

David Howells – Conclusion

In order to implement either an Article 4 Direction, or additional licensing, exceptional circumstances are required. The report produced does not identify clear evidence of “exceptional circumstance” in Bath and highlights in point 6.3 that only a limited number of councils have implemented an Article 4 Direction as such there is little precedence in this area. With this information, and the lack of information surrounding the effectiveness and appropriateness of the management initiatives we do not believe that exceptional circumstances, warranting an Article 4 Direction on HMOs in Bath, has been adequately proved.

Your own equality impact summarised the high risk of alienating young people with an Article 4 Direction. What we are here to say, as the representatives of 20,000 students, is that that risk is the reality. Article 4 Direction discriminates against the young, be they students or otherwise, and such a direct and heavy-handed approach from this Cabinet will alienate 20% of your and your fellow councillors’ constituents. It will permanently undermine the efforts of everyone to solve the problems our community shares and will encourage the talented students of our universities to look elsewhere when they graduate.

While we understand that there will be positives and negatives for various groups with the majority of decisions that the council and councillors are required to make on a regular basis, the recommendation to introduce an Article 4 Direction or additional licensing appears to have uncovered and stated many problems without proposing solutions and has failed to adequately address the points above. We see no reason why these points should not be considered to the same extent as any argument for an Article 4 Direction, especially as no council has yet proved that an Article 4 Direction will do what it is hoped.

We therefore ask that it is decided that the approach of an Article 4 Direction and threshold policy is not adopted for Bath and that additional licensing is further investigated. By working closely with the Students’ Unions and the universities, the Council will be able to ensure that should additional licensing be brought in, any additional costs that would be passed to tenants would provide value for money. We also ask that the management options detailed in the feasibility study are sufficiently tried, tested and evaluated for effectiveness before an Article 4 Direction is considered. On behalf of the 20,000 students in Bath, Thank you.