

Examination of the Bath and North East Somerset Local Plan (Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan) Partial Update

Matter 5: Other District Wide Development Management Policies – Policy H2A Purpose Built Student Accommodation

Prepared on behalf of
University of Bath

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1 ASSESSMENT OF ACCOMMODATION NEEDS (Q115)

- 1.1.1 As set out in the Statement of Common Ground that has been agreed with the Council, the University recognises the demand it places on residential accommodation in the city. Consequently, the University and the Council have liaised closely in relation to the evolving University Strategy, the areas of planned growth and the likely accommodation requirements that will arise from that.
- 1.1.2 The outcome of that process in terms of student numbers and expected accommodation requirements and supply (PBSA) in the plan period to 2029 is set out in the Topic Paper: Student Accommodation (CD-O36). The conclusions have directly informed the policies in the Local Plan Partial Update, notably the revised Policy SB19 in relation to further development on the campus and the addition of the new Policy H2a in relation to PBSA development.
- 1.1.3 It should be noted, however, that the inherent uncertainties that the Higher Education sector faces presents challenges in precisely forecasting student numbers and assessing the need for new facilities and accommodation, certainly in the longer term.
- 1.1.4 In developing the new University Strategy, the University has sought to take account of the economic, political, societal and technological context and the uncertainties that the Higher Education sector will need to navigate. These include the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery in the post-Covid era, the changing relationship between the UK and EU and evolving global trade and industry relationships, a transforming digital landscape and the need to respond to the imperatives of sustainability, diversity and inclusion.
- 1.1.5 For Higher Education Institutions, both the global and national landscape is rapidly changing, due in part to increased international competition and complexity, evolving HE policies in the UK, and pressures on university finances. The University is unclear as to when any degree of stability will return to its student recruitment markets, but the recent past has underlined the need for increased agility.
- 1.1.6 The Local Plan Partial Update is, therefore, based on a robust assessment of accommodation needs in the period to 2029, but that will need to be carefully monitored and certainly considered again in the preparation of the full review of the Local Plan that is already underway.

2 MEETING ACCOMMODATION NEEDS (Q116)

- 2.1.1 The revised Policy SB19 provides a robust policy framework for the long-term development of the Claverton Campus including significant additional PBSA (alongside academic, research and support facilities). The PBSA is proposed to be located on 2 grass pitches and a car park in the eastern part of the campus that was previously removed from the Green Belt to facilitate the University's continued growth. Development on the campus is subject to operational and environmental constraints, but the PBSA can be delivered later within the plan period to meet the identified needs.

- 2.1.2 The addition of Policy H2A to the Local Plan is also supported by the University as it provides the required flexibility within the spatial strategy and will help to reduce pressure on Houses on Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the city.
- 2.1.3 Therefore, the Local Plan Partial Update positively seeks to address the identified student accommodation needs in the plan period and Policies SB19 and H2a will be effective in realising that objective.
- 2.1.4 However, the preparation of the Masterplan has highlighted that the development capacity on the campus is relatively limited, ultimately finite and subject to a number of demands and requirements that are essential to the University's operation. In that light, a review of the spatial strategy (post 2029) in relation to off campus development should be undertaken in the preparation of the full review of the Local Plan.