



Committee and Date

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Enterprise & Growth Scrutiny
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Item

6

Public

University Centre Shrewsbury – Student Accommodation Strategy

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the requirements and process for the development of a comprehensive approach to providing student accommodation in order to fully consider the demand for student residential space for the University Centre Shrewsbury (UCS) in the short, medium and long term. The creation of the strategy will involve consultation with the local community and private sector accommodation providers.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Commissioning to further develop a comprehensive Student Accommodation Strategy together with the required policies (including appropriate consultation requirements), with the Final Draft Accommodation Strategy to be presented to a future Cabinet prior to formal adoption by full Council, and resulting policies forming part of the Strategy being approved in accordance with the appropriate approval processes for such policies.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 The primary risk of not making an early assessment of the likely demand for student accommodation in Shrewsbury, and the formulation of subsequent policies for management, would be the development of an unaccredited accommodation market that would not be beneficial to either residents or students.
- 3.2 An assessment of demand will allow for the formulation of policies relating to private rental accommodation alongside, accreditations of accommodation to protect both landlords and student residents. This will also include a thorough investigation of the planning powers available to the authority to manage future growth.
- 3.3 Once the Draft strategy is completed it will be subject to consultation and a detailed Equalities Impact Needs Assessment will be prepared to address any issues identified in the consultation process, prior to the Strategy being adopted.

- 3.4 A risk register has been produced for the UCS project highlighting overarching, legal, finance, property, curriculum and procurement risks. The risk register is reviewed regularly and updated by the Project Team. In addition a UCS Programme Manager has recently been appointed who will coordinate activities including maintenance of the risk register.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The financial implications for direct delivery of student accommodation by the Council were considered by Council on 18 December 2014 in an exempt report.
- 4.2 A project budget of up to £1 million was agreed with authority delegated to the Chief Executive to approve spend against this budget, in consultation with the Leader of the Council by Council at its meeting of 17 July 2014.
- 4.3 Spend may be required in relation to consultation events, producing documentation and specialist advice where appropriate.

5. Background

- 5.1 This report builds on previous reports to Council on 17 July 2014, 25 September 2014 and 18 December 2014 (Exempt item) and seeks to address the particular need for a Student Accommodation Strategy to assess the impact of student presence on the local community. The availability of a sufficient quantity and quality of student accommodation will contribute to the success of the UCS and its associated economic benefits. The Council's intention is to have a strategy to deal with the future development of student accommodation to ensure the sympathetic introduction of the new university into Shrewsbury.

6.1 The Role of Shropshire Council

- 6.2 The Council has a number of roles in terms of ensuring the right amount of accommodation of the right quality is provided. It will do this in partnership with the University of Chester to ensure UCS is a success. This approach will build on the longstanding experience of the University of Chester and will also look towards best practice from elsewhere.
- 6.3 Shropshire Council has formally agreed that it will provide direct delivery of student accommodation to kick-start the provision of accommodation needs, which at the early stages of this project, are not met by the private sector. The Council will also fit out and operate student living accommodation or otherwise secure such living accommodation by tendering for services on the open market.
- 6.4 With this in mind the Council is in the process of seeking planning permission for student accommodation at Mardol House. This will provide accommodation for the first cohort of undergraduates at the first intake in 2015. Therefore, the Council will be able to provide guaranteed accommodation to all first year students.
- 6.5 In addition, the Council is currently inviting expressions of interest in developing up to 800 further new build accommodation units, over the next 3 years, through an EU Tender process in order to assess the appetite of private sector developers.

6.6 It is anticipated that the longer term provision may be delivered by the private sector. If this is to occur then the Council has a role in terms of its regulatory functions through the control of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) legislation for instance. This will require the Council to have evidence based policies.

7. Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

7.1 HMOs are a vital part of Shrewsbury's housing stock and provide an important source of affordable accommodation. Under existing planning legislation (Permitted Development), permission is not required to convert a dwelling house into a HMO for six residents or fewer. Larger HMOs, occupied by more than six individuals require planning permission whether this be purpose built or the change of use of an existing property. However, local authorities can issue an Article 4 Direction to remove Permitted Development rights within defined areas in exceptional circumstances where evidence suggests that the exercise of permitted development rights would harm local amenity or the proper planning of the area.

7.2 The Council is aware of concerns, particularly from local residents, that there will be high concentrations of HMO's in particular areas and that this in turn could lead to an increase in associated issues. The Council is mindful of these concerns and is keen to take a range of considered measures to manage the process of a growing student population, their housing needs and the local communities.

7.3 This particular area of student accommodation and likely impact on the locality can be considered through additional policy clarification. This is in the form of supplementary planning advice, and specifically contained within the Type and Affordability of Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This SPD supplements the Shropshire Core Strategy (adopted 24th Feb 2011). An SPD provides more detailed guidance for the Development Management process on delivering the Councils policies. At present there is no direct reference nor guidance within SPD in relation to HMO's.

7.4 Therefore the SPD will be reviewed and guidance introduced on dealing with applications for HMO's. The review will begin in February 2015 and will incorporate other revisions subject to the Local Plan public inquiry. It is anticipated a revised SPD will be available to go for formal consultation by July 2015. The Council will also consider whether an Article 4 direction could be implemented if appropriate as it reviews its SPD. This revised SPD will form the policy element of the Student Accommodation Strategy regarding HMOs.

7.5 The Council, in terms of its regulatory functions, also has a role in the licensing and registration of HMO's and ensuring required standards in the private rented sector are maintained. Again, how these are addressed will be considered in formulating policies and appropriate consultation. Landlords will be encouraged to develop living space in a controlled way in line with appropriate regulations.

7.6 UCS will work with Shropshire Council to also develop a Student Accommodation Quality Accreditation Mark relating to the management and condition of student accommodation. The scheme would be voluntary and would provide recognition that a property meets all the requirements for student accommodation and relevant legislation. The benefits of such a scheme would allow landlords to advertise their

properties through USC Accommodation Office and would help students to make informed choices about the quality of accommodation available. Landlords, including the Shropshire Branch of National Landlords Association, and other stakeholders would be consulted on the details of the scheme.

7.7 The management of the student population will also be considered and policy documentation developed accordingly. This will include Strategies for the Management of Student Halls, and a Shrewsbury Student Landlord Accreditation Scheme. These will all become clear through the development of the Student Accommodation Strategy.

8. Conclusions

8.1 A Student Accommodation Strategy is required in order to consider all elements of the provision of student accommodation and its likely impact on the town. Therefore, there is a need to progress the development of appropriate interventions and policies and the necessary consultation undertaken.

8.2 The Student Accommodation Strategy will provide the Council's overarching approach on this issue and will inform the development of, and consolidate, a range of policies. Such individual policies may be subject to consultation and separate approval processes in line with the Council's Constitution, including by Cabinet or Portfolio Holders as appropriate. The Strategy will provide a single document which includes all the proposed interventions or policies in a comprehensive manner.

<p>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Councillor Malcolm Price, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Commissioning. Councillor Keith Barrow, Leader.</p>
<p>Local Member All Shrewsbury Members.</p>
<p>Conflicts of interest declared by members</p>
<p>Appendices</p> <p>N/A</p>