

From: Jonathan.Nicholls [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 March 2019 13:45
To: Planning Policy
Subject: SPD on PBSAs

Dear Council

I am replying to the invitation to comment on the SPD on Purpose-Built Student Accommodation.

I share the welcome and acknowledgement that the Council makes to the contribution that students make to the District. I also welcome the detailed assessment of the concerns of SOLAR in South Leamington when the density of student HMOs or other accommodation can reduce the quality of life for other residents. My comments are principally about the University of Warwick, about which the SPD mainly focuses its attention on.

The Council will be aware that the University is currently undergoing a re-master planning exercise for its main campus. It is therefore imperative that in working in consultation with the University on the proposals that come forward for that (as much as they fall in the District boundary and not Coventry), that the policy about student housing and the numbers that the University expects to recruit in future years is kept under review. In this context, the projection of student numbers is on a short timescale. Over the years to 2029, there will be a very significant growth nationally in the 18-19 year olds in the population. What plans do the University have for further expansion against that growth? Brexit may also play a role here, as well as developing policy about fees and loans for UK-based students. It will be very tempting for the University to expand its population of students from outside the EU area in the future given that fees from such students are not regulated and may compensate for losses of income should fees for UK students fall when current reviews of policy in this area are acted upon by government, or when EU students do not arrive in such current numbers post-Brexit. The cultural impact of the mix of student origins is therefore as important as the numbers projected in these contexts. The multi-national and multi-cultural characteristics of Leamington in particular but the District more generally is much to be welcomed. But the projected mix of culture and nationalities is an important consideration in how we can best integrate and welcome all students in our resident population.

It is not reasonable that the University should not apparently be making further provision for student housing on its campus or in considering the future uses of its campus at Wellesbourne, where some restrictive covenants on use expire shortly. It is possible that the University should be criticised for not having replenished its land bank as it was given permission to build on the former green belt land at its main campus. To assume that the solution to its future growth is entirely based on the District's towns, particularly Leamington, needs careful thought. Kenilworth is well-connected to the Warwick campus by a dedicated cycle way; that cannot be said of Leamington. Talk of such a dedicated link has been inconclusive for too long. Buses are necessary (but arguably not diesel buses) but not sufficient and the Council should ensure that it has controls in place for the optimal number of student numbers to which the University can grow in Leamington as well as that adequate and sustainable and environmentally-conscious transport is being provided.

I also have a concern about PBSAs. The District needs cohesive and integrated residential communities where young and old, families and single people, transient members of the community and those with deeper roots live together so that facilities and community anchor points are shared and serve the needs of all. The risk with a PBSA is that it creates an island within the wider community rather than providing the means for better integration and the sustainable communities that we should all want. I would also be concerned if the site of PBSAs were to compromise the location of social housing within town centres. It is by using such sites for new council housing or affordable homes that we can ensure that everyone has the

opportunity to benefit from being part of our towns and not isolated on their fringes as the current Local Plan disastrously envisages.

I would therefore urge the Council to ensure that its discussions with the University focus on these points and that in considering its future master plan and student growth, the Council develops policies and planning agreements with the University or third-party PBSA providers that build better communities for all and are directed to the University's own land, Kenilworth and Warwick, as well as Leamington.

Yours

Jonathan Nicholls

