a significant difference between PBMSA and students living in the more traditional form of student accommodation often referred to as HMOs in the private rented sector.

3.8. Best Practice Guide for Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)

Belfast City Council states that the Best Practice Guide (published January 2016) seeks to encourage the development of good quality PBMSA in the right locations by explaining how new developments can be best planned and designed prior to submitting planning applications

This guide explains how new developments can be planned and designed before planning applications are submitted and provides advice in the following eight areas:

1. Pre-application: encouraging early engagement with us and local communities
2. Location: promoting suitable locations within the city centre
3. Policy: outlining relevant planning policy constraints
4. Design: encouraging good quality, well designed PBMSA in terms of layout, accommodation mix, open space, parking, facilities, waste and recycling, safety and crime prevention and energy reduction
5. Impact: reducing negative effects whilst capturing any positive impacts of PBMSA development
6. Management: ensuring effective management arrangements to deliver a safe and positive environment for students, whilst reducing the risk of negative impacts on the local community
7. Need: ensuring the right balance between meeting student housing needs and preventing an over-supply of PBMSA
8. Planning agreement and developer contributions: summarising issues in relation to PBMSA where we may consider the use of planning agreements

3.9. Supplementary Planning Guidance for PBMSA

Introduced in June 2016, the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) gives extra advice and guidance to developers, the public and planning officers when working on planning applications for PBMSA developments in the City.

The guidance is structured into six planning issues, including:

1. Location and accessibility: the development should be at a location that is easily accessible to university or college campuses by sustainable transport modes.
2. Design quality: the layout, design and facilities provided within a development should be of high standards.
3. Impact and scale: the development should be designed in a way that does not conflict with properties close by or the general amenity of the surrounding area.
4. Management: the development has appropriate management in place to create a positive and safe living environment for students while reducing any potential negative impacts from occupants.
5. Need: there is a need for the type of accommodation proposed.
6. Planning agreements: planning agreements and related developer contributions may be required for Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation where conditions alone cannot secure planning.

3.10. Policy Context

Policy HMO7 relates to the provision of ‘Large Scale Purpose Built Student Accommodation’ and is the principal planning policy tool available when considering applications for PBMSA in Belfast City Centre.

Policy HMO 7 – Large Scale Purpose Built Student Accommodation
 Planning permission will only be granted for large scale purpose built student accommodation where all of the following criteria are met:

- Development of any complex consists of a minimum of 50 units or a minimum of 200 occupants. This will not preclude proposals for smaller incremental extensions or consolidations of existing halls of residence and phased development of larger schemes;
- All units are self-contained (i.e. having a bathroom, w.c. and kitchen available for use by the occupiers);
- The location is not within a primarily residential area;
- Provision is made for management of all accommodation. This may require an Article 40 agreement with Planning Service; and
- Landscaping and amenity space is provided in accordance with a landscaping plan indicating all landscaping proposals for the scheme and, where relevant making provision for future maintenance.

Source: Belfast City Council (2016) *Best Practice Guide for Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)*

3.11. PBMSA Numbers

Current provision of student accommodation

This section outlines the current provision of student accommodation, Table 6 outlines the private sector provision and Table 7 outlines University provision (as of September 2018). Developments in the pipeline are highlighted in the following section, outlining the planning status of them.

CBRE (2018) reported that there were 1,406 bedspaces across five schemes privately operated in Belfast in 2018/2019. The schemes were located in Belfast City Centre and largely near to the University of Ulster campus.

There were 4,471 bedspaces across 12 schemes owned and operated by the Universities in Belfast in 2018/2019 (including BT1 and BT2 which opened for the start of 2018/2018)

In total, there are 5,877 operational PBSA bedspaces in Belfast for 2018/2019.

Operator	Scheme	Total Bedspaces
Cathedral Living	Mark Royal House	45
Student Roost	John Bell House	413
Universal Student Living	Botanic Studios	156
Student Roost	Great Patrick Street	475
Student Roost	Swanston House	317
Total		1406

Source: adapted from CBRE Research 2018/2019

University Supply

Table 7: University Supply 2018/2019

Operator	Scheme	Total Bedspaces
Queen's University Belfast	Elms Village and Houses	1,632
Queen's University Belfast	Guthrie House	87
Queen's University Belfast	Mount Charles	156
Queen's University Belfast	76 Malone	14
Queen's University Belfast	Grant House	50
Queen's University Belfast	Willow Walk (Elms Village)	257
Queen's University Belfast	College Gardens	50
Queen's University Belfast	BT1	740
Queen's University Belfast	BT2	476
Stranmillis University College	Stranmillis College	400
University of Ulster	Dalriada Village	572
University of Ulster	The Courtyard	37
Total		4,471

Source: adapted from CBRE Research 2018/2019

3.12. Pipeline

This section provides a more detailed breakdown of the number and status of new Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) in Belfast (as of February 2018). There were 18 unique PBMSA schemes remaining of the 22 recent planning applications considered. This detailed breakdown of the 18 remaining developments be summarised as follows:

- Completed: there were 3 schemes which had been completed, which comprised a total of 614 bedrooms.
- Development ongoing: there were 6 schemes which were still undergoing development. These comprised a total of 3,132 bedrooms.
- Not started: there were 6 schemes still to start development (with 2 awaiting section 76 agreements), and two further schemes are still in the planning process. These schemes comprised 2,575 bedrooms.

Since these figures were published in 2018, CBRE reported a further nine schemes. In January 2019 the Bradury Place development

Map Ref	Planning Reference	Applicant	Address	Description
1	Z/2013/0686	Progressive Property Investments Ltd	Mark Royal House 70 - 74 Donegall St	Change of use from offices to student living accommodation single bedrooms with ensuite, communal kitchen / living with cycle parking.
2	Z/2014/1172/F	Watkins Jones Group & Lacuna Development	1A College Square East	Conversion refurbishment and extension (one floor on the east and two floors on the west elevation) of the former college building to provide student accommodation, comprising 292 no ensuite bedrooms with ensuite.
3	Z/2014/1657/F	Patton Developments	28 - 30 Great Patrick Street	Erection of 11 storey building (34.5m high) comprising a managed student accommodation (with communal living reception / office facility, other ancillary accommodation facilities).
4	Z/2014/1669/F	Mr R. Mulholland, CS Suppliers (NI) Ltd	118 - 122 Royal Avenue	Change of use of upper floors from retail, offices and storage to student accommodation (with ensuite bedrooms) and alterations to elevations including cladding and parapet wall to front elevation.
5	Z/2015/0177/F	York Street No. 1 Ltd	123 - 137 York Street	Demolition of the existing building and erection of a 12 storey ground floor retail unit, 407 managed student accommodation (with ensuite bedrooms, kitchens), associated reception / office facility, gym and other ancillary facilities.
6	LA04/2015/0092/0	Northview Developments	Land bounded by Carrick Hill, 22 - 36 Clifton Street and 4 Trinity Street	Phased demolition of existing buildings and construction of a new development including ground level car and bike park, gymnasium and local retail units.
7	LA/04/2015/0419/F	McAleer & Rushe	78 College Avenue	The erection of a mixed use development to include 647 student rooms managed student residential building with ground floor retail units. The development is comprised of welfare facilities, associated reception / office facility, other ancillary facilities.
8	LA04/2015/0420/F	McAleer & Rushe	Land south of Franklin Street, east of Brunswick Street and west of McClintock Street	Redevelopment of the former Belfast Metropolitan College site. This is to erect a 476 bedroom managed student accommodation with ground floor retail class A1 to the Southern aspect of the site.
9	LA04/2015/0609/F	Northside Regeneration Ltd	140 Donegall Street	Purpose built managed student accommodation comprising 54 no student rooms, amenity and ancillary support accommodation with 54 no student rooms.
10	LA04/2015/0676/F	Car Park Services Ltd & Slaney Ltd	Land bounded by Library Street, Stephen Street and Kent Street	Demolition of existing warehouse and construction of Managed Student Accommodation comprising 78 apartments containing 4 living rooms and kitchens and 10 Studio apartments containing 4 living rooms and kitchens.
11	LA04/2015/0685/F	Cathedral Living Group Ltd	89 - 101 Royal Avenue	Alteration, extension (additional floor) and change of use of existing building to provide 30 No. student apartments.
12	LA04/2017/2306/F	Lacuna WJ Ltd	26-44 Little Patrick Street	Development of purpose built managed student accommodation with internal and external communal areas.
13	LA04/2015/1175/F	Lacuna Dublin Rd Ltd	78-86 Dublin Road	Construction of a purpose built managed student accommodation of 156 studio rooms, reception / management suite, communal areas and storage area.
14	LA04/2015/1252/F	Lacuna WJ Ltd	41-49 Queen Street, 24 - 30 College Street and 29 Wellington Place	Erection of purpose built managed student accommodation comprising 203 cluster rooms (317 units in total), retail unit (class A1) and common room, management suite on ground floor of Wellington Place.
15	LA04/2017/2753/F	Rojem Properties Belfast Ltd	30-44 Bradbury Place	Demolition of buildings and erection of a mixed use development comprising managed student accommodation with 112 en-suite cluster rooms (in total). Accommodation includes associated shared common areas and recreation space. Ground floor includes reception, retail and storage. The building is 5 storeys with an additional floor section at the rear. To the rear the building is 7 storeys with an additional floor section.
16	LA04/2016/1213/RM	Student City Ltd	48-52 York Street, Belfast	Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 11 storey building comprising ground floor retail units, 307 studios for use as purpose built student accommodation with communal and amenity facilities, including gym and other ancillary facilities.
17	LA04/2016/1252/F	Olympian Homes	Site bounded by Little York Street, Great Georges's Street and Nelson Street	Purpose built managed student accommodation (774 beds) with ground floor retail units, reception / management suite, communal areas and storage area.
18	LA04/2016/2385/F	York Street Student Properties Ltd	81-107 York Street	Amendment to planning permission Z/2015/0138/F to provide student accommodation comprising 717 beds with shared living spaces at ground floor level; two landscaped courtyards; other ancillary facilities.

chemes with granted planning permission for a total of 3,752 bedspaces in Belfast.
 ment was granted approval for 156 bedspaces.

	Bed-rooms	Planning Status	Decision Date	Development Status	Notes
Accommodation(halls of residence) comprising 45 living / dining facilities and external terrace	415	Permission Granted	19/12/2013	Complete	Cathedral Living
on the north, south and east elevation college building for managed student rooms with shared living rooms.	413	Permission Granted	29/01/2015	Complete	Fresh Student Living
ing a retail unit at ground level, 475 living rooms / kitchen), associated including landscaped.	475	Fully approved (including section 76 agreement of 20/05/16)	20/05/2016	Development Ongoing	
storage to student accommodation (21 adding, revised window positions, and	21	Refused January 2016; Allowed at appeal August 2016	21/01/2016; 23/08/2016	Not Started	
a 12 storey mixed use building with a accommodation rooms (with communal living, gym other ancillary.	407	Fully approved (including section 76 agreement of 16/09/16)	11/10/2016	Development Ongoing	
ction of student housing units to include retail units .	375	Permission refused; Appeal withdrawn	26/01/2016; 14/10/2016	NA	
647 standard bedrooms and 93 studio round floor shop use class A1. The student related ancillary accom.	740	Fully approved (including section 76 agreement of 04/07/2016)	05/07/2016	Development Ongoing	
College Campus into a mixed use student residential building with of the site> the student developm.	476	Permission granted, subject to section 76 agreement of 06/07/18	20/07/2016	Development Ongoing	
comprising 620 no. units with associated 54 no. lower ground floor parking spaces.	620	Permission refused; Allowed at appeal November 2017	18/10/16; 21/11/2017	Not Started	
of Managed Purpose Built Student housing 409 en-suite Bedrooms with shared s containing 36 self contained Studios.	393	Permission refused; Allowed at appeal February 2017	27/02/2017	Not Started	
f use to extend listed building to provide	30	Permission Granted	22/05/2017	Not Started	Also - LA04/2015/0684/LBC
accommodation comprising up to 430 beds	430	Recommended approval at committee of 16/01/18	NA	NA	LA04/2015/0716/F approved 17/10/2016 (354 units) with section 76 agreement
accommodation (8 storey block) consisting common room space, bike and general	156	Fully approved (including section 76 agreement of 15/04/16)	15/04/2016	Complete	Universal Student Living
modation comprising 114 studios and s A1) on ground floor of Queen Street, of Wellington Place, reception.	317	Fully approved (including section 76 agreement of 16/06/16)	27/10/2016	Development Ongoing	
development to include purpose built e cluster bedrooms and 73 studios (185 d communal areas including a laundry on, retail, car parking, cycle storage and bin floor set-back addressing Bradbury Place. al floor set-back addressing Albion Way.	185	Under consideration	NA	NA	LA04/2016/0900F - Permission refused for 271 bed units on 21/11/2016
storey building comprising of 3 no. ground student accommodation with associated d al.	307	Permission granted, subject to section 76 agreement of 06/07/18	02/10/2017	Not Started	Z/2014/0479/O - Outline permission granted 24/3/15 for c. 200 units student accommodation
74 beds). Maximum height of 12 storeys	774	Permission granted, subject to section 76 agreement)	23/01/2017	Not Started	
to develop purpose built managed shared communal areas, 2 no. retail units her ancillary accommodation incl.	717	Permission granted, subject to section 76 agreement)	26/06/2017	Development Ongoing	Z/2015/0138/F - approved 20/05/2016 (682 units total)
TOTAL	6881				

3.13. Welfare Reform

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) carried out a comprehensive analysis on the impact of welfare changes in Northern Ireland on rented housing. This was published in June 2017. In the report the CIH highlighted that over the next three years a number of changes will be introduced that will adversely affect housing affordability for more people living on low incomes in social and private rented accommodation, as well as social housing providers' ability to build new homes and deliver a broad range of services.

It went on to list these changes as including:

- benefits for people living in private rented accommodation are frozen at the 2015/16 rate for the four years from April 2016, risking higher levels of rent arrears, legal action, eviction and homelessness
- benefits for people living in social housing are cut from April 2019 creating affordability problems – particularly for under 35s and pensioners – and making new social housing less viable
- supplementary payments, which fully top-up reductions to benefits under the social sector size criteria (bedroom tax) and benefit cap, end in March 2020 increasing the risk of rent arrears, legal action, eviction and homelessness

CIH looks at the effects on social and private rented housing and highlights that in social housing the amount of Housing Benefit people receive will normally be reduced if they have a spare bedroom ('social sector size criteria' [bedroom tax]) or if their total benefits exceed a set limit ('benefit cap'), but most affected tenants in Northern Ireland are receiving supplementary payments that fully top-up these reductions. This is due to come to an end in 2020.

Regarding private renting CIH points out that most single people aged under 35 only receive an amount equivalent to the cost of renting a single room in a shared house ('shared accommodation rate'). It also examines Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates which are set in April of each year at no more than the rent for the cheapest 30 per cent of homes in a defined local area, known as the broad rental market area (BRMA). In 2013/14 more than 60,000 private tenants received LHA totalling more than £300 million. According to the CIH report HB and LHA will begin to be replaced by a new benefit – universal credit (UC) – for new claimants from 25 September 2017. This will happen in Limavady first and then roll out across Northern Ireland over the period to March 2022. UC is a single payment that replaces six existing benefits and tax credits, including HB/LHA. CIH argues that UC creates a complex web of winners and losers – CIH modelling has previously shown that lone parents under 25 with child care costs are particularly worse off under UC

It is inevitable that the welfare reforms that have, and are, taking place will have a profound effect on certain groups particularly younger people. Increasingly under 35s will be looking to avail of shared housing rather than independent living as their benefit levels are cut. HMOs and shared housing would be the obvious types of accommodation that they might seek.

3.14. Conclusion

The process of studentification has many facets and whilst it can deliver many positive benefits, arguably these are outweighed by the negative impacts that studentification can have. Some areas have experienced “de-studentification”, often linked to the development of Purpose Built Student Accommodation, although this is certainly not an automatic consequence of PBSA. Whilst PBSA is a relatively new phenomenon in Northern Ireland, they have become a more established part of the student housing market in other jurisdictions over the last decade. The next section provides some examples of how others have dealt with these issues, and something from which we can learn from in terms of the provision and management of student accommodation in Belfast.

BEST PRACTICE

This section will highlight the importance of good practice in other parts of the UK and Ireland. A number of case studies have been selected to examine how other towns and cities with relatively large concentrations of students have helped to improve relations. In recent years discourses have been dominated by concerns around the impacts of studentification and how these issues are being tackled.

Smith (2005) pinpointed a number of “good practices” adopted by various cities in the UK which have all played roles in “enhancing town-gown relations”, particularly in relation to tackling the problems brought on by larger concentrations of students.

Multi Agency Approach

Smith (2005) describes a “multi-agency” approach to tackling these problems which is an approach where the “social and cultural well-being” of all the people living in student areas is enhanced through the “effective dissemination” of good practices through “student-led” initiatives such as “conferences and seminars”, and campaigns initiated by students such as noise, litter, and car-parking campaigns which have been effective in “fostering a context of mutual trust, transparency and joined-up communication” between cities’ student and permanent populations, particularly where there has been a lack of purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) and students are forced to live in residential areas.

These initiatives are largely aimed at tackling both the negative effects of having high student numbers while also trying to maintain the sustainable community aspects which were present before the studentification of the area.

A more detailed list of examples is provided in Appendix A.

4.1. Brighton

Brighton and Hove City Council set up a Strategic Housing Partnership Working Group (SHS), which included representatives from both the University of Brighton and academics from the University of Brighton department of Geography. This group led the development of the SHS that set out four strategic goals; effective management & support, using an area-based approach; development of purpose built student accommodation; to work collaboratively and; to monitor effects of the strategy. From 5th April 2013 the council introduced an ‘Article 4 Direction’ in five of the most student populated areas of the city in order to prevent further over-concentration of HMOs. This meant that in these five wards permitted development rights were removed and planning permission is required to convert family homes to small HMOs. Consent for planning permission will also be refused if 10% of homes within a 50 metre radius are already HMOs.

The University of Sussex has crafted a community cohesion programme that involves contact engagement models, marshalling, services for local people, and student volunteering schemes. Personal testimonies for some current ambassadors revealed that their motivations included wanting to have positive relationships with residents, to promote a positive image of students to residents and to lend their skills to help improve conditions for residents. (University of Sussex, 2017)

4.2. Exeter

The city council restricted HMOs in 2012/13. Landlords were reluctant to adapt the HMOs to family homes because, under the council's directions, they claim they cannot afford to change the properties back. In Exeter, this has led to many large properties being left vacant or either occupied by young single people, rather than families who are in need. However, in order to rectify this 'ghost town' appearance, the Government did not offer their services of grant aid to transform the HMOs to family homes, therefore the issues are still of concern for the area (Nowicki, 2015).

4.3. Loughborough

High student numbers created a negative impact in Loughborough and as a result of high levels of tension between the students and residents,

The council decided on a threshold approach in that although no area within the town would be specifically categorised or zoned for students or residents only, that once planning applications were received by the council they would have to base their decision on student occupancy within the area. This allowed them to reject it on the basis that it may further increase tensions and anti-social behaviour and prevent the formation of exclusive 'student ghettos' acknowledging that students need to be spread more thinly across the city (Hubbard, 2006)

In response to neighbour concerns and trying to balance the needs of the local community with those of the students the local authority issued supplementary planning guidance relating to student properties in 2006. This meant that the maximum percentage of HMOs allowed to be created within any single neighbourhood was 20%.

Loughborough University implemented a strategy to try and strategically manage neighbour relations and resulted in the formation of the Loughborough Campus and Community Liaison Group. It also situated wardens in areas of high student population to address issues of anti-social activity. This group delivered community awareness campaigns all aimed at teaching the students their responsibilities for being part of the community. One example of an educational campaign included SSHH! (Silent Students Happy Homes).

4.4. Leeds

Within Hyde Park, Leeds City Council deploys more resources in the area than any other part of the city (Leeds City Council, 2016). This great deployment of resources came about because of the 'impassioned plea' from permanent residents in the area to not ignore the hidden deprivation of Hyde Park. By positioning more resources in the area, a new Neighbourhood Board was formed which consisted of local councillors, permanent residents, students, and managers from across the council and other public services. Short term solutions to ongoing problems in Hyde Park included improving security awareness, out of hours dog warden patrols and carrying out annual deep cleans to bin yards, back alleys, removing graffiti, spraying weeds and maintaining green spaces.

In both Headingley and Hyde Park, and other surrounding student areas, there have been out of hours patrols by foot and by van to deal with noise and nuisance complaints known as the LASBT – Leeds Antisocial Behaviour Team (Leeds City Council, 2016). Patrols took place close to the start of term on dates from 15th September 2016 – 23rd September 2016. These patrols officers are in the area and can deal with complaints, break up parties and help members of the community. The officers also attend home visits to issue warning letters and in two particular cases, confiscated noise equipment in the first term of 2016 and issued 90 noise abatement notices to student properties. It was concluded by Leeds City Council (2016) that the increase in funding for these patrols be maintained so they can be in effect in the 2017/18 academic year.

Since April 2010, council planning permission has been needed when a property's use changes to a shared accommodation where 3 or more tenants are not related (Yorkshire Evening News, 2010).

The University of Leeds community programme includes funding for a Community Planning Officer who facilitates communication between all members of the community about planning issues. It also runs a neighbourhood helpline that directly connects residents with the university to report problems as well as a large volunteering programme that matches student volunteers with schools and community groups. Additionally, the university has set up its own grant that awards monies to students to develop and implement their own community projects, further involving students in the community and encouraging their creativity and altruism. The grants have funded a range of impactful community projects, many of which have dealt with vulnerable populations, such as young people in areas of high deprivation and victims of race hate crime. They also have a flyer consent zone in student housing areas and designated areas of housing mix.

Accreditation of student housing has been introduced and there are 32,000 bed spaces in Leeds student accommodation covered by accreditation operated by Unipol, and these schemes all feature standards on community/neighbour complaints, waste management, garden, maintenance and management of properties that mean that standards are generally quite good and that the traditional causes of friction between student and community are reduced.

In addition to this, the local authority has a very active approach to noise nuisance complaints and regularly hands out high profile abatement or confiscation orders on noisy properties.

4.5. Manchester

In 2009 Manchester City Council commissioned a report suggesting a number of strategies to ease tensions between residents and students. According to the Tribal Group (2009) the mainstreaming of what they describe as good neighbourhood management was a necessity to provide effective management of areas which house a particularly high student population. They suggested introducing an off campus manager and a helpline so that residents had a contact to approach with student issues. A neighbourhood steering group was established to manage fresher's week to cut down on ASB. The council requested that student volunteers should work closely with the off campus manager in areas which have a higher student population to make them more aware of crime prevention and ASB. Community forums are another suggestion which would allow all Stakeholders a chance to discuss student issues with both the University and the local Council. (Manchester City Council 2009)

Halls 2 Homes is an initiative created by Manchester University which works closely with Manchester City Council to promote Best Practice in student heavy areas. They work to educate students on their responsibilities living in communities, teach them how to be good neighbours, encourage and implement student involvement in community activities, implement activities which ensure student engagement with local residents and they also support students who are moving from on campus accommodation to off campus.

Steps have also been taken by Manchester City Council and the Universities to deal with ASB problems associated with student heavy areas in the city. A report produced by the Council in 2015 details how they are working together, if the ASB is continuous the University can end the student's studies, and Noise Abatement Notices can be issued which can lead to fines. Community Protection notices can be issued to Landlords who don't take steps to prevent ASB with their tenants, which can then lead to an Abatement Notices and fines. They also state that they will issue injunctions where necessary and in more serious cases of ASB they will issue a closure of premises to the Landlord. These preventative measures work to reduce instances of ASB in student areas (Todd, 2015). There have been reports of this strategy having a favourable impact (Abbet, 2016).

Two academics in Manchester, decided to get students to reflect upon their impacts on their neighbourhoods and the city more broadly, whilst simultaneously developing and maturing key geographical techniques and analysis. To do this they integrated the study of studentification into an introductory module and called it "Introducing Human Geographies".

4.6. Cardiff

Cardiff Council has started a campaign to improve waste collection in the city. Following a period of education a zero tolerance policy was introduced in the Cathays area of the city (an area of highly concentrated student housing). 129 fixed penalty notices (£100) have been issued, for offences such as placement of rubbish, items wrongly put in recycling and waste put out for collection on the wrong day.

4.7. Sunderland

Sunderland City Council Draft Interim Student Accommodation Policy (2014) recognised that although the city has a university, it does not yet possess all the characteristics and qualities of a university city. It refers to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 which recognises the importance of city centres by pursuing policies which support their viability and vitality. The Council believes that student living can play a major role in the city centre regeneration. The socio-economic and demographics of students are quite specific to Sunderland and differs considerably from neighbouring University cities such as Newcastle and Durham whereby a high proportion of University of Sunderland students tend to reside in their parental/ own home whilst studying. Of the 12,000 on- campus students, approximately 7,000 reside within the city. Of these 7,000 students over 46% reside in private rented accommodation, with others living either in their own home, parental home or in university accommodation. Houses in multiple occupation account for the majority of the student private rented sector.

4.8. Sheffield

Sheffield has one of the largest student populations in England, with students forming 18% of the working age citizens. The number of international students living in the city has increased by 30% over the last 5 years and they now make up a fifth of the student body. There has been an increasing amount of Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) and whilst demand for this is continuing to grow, particularly from the newer international student market, Sheffield City Council recognises that existing stock is still not at full occupancy, and there is a risk that the provision of more PBSA will lead to over supply with older blocks falling empty.

It's Student Accommodation Strategy for 2014-19 recognises that city's student population brings many benefits, including: adding life and vitality to the areas in which they live, supporting local businesses and benefitting inner city urban areas. It discusses the services which are provided to support students and the communities within which they live and how students can be encouraged to actively participate in their neighbourhoods. The strategy also discusses ways in which graduate retention can be increased to strengthen the city's workforce.

KEY FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

A variety of interested groups were interviewed as part of this study. This included: landlords, residents, university representatives, student representatives, social housing providers, councillors and representatives of various statutory agencies. This section provides an overview of the key issues emerging from these interviews.

5.1. The Area

It is clear that the area has undergone considerable changes throughout the years, with a substantial reduction in the number of permanent residents. Landlords state that there are very few family houses in the area and that it is mainly made up of students. According to one respondent, there has always been a mixture of students and long-term residents, but the balance tipped between 2002 and 2004. There have been calls for a census in the area by some stakeholders and they would like to know the number of 'non-students' living in the area. There was a view that there are more non-students than people think, as one respondent stated: 'Everyone refers to students living there but I am sure there are many non-students'.

The area is clearly still very popular with students, with on-going demand from this group for accommodation in the area. Agents say they can let properties from March for the following year given there is such a high demand. The largest amount of changeovers are in August.

The area has also witnessed new types of residents moving in. There has been an increase in the number of ethnic minorities in the area (this is discussed in full later). Respondents also suggested that some people moving into the area have complex needs, including people with alcohol and drug addiction who are living in the Bail hostels located in the Holyland. Part of the reason for this choice of location for hostels is due to the area being perceived as having no affiliation with either of the traditional religions. However, one respondent felt that the provision of these hostels would not be tolerated in other areas. Landlords questioned why these bail hostels are located where they are when it is known there are vulnerable students about. 'We are not just landlords but parents as well... we do try to assist students with their problems'.

5.2. HMOs

According to the landlords many people renovated properties due to the availability of grants by the NIHE. This happened from the 1970s right through to the 2000s. NIHE HMO grant aid during this period was solely for the upgrading of existing HMO properties to fire safety and amenity standards and did not provide grant aid for the creation of new HMOs. It should be noted that before the introduction of the Planning Use Class Order in October 2004 there was no requirement to obtain planning permission to convert an existing house into a HMO and thus there was no mechanism for preventing the creation of New HMO properties in the Holyland area.

The landlords interviewed were of the opinion that the Holyland was never really an area for family homes. According to many respondents most of the properties in the area are HMOs with residents estimating that 80-90% of properties in the area are HMO. Landlords interviewed all agreed that all HMOs in the area are registered, however, residents disagreed with this. Table 7 below indicates the total number of HMO's registered in the Central Ward, the Housing Executive correlate statistics based on electoral wards, the Holyland is included within the Belfast Central Ward.

Table 9: HMOs in the Central Ward, February 2019

Total known HMOs in Central Ward	Registered HMO	HMOs Exempt from Registration(A)	Currently going through the registration process	Ongoing legal action
1508	1464	15	25	4

Source: NIHE

(A) Houses Exempt from Registration:

- 1) Residential homes, within the meaning of the Registered Homes (NI) Order 1992 and the Health and Personal Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (NI) Order 2003;
- 2) Children's homes or community homes within the meaning of the Children (NI) Order 1995;
- 3) Boarding schools;
- 4) Any building or part of a building which is occupied principally for the purposes of a religious community whose principal occupation is prayer, contemplation, education or the relief of suffering;
- 5) Properties owned by the Housing Executive;
- 6) Any HMO which is occupied by persons who comprise no more than two families;
- 7) Any HMO which is occupied by no more than two persons in addition to the owner (or owners) and members of the family (or families) of owner(s).

It should be noted that these exemption categories have since changed with the enactment of the new HMO legislation in April 2019.

There is disagreement between respondents about the efficacy of enforcement of HMO legislation, with University Representatives suggesting limited enforcement by NIHE, and that it was not enforcing inspections of HMOs. The NIHE states it sent letters asking landlords to take reasonable practical steps to reduce anti-social behaviour in their properties as part of the multi-agency initiative which stakeholders and statutory agencies were involved in.

Table 10: HMO Inspections in Central Ward

Year	Inspections of existing HMOs(B)	Investigatory visits to ascertain if a house is in HMO usage
16/2015	741	68
17/2016	461	27
31 – 2017 Jan 2018	389	89

Source: NIHE, February 2018

(B)Inspection Categories:

- 1) Initial Inspections
- 2) Management Inspections
- 3) Final inspections

The NIHE insisted that it had a robust enforcement regime (see Table 9) and that all HMOs have been inspected. Ten per cent of HMOs are to be monitored every year. According to section 6.3 of the Statutory Registration Scheme, the 10% figure is exceeded annually in the Central Ward (see Table 8). At present, there are about 24 going through the registration process and the vast majority are registered and those that are not are probably in single numbers. The organisation also does inspections on general properties to see if they require registration. It provided the following table on inspections of properties from 2015 to January 2018 and the associated articles under which it operates.

Table 11: HMO Enforcement Notices Issues in Central Ward

Year	Article 13	Article 76	Article 79	Article 80	Article 85
16/2015	35	0	245	24	0
17/2016	35	0	118	9	0
31 – 2017 Jan 2018	14	1	67	10	1

Source: NIHE (February 2018)

Article 13, Housing (NI) Order 1981 as inserted: **Powers of Entry**

Article 76, Housing (NI) Order 1992: **Overcrowding in houses in multiple occupation**

Article 79, Housing (NI) Order 1992: **Power to require work to make good neglect of proper standards of management**

Article 80, Housing (NI) Order 1992: **Power to require execution of works to render premises fit for number of occupants**

Article 85, Housing (NI) Order 1992: **Directions to prevent or reduce overcrowding in houses in multiple occupation**

A local public representative referred to the failure of public policy in the area with too many HMOs. He suggested that the number of HMOs has to be reduced as some streets have 80-90%. They should begin at the river and work up.

'Landlords in the 70s and 80s were incentivised to go there because of the growing number of students. DfC has no interest in changing these to family homes'

However, according to Belfast City Council, HMOs are not the problem, but rather the intensification in the area resulting from the sub division of properties into flats. One of the core issues within the area is the intensity of housing – large properties are sub-divided into flats (although the NIHE point out that the Statutory definition of a HMO – Article 75 of the Housing (NI) Order 1992 - includes houses converted into flats when there are more than 3 people from 2 or more families within the overall building). The current policy, The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan 2015 has stopped more HMOs within the area – this introduced a cap to the level of HMOs within any area of 30 per cent. The NIHE states that it had adopted this approach since 2008. This policy has had the unintended consequence, however, of encouraging the development of the sub-division of properties into flats. However, from a policy perspective this makes the issues more difficult to address than if the properties were all HMOs. It is more difficult to police these as they are within residential use whereas HMOs are not. They are trying to manage flat conversions. They are also trying to remove To Let signs.

Landlords suggested that all HMOs should be located in the Holyland area and called for HMOs from across the Ormeau Road to be moved into the Holyland.

9.1.1. Conditions

Some respondents believe that a lot of houses would lose HMO status due to their poor condition, and do not meet the safety criteria for HMOs. It was suggested that the NIHE and Belfast City Council need to look at HMOs and stage an intervention. Several respondents stated that a lot of the properties in the area are in poor condition – both internally and externally. Indeed, one respondent stated: “parts of Holyland are like slums”. Additionally, the fact that properties were in poor condition, meant that the students were less likely to keep the properties clean and tidy.

“...landlords don't keep the properties in good condition....so students don't treat it with respect”.

Residents suggested a fitness survey or house condition survey carried out in the area to establish levels of unfitness. However, the NIHE states that none of the properties it inspected in the Central Ward failed the Statutory Fitness test in the last 10 years, and that all Registered HMOs comply with Section 4 of the Statutory Registration Scheme which states:

1. The house shall meet all the requirements set out in Article 80(2) of the Housing (NI) Order 1992, or any re-enactment or statutory modification;
2. The house shall be fit for human habitation under the terms of the Housing (NI) Order 1981, or any re-enactment or statutory modification;

3. The house shall be managed in compliance with the Housing (Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Regulations (NI) 1993, or any re-enactment or statutory modification;
4. Valid, current certificates are available for:
 - The electrical installation, confirming compliance with the applicable edition of the I.E.E. Regulations. Where the property is less than 5 years old a letter or statement issued by Building Control confirming date of completion will be accepted instead;
 - Any gas installation, as issued within the last year by a Gas Safe registered installer, or by any other regulatory body appointed by the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland to regulate gas installations and appliances.

It was suggested that some landlords may be in negative equity due to the soaring property prices prior to the financial downturn, hence making it difficult to afford proper upgrade and maintenance. In contrast, Queen's University refurbishes its buildings every seven years.

Some respondents said that standards are up but there is still a lot of overcrowding with people claiming not be separate families. According to the NIHE it has inspected a number of properties occupied by tenants claiming to be family but which were reported to be in HMO usage. In the majority of houses inspected within the Holyland area the Information ascertained from the occupants indicate that these are large single family homes. Of those cases which were in HMO usage statutory notices were issued to remedy any neglect.

A local representative acknowledged that there is a difficulty in getting some people to register as there is no requirement to do so. Some newcomer families in particular say they are living as one family and that is their culture. It is believed that the vast majority of unsafe housing is with newcomer and BME communities. In December 2017 the NIHE along with BCC held a public meeting specifically for newcomer communities in the Holyland area informing them about safety issues.

New licensing laws for HMO'S came into effect in April 2019 (via the Housing in Multiple Occupation Act 2016), which means that HMO's need to have a license issued. One of the main aims of this legislation is to protect the health and safety of tenants.

The Queens PBMSA team felt that some landlords are renting accommodation which is in relatively poor condition, and that the relevant authorities lacked the resources to deal with this in a comprehensive way.

They also point out that the area has a disproportionate number of former offenders in residence there.

5.3. Issues in the area

Rubbish

Most respondents mentioned that there is a huge amount of waste being generated, given the sheer number of people living in the area. Landlords and agents were critical of Belfast City Council and its response to rubbish. They point out that the council only spends about £200k on rubbish collection whereas they pay over £1 million in rates. The University Representatives suggested that landlords should be levied for cleaning the area: "if landlords want a private precinct then they should pay for it" Residents also refer to the amount of rubbish lying around.

'Look at the gardens...no enforcement...people know they are going to get away with it. There is very little enforcement from BCC for rubbish lying in front of properties'

University Representatives also criticised the authorities for not enforcing cleaning or car parking but instead they tend to go for the softer targets.

Some respondents describe the whole place as a slum. Belfast City Council says that car parking makes it difficult to access the streets to collect rubbish. It also says that recycling is difficult because of the transient nature of students.

Parking

Residents refer to parking in the area or lack of it and have called for controlled parking zones. In 2019 a Residents Parking Scheme was introduced in College Park Avenue and Rugby Road with 117 parking spaces for residents and 119 pay and display spaces. This is the only scheme in NI to date. There are no parking restrictions in the rest of the area resulting in some people using the area to park at no cost and walk into town.

'More and more people bring their cars into the area even in last three years'. BCC states that as part of its strategy for car parks 'it is thinking of putting a multi storey car park into the South Belfast area. There are currently 16 car parks.'

Anti-Social Behaviour and crime

Interviewees reported various issues, ranging from low level anti-social behaviour to criminal activity. One of the most common complaints was with noise – in particular with students leaving bars late at night and then having parties. However, there was also reports of more serious issues such as cars getting damaged.

This anti-social behaviour and criminal activity was reported to happen across the whole term, but at different levels, and at different scales at different times. For example, Freshers week, Halloween and St Patricks day are times when the issues worsened, with a quieter period over exam times.

One local representative stated that students gravitate more to the Ormeau Road for times like St Patrick's day. He says that after Freshers week everything settles down then there is the odd blip although more recently Sunday Monday Tuesday and Wednesdays have become more problematic. Large numbers of students leaving local bars at 1am create street noise. This becomes a recurrent problem for residents and professionals renting in the area. He says

'There needs to be a community.. the balance has gone.. there is a drinking mentality . Students in the Holyland are very contained to that area and lower Ormeau.. don't seem to reach out to Botanic Avenue.. you get the sense they are not welcome there'

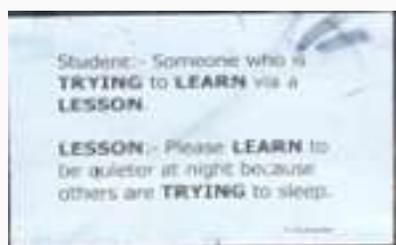
Residents stated that it was not just students at fault, that their friends, and others from outside the area were causing problems. As one interviewee stated: "it's not just students in the area getting on this way – all the scum of the country are coming into the area at certain times of the year"

Indeed, the PSNI has recorded this ward as the ward with the highest level of Anti-social behaviour, and that it is a consistent issue for the PSNI.

Residents spoke of the huge impact this has on their lives. It was reported that the vast majority of residents are on some form of medication to help them sleep. Those with children, have to move children into different rooms at night if there is too much noise. As one interviewee summed up: 'At the moment children have to stay with relatives due to the noise during the week.. Some people get earplugs to sleep.. other residents are getting medication ..others are considering selling their properties and moving elsewhere'

The severity of what some residents have experienced is demonstrated in the following quotes: "I was out....but at 10.30pm I had to go home, it was too dangerous. It was just too dangerous on the street last night"..... "I have been threatened before, I have been assaulted before".

Residents say that many long-term residents have moved out of the areas due to anti social behaviour. It is not only residents that suffer as a result of this poor behaviour. A lot of students live in the area, and the poor behaviour of some has an impact on all the students and can impact on their academic work. As one respondent put it: by "living in the Holyland it is negatively impacting on what they are trying to achieve at University".



Sign put up by residents in Holyland area, taken on 11/10/17

Safety and well-being of students

The Universities are increasingly concerned with safety and well-being of students but according to their representatives much of the crime in the area goes unreported. It would be of benefit to get residents to report things for them. One area Agincourt Avenue is called 'the strip' by landlords but there is a lot of crime here unreported. They are surprised that crime hasn't escalated. Anecdotally, a number of sexual assaults have gone unreported.

One local representative also referred to crimes in relation to the vulnerability of girls.. 'Some residents have taken girls into their house to sober them up on the sofa'.

However, a different viewpoint emerged from discussions with landlords. They agreed that the area provided safety for not only the students but also the newcomer and BME communities in the area. As students are integrated in the area they feel safe walking home. Some BME communities had moved in from other nearby areas where they had been subject to abuse.

According to the Landlords there are a few 'serial complainers'. Landlords said:

'the area is 95% students so residents need to raise their tolerance levels. 5% of residents want 95% to be quieter. Demographics have changed so people need to make allowances.'

Landlords state that they are careful who they put adjacent to residents. The landlords highlighted that the media portrayal of the area is not an accurate reflection – that the image that is portrayed on St Patricks Day is wrong.

5.4.Responsibility for ASB

There was a general criticism that there is no governance and no oversight and there has been a decrease in the number of police in the area. The Universities state that they don't have any statutory enforcement powers yet police and others forward everything to them for action.

According to a local councillor the Council needs more rigorous byelaws such as alcohol consumption especially St Patrick's day.

'Everything with the Council tends to be under review but nothing seems to get done'

He also suggested that landlords should have responsibility for tenants behaviour in the area. They have a moral responsibility on how their properties are being used. There should be something in the tenancy agreement. He suggested that the quality of accommodation may have an impact on behaviour and academic performance as the problem is 'there are too many students who see it as run down and don't have any interest in the area. They see it as transient'.

One local estate agent, however, stated that the vast majority of students are decent sensible and well brought up. "Some times when the drink is in the wit is out but the vast majority are nice. In the last six months I have had only two complaints".

According to the representative from Lacuna Developments the Holyland needs a more robust inspection process. At present landlords can't be held corporately responsible in the Holyland particularly for students partying in the street.

In his PBMSA developments they have corporate responsibility for their residents. Security is paid for and management plans have to be signed off by BCC. The management company has to be accredited. At his developments they insist students have guarantors who can be contacted if there is a breach of the regulations.

According to University representatives NIHE and Housing Rights should be going to schools and educating young people coming to Belfast about their rights in group housing. The NIHE, states however that over the last couple of years four schools have been visited.

5.5.Residents and Families

Residents interviewed stated that they were “totally frustrated”, and asked why the authorities were allowing this to happen. On the one hand they stated that something needs to be done now, however, they were also mindful that any solution to the problems will not be found overnight.

The residents believed that they are being treated differently to others, and the issue is around enforcement. The residents do not believe that there is a will to enforce. They stated that Belfast City Council takes a graduated approach to the Holyland, but that this approach doesn't take place in the city centre. An example was given of drinking alcohol – if someone is drinking alcohol in the city centre or dropping litter the law is enforced and the person is fined. However, they felt that this isn't the case in the Holyland – it's a warning and alcohol is taken from them, there are no fines.

Residents refer to the area as a “student / sectarian ghetto that needs rebalancing.” They feel that this “student ghetto” was created by the state. From the residents' perspective, they would like to see a demographic rebalancing – they feel that it should be about the development and rebuilding of a community. The residents suggested that landlords should be required to let out a certain percentage of the properties to long-term residents (30% was suggested).

However, landlords stated that the only way families would move into the area is if the current dwellings were demolished and replaced with houses with gardens. All of the properties are now fit for a certain purpose. According to a public representative, he would like to see the streets populated by families. He said the area is showing signs of change although the student population is unlikely to change soon but he did suggest that they should keep the area they have for residents and maybe wall them off from the rest. One housing leader suggested that they should go further and

‘vest the properties from the residents and create a proper student village for students only. The residents would be glad to get the market value for their properties and the new student village could be well managed and maintained.’

He also said there: ‘should be support for the resident community.. maybe a worker or a regeneration source. Ultimately there is a need to make more accommodation available rather than dumping people in the area.’

The residents are proud of the diversity in the area. We want a balanced community. .. We welcomed the Roma community..”

5.6. Community

Transient community

Many respondents felt that there is an absence of community, and that this is due to the largely transient nature of tenants. There is a small population of residents, but some felt that there is no sense of cohesion in the area. They pointed to other nearby areas like the Village, where they felt residents are empowered, they can apply for funding etc. There is more of a community ethos in these areas, not so in the Holyland.

Roma and Ethnic minority communities

Over recent years new minority ethnic communities are moving in, the largest minority group being members of the Roma community. There were different figures given as to the number of Roma living in the area: one interviewee stated there are around 1,000 whilst another stated that there are currently 1500-1800 members of the Roma community. The Holyland is viewed as a safe place for them to live and they are spread throughout the area.

However, this group is facing various issues, particularly around rent levels which are quite high for the families. They also have difficulty getting new properties. It was claimed by several interviewees that the Roma are housed in the worst – substandard accommodation. Examples were given of no electric in house, another no working toilet. However, it was also reported that they are afraid to complain – they are afraid that they will be evicted.

It was pointed out that there are now 100s of children in the area mainly amongst the Roma community. However, there aren't enough school places in St Mary's P.S and Botanic P.S. The Roma are engaging in schools and with the education welfare officer. An additional problem is the lack of local secondary schools in the area.

There is no safe play area for children and no pedestrian crossings, and one interviewee stated that 'it is only a matter of time before a child is killed or seriously injured.. then this will be taken more seriously but then it will be too late.'

The PBMSA team at Queen's University stated that with the significant migrant community there are minor clashes as many of the children are now older and won't tolerate the behaviour of students.

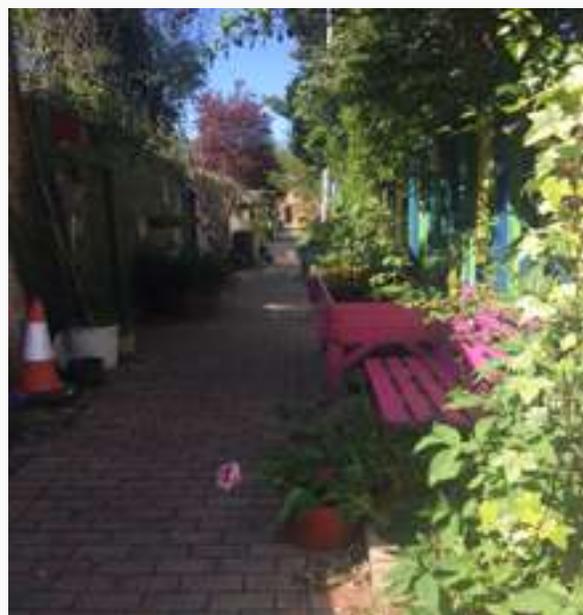
There is an Integrating Roma Tension Monitoring Group which operates NI-wide and meets every six weeks. The members are from BCC, PSNI, Fire and Rescue Service, Queen's University and community groups. Most of the work with the Roma community is in the lower Ormeau and Holyland area.

5.7. Positive impact of students

Both landlords and residents were keen to highlight the benefits that the students bring to the area. Landlords state that it is important to recognise the benefits that students bring to the area particularly in terms of financial spending in local restaurants shops and pubs. As one landlord puts it: *‘South Belfast lives on the student weekend (Tuesday to Thursday) particularly taxi drivers’*. Landlords stated they employ local people.

Residents were keen to highlight the positive impact that students can and do bring to an area. As one resident stated: *“the negative impact of the student population is always highlighted, the positive impact is lost amongst the negative press. The students do a lot of amazing things, and there are a lot of good citizens in the area. But that is being lost, tarnished and destroyed”*.

Student volunteers have participated in local regeneration, however, as has been stated previously, these are usually not students who live in the Holyland area. The Wildflower Alley initiative is developed in the residential core of the area and efforts to extend it to the mainly student area have been difficult because of ongoing anti-social behavior.



Wildflower Alley, Belfast. Photograph taken on 11/10/17

5.8.Landlords

Some respondents claim that landlords are a 'law unto themselves'. Indeed, several interviewees reported difficulties working with landlords, that: "it's a one-way street".

Several interviewees stated that some landlords operate with poor practices, for example, landlords charge £35 if they have to call out about noise. The landlords with the largest portfolios were singled out: residents believe that there are three landlords with large portfolios in the area turning over £6-7 million in rent. They say that these landlords prefer to pack houses with students. One respondent stated that ultimately, they (the landlords) benefit from the party atmosphere as it encourages students to come into the area.

It was pointed out by one respondent that the age of the landlords may have some effect as some have been operating for 30 years. She asks what will happen when they go?

It was felt that: "No-one is enforcing the rules or regulations for landlords. Not the NIHE/BCC/PSNI". It was suggested that a 'Rate your Landlord' scheme should be introduced as one method of improving the practices of landlords. According to the NIHE, 659 enforcement notices have been issued since April 2015 in Central Ward.

Whilst there is a somewhat fractious relationship between landlords and residents, one resident stated: "private landlords are the only ones who can do anything, so we need to work together".

Whilst residents listed several issues with landlords, City Church, believed that there had been some progress made. They stated: "in reality, landlords have started to become more involved. For example, with clearing up the area. But they need to take more social responsibility on. As an example, of the improvements – one Saturday morning, City Church, BCC and landlords tackled graffiti and cleared up the area. This could be done again".

5.9.Management

The management of the area (or lack of) was a key concern for many. From the landlords perspective, they are already managing the area. They feel that they already offer pastoral support to the students, and that they act as parents to their tenants as well as trying to sort out any issues with the property. They stated that they have staff there every day dealing with issues. Landlords referred to the area as a 'student precinct' or a 'student village'. The area is so attractive to students that they can let properties in March for September of each year. "Students feel safe in the area as do the Roma community". They also state that parents choose to send their children to the Holyland as they know the area. They proposed that a Management Board should be established to run the area.

The residents believe that the landlords should be paying more – through increased rates – to be funding additional services. As one resident stated: "Landlords call it a student village. Landlords should be levied – they should be charged for wardens, parking, clearing up, health and safety etc. If landlords want a private precinct they will have to pay for it". Landlords, however, stated that they would be prepared to put money into the area to help the external environment.

It became apparent from the interviews that the issue of who should take responsibility is a key concern, with interviewees giving examples of how they felt different bodies had not fulfilled their responsibilities. For example:

- “The council have taken a step back”
- “BCC need to take a grasp of the issues – not leave it all to the universities”.
- “Landlords don’t take on responsibility for their tenants”
- “The PSNI are not doing enough”.
- “Politicians don’t care for the area as there are no votes for them.”
- “Some residents are serial complainers”

According to the Universities, ‘there is no shared vision and no one working to broker one.. no one has brought them all together’. Several interviewees felt that there is not the political commitment (despite the rhetoric) to the area. As one put it: ‘Students in the area don’t vote as they mainly go home to vote.. that’s why politicians don’t bother’.

5.10. Statutory Agencies

The residents state that the area is not considered an area of disadvantage and therefore does not meet the criteria to attract funding given the high concentration of students. As one resident stated: ‘There is a dynamic of who is living here... there is an absence of community. Other areas like the Village have been good at attracting funding but in this area it is difficult’.

Belfast City Council agreed that it is not considered high risk with high deprivation, that the only factor that puts it at high risk is crime. “It isn’t an area that is socially deprived so it doesn’t get the funding.” The Race Relations Officer stated that with the increasing Roma population, deprivation is also increasing in the area but it still hasn’t been designated as a Neighbourhood Renewal Area.

A local politician referred to a policy of containment whereby statutory agencies are looking at the area and saying there is no political interest. They further argued that there has been a gradual disengagement by statutory agents. An example of this was the withdrawal of CCTV and wardens - other areas tend to be prioritised.

‘The question is how do you energise those involved? I haven’t seen any changes in the nature of complaints made to me in the last three years’

Landlords were particularly critical of the PSNI and BCC roles in the area. Indeed, another respondent felt that it should be the City Council looking at issues such as noise, waste management and regeneration, and that they should coordinate inter-agency working. Again it was suggested that if it was a quarter of a mile away there would be a different response from the statutory authorities particularly regarding anti-social behaviour, and with BCC it isn’t the number one issue in the city but is in the top 10.

Belfast City Council stated that they are developing Neighbourhood Area plans for the North, South, East and West of the city. They are looking at the whole wider neighbourhood rather than specifically at the Holyland. The emerging Local Development Plan will deal with existing land uses and will be looking city wide and not just at students but families also.

The LDP (Local Development Plan) is not going to be a solution to all the problems.. we can prevent concentration happening... very little can be done about existing housing stock... can influence direction of market changes'

There was also a general view that the key stakeholders need to be engaging with each other more.

5.11. Universities

According to the residents the universities have "abdicated their responsibilities". They feel that the role of the Universities is a pastoral role. Students are entering into an agreement with their university, and because of that the disciplinary procedures of the University are very important. Not least to the reputation of the Universities. They feel that there is a certain responsibility for students from the University and that the Universities are not holding up their responsibilities.

The University Representatives say that they have managed it to the best of their ability, have been very responsive, have a social responsibility and their utmost concern is the health and safety of students. The universities began in 2004-05 after the spotlight programme and the bad press. They took the lead and funded 10 wardens after the bad press coverage. £25k was committed from each University and in 2006 the first schemes were dedicated only for the Holyland. They were so good that BCC funded the scheme to go city wide. After a particularly bad St Patricks Day in 2009, Universities increased funding to £75K each. The University Representatives stated that between 2009-12 the PSNI and NIHE paid and it was mainly in the evenings 4pm – 3am. Wardens didn't have any enforcement powers and they may not have been used properly and in 2012 BCC pulled out because costs had gone up so much when it was rolled out over the city. Universities put a proposal of £75k each and asked police to contribute but they said no.

A Belfast councillor was adamant that wardens need to be reintroduced as at the moment there are 8 for the whole city

Another interviewee stated that bringing back the wardens would be good for reporting, and good for early intervention. However, they went on to say that they didn't solve the problem when they were here...."they are not the solution to the problem, but can be part of a solution".

Queen's University stated that a full time officer patrols the Holyland. There is a Community Engagement Team of three also working in the area. They are mostly dealing with first year students and they have to make very clear boundaries. They have a two strike policy for noise after 11pm or if it is unacceptable. They have received no complaints around the Elms. If students breach rules they get a written warning and for a second offence they are called in and go through the disciplinary procedures. The University also stated that it runs workshops in March to prepare students going into the private sector..

5.12.PBMSAs

Some interviewees believed that we will not see a largescale movement of students from the Holyland to the PBMSA. There are several reasons for this, but the main reason relates to cost. The rental levels in PBMSA was noted by all interviewees to be considerably higher than that found in the more traditional student housing in the Holyland. A student union representative stated that: “students want freedom and cheap prices. Students in the main don't care about quality”.

Landlords agreed that there was a significant difference in rental costs for students choosing PBMSA and students living in the Holyland, and that cost is a critical factor to local students. ‘Students in the Holyland only pay £8 per night per person.’ There was a general consensus that the PBMSAs were much more expensive as you can get a place in the Holyland for £240 per person per month. The PBMSA is for 42 weeks although it includes everything. It was stated that we are a low wage economy so you won't get people moving out of the Holyland.

The representative from Lacuna Developments referring to the extra costs said that the £70 difference sounds a lot but when you take in all of the extras including contents insurance and general maintenance it is good value for money. “In the Holyland they have to get taxis to come into city centre whereas in his developments they don't.”

One local estate agent stated that 200 of his lets each year alone would be people coming out of halls into 2nd year. Cost is a primary consideration. More international students are coming as there is no cap on this whereas there is a cap on local students.

He also suggested that the nature of the accommodation and how it is built is not attractive to local students. “There is no living room with settee. The kids coming to university here all know each other and in many cases are friends who have been to school together”. He stated that “We are more colloquial here than in other places. They want a living room for 5 rather than a communal area for 200.”

He stated that carparking is an issue, “Do you want your daughter walking home late at night?”

He said that 90% of students have part time jobs which they go home for that's why they go for the cheaper accommodation as they don't stay in Belfast for the full week but only a few days.

He pointed out that in the city centre there is no car parking and many of them need a car as they live in rural areas where public transport isn't the best and they need to get home for football training etc. Landlords also highlighted the fact that you can't park your car at the PBMSA.

The additional rules within PBMSA were viewed by landlords to be too restrictive. In addition, landlords pointed out that most students have part time jobs and go home for these so are only up a few nights a week at most. The local letting agent pointed to the fact that all of our students leave on a Thursday and don't come back maybe until a Tuesday.

There was also agreement amongst landlords and agents that students preferred to live with those they are familiar with. One letting agent said that he let a house to 5 students who were friends who went to school together and that was a pattern that landlords agreed on as many of the students who live in Holyland knew each other before coming into the area and generally sought accommodation together rather than sharing with strangers.

Landlords suggested that John Bell house was 50% empty but there was no way of proving this. The representative from Lacuna Developments denied that occupancy was low stating that they have had 90% occupancy since day one. There are 413 beds in John Bell house and they brought Fresh Student Living in from GB to manage them. He also dismissed claims that his company was renting to non-students as planning restrictions mean they have to rent to students. They can, however, let to others but only for a short term as they have 44 or 50 week leases.

In the Belfast market students want clusters where they have shared living rooms whereas the studios are self-contained. Studios are 10% void. He also stated that there is an even spread of UU and QUB students but also Belfast Metropolitan College and Stranmillis.

The majority are first year students and the reason for this is that parents want them to be safe. "The parents want the pastoral care and don't want the Holyland because of the ASB." Some are already booking for next year who currently live in the Holyland. He went on to say that Lacuna is offering choice. Students nowadays don't want to be in the Holyland type of accommodation. In his developments they get pastoral care, high speed internet, city centre living, 24 hour security, and brand new en-suites. He did confirm that although Botanic Studios on the Dublin Road isn't full, it is still going well. They are all studio flats and they are already taking bookings for next year. Holyland has a place for students and Lacuna is not trying to close down the Holyland.

Unlike the Holyland, there are no issues with residents around John Bell House as it is well managed and has no ASB. His view is that Holyland should be more mixed use. It is a very attractive part of Belfast and it needs its character back and its sense of importance. Students should be spread around the city and not be living in clusters in one area.

PBMSA brings life back into the city centre and students shouldn't be living in strong congregations with no control. "If we want to grow as a city and attract and retain young people we need PBMSAs that attract and retain the students." He emphasised that we also need build to rent in the city to retain young people. "People coming into the city will go for independent accommodation. We provide accommodation that we have invested a lot of money in".

The Ulster University (UU) said it wants students to move in greater numbers out of the Holyland into the PBMSAs that are being built in North Belfast. It says that students will have a much wider student experience in PBMSAs and that's the message it wants to get across.

The university wants to develop a student community and put on events to attract them to stay all week as many only stay two days per week and fulfil all their requirements at home. If UU activities are increased in the area it will give them a proper student experience meaning they will stay in the area longer and enjoy the range of activities that will be provided for them.

The university also admits it is very keen to attract International Students. Most of them will want to live in Belfast where they will want quality accommodation.

A number of respondents mentioned that UU is trying to get a deal done with Turkington's in the PBMSA located near its York Street site where rents will be subsidised. The University admitted that it may be awarding accommodation bursaries to some students to assist with their rents. It wants to introduce 4500 student bursaries to help with the rent for low income groups and funding will come from the current widening participation budget and from the student support grant. The university is worried, however, that landlords in the Holyland will reduce their rents to compete

The QUB PBMSA team confirmed that its university wanted at least 1000 bed spaces by 14/15 or 15/16. Unlike examples in other cities, QUB didn't want to outsource the PBMSA but keep control. The university, as a result, went to tender and agreed a deal with Mc Aleer & Rushe for an additional 1237 rooms. This would give them 3484 in the city. According to the team "QUB has invested £70m but you never hear this in that narrative around the new provisions. There is a lot of talk around York Street but QUB is the only institution that had moved on this and not UU BCC or NIHE" According to the team there is a range of PBMSAs but no real discussion around QUB provision.

Management is important and the QUB Strategy is to put in place support structured for students from the day they arrive to the day they leave. Safety is of primary importance. "We only ask them to pay for 38 weeks £75 per week or £2800 to £130 per week or £4900. Private operators start at £130 per week for 44 weeks or £6100" They have had nearly 1000 applicants already and they only opened applications in the last week of January. They state that there has a lot of false information going around about cost.

They refer to the fact that in the Holyland last year alone there were 6 suicides mostly linked to drug or alcohol. For safety QUB has staff on site 24 hours a day for 365 days a year. They have a large daytime team and a sizeable night time team. Safety teams patrol the spaces from 7pm to 7am.

They also have a Residential Life team. They bring in qualified youth workers for this as well as using student peers. They are targeting 350 events to engage 11700 students. All of the new accommodation will be run in an identical way. 6 Residential life co-ordinators who are qualified youth workers will work with student volunteers (at present there are 16 but it can go up to 24). They are trying to make students respect others and are concerned with cultural inclusivity and diversity. According to the team third year students want to come back as they are fed up with the Holyland especially the extra bills they didn't expect and the poor conditions. In QUB they get 24 hr hot water, free WiFi, group study spaces, free coffee.

There was a view from Belfast City Council that the move of UU into the north of the city might create another Holyland. There are a lot of developments in the planning stages, however, some developers are “hanging back” to see how other developments are getting on. The recent announcement by Ulster University, that the move to Belfast Campus has been delayed will undoubtedly impact on the timing of the new developments coming onstream in the North Belfast area. Nonetheless, when the PBMSA in North Belfast is built, the question was raised as to how will Ulster deal with the car parking issue?

One respondent also suggested that the delay in the University moving to Belfast City Centre will mean that those PBMSAs that have been completed in the area may seek alternative ways of filling the bed spaces.

‘it could be attractive for social housing organisations such as a housing association or the NIHE taking over the letting and management for temporary accommodation or other uses. This of course would cause even more friction with the local community’

Several interviewees were concerned about an overall lack of policy on PBMSA. There is no policy guidance on the concentration of PBMSA, for example, as there is in cities in other jurisdictions. For example, both Bristol and Leeds have policy guidance in this area

5.13. Housing Associations

Landlords do not believe that many housing associations will come into the area. Indeed, they felt that it would be better if the current Housing Associations moved out of the area, stating that there is a clash of lifestyles. Landlords stated that Housing Associations should move out of the Holyland area because of a clash of lifestyles.

Their tenants wouldn’t want to come into the area as they would be surrounded by students. Furthermore, landlords believe that the current housing association tenants who are in the area are not there by choice but because of the housing selection scheme where they have to take what they are offered.

In direct contrast to this view, Housing associations said they would potentially like to contribute to the Holyland. As one Housing Association representative stated:

“we want to build prosperous, sustainable communities, so of course Housing Associations would be interested”.

One of the larger associations, Clanmil, has a number of schemes near the Holyland. These include Lavuna on the Lower Ormeau which is a family housing scheme and the old Curzon cinema where one floor is exclusively for the elderly. The association has recently provided apartments at the end of University street where it meets the Ormeau Road. It wants to buy up empty houses and make them available for sale or rent. It can also offer equity sharing. The association wants to bring properties up to habitable standard and rent them to professionals. With proper management, the association feels that you would definitely get young professionals who are coming into Belfast to work on short term contracts to live in the area if it was properly managed. Introducing mixed tenure in the area could help remove the ghetto image which is common in single tenure areas.

There is funding available through the Empty Homes fund which also means they do not have to allocate from the housing waiting list. The association, by the nature of its business, can ensure that the properties would be well maintained and antisocial behaviour would be limited. In Annadale it built 17 using empty homes funding and is now actively looking in the area along University street. The association has 18 apartments along Fitzroy Avenue in the old Simon Community Headquarters and it is actively exploring the purchase of two sites along University Street as development potential. The association is keen that the area is declared a shared neighbourhood and funding could be provided. Under Fresh start there is £50m available.

Other housing associations have shown a willingness to contribute. Another one of the largest is branching into the private rented sector as well. It would be willing to help those landlords who want to move out of the area. They could also manage properties on behalf of landlords. One of the benefits of a Housing Association using the private rented sector (PRS) is that it can select tenants rather than taking from the top of the waiting list. This is crucial when you are trying to build sustainable communities and using the PRS is a way of doing this. The problem with the Common Selection Scheme is that people have more complex needs at the top of the list. The PRS gives scope to manage mix in the area. In addition, some private landlords find it difficult to manage properties. A social housing provider can bring their managerial experience to the PRS. Housing associations have a reputational value as they are responsible in their approach. Associations could contribute to stabilising the area and they could build trust.

There was also a view that housing associations should be invited onto local boards. Housing associations would be interested in the area both for social housing and for alternative use. Co-ownership Housing association has properties in the surrounding area in Annadale Donegal Pass and Ormeau Road. People go and find a house then come to them. The organisation tends to look at larger areas and it appears that landlords can outbid people for properties in the Holyland which would indicate that it is not a place people looking to buy, want to live in. Lower income groups go to the surrounding areas and there is a perception that it is a bad area and that properties are all HMOs and not suitable for families.

'You would have to spend £10k more than what it takes to buy one to do the work'.

If somebody did the work, like another housing associations, then Co-ownership would be happy to market them. "If a housing association wanted to develop a site and sell some of the properties we would be willing to get the properties marketed."

Residents state that there is a large waiting list in South Belfast and that there should be more social housing in the area. This was also a view from the university representatives who stated that the NIHE has a high waiting list but no one wants to come in and NIHE tenants want to get out. In their view the NIHE should intervene and change the balance by reducing the number of HMOs and making it more balanced.

Landlords, however, stated: “social housing tenants who were already in the area were not there by choice, but taking what they had been offered”.

A local estate agent stated: “those who have come in through the housing associations as social tenants want to get out as quickly as possible through management transfer families with young children will not move in due to the noise”.

5.14.Housing need

It is recognised that there is a high housing need in the surrounding area. According to the NIHE in terms of need there is a huge waiting list which takes in both sides of the Ormeau Road. There is also large demand on the Lisburn road particularly for singles. There is no question of housing need for all sorts of groups.

The NIHE stated that it would be willing to encourage the acquisition of a site in the area rather than individual houses. It might not turn around the whole area but would help the area. There is difficulty on how you would do it immediately but NIHE has supported a few schemes for Clanmil at University street. Welfare reform will also increase demand for single and shared accommodation.

The NIHE would encourage more mixed tenure in the area.

Table 12: Projected Housing Requirements

Group Housing Needs Area	Housing Needs Area (HNA)	Projected Housing Requirement
South and East Belfast	Upper Ormeau	250
(Nine areas in total)	Lisburn Road	362
	Lower Ormeau	220

Source : NIHE

The NIHE has nine housing needs areas (HNAs) in South and East Belfast. According to the organisation demand in this area has remained stable over the past five years although this is not consistent over all nine HNAs. At March 2017 there were 2305 applicants on the waiting list who were considered to be in housing stress. Singles are the largest group at 60% with families at 22%. The private rented sector in South Belfast caters mainly for single applicants.

The Lisburn Road HNA area includes the University area. The social housing need assessment net projection for the next 5 years is 362. Local housing issues in the area include housing associations having difficulty in obtaining sites as the area is attractive to private sector interests who have been developing apartments for sale and latterly purpose built managed student accommodation. According to NIHE land values here are among the highest in the city.

The waiting list for the Common Landlord Area (CLA) comprising Lisburn Road, Lower Ormeau and Stranmillis is as follows:

Table 13: March 2017 Applicants

CLA	Elderly	Families	Singles	Grand Total
Lisburn Road	44 (33)	114 (73)	324 (238)	482 (344)
Lower Ormeau	7 (4)	64 (55)	205 (145)	276 (204)
Stranmillis	2 (2)	12 (8)	26 (14)	40 (24)
Area Total	53 (39)	190 (136)	555 (397)	798 (572)

Source: NIHE (In brackets applicants in housing stress >30pts)

5.15.Mixed Neighbourhood

The residents suggest that the area should have been included in the governments Together: Building a United Community (TBUC) initiative set out in 2013. A local councillor also asked why it was not part of TBUC and why it was not considered for shared neighbourhood status by the NIHE. Ballynafeigh is a shared neighbourhood and there is no reason why this area could not become one as well with perhaps a new build TBUC scheme in the area.

5.16.Solutions

Various solutions were given by interviewees:

Shared Vision for the Holyland

The Holyland cuts across various agencies. Many respondents felt that there hasn't been a shared vision of what it will look like for the future. Landlords have a vision, so do residents, so does BCC, Queen's University and Ulster University, but we need to bring these together to get a shared vision.

Partnership approach

There was general agreement that any solution has to be a partnership approach. This means all the partners - the long-term residents, new comers, statutory agencies, HEI's, landlords, students union etc.

Re-balancing

Residents felt that ideally, the numbers of students in the Holyland should be reduced to where it can be managed it. "Then we can start to re-build the community."

1. More social housing / social housing involvement
2. Intervene and change the balance by reducing the number of HMOs and in turn create more family homes (approx. 95% of houses in the area are HMOs).

Improving landlord practices

- Students Unions promoting the “rate your landlord” website.
- Inclusion of ASB clauses in tenancy agreements.
- Acceptable Behaviour contracts similar to those signed by residents going into Shared Housing Schemes provided by housing associations
- There is an APP called Next Door – you sign up for a particular area. You can report noise etc

Improving behaviour of students

- The NIHE, housing associations and organisations such as Housing Rights should intervene and restart going back to schools. You need to educate young people on their rights and what to look out for. The NIHE go out to schools to raise awareness.
- There should be public information (from NIHE/BCC) – young people are not experienced in their rights / housing issues. There should be a public information service for all students – you should know the info before you get a house in Belfast. It will drive up standards because students will know their rights.

Improving community ethos

- “there needs to be a sense of community” for a solution.
- need community infrastructure, need a paid worker to bring together the different groups.

Area

- Potential for reduced licence for bars – with earlier closing times. It may shift the problem earlier, but the residents are still getting to sleep earlier.

Evidence base

- Need a 100% census of the area
- Need a fitness survey

STUDENT SURVEY

In order to assess the motivations, experiences and future intentions of students in relation to their accommodation, a questionnaire was distributed. The questionnaire was distributed to students in further and higher education institutions in Belfast / Jordanstown. The questionnaire was sent to all students, rather than only students living in the Holyland, as broader attitudes and intentions are sought in this survey.

Methodology

A questionnaire was designed and distributed via SurveyMonkey. Students from Queens University, Ulster University and Belfast Metropolitan College were emailed a link to complete the questionnaire by their respective institutions. Queens University and Belfast Metropolitan College sent the questionnaire to all students, whilst Ulster University sent the questionnaire to students registered at Belfast and Jordanstown. In total, 549 students completed the online questionnaire. It is not possible to give a response rate due to confidentiality requirements with student email addresses (therefore the total number of emails sent is unknown). The Students Unions at both UU and QUB were particularly in encouraging responses.

Results¹

The results of the survey are presented in the following sections:

- Background information of students completing the survey
- Students living at home
- Students living in university provided accommodation
- Students living in the private rented sector
 - In private Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation
 - In “traditional” private rented student accommodation (e.g. HMO / Shared accommodation).

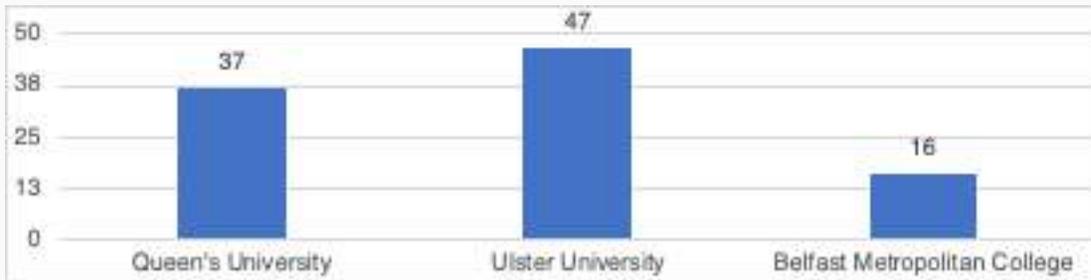
The number of respondents that answered each question is different as some responses are filtered out due to question not applicable, whilst other respondents skipped the question. The total number of respondents for each question is noted as “base” below the chart

6.1. Background Information

University / College student attends

Just under half (47%) of students that responded to the survey attend Ulster University, 37 per cent attend Queen’s University and 16 per cent attend Belfast Metropolitan College.

Figure 5: University / College (%)

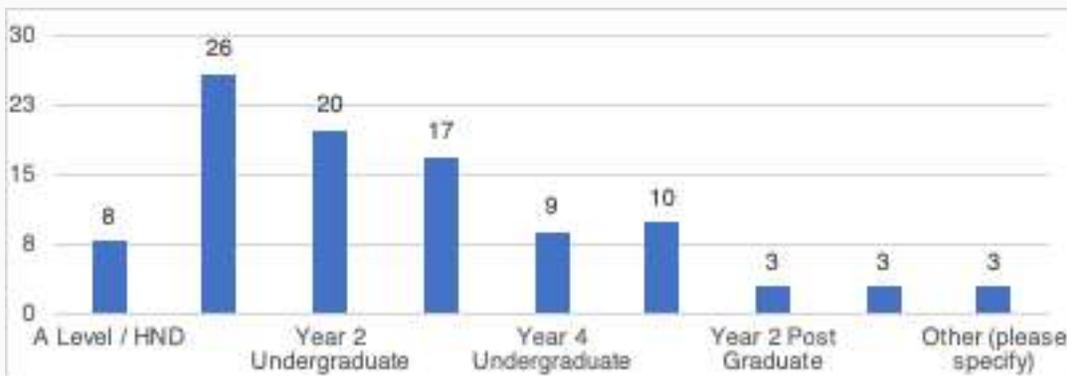


Base: 548

Year in University College

Students completing the survey included A level/ HND students (8%), undergraduate students (72%) and post graduate students (16%). Amongst undergraduate students, year 1 students were largest group of responders, however, all year groups at undergraduate level are represented in the survey. Three per cent (n19) stated “other”, this included Phd students and Access students.

Figure 6: Year of study (%)

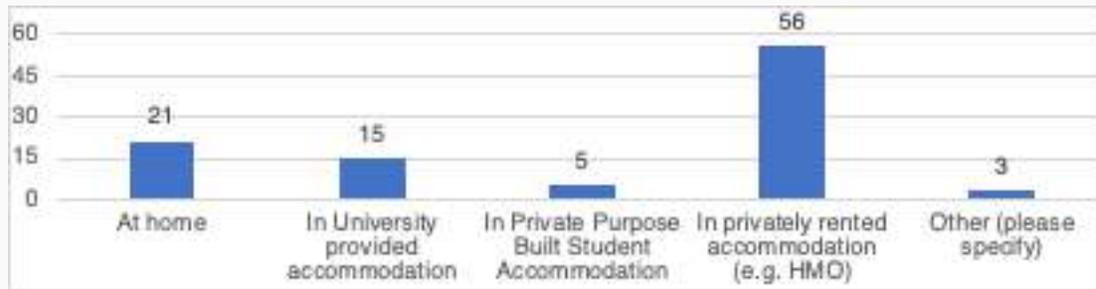


Base: 549

Previous Accommodation

Students (from year 2 undergraduate upwards) were asked a series of questions about their accommodation in the previous year. Just over half (56%) lived in traditional student privately rented accommodation, whilst one fifth (21%) lived at home. Fifteen per cent lived in University provided accommodation, and five per cent lived in private Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation. Three per cent (n11) recorded "other" accommodation type: this included living with family, living in social housing and being an owner-occupier. Two-thirds (65%) are living in the same accommodation type as they did last year.

Figure 7: Previous accommodation type (%)



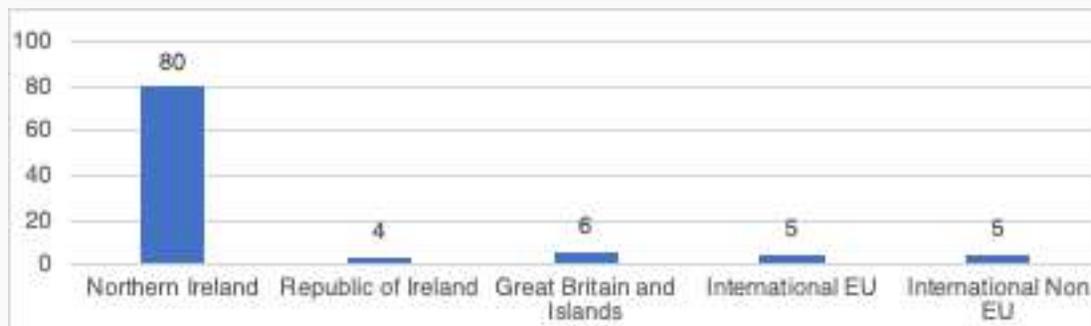
Base: 357

Where students are from

The vast majority (80%) of students that responded to the survey are from Northern Ireland. Six per cent are from Great Britain and islands, five per cent are International EU and five per cent International Non-EU. The remaining four per cent are from the Republic of Ireland.

For the six per cent of students from Great Britain and Islands (34), most (29) are from England, whilst 3 are from Scotland and 2 from Wales.

Figure 8: Where students are from (%)

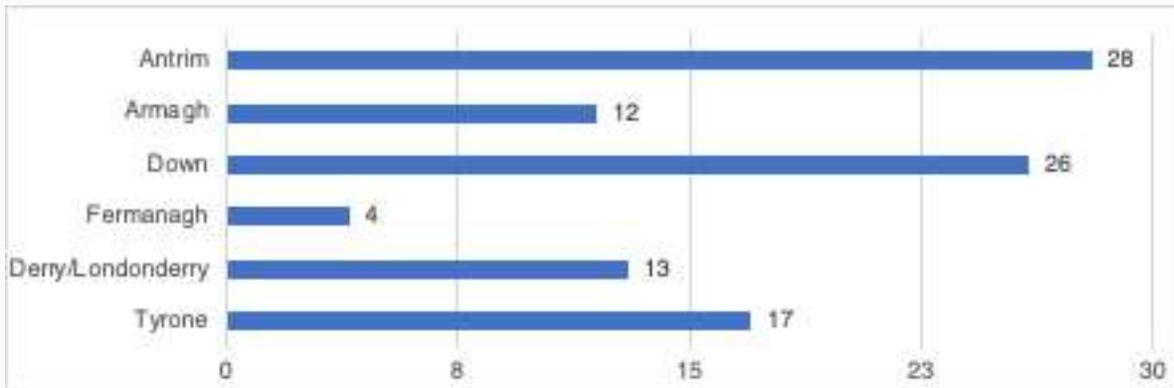


Base: 538

Home county of students from Northern Ireland

Students from Northern Ireland were asked what county in Northern Ireland they resided in outside of term time. All counties in Northern Ireland are represented in the responses, however, Antrim (28%) and Down (26%) were the most common, with only four per cent of students from Northern Ireland having a home address in County Fermanagh.

Figure 9: Home county of students from Northern Ireland (%)



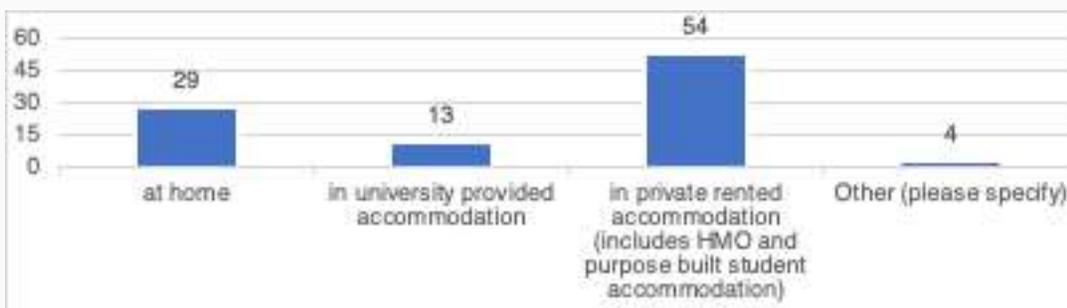
Base: 427

Tenure type

Just over half (54%) of the students that completed the survey live in the private rented sector, just over one quarter (29%) live at home, 13 per cent live in university provided accommodation and the remaining 4 per cent stated "other" (this included living with family, living in the social rented sector and living in the owner occupied sector).

Of those living in the private rented sector, almost all lived in traditional student privately rented accommodation - only a small proportion (4%, n11) lived in privately managed Purpose Built Student Accommodation.

Figure 10: Current tenure (%)

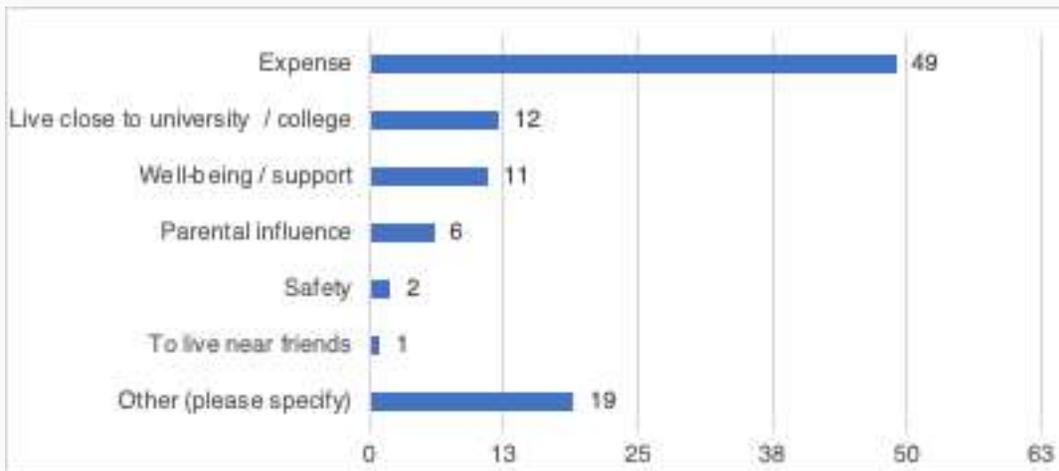


Base: 254

6.2. Students living at home

As noted above, 29 per cent (n153) of students currently live at home. These students were asked for the main reason for living at home this academic year. The most common response (49%) related to the expense of living at home when compared to other options of living away from home. Similar proportions stated that they wanted to live close to university / college (12%) or for well-being / support factors (11%). Almost one-fifth (19%, n29) gave “other” as their main reason for staying at home. There were many reasons for this, including students owning their own home, students that had children, students home was near their employment, and final year students wanting to focus on their studies.

Figure 11: Main reason for living at home (%)

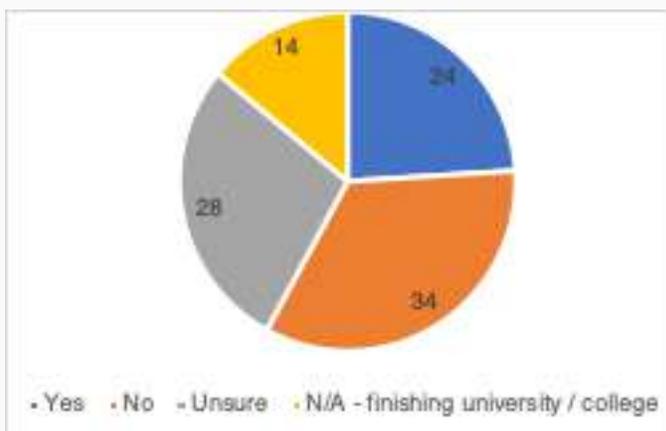


Base: 158

Students living at home: do you plan on living somewhere else next academic year

Students living at home were asked if they planned on living somewhere else next academic year. There was a mixed response to this, with one-third (34%) stating that they did not plan to live anywhere else and one-quarter (24%) stating that they did plan on living somewhere else next academic year. A substantial proportion (28%) were unsure of their living plans for next year, whilst for a further 14%, the question was not relevant as they intend on finishing their studies.

Figure 12: Students living at home: do you plan on living somewhere else next academic year? (%)

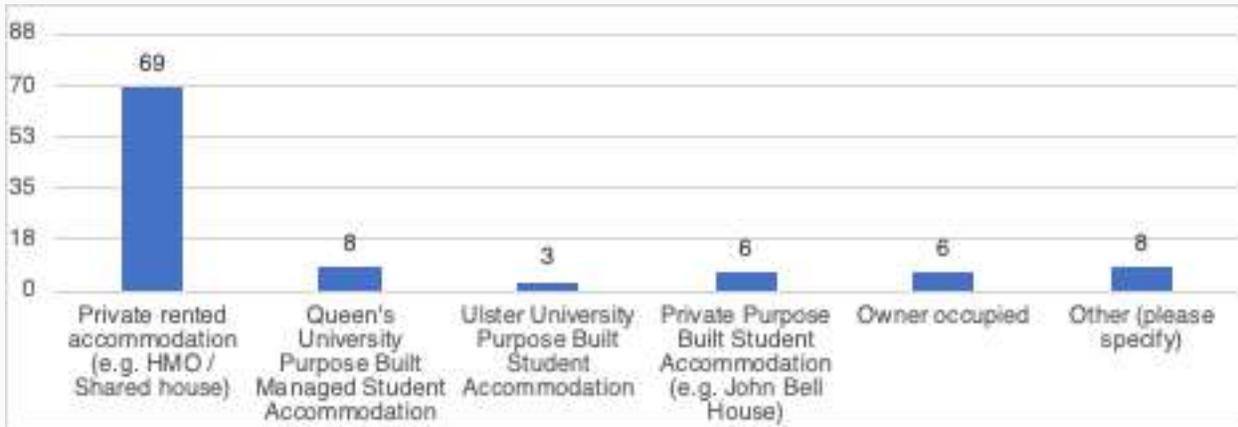


Base: 153

Students living at home: those planning on moving

Those students living at home that indicated that they plan on living somewhere else next academic year (34%, n36), were asked what type of accommodation they plan on moving to. Most (69%, n25) stated that they intend on moving to the private rented sector.

Figure 13: Where students living at home plan on moving to next academic year (%)

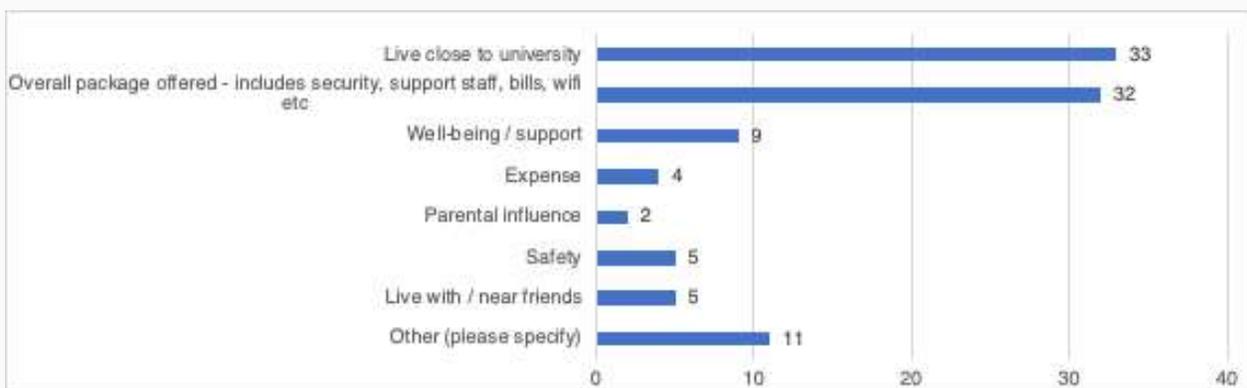


Base: 36

6.3. Students living in university provided accommodation

Students living in university provided accommodation were asked to give the main reason for choosing this type of this accommodation. One third (33%) gave the closeness to university as the main reason, whilst a similar proportion (32%) have the benefits of the overall package offered of security, support staff, bills included and wifi etc. One-tenth (11%), stated "other", this included meeting new people, and it being the "norm" for first year students.

Figure 14: Main reason for choosing university provided accommodation (%)

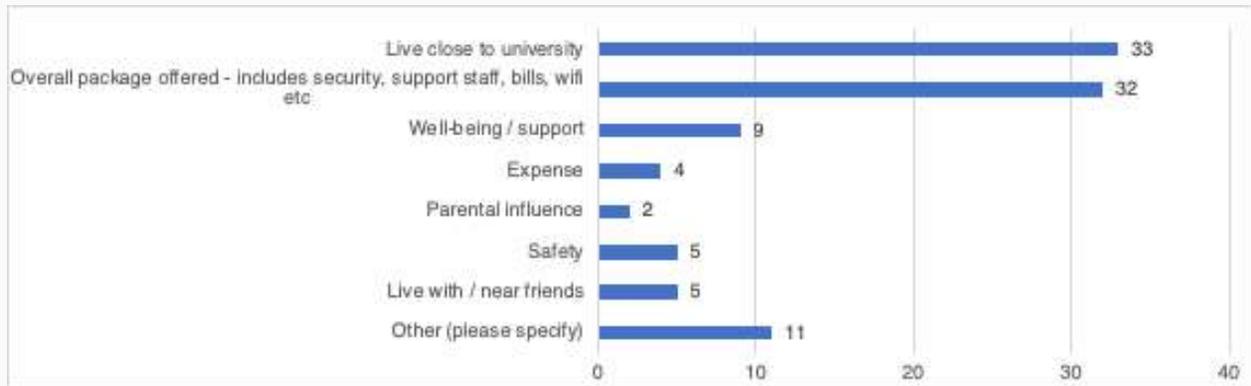


Base: 57

Average monthly rent

The average monthly rent paid by students living in university provided accommodation was £450.

Figure 15: Length of Lease (%)

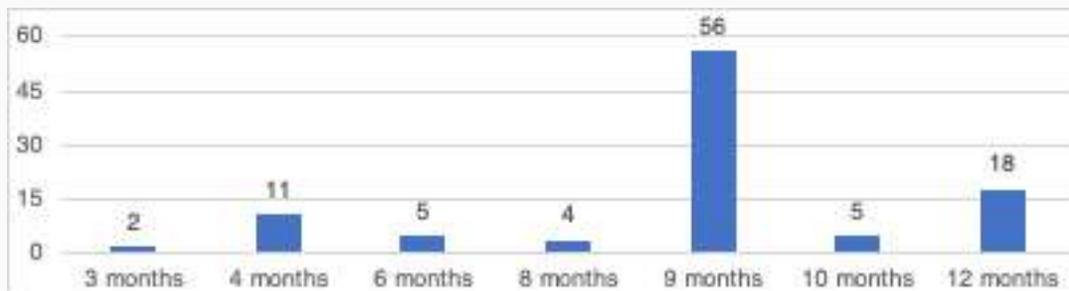


Base: 57

Length of lease

Just over half (56%) of those living in university provided accommodation had a 9-month lease, and a further 18 per cent had a lease of 12 months.

Figure 16: Length of Lease: University provided accommodation



Students living in university provided accommodation: do you plan on living somewhere else next academic year

Three-quarters (75%) of students living in university provided accommodation plan on living somewhere else next academic year. Seven per cent intend on remaining within their university provided accommodation, and a further 11 per cent are unsure.

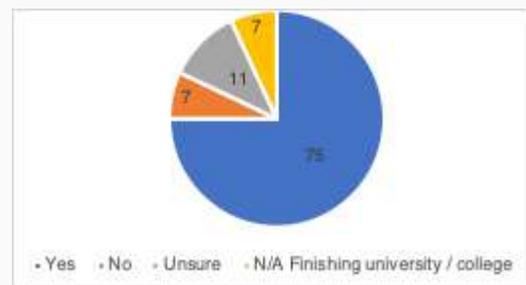
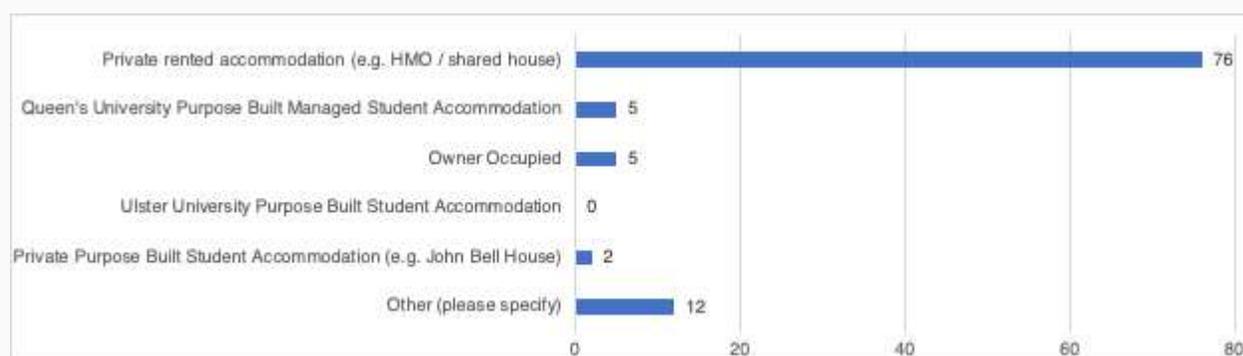


Figure 17: Intend on moving out of university accommodation next year (%)

Students planning on moving out of university accommodation: type of accommodation planning on moving to

Those students planning on moving out of university provided accommodation mainly (76%) intend to move into traditional student private rented accommodation (e.g. a HMO / shared house). Only 7 per cent plan on moving to purpose built student accommodation. In the “other” category, the responses were mostly from international students intending to return home.

Figure 18: Students planning on moving out of university accommodation: type of accommodation planning on moving to (%)



Base: 42

6.4. Students living in private rented accommodation

Just over half (54%, n281) of students surveyed lived in the private rented sector. Of those living in the private rented sector, the vast majority (96%, n267) lived in the more traditional HMO / shared accommodation. Only 4 per cent (n11) of those living in the private rented sector lived in purpose build student accommodation.

Purpose Built Student Accommodation

This section provides information on respondents living in purpose built accommodation. However, due to the small numbers involved, (n11), the results should be viewed with caution, and represent an insight into the experiences of these students.

Most of the respondents living in purpose built student accommodation lived in John Bell House. A variety of reasons were given for choosing to live in purpose built accommodation. The most common reason given was: overall package of security, support staff, bills and wifi etc (25%, n3). Other reasons included: close to university (n2) and expense (n2).

Traditional student private rented accommodation (HMO / Shared accommodation)

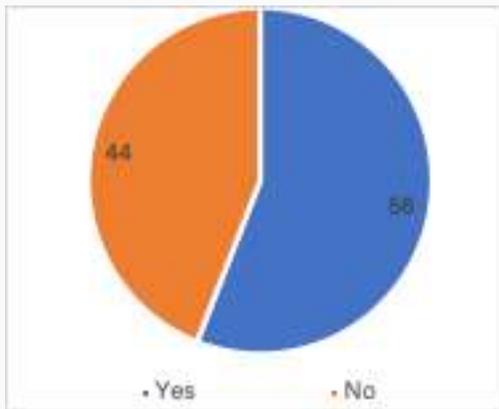
The total number of students completing the survey and lived in traditional privately rented student accommodation (HMO/Shared houses) is 267, representing 49 per cent of those surveyed.

Opinions on PBMSA from those in traditional student housing in the private rented sector

Respondents in “traditional” student housing in the private rented sector were asked questions about Purpose Built Student Accommodation.

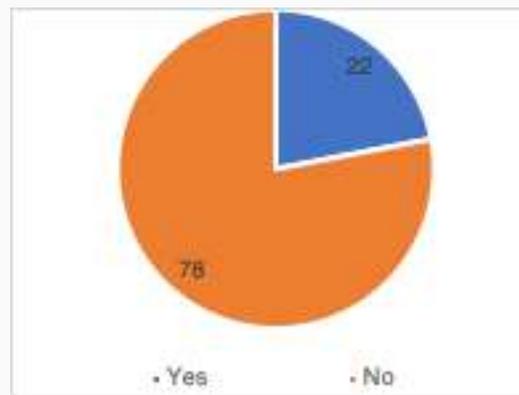
Only 56 per cent of those living in “traditional” private rented students were aware of private purpose built student accommodation. Of those that were aware of the purpose built managed student accommodation, most (78%), did not consider living in this accommodation type, whilst 22 per cent stated that they considered living in purpose built managed student accommodation.

Figure 19: Aware of PBMSA (%)



Base: 266

Figure 20: Did you consider living in PBMSA (%)

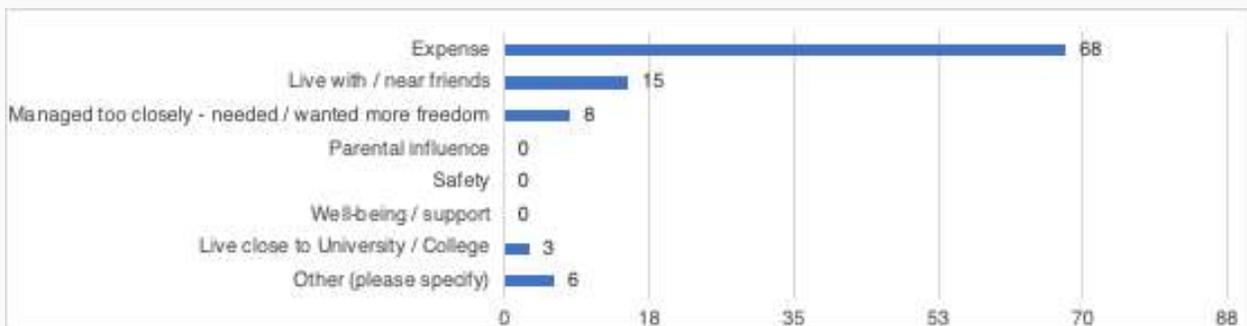


Base:145

Reasons for not living in PBMSA

Students living in “traditional” private rented accommodation were asked why they choose not to live in private PBMSA. The most common reason (68%) was expense, 15 per cent stated that they wanted to live with or near friends and a further 8 per cent stated that it was because PBSMA is managed too closely / want more freedom.

Figure 21: Reasons for not living in PBSA (%)

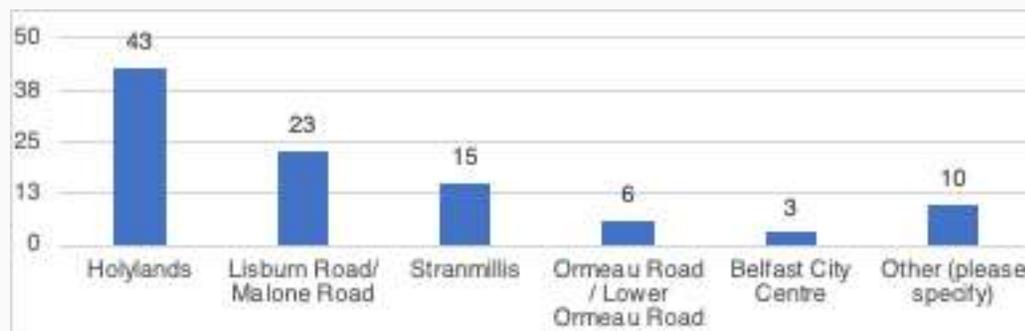


Base: 146

Location of traditional student accommodation

Those living in traditional student accommodation were asked to give the location of their current accommodation. The most common response (43%, n112) was the Holyland area, followed by the Lisburn / Malone Road area (23%, n61). A further 15 per cent lived in Stranmillis, 6 per cent on the Ormeau / Lower Ormeau Road and 3 per cent in Belfast City Centre. Ten per cent stated “other”, this was mainly the Botanic area and the Donegal road area.

Figure 22: Location of traditional student accommodation (%)



Base: 262

Family connections with the Holyland area

Anecdotal evidence suggests that students living in the Holyland area may do so because of a family history of living in this area whilst studying. The following questions were only answered by those currently living in the Holyland area.

Just over half (57%, n64) of students currently living in the Holyland reported that a family member had previously studied and lived in Belfast. The location of where a family member lived is detailed in Chart X. This shows that the majority (80%, n51) lived in the Holyland area. Nearly all of these relatives (97%) had lived in privately rented accommodation.

Figure 23: Another family member has lived and studied in Belfast (%)

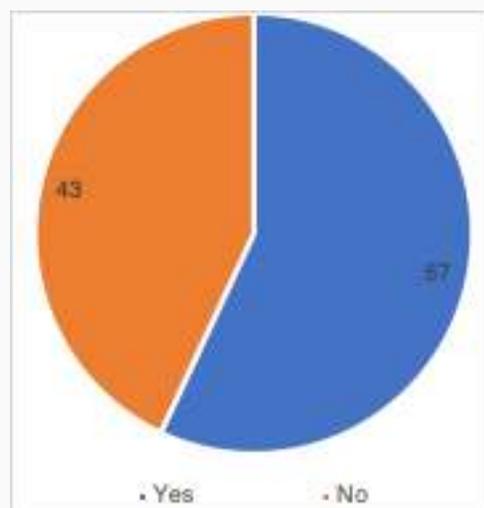
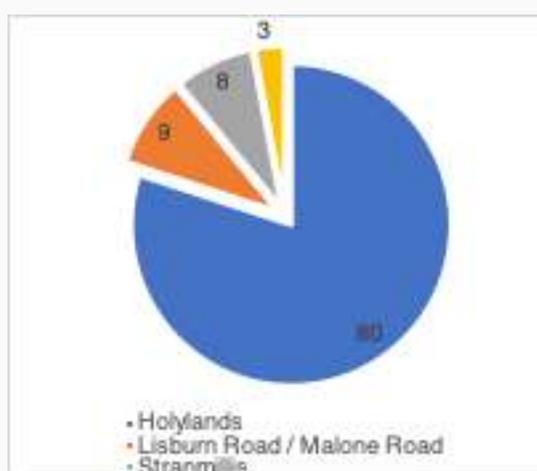


Figure 24: Location of family member who studied in Belfast (%)

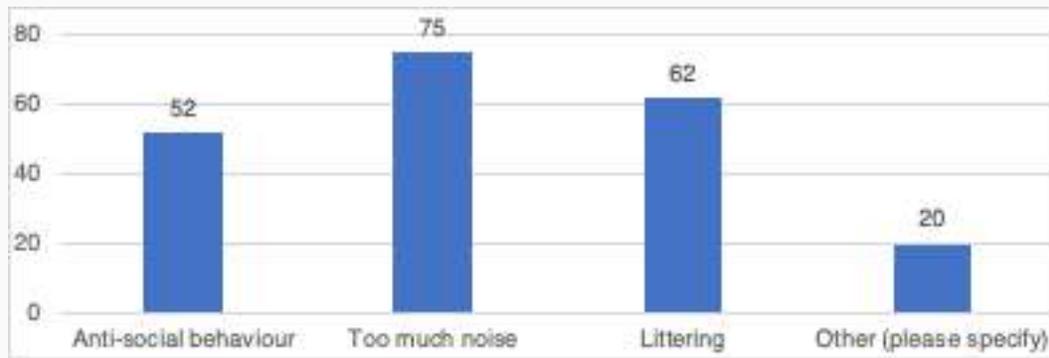


Experiences of living in the private rented sector

Students that are living in traditional private rented accommodation and those living in private Purpose Built Student Accommodation were asked questions relating to their experiences whilst living in their term time accommodation.

Three-quarters (75%) reported that they have experienced excessive noise, 62 per cent that there was littering in the general area, and just over half (52%) reported general anti-social behaviour. Twenty per cent stated "other", this included poor standard of accommodation (cold/damp), lack of parking, lack of recycling. Several respondents reported experiencing criminal activity of some type: burglary, damage to cars, bins being set alight.

Figure 25: Experiences of problems

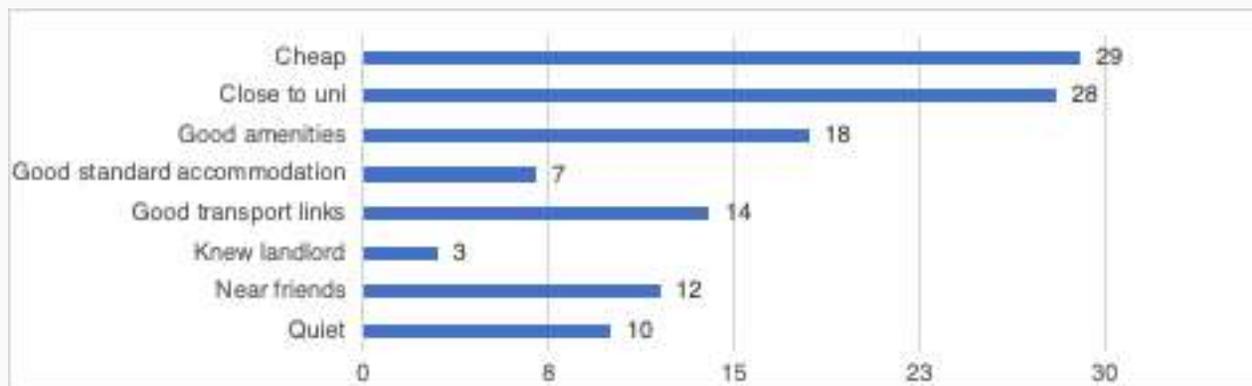


Base: 184

Choosing their particular neighbourhood

Students living in the private rented sector were asked why they chose their particular neighbourhood. Respondents were not given a pre-defined list to choose from, rather, they identified the key issues themselves. They could give more than one response. Figure X below shows the different issues students gave in relation to choosing an area to live in. Price was the most common response, mentioned in 29 per cent of cases, closely followed by proximity to University. The proximity to amenities and transport links were mentioned by 18 per cent and 14 per cent of respondents respectively.

Figure 26: Reasons for choosing their neighbourhood (%)



Base: 218

Letting agent/landlord

For those living in the private rented sector, the majority (80%) had a letting agent. Most (70%) students in the private rented sector stated that they know who their landlord is.

Figure 27: Do you have a letting agent? (%)

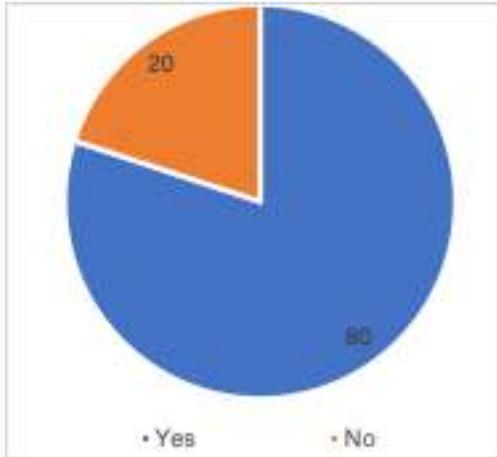
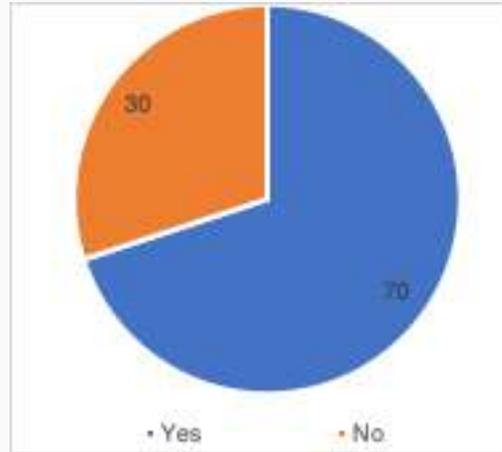


Figure 28: Do you know who your landlord is? (%)

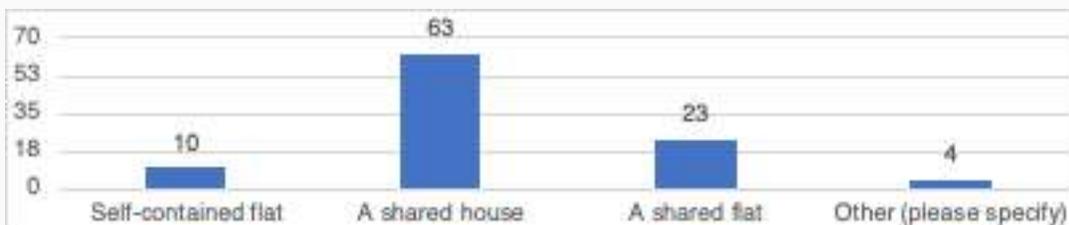


Base: 235

Type of private rented accommodation

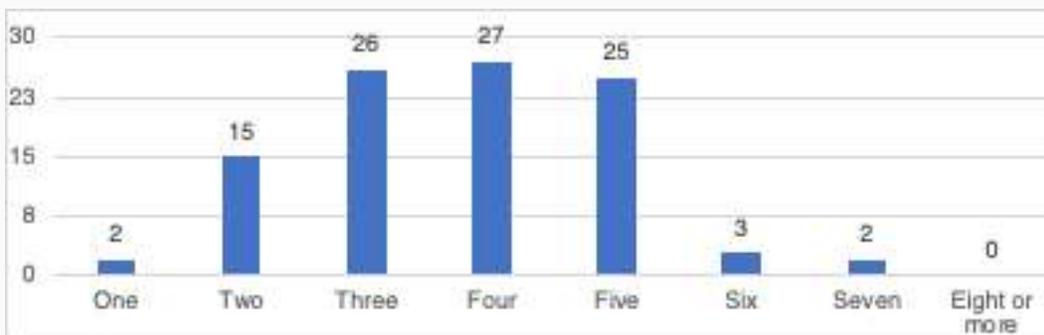
Most students in the private rented sector lived in shared accommodation: 63 per cent lived in a shared house and 23 per cent lived in a shared flat. Most students lived in 3 (26%), 4 (27%) or 5 (25%) bedroom accommodation.

Figure 29: Type of accommodation (%)



Base: 235

Figure 30: Number of bedrooms (%)

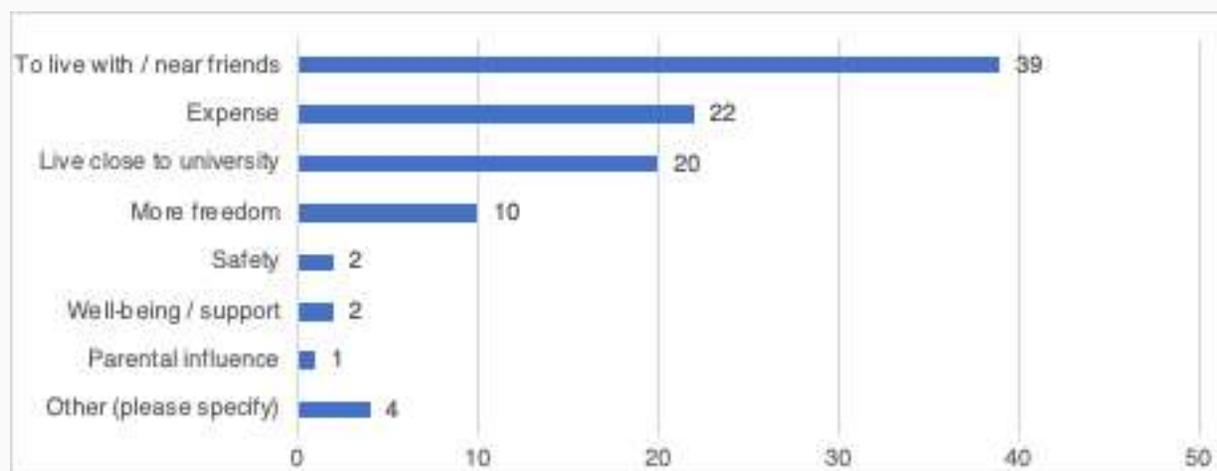


Base: 235

Main reason for choosing this type of accommodation

The most common reason for choosing their private rented sector accommodation was to live with / near friends (39%), while one-fifth stated the cost (22%) as the main reason for choosing this accommodation type. A further fifth (20%) stated that the proximity to university was the main reason for choosing this type of accommodation. For one-tenth (10%) the freedom they attached to this type of accommodation was their main reason for choosing it.

Figure 31: Main reason for choosing PRS accommodation (%)



Base: 230

Rents / Lease

The average monthly rent paid by students living in the private rented sector was **£281**. The majority (84%) of students living in the private rented sector had a lease of 12 months (see Table 14 below).

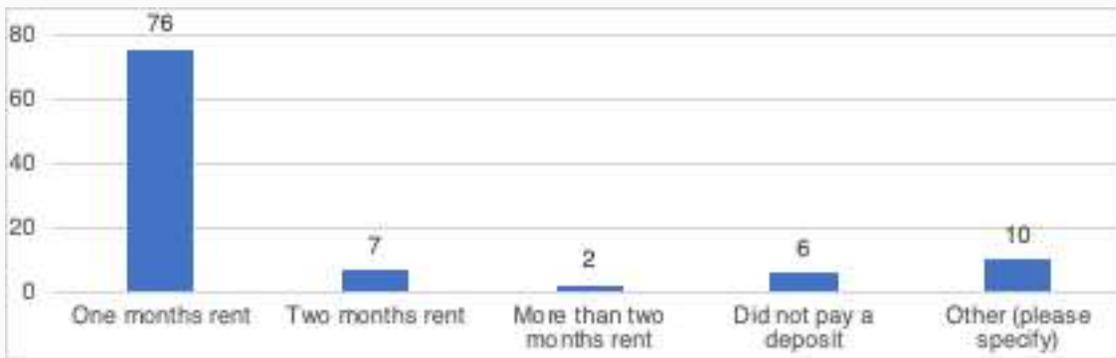
Table 14: Length of Lease in the PRS

	%	n
6 months	1	2
7 months	0	1
9 months	3	7
10 months	3	6
11 months	6	14
12 months	84	201
24 months	0	1
month by month	2	4
other	2	4
Total	100	240

Amount of deposit

Most (76%) students living in the private rented sector paid a deposit equivalent to one month's rent, 7 per cent paid a deposit equivalent to 2 month's rent, whilst 2 per cent paid a deposit equivalent to more than 2 month's rent. Ten per cent stated "other", and the amount of deposits ranged from £100 to £2,000.

Figure 32: Amount of deposit (%)

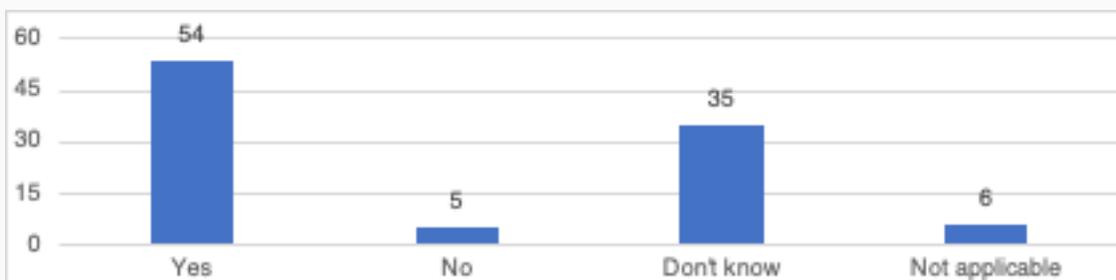


Base: 241

Deposit in a government approved deposit protection scheme

Just over half (54%) of students in the private rented sector report that their deposits were held in a government approved deposit protection scheme. However, one-third (35%) did not know of their deposit was being held in a government approved scheme and a further 5 per cent stated that their deposit was not being held in a government approved protection scheme.

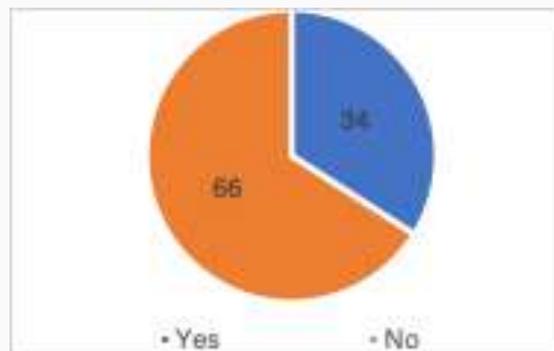
Figure 33: Deposit held in a government approved protection scheme (%)



Other charges

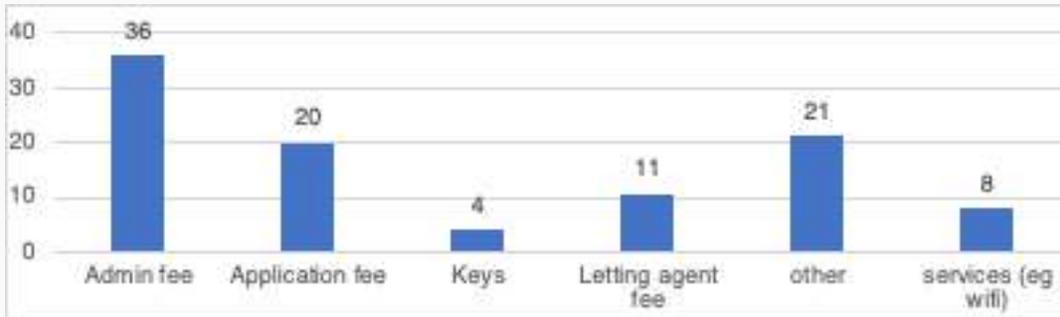
Three-quarters of students living in the private rented sector had to pay additional charges when they first moved into their accommodation.

Figure 34: Had to pay additional charges (%)



Most (67%) of these charges related the administrative processing charges: 36 per cent had to pay an “administrative fee”, 20 per cent paid an “application fee” and a further 11 per cent paid a “letting agent fee”. Eight per cent paid a fee for services such as wifi / electric and 4 per cent had to pay for keys to be cut. Eleven per cent stated “other”, this included a credit check and a “reference fee”.

Figure 35: Nature of additional charges (%)

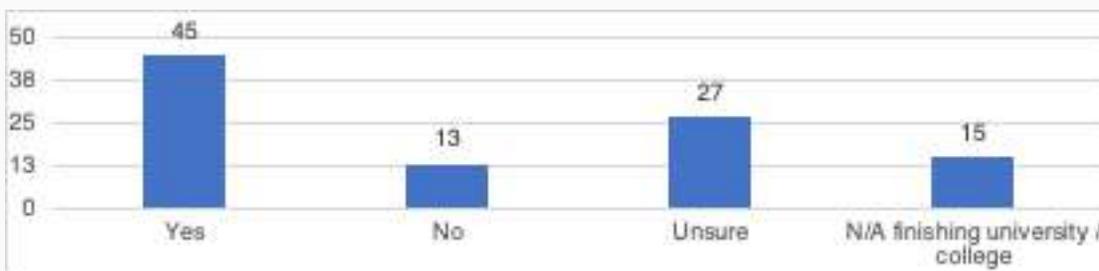


Base: 75

Plan on moving next academic year

Respondents living in the private rented sector were asked if they intended to move in the next academic year. Just under half (45%) said that they intend on moving, a further quarter (27%) were unsure and only 13 per cent said that they do not intend on moving. Fifteen per cent of students living in the private rented sector are completing their studies this academic year.

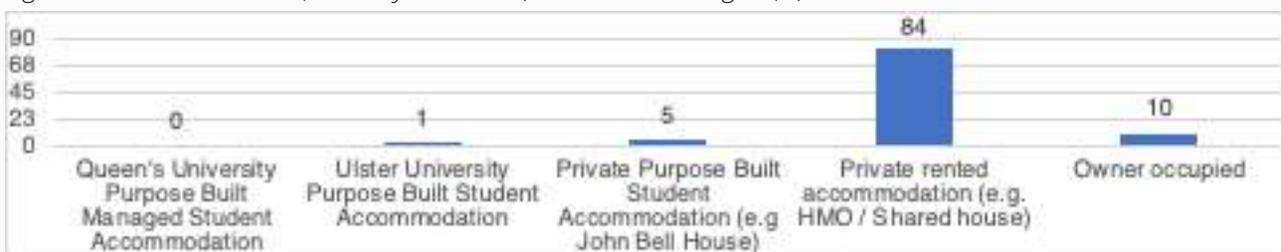
Figure 36: Do you intend to move next academic year? (%)



Base:239

Students currently living in the private rented sector that intend on moving next academic year were asked what type of accommodation they intend on moving to. The majority (84%) intend on moving to other private rented accommodation – i.e. HMO / a shared house. Only 5 per cent intend on moving to private Purpose-Built Student Accommodation.

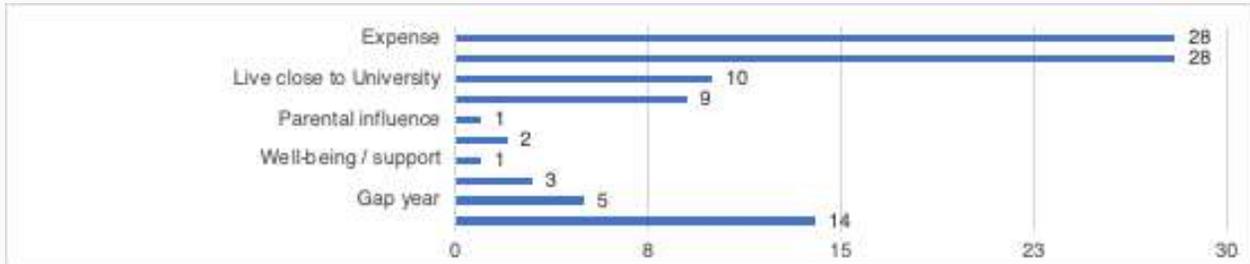
Figure 37: Where students (currently in the PRS) intend on moving to (%)



Base: 111

Those intending on moving next academic year were asked the main reason why. Just over one fifth (28%) gave expense reasons, and the same proportion stated that they wanted to move to live with / be near friends.

Figure 38: Why do you want to move? (%)



Base:107

It can be concluded from the responses received that only a small proportion of the students surveyed lived in PSBA. Of those living at home the majority intended to move to the private rented sector with a much smaller number saying they would move to PSBA.

Of those students currently living in university accommodation closeness to university was the main reason, as well as the benefits of the overall package offered of security, support staff, bills included and wifi etc. The majority of these students still planned on moving into the PRS next year.

Those currently living in the private rented sector cited the main reasons they lived there as expense, wanting to live with or near friends and because the PBMSA is managed too closely and they wanted more freedom. The vast majority of those students in the PRS who said they intended moving next year said they would move again to the private rented sector.

HOUSING ASSOCIATION SURVEY

A survey monkey survey was distributed to the housing associations (as well as interviews with the key housing associations located near the Holyland area). In total 14 housing associations responded. The section below discusses their responses.

Current involvement with the Holyland area

Most (12/14) of the housing associations do not currently own properties within the Holyland. One of the housing associations with properties in the Holyland has HMO units within the area.

Potential future involvement in the Holyland area

The housing associations that do not have properties currently in the Holyland were asked if they would consider this in the future. Of the 10 that responded, 4 gave positive responses. This ranged from yes, if there was demonstrated need in the area, and another stated that they are always open to partnership ideas. For another housing association, this is something they may consider in the next 5-10 years. For those associations that do not plan on becoming involved in the Holyland, generally it was a locational issue, with the associations operating in other areas, or only in a specific area.

Issues within the Holyland

Housing associations were asked what they felt were the main issues in the Holyland with regards to privately rented housing. Several respondents felt that management standards within the sector are an area of concern, with some private landlords not being as responsible as they might be. The density of the area was highlighted as an issue for some, with the clash in lifestyle between the younger student population and the older, more settled population.

Working in partnership with private landlords

Four housing associations stated that they would be willing to work with private landlords in the Holyland. This could be through a service level agreement, or through assisting with focus groups / stakeholder groups.

Purpose Built Student Accommodation

Two housing associations stated that they have considered building Purpose Built Student Accommodation. One is still considering options in this area, and another currently has a small HMO near Queens University.

Of those that had not considered Purpose Built Student Accommodation before, 3 stated that this is something that they would consider in the future. This would be subject to need being determined.

Partnership working

Housing Associations were asked if they would be willing to work on a joint committee with statutory agencies, community leaders and local landlords in the area. Three housing associations said that they would be willing. Those that wouldn't gave a variety of reasons, but several stated that as they did not have property in the area, that interest was limited and would not be a good use of their resources. However, one association stated that: "any social housing provider with a presence (NIHE/HA) should be leading and facilitating such a joint committee".

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Multi agency Working

Many respondents highlighted the fact that whilst agencies have been working together in the past no one seems to be driving this. Taking a multi-agency approach is about agencies working together to better understand the needs of, and achieve the best possible outcomes for, families and individuals living in the area. There needs to be improved ways of sharing and making better use of information, expertise and resources to provide seamless, holistic services for the area. Agencies working together should regularly meet in the area with local representatives with actions agreed at each meeting. Housing associations have indicated that they would like to be involved. Within this multi-agency approach, the inclusion of a centralised database for complaints, with all the partners collectively taking on responsibility is required.

Shared Vision

The interviews highlighted the fact that the Holyland cuts across so many agencies yet there hasn't been a shared vision of what it will look like in the future. Landlords have a vision, so do residents, so does QUB and others. These need to be brought together to establish an agreed shared vision.

Develop a partnership vehicle

Consideration could be given to how a partnership vehicle might be developed. Such a vehicle could, in theory, enable effective coordination of actions and finance to recycle empty properties; funding of property and environmental improvements; consideration of the feasibility of converting large empty terraced housing to flats for starter households; and the provision of assistance to first-time buyers. It could work with organisations such as Co-ownership housing association to encourage the purchase of properties in the area by first time buyers. It could also work at leveraging in private finance from housing associations and private investors.

Building and Supporting Community Capacity

Successful regeneration to date has been driven by grassroots community development (Wildflower Alley, street improvements and Residents Parking Scheme). Forward South Partnership and other relevant agencies should continue to support and develop this bottom up regeneration throughout the wider Holyland area. This will require a dedicated and comprehensive funding package with a full time staff complement housed within the Holyland.

Governance and enforcement.

The research has highlighted that there is no established governance nor oversight of the area, and enforcement needs to become more effective. There needs to be a proactive approach to enforcement by the relevant authorities even for small things such as litter. It is broadly felt that very little enforcement happens in the area. There is no point in putting in new laws until the current ones are enforced and used effectively. There was a sense that no one was taking control of the area.

Early Intervention

There is a need for early intervention with prevention in mind rather than reaction. Intervening early can reduce the costs.

Preventative measures could include:

- the extensive reintroduction of CCTV in the area. This should help to diminish occurrences of anti social behaviour by monitoring large groups of students or capturing those responsible for ASB.
- Extra security presence through the reintroduction of wardens.
- Re-imagining the area as a positive area to live. The area gets negative press particularly during events such as St Patrick's Day. A proper communications strategy should be put in place to turn around the image to a positive one.
- Discourage the wearing of sectarian symbols in the area such as football shirts.
Whilst this would be difficult to enforce it could be encouraged through a process of educating those signing tenancies in the area

Good Neighbour Agreements

These are encouraged in shared housing schemes that have been introduced across NI under T:BUC and should be enshrined into all tenancy agreements by landlords. It would have to be strictly enforced with immediate eviction for any breach.

Encourage Housing Associations

Two of the larger housing associations are already in the area and are seeking more properties. Many associations have now special vehicles that don't confine them to draw from the housing waiting list, although they still can through their core business. As they develop their activities in buying houses for sale and for rent they could bring much needed investment into the area by bringing properties up to standard.

They also have a track record of good housing management and dealing with anti social behaviour. Housing associations could provide accommodation for young starter households, young workers looking for shared housing, migrant families seeking decent and affordable housing, homeless households or other households on the waiting list in housing need and households on the waiting list with a general housing need only. If students do move out in the next few years as PSBAs become more established then housing associations would have a major role to play in the transformation of the area.

Encourage Community Engagement for Students

Students could be encouraged to interact with the residents in the area through volunteering schemes and joint events. Students unions could encourage more awareness of what students can do in the area. In the literature review it was highlighted that the “social and cultural well-being” of all the people living in student areas is enhanced through the “effective dissemination” of good practices. These can be through “student-led” initiatives such as “conferences and seminars”, and campaigns initiated by students around noise, litter, and car-parking which have been effective in “fostering a context of mutual trust, transparency and joined-up communication” between cities, students and permanent populations. It should be noted that there are currently full time Student Volunteer staff at QUB who have made a start to assisting with local voluntary initiatives, such as creating a group of student volunteers who support local projects, called Handy Helpers. They hope to further develop long term initiatives involving Holyland students with Holyland residents.

Halls 2 Homes, an initiative created by Manchester University, works closely with Manchester City Council to promote Best Practice in student-heavy areas. The intention is to educate students on their responsibilities whilst living beside local communities, and teach them how to be good neighbours. It also encourages and implements student involvement in community activities, implements activities which ensure student engagement with local residents and supports students who are moving from on-campus accommodation to off-campus. Successful events and fun days have been organised by this initiative which has promoted community cohesion and improved relations between the student and non-student residents such as a Fun Fest.

University Grants for Community Projects

In Leeds the university set up its own grant that awards monies to students to develop and implement their own community projects, further involving students in the community and encouraging their creativity and altruism. The grants have funded a range of impactful community projects, many of which have dealt with vulnerable populations, such as young people in areas of high deprivation and victims of race hate crime. It is recommended that the Universities here follow a similar approach. QUB currently has a limited sum of funding which they have contributed towards projects such as Wildflower Alley (compost, gardening expertise, pop-up tree nursery and ‘Hello Neighbour’ events). This could be further developed and expanded especially given the recent launch of the QUB Social Charter.

Reserved Room Scheme

Brighton Council introduced a new social lettings scheme for students called “Reserved Room Scheme” (RRS). RRS properties are privately owned which the university leases from a local estate agent and sublets to students. The University manages the properties on behalf of the private owners and is, in effect, the landlord so any issues around ASB are directed to the university. The benefit of the scheme is that tenants have more stringent tenancy conditions which aim to reduce antisocial behaviour and encourage better integration between students and local residents.

It also gives the University more control over where students are housed. For landlords who sign up to the scheme they will get long-term contracts, guaranteed rent and full lettings management. Housing Associations could also get involved in this as they have a good track record of managing anti-social behaviour.

Tenancy Registration Scheme

Introduce a tenancy registration scheme for the area which would provide up to date information on who is living there at any one time and the number of students and non-students. Respondents called for a census in the area to establish who is actually living there and the breakdown between students and non-students. A tenancy registration scheme would provide this information at any given time.

Better management of the amount of HMOs

Currently Belfast City Council has set a limit of 30% HMOs but this is for the wider area of Holyland, Rugby Road and Botanic. Although the proportion is much higher at 64% it refused any new HMOs expecting the area to eventually return to 30%. This clearly has not happened and many respondents were of the opinion that there were far too many. The council should explore methods to reduce the numbers of HMOs particularly in those streets where the proportion is very high. In Brighton for example planning permission is refused if 10% of homes within a 50 metre radius are already HMOs.

Create Incentives for Landlords who want to move out of the area

During the interviews it was mentioned that some landlords in the area may want to move out but are trapped. Housing Associations should be encouraged to actively seek out this group with a view to purchasing their properties and bring them up to standard for families or young professionals.

Increased Resources provided by BCC to the area.

Many respondents criticised the resources that Belfast City Council puts into the area. There was also criticism that there is a lack of political will to do anything in the area given that the majority of residents are students who are registered to vote in their home towns.

In 2016 Leeds City Council targeted more resources in Hyde Park than any other part of the city. This was in response to the 'impassioned plea' from permanent residents in the area to not ignore the hidden deprivation of Hyde Park. By positioning more resources in the area, a new Neighbourhood Board was formed which consisted of local councillors, permanent residents, students, and managers from across the council and other public services. Short term solutions to ongoing problems in Hyde Park included improving security awareness, out of hours dog warden patrols and carrying out annual deep cleans to bin yards, back alleys, removing graffiti, spraying weeds and maintaining green spaces.

In both Headingley and Hyde Park, and other surrounding student areas, there have been out of hours patrols by foot and by van to deal with noise and nuisance complaints known as the Leeds Antisocial Behaviour Team (LASBT). Patrols took place close to the start of term on dates from 15th September 2016 – 23rd September 2016. These patrols officers are in the area and can deal with complaints, break up parties and help members of the community. The officers also attend home visits to issue warning letters and in two particular cases, confiscated noise equipment in the first term of 2016 and issued 90 noise abatement notices to student properties.

Increase awareness of accommodation available

The student surveys highlighted the number of students who intended to go to the private rented sector either after leaving Halls or leaving home. The lack of awareness of PBSA is an issue and more information could be channelled to school leavers and those in first year in Halls of Residence as to what options are open to them. If more students are encouraged to go to the PBSAs then this might reduce overcrowding in the Holyland and change the profile of those residing there. Housing Rights, the NIHE and Housing associations could increase awareness at Schools as well as the Universities as both visit schools on a regular basis.

Management of PBSA

The Universities, in particular Ulster University around the Belfast Campus, should explore the potential to block book units within PBSA developments. This could be aimed at first year students. There is anecdotal evidence that there are levels of vacancies within the current PBSAs. The universities would then have an input into the management of these units.

The developers should provide an element of pastoral care within their PBSA. The Dublin case study showed a good example of how this can and does work.

PBSA developers should work with the local community before the build begins, and have on-going interaction with them, this will assist with integration between the student tenants and the local community.

Introduce a New Build Shared Housing Scheme

The NIHE should work with housing associations to actively seek a site in the area to facilitate the building of a shared housing scheme under T:BUC. It has indicated a willingness to do this if a site can be identified. It may mean demolishing some very poor housing and replacing this with a new scheme.

Shared Neighbourhood Programme

The NIHE should include the area onto its Shared Neighbourhood programme which has to be community-led. The NIHE could drive this by engaging with communities both within the Holyland and in the surrounding communities to create community cohesion.

Students Unions promoting the “rate your landlord” website.

This would rank the landlords / accommodation services and provide feedback for students when they are choosing where to live.

Education Campaigns: Silent Students Happy Homes

This would involve regular community awareness campaigns all aimed at teaching the students their responsibilities for being part of the community. Loughborough University implemented a strategy to try and strategically manage neighbour relations and this led to the formation of the Loughborough Campus and Community Liaison Group. It also situated wardens in areas of high student population to address issues of anti-social activity. One example of an educational campaign included SSHH! (Silent Students Happy Homes). Both universities have demonstrated that they regularly run campaigns but a more consolidated and strategic approach should be encouraged.

Compulsory module at Universities

Introduce a module at universities and colleges on studentification similar to the one introduced in Manchester.

NIHE schools awareness campaign

The NIHE should expand their programme of going out to schools to raise awareness about housing issues for students. Over the last couple of years 4 schools have been visited (based on a specific request from them).

The following issues are covered:

- how to obtain suitable accommodation
- tenancy/letting agreements
- issues to be considered before accepting a property – condition of the property/conditions within the agreement/checking inventory etc.
- Houses in Multiple occupation – Registration and standards eg fire safety.
- Safety – personal safety when looking at properties/Fire alarm systems and equipment/carbon monoxide alarms/smoke detectors.
- Tenants responsibility – care of the property/disposal of refuse and litter/securing the property due to risk of burglary etc.
- Be a good neighbour – anti social behaviour and the possible consequences.

This should be rolled out, and be aimed at 6th year pupils in schools, with the objective of promoting an understanding of what is required by new tenants amongst the pupils before they move to Belfast. In the past the NIHE wrote out to schools offering them a visit – this should recommence. QUB also visit school leavers but has limited resources for this. An educational tool kit and more resources should be introduced to create an effective preventive method. Visits could be expanded to include housing associations and organisations such as Supporting Communities.

House Condition Survey

A comprehensive house condition survey should be carried out by the NIHE to establish which properties are fit and those that are not. This was mentioned by a number of respondents. This might also collect demographic and socio-economic information on those living in the area.

Refurbishment of terraced housing:

In order to make small terraced housing more attractive to potential purchasers consideration of needs should be given to the refurbishment, and how to improve the street environment. This may need to be done through a partnership vehicle. Purchase and refurbishment by housing associations could be encouraged. Indeed, the heritage value of red brick terraces and sources of investment in this could be explored.

Inspections of Non HMOs

A regular inspection of non-HMOs to establish the levels of overcrowding that exists using criteria that is set out in the way the NIHE assesses housing need. Overcrowding was cited throughout the research.

Assess levels of poverty in the area

With a transient community with many newcomer families, which seems to be continuing to grow, the levels of poverty may have increased and this might provide the basis for applications for funding to improve the area, and access to services.

A Wider Plan for newcomer and BME communities

As this community increases so does the level of children living in the area, currently estimated at around 600. There are no facilities nor road crossings available. A much wider plan to include children is required as this community grows. The lack of adequate school provision was also mentioned within the research. The children are now getting older and have become a sizable proportion of those living in the area. Their needs will change and this has to be recognised and forward planning put in place.

Accreditation Schemes

Landlords and PBSA developers and managers should be encouraged to join accreditation schemes. Student Unions should continue to support students to know their rights and promote living in accommodation provided by an accredited landlord.

The removal of lettings boards with strict compliance

Letting signs are present for considerable periods of time after properties have been let, and act as de facto advertisements for landlords / letting agencies. These are unsightly and work against improving the area.

Marketing and publicity

Action is needed to counteract any negative image of the area. It should be actively promoted as a good place to live. In particular the area and living options within it should be promoted to young couples/ families and young professionals.

APPENDIX A: BEST PRACTICE

Brighton

Brighton is a relatively small coastal city located on the South Coast of England. There are two Universities in the city – Sussex and Brighton. The city has a usual resident population of 273,369 with 121,540 households (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2011). Brighton University alone has a student population of 21,134 (University of Brighton, no date), amounting to 7.7% of the resident population. The rise in student numbers and lack of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) resulted in the increase in demand for the Private Rented Sector (PRS). As a result, there was a rise in the conversion of family housing to student houses in multiple occupation (HMO).

Brighton & Hove City Council was the first UK city to have produced an official Student Housing Strategy (SHS) in 2009 and set a benchmark for national good practice. Brighton and Hove City Council set up a Strategic Housing Partnership Working Group, which included representatives from both the University of Brighton and academics from the University of Brighton department of Geography. This group led the development of the SHS that set out four strategic goals; effective management & support, using an area-based approach; development of purpose built student accommodation; to work collaboratively and; to monitor effects of the strategy. There is an action plan containing 40 actions, with partners identified for delivery in each case.

Actions were outlined to increase provision, conditions and management of student accommodation and support residential communities. The SHS has proven to be very successful since its introduction in 2009:

- It has successfully identified five sites for PBSA which will deliver over 3,000 bed spaces. The SHS has since 2009 already provided approximately 1,600 bed spaces in PBSA.
- From 5th April 2013 the council introduced an 'Article 4 Direction' in five of the most student populated areas of the city in order to prevent further over-concentration of HMOs. This meant that in these five wards permitted development rights were removed and planning permission is required to convert family homes to small HMOs. Consent for planning permission will also be refused if 10% of homes within a 50 metre radius are already HMOs.
- In 2012 the Council extended the rules of the 2004 Housing Act (which requires landlords of larger HMO to apply for licences). An additional licensing scheme was introduced which covered properties with less than four bedrooms in five student populated areas of the city.

More recently this year the Council, in partnership with Brighton University, introduced a new social lettings scheme for students called "Reserved Room Scheme" (RRS). RRS properties are privately owned which the university leases from a local estate agent and sublets to students. The University manages the properties on behalf of the private owners and is, in effect, the landlord so any issues around ASB are directed to the university.

The benefit of the scheme is that tenants have more stringent tenancy conditions which aim to reduce antisocial behaviour and encourage better integration between students and local residents. It will also give the University more control over where students are housed. For landlords who sign up to the scheme they will get long-term contracts, guaranteed rent and full lettings management.

The University of Sussex has crafted a community cohesion programme that involves contact engagement models, marshalling, services for local people, and student volunteering schemes. Personal testimonies for some current ambassadors revealed that their motivations included wanting to have positive relationships with residents, to promote a positive image of students to residents and to lend their skills to help improve conditions for residents. (University of Sussex, 2017)

Canterbury

Canterbury is home to four universities with a total 46,000 students. There were 30,795 students living in Canterbury in the academic year 2010/11. As a result of this, 25% of all private rented housing was student-only households and the private rented sector became the largest source of student accommodation. The student demand for housing distorted the market, the number of family-sized homes decreased and it also led to inflation of rent and house prices which affected affordability for all. With large numbers of HMOs occupied by students the balance of communities was altered, and this contributed to community safety concerns.

In 2006, the Canterbury council completed a scrutiny review which encouraged the development of PBSAs to ease private rental demand to reduce inflationary pressure. Action was again taken in 2012 when the council decided to examine limiting numbers of new HMOs to try and further decrease the negative effects that high student numbers can have on the surrounding community.

Exeter

In Exeter, the city council put plans in place to reduce studentification and agreed on a target that 75% of any increase in the student population would be accommodated in purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) rather than high multiple occupancies. The council met its target (according to Citizen's Advice) between 2012/2013 and even though this particular purpose built student accommodation has been successful, Exeter still has an unresolved issue of vacant properties (Nowicki, 2015). Landlords were reluctant to adapt the HMOs to family homes because, under the council's directions, they claim they cannot afford to change the properties back. In Exeter, this has led to many large properties being left vacant or either occupied by young single people, rather than families who are in need. However, in order to rectify this 'ghost town' appearance, the Government did not offer their services of grant aid to transform the HMOs to family homes, therefore the issues are still of concern for the area (Nowicki, 2015). Many landlords are depending on their rent from the HMOs to pay their mortgage, so could landlords in this scenario really transform their properties to appeal to young professionals or the single market and still ascertain the same rental income?

Loughborough

Loughborough University is located within a small town in Leicestershire. The rise and growth of the student population since 2001 led to many areas of Loughborough becoming very heavily populated with students (Kinton, 2013). The shortfall of PBSA created opportunities for the PRS and HMOs. High student numbers created a negative impact in Loughborough and as a result of high levels of tension between the students and residents, Loughborough council began engaging with consultants in the early 2000s to develop a supplementary planning document to commission research with the aim to investigate options for student housing. The document was published in 2005 and was open to feedback and responses from students and residents. The council decided to try a threshold approach with the aim of easing tensions within the areas surrounding the University.

This meant that although no area within the town would be specifically categorised or zoned for students or residents only, that once planning applications were received by the council they would have to base their decision on student occupancy within the area. This allowed them to reject it on the basis that it may further increase tensions and anti-social behaviour (Hubbard, 2006). This method allowed the council to shape and manage the area to create suitable living and housing conditions for both residents and students, while easing tensions in the process. Policy and planning responses were aimed at regulating the social impact of studentification according to a case study by Hubbard in 2008. It argued that intervention is required from local authorities in tackling social and cultural conflicts within communities and housing policies should prevent the formation of exclusive 'student ghettos'. Students need to be spread more thinly across the city, but relationships between students and the wider community also need to be strengthened.

In response to neighbour concerns and trying to balance the needs of the local community with those of the students the local authority issued supplementary planning guidance relating to student properties in 2006. This meant that the maximum percentage of HMOs allowed to be created within any single neighbourhood was 20%.

Loughborough University implemented a strategy to try and strategically manage neighbour relations and resulted in the formation of the Loughborough Campus and Community Liaison Group. It also situated wardens in areas of high student population to address issues of anti-social activity. This group delivered community awareness campaigns all aimed at teaching the students their responsibilities for being part of the community. One example of an educational campaign included SSHH! (Silent Students Happy Homes).

Destudentification within Loughborough also stems from changing patterns in student living. In Loughborough the student's preferences and expectations changed with many opting for purpose built student accommodation rather than private rented dwellings (Smith, 2013). There was a greater demand from students for a higher-quality accommodation and closer proximity to the campus. There was also a movement from students to want a closer proximity to the campus and for halls of residence during years 2 and 3 (Smith, 2013). In response to this changing pattern of the need for more PBSA, Loughborough University entered into a partnership with the University Partnerships Programme (UPP)

and created 1,300 new bed spaces on campus adjacent to the existing student village in 2008/09. Further expansion of PBSA continued in 2010 with the creation of 962 beds off-campus and 5,592 on-campus. Such initiatives resulted in the opportunity for first year students to remain on campus, diversifying the housing options for students who traditionally would have sought private rented accommodation after their first year (Kinton, 2013).

The appeal for more PBSA relieved pressure of the private housing sector and meant that students no longer had to deal with landlords who provided grotty 'digs' (Kinton, 2013). The location of the PBSA near to the university changed the residential patterns of students. Kinton et al. (2016) highlighted how destudentification in an area can have both positive and negative implications for a community. It can attract the location of migrant or problematic families which are often less favourable with landlords. On the other hand, it can encourage the movement of families and professional couples to locate to neighbourhoods that were once dominated by students (Kinton, 2013).

Leeds

The student population within Leeds city contributes to almost 10% of the total population of Leeds (Student City.co.uk, 2017). Two densely populated areas by students within the city are Hyde Park and Headingley and over recent years there have been numerous attempts to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour by Students in what used to be family homes but now considered to be more housing multiple occupants (HMOs). (The Guardian.com, 2010)

Within Hyde Park, Leeds City Council deploys more resources in the area than any other part of the city (Leeds City Council, 2016). This great deployment of resources came about because of the 'impassioned plea' from permanent residents in the area to not ignore the hidden deprivation of Hyde Park. By positioning more resources in the area a new Neighbourhood Board was formed which consisted of local councillors, permanent residents, students, and managers from across the council and other public services. Short term solutions to ongoing problems in Hyde Park included improving security awareness, out of hours dog warden patrols and carrying out annual deep cleans to bin yards, back alleys, removing graffiti, spraying weeds and maintaining green spaces.

In both Headingley and Hyde Park, and other surrounding student areas, there have been out of hours patrols by foot and by van to deal with noise and nuisance complaints known as the LASBT – Leeds Antisocial Behaviour Team (Leeds City Council, 2016). Patrols took place close to the start of term on dates from 15th September 2016 – 23rd September 2016. These patrols officers are in the area and can deal with complaints, break up parties and help members of the community. The officers also attend home visits to issue warning letters and in two particular cases, confiscated noise equipment in the first term of 2016 and issued 90 noise abatement notices to student properties. It was concluded by Leeds City Council (2016) that the increase in funding for these patrols be maintained so they can be in effect in the 2017/18 academic year.

Since April 2010, council planning permission has been needed when a property's use changes to a shared accommodation where 3 or more tenants are not related (Yorkshire Evening News, 2010). Although initially it was agreed that this alone will not solve the issues overnight, it was agreed by the 20

or more community groups involved that it was a positive step for residents to regain control of their communities. In conjunction with this, local authorities have introduced landlord licensing schemes. These schemes are intended to encourage a better housing standard and 'stamp out' those landlords that are dragging down the reputation of the rest.

Efforts being made by the LASBT in the Hyde Park and Headingley area have proved to be a great success. 94% of callers to the team were satisfied with the outcome of the case and 98% of callers were satisfied with the overall service provided by LASBT (Leeds City Council, 2014). Leeds City Council believes that by keeping the increased resources available they will be able to continue to deal with student issues in the area.

The University of Leeds was the first HE Institute in the UK to produce a housing strategy in 2005. The reasons for this were to ensure that student accommodation in Leeds is developed and managed appropriately and that this then does not create any difficulties for long-standing residents. It focused on a few key areas of Leeds, (Leeds 6 areas including Woodhouse, Hyde Park, South Headingley, Central Headingley and Far Headingley). In Leeds 6, the student accommodation compromises; halls of residence, purpose built student flat complexes and HMOs, but has spread to cover semi-detached/detached homes normally occupied by families and long standing residents. Leeds has many HE establishments to include Leeds Beckett, Leeds Trinity, a Law College and Leeds University. The city of Leeds has a student population of 64,990 which is 8.6% of the general population for the area (Student Cities, 2017).

As well as having a wide ranging and long running community programme that prioritises 'open and transparent communication, actively promoting community cohesion and matching resources to community priorities' its community strategy acknowledges cultural disparities in areas such as social class and uses language of 'narrowing the gap' to describe the mechanism by which it aims to address division (University of Leeds 2012). The community programme includes funding for a Community Planning Officer who facilitates communication between all members of the community about planning issues. It also runs a neighbourhood helpline that directly connects residents with the university to report problems as well as a large volunteering programme that matches student volunteers with schools and community groups. Additionally, the university has set up its own grant that awards monies to students to develop and implement their own community projects, further involving students in the community and encouraging their creativity and altruism. The grants have funded a range of impactful community projects, many of which have dealt with vulnerable populations, such as young people in areas of high deprivation and victims of race hate crime. They also have a flyer consent zone in student housing areas and designated areas of housing mix.

The main aim of the housing strategy is to reduce the impacts students are having on certain areas of the city. Leeds University are working closely with the Council and using their development powers to plan for and manage areas of additional student housing covering the LS6 and adjoining areas. This policy - H15, has focus on providing for students but also for family occupation as well. Whilst looking at housing provision it also includes information about living conditions (an umbrella term covering; activity levels, noise/disturbance, parking availability, variety/ amount of student homes and community committees.

Leeds City Council has been working with the local universities and developers to explore new sites for accommodation development and has set out satisfaction criteria to ensure some of which must include good public transport connections to the Universities, contribution to regenerating target areas and not unacceptably affect existing housing stock in Leeds. Construction has commenced on a new PBSA in the Woodhouse area of Leeds. It will provide a total of 117 beds and cost a value of £15 million. This will be completed in time for the start of the 2018/2019 academic year (Crosslane Group, 2017).

Some of the strategies being implemented are proving to be successful. Councillor Sue Bentley, who represents the area agrees: "There has been a reduction in the number of houses in multiple occupation by students and the area is returning to a more balanced community." (Yorkshire Post, 2016)

Accreditation of student housing has been introduced and there are 32,000 bed spaces in Leeds student accommodation covered by accreditation operated by Unipol, and these schemes all feature standards on community/neighbour complaints, waste management, garden, maintenance and management of properties that mean that standards are generally quite good and that the traditional causes of friction between student and community are reduced.

Accreditation sets some parameters in terms of the provision of amenities to combat problems. A prominent commentator involved with student housing provision stated that the local authority has improved in recent years, through the planning system, at integrating these schemes into their locality. However, they note that this did not happen very successfully during the boom in development (2005-2012) and as a result there are some very large schemes which are all clustered together with very little thought on how they relate to their location and what local services the student tenants need.

In addition to this, the local authority has a very active approach to noise nuisance complaints and regularly hands out high profile abatement or confiscation orders on noisy properties. There is also a joined up approach on crime and security, and summer student changeover, with the universities, student unions, local authority, community groups, police etc all trying to co-ordinate their efforts. There is also a Neighbourhood Helpline, a joint effort between Leeds University and Leeds Beckett University, which receives complaints/issues about students from members of the community, with action taken. The evidence in the recent report of the Universities and Colleges Neighbourhood Helpline 2015-2016 is that the number of complaints has fallen by 43% from 2014-2015 indicating that a pro-active approach is working.

Manchester

Manchester is currently home for four very large Universities which has resulted in the city boasting one of the largest student populations in the UK, the current population of students in the Manchester area is around 99,000. (Universities in Manchester, 2017). With that in mind both Manchester City Council and the Universities themselves have come up with a number of steps to ensure that the student population integrates with the non-student population favourably by ensuring there is infrastructure in place to allow the students to engage positively with their neighbours and also working to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in student areas.

In 2009 Manchester City Council commissioned a report suggesting a number of strategies to ease tensions between residents and students. According to the Tribal Group (2009) the mainstreaming of what they describe as good neighbourhood management was a necessity to provide effective management of areas which house a particularly high student population. They suggested introducing an off campus manager and a helpline so that residents had a contact to approach with student issues. A neighbourhood steering group was established to manage fresher's week to cut down on ASB. The council requested that student volunteers should work closely with the off campus manager in areas which have a higher student population to make them more aware of crime prevention and ASB. Community forums are another suggestion which would allow all Stakeholders a chance to discuss student issues with both the University and the local Council. (Manchester City Council 2009)

Halls 2 Homes is an initiative created by Manchester University which works closely with Manchester City Council to promote Best Practice in student heavy areas. They work to educate students on their responsibilities living in communities, teach them how to be good neighbours, encourage and implement student involvement in community activities, implement activities which ensure student engagement with local residents and they also support students who are moving from on campus accommodation to off campus (Halls 2 Homes Website, 2017). There have been reports of successful events and fun days organised by this initiative which have promoted community cohesion and improved relations between the student and non-student residents such as a Fun Fest which took place in February 2015 (Bruce, 2015).

Steps have also been taken by Manchester City Council and the Universities to deal with ASB problems associated with student heavy areas in the city. A report produced by the Council in 2015 details how they are working together, if the ASB is continuous the University can end the student's studies, and Noise Abatement Notices can be issued which can lead to fines. Community Protection notices can be issued to Landlords who don't take steps to prevent ASB with their tenants, which can then lead to an Abatement Notices and fines. They also state that they will issue injunctions where necessary and in more serious cases of ASB they will issue a closure of premises to the Landlord. These preventative measures work to reduce instances of ASB in student areas (Todd, 2015). There have been reports of this strategy having a favourable impact (Abbet, 2016).

The evidence suggests that for students to integrate in residential areas in the city there should be steps in place to deal with and prevent instances of ASB. Improving community relations between the non-student and student populations is also an important step and programmes such as the work of Hall 2 Homes will only help to continue improving relations.

More recently two academics in Manchester, Julian Holloway and Paul O'Hare stated that they were acutely aware of how the presence of so many students has had a marked impact on the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the city where there are almost 100,000 undergraduate students across four universities (Visit Manchester 2017).

“as with similar cities across the UK, there is concern that relationships between students and ‘host’ communities are fraught. Periodic articles in the city’s press often lament ‘bad’ student behaviour whilst the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University have recently temporarily funded private security patrols of public streets in a bid to address concerns regarding anti-social behaviour on the part of students.”

The academics decided to get students to reflect upon their impacts on their neighbourhoods and the city more broadly, whilst simultaneously developing and maturing key geographical techniques and analysis. To do this they integrated the study of studentification into an introductory module and called it “Introducing Human Geographies”.

The first part of the module introduced students to political, social, economic, cultural and urban geographies, and the final six weeks of the course specifically looked at the issue of studentification. Part of the assessment included a 1,000 word essay with a brief to “Describe and discuss the geographies of student identity” The module encouraged students to read key literature around the theme of studentification, to design and execute semi-structured interviews and focus groups with their fellow cohort of geography and human geography students, and to develop an empirical qualitative dataset that students could analyse and reflect upon with reference to the published literature.

It allowed students, and indeed staff, to consciously explore the impact students had on the urban fabric including, but not limited to, cohesive neighbourhoods, identity,

exclusion, segregation, liveability and quality of life. According to the academics this reflective learning in the Living Lab of the city and the classroom can have a real impact on those experiencing – and who ultimately are responsible for – studentification in the contemporary city. (Holloway and O’Hare).

Nottingham

“Graystacks” student town houses - In Spring 2013 Church Lukas Architects submitted a planning application to re-develop a former car park on Castle Boulevard overlooking the canal as seven four-storey student ‘town houses’. In their Design and Access statement, Church Lukas said:

“... Whilst the ‘cluster flat’ and ‘studio’ based schemes provide accommodation for predominantly first year students, most leave purpose built accommodation after one year and move into HMO houses. This scheme will set a new benchmark in the design, environmental performance and provision of social space lacking in the purpose built market.

“This product ... [will] provide: a genuine alternative to the existing HMO houses a spatial configuration that encourages social cohesion and a management process that promotes social responsibility ...” Also, and equally significant is the fact that the project has *“... a flexible ‘long life, loose fit’ design that can be configured to residential [use] at a later stage if required. ...”* A range of options exist for conversion of the scheme back to residential use, including the possibility of changing the building into large individual family town houses or a mix of two-bed and one-bed apartments.

Sanctions for student misbehaviour - Nottingham Trent University has re-designed its Student Code of Behaviour to make it more accessible to students. The Student Code of Behaviour misconduct table, was presented at a 'Community Trigger' meeting on Tuesday 18 July 2017. This outlines examples of behaviour and examples of sanctions. The full 21-page Student Code of Behaviour document is available to all students on-line, and all students are required to sign it on enrolment at the start of each academic year, confirming that they have read/understood/will adhere to it. The new table guide for students links in with the Student Charter and will be displayed in all Student Halls of Residence, and has been embedded into the student 'Induction' and 'Outduction' educational programmes sent to all students.

Dublin – PBSA

In Dublin, several PBSA projects have been developed. When planning for PBSA, developers have to show how the students can integrate into the community. This section describes the Binary Hub – student accommodation of Thomas Street. It has 471 bed-spaces, which are organised into “cluster apartments” with between three and eight bedrooms. The accommodation was fully booked for the 2018 academic year, with the lease lasting for 41 weeks.

Community integration:

Integration with the community is done at several levels for this development. High level discussion of examples of integration / regeneration are introduced and early engagement with the community is important where they are invited to consultation meetings. The developers built up a rapport with the local community from the very start.

This development has a community garden which has various events. The area, according to those involved on the PBSA project was a run-down area before this development happened with multiple incidents of ASB. The development has added to the regeneration of the area and it also incorporates Summer lets to tourists. It is situated about 25 mins walk from Trinity College Dublin and there are a range of bedrooms, studio, 1, 2 bedroom units, and some 8 bed units with shared facilities.

Management

The management company takes on a relatively larger management role than in other PBSMA's. There are consequences for bad behaviour from the management company. There is a clause in the tenancy agreement for ASB and there is a pastoral responsibility to the residents. The staff know every residents name within a week and they are always on site. If a student is in a room and they don't get on with others, they can speak to staff and get a new room. There are social spaces, and they have different ways of encouraging their use through film nights or order pizza. This is the pastoral side of the operator.

Cardiff

Cardiff Council has started a campaign to improve waste collection in the city. Following a period of education a zero tolerance policy was introduced in the Cathays area of the city (an area of highly concentrated student housing). 129 fixed penalty notices (£100) have been issued, for offences such as placement of rubbish, items wrongly put in recycling and waste put out for collection on the wrong day.

American examples - Universities of Michigan, Montana, Albany, Ohio, and Oregon all have successfully implement an ambassador programme

The Universities of Michigan, Montana, Albany, Ohio, and Oregon all have successfully implement a Neighbourhood ambassador programme. The program consists of off-campus students who meet certain requirements (GPA, and off-campus status being the primary requirements), who are each in charge of a certain neighbourhood/street within the town.

The full Holyland Transition Study is available online www.forwardsouth.org

HOLYLAND TRANSITION

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