

**Bath and North East Somerset Council
Planning, Housing and Economic Development
Development and Scrutiny Panel, 5 January 2016**

**Statement by Mr Neil Latham
Response to Student Accommodation (Placemaking Plan) paper**

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Student Accommodation paper tabled at this meeting.

I would like to start by confirming the University's desire to work with the Council and the community in developing our plans for student housing in the city and wider region. In 2012, the University did not object to the Article 4 proposals about restrictions on the development of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), recognising the impact in wards such as Oldfield Park and Westmoreland. In 2016, we hope to see our continued contribution to the dialogue around student housing.

The data presented in sections 5.10 to 5.15 of the paper does not align with our own projections, which indicate much more modest growth. We will be preparing a full response to the Placemaking Plan consultation and would welcome a meeting with the Council to jointly update the student number projections and housing estimates. In summary, by 2020/21 our estimated number of additional bedspaces is approximately 1,100 (equivalent to around two Green Park House sized developments or three Twerton Mill developments) rather than the 3,895 quoted

We are working on several new initiatives:

- Conscious of the impact HMOs have on the city, we are in the early stages of planning a pilot scheme to house some continuing students (i.e. 2nd and 3rd year undergraduates). This will involve looking at how we can offer affordable alternatives to HMOs using some of our own accommodation stock. The pilot will use part of the University's income from a growing summer lettings business to subsidise term time rental.

- We recognise that all new accommodation does not need to be in the city. While the paper before the Panel focuses on Bath, we must not forget the wider region when considering opportunities for student housing; after all we are in Bath and North East Somerset. We have excellent transport links into Bath, particularly on the routes from Bristol. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss possible sites with the Council that fall along those key transport routes into the city.
- We are also investigating the possibility of some accommodation in Wiltshire to support those studying at Corsham Court.

A recent study by Oxford Economics found that the student population in Bath represents 17.4% percent of the population which is broadly equal to that of Nottingham and lower than other university cities such as Oxford and Cambridge. For BaNES as a whole, the percentage is much lower at around 10.9%. We therefore believe that Bath does not 'over perform' as a host to higher education as some people have suggested, and has the capacity to benefit from some further carefully managed expansion. That benefit is illustrated by the Oxford Economics reports which found that in 2014/2015 Bath Spa University and its students generated a value-added contribution of nearly £100 million to the Bath and North East Somerset economy and supported 1 in every 49 jobs.

I would like to close by saying that our students are an extremely important part of this community. They don't just contribute economically, but bring a wealth of creativity and innovation, and also contribute to the cultural life of Bath.

Thank you.