

Question 12

Policy 10 – Student Accommodation

1. The first paragraph of this policy states “A site at Mount Oswald, Durham City, [...] is identified as suitable for purpose-built student accommodation as part of a wider housing allocation.” The issue of the wider housing allocation is not relevant to a policy dealing with student accommodation, and is not justified in the subsequent paragraphs. This phrase should be deleted from this policy.
2. We have major reservations about the current proposals for the Mount Oswald Golf Course and have stated them in our comments on planning application CMA/4/83 which we hope the Council will reject in its current form. However we do accept the need for a new college and Mount Oswald may be a suitable site. Given the fluid nature of this aspect of the policy we will defer more detailed comment for the deposit draft.
3. This policy underestimates the scale of the problem, possibly because it is based on inadequate evidence. The 2011 Census should clarify the position but the small area statistics are not due out for several months. Durham University has published a Residential Accommodation Strategy¹ and this submission draws on the information contained therein.
4. For the 2012/13 academic year, the total student population is 13,500. Around 5,700 (43%) live in college and the other 7,800 live out. Paragraph 4.162 says “Students living outside the purpose built accommodation tend to house share in the private market sector estimated at 8-10% of all houses within the City.” Given that the SHMA (table 4.1a) gives the total number of dwellings in the City as 18,225 that would equate to between 1,458 and 1,823 houses with between 4.3 and 5.3 students living in each house, which is plausible. However, the same table gives the number of student lets as 383 which is much too low. The University should be able to provide the information requested.
5. However, most of the student lets are in the central wards of the City where many streets are over 50% student lets and some are almost entirely so. This is an undesirable situation which runs counter to NPPF paragraph 50 which says “there is a need to create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities.” - this is quoted at the end of this part of the *Preferred Options*. Contrary to what is said in paragraph 4.163, if an Article 4 Direction were introduced it would materially help in achieving this objective.
6. The large number of students living in the City compromises the objective of creating a critical mass able to support more retail etc. The three University terms last 28 weeks so for the remaining 24 weeks in the year the town has nearly 30% fewer residents. Furthermore, the nature of student households differs from the settled population so that they are for example less likely to buy white goods.

1 <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/estates/documents/DurhamUniversity-ResidentialAccommodationStrategy2012-2020.ppt>

7. The University's Residential Accommodation Strategy predicts future student numbers in Durham City as 14,000 in 2015/16 and 15,300 in 2019/20. Assuming the Mount Oswald College is built but no others there will be an extra 800 students living out by 2019/20.
8. In fact the University's aim is to accommodate 50% - 70% in college (but they are not sure if they can achieve this). Their plans include a map with possible further colleges at Elvet Waterside, Hild/Bede and off Green Lane. These plans need to be incorporated into the County Durham Plan so that they may be considered at the Examination in Public.