

Belfast Local Development Plan

**Purpose Built Managed Student
Accommodation (PBMSA)**

Supplementary Planning Guidance

January 2025

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) provides additional advice and guidance specific to Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) in Belfast. It complements Policy HOU12: Large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA) which has been adopted in the Local Development Plan (LDP) Plan Strategy (PS). It is intended for use by developers, the public and by planning officers in the assessment of planning applications for PBMSA developments within Belfast.
- 1.1.2 SPG represents non-statutory planning guidance which supports, clarifies and/or illustrates by example policies included within the current planning policy Framework, including the PS and other development plans.
- 1.1.3 Where relevant to a particular development proposal, this SPG will be taken into account as a material consideration when determining planning applications.

1.2 What is Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)

- 1.2.1 PBMSA is accommodation that is built, or converted, with the specific intent of being occupied by students undertaking a full-time course of higher or further education – either within individual ensuite units or sharing facilities. The inclusion of the word ‘managed’ highlights the importance of such accommodation being centrally supervised by the developer/landlord to provide welfare support for students and to ensure compliance with any code of conduct or tenancy agreements, etc.
- 1.2.2 These management arrangements are a significant difference between PBMSA and students living in the more traditional form of student accommodation often referred to as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the private rented sector. However, as a form of housing, PBMSA has many distinct characteristics that distinguish them from smaller-scale housing occupied by unrelated people (HMOs). They raise many different planning issues from other forms of student accommodation, HMOs or general housing that can have significant implications for the orderly and consistent development of the City.
- 1.2.3 Although ‘residential’ in nature, PBMSA has no formal definition within the planning system and is considered ‘sui generis’ (unique/of its own class). It is therefore a form of development for which further guidance and clarification is appropriate to ensure the unique nature of the development can be adequately assessed.

Introduction

- 1.2.4 The student population in Belfast includes anyone enrolled for more than two weeks on a higher education (HE) course that is primarily based in the UK, unless they are an incoming exchange student, on sabbatical, writing-up or dormant. Data from universities, higher education colleges and other specialist providers of higher education are collectively referred to as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Higher education campuses in Northern Ireland includes Queen's University Belfast, The Open University, St Mary's University College, Stranmillis University College and Ulster University.
- 1.2.5 In the academic year 2021/22, there were a total of 2,862,620 students in higher education (undergraduate and postgraduate students) for the whole of the UK¹. In the context of Northern Ireland (NI), in the same academic year there were a total of 69,565 students in higher education (undergraduate and postgraduate students). Therefore, the NI student population represents 2.43% of the total UK students. The number of higher education students enrolled in Northern Irish campuses, has increased on an annual basis. From the academic year 2017/18 through to 2021/22 there was an increase of 15,105 students, or 27.7%.
- 1.2.6 The council recognise that students studying and living within Belfast make a significant contribution to local and regional economies. For Belfast, the continued growth in the number of students wishing to enter third level education in our universities and further education colleges; the re-location of the Ulster University to the north of the City Centre and growth in the international student market all present significant opportunities for the city.
- 1.2.7 However, the rapid expansion of student numbers over the last three decades also presents a range of challenges, with specific pressures relating to housing a large student population in concentrated areas of the city and associated impacts on existing housing stock, local amenities and the wider urban environment. Taking learning from experiences of areas such as the Holylands, student housing provision needs to be well planned and appropriately managed to ensure that there is positive integration with existing communities and minimise any potential negative side effects or 'externalities' associated with an increasing student population.

¹ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he#numbers>

2 Policy Context

2.1 Regional planning policy and guidance

Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

- 2.1.1 The RDS recognises the importance of Belfast as the major driver for regional economic growth. It notes that population decline in the City needs to be reversed in order to have a strong capital city which is the economic driver of Northern Ireland. Key to this population growth will be the provision of housing to meet the full range of need. The council's Policy approach to PBMSA therefore seeks to manage housing growth and achieve sustainable patterns of development (Policy RG8) and help grow the population of the City (Policy SFG2).

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland (2015)

- 2.1.2 The council is required by the SPPS to secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving well-being. In furthering sustainable development, the SPPS advises that it is important to manage housing growth in a sustainable way, placing particular emphasis on the importance of the inter-relationship between the location of local housing, jobs, facilities and services, and infrastructure. It is similarly important to successfully integrate transport and land use generally in order to improve connectivity and promote more sustainable patterns of transport and travel.
- 2.1.3 Whilst there are no direct references to student housing within the SPPS, it notes that planning authorities should seek to facilitate sustainable housing growth in response to changing housing need, support urban regeneration (including proposals to address dereliction and to promote investment in the physical regeneration of deprived areas), progress policies, plans and proposals that can improve the health and well-being of local communities and help build a strong and shared society. Offering a variety of house types, sizes and tenures, such as bespoke PBMSA, will help to meet the diverse needs of all the community.

2.2 Local planning policy

Local Development Plan (LDP) Plan Strategy (PS) 2035

- 2.2.1 The Plan Strategy (PS) provides the strategic policy framework for the plan area as a whole across a range of topics. It sets out the vision for Belfast as well as the objectives and strategic policies required to deliver that vision. It also includes a suite of topic-based operational policies, including those relating to housing.
- 2.2.2 The residential accommodation policies within the PS seek to address both current and future residential needs by ensuring sufficient land is made available to meet

Policy context

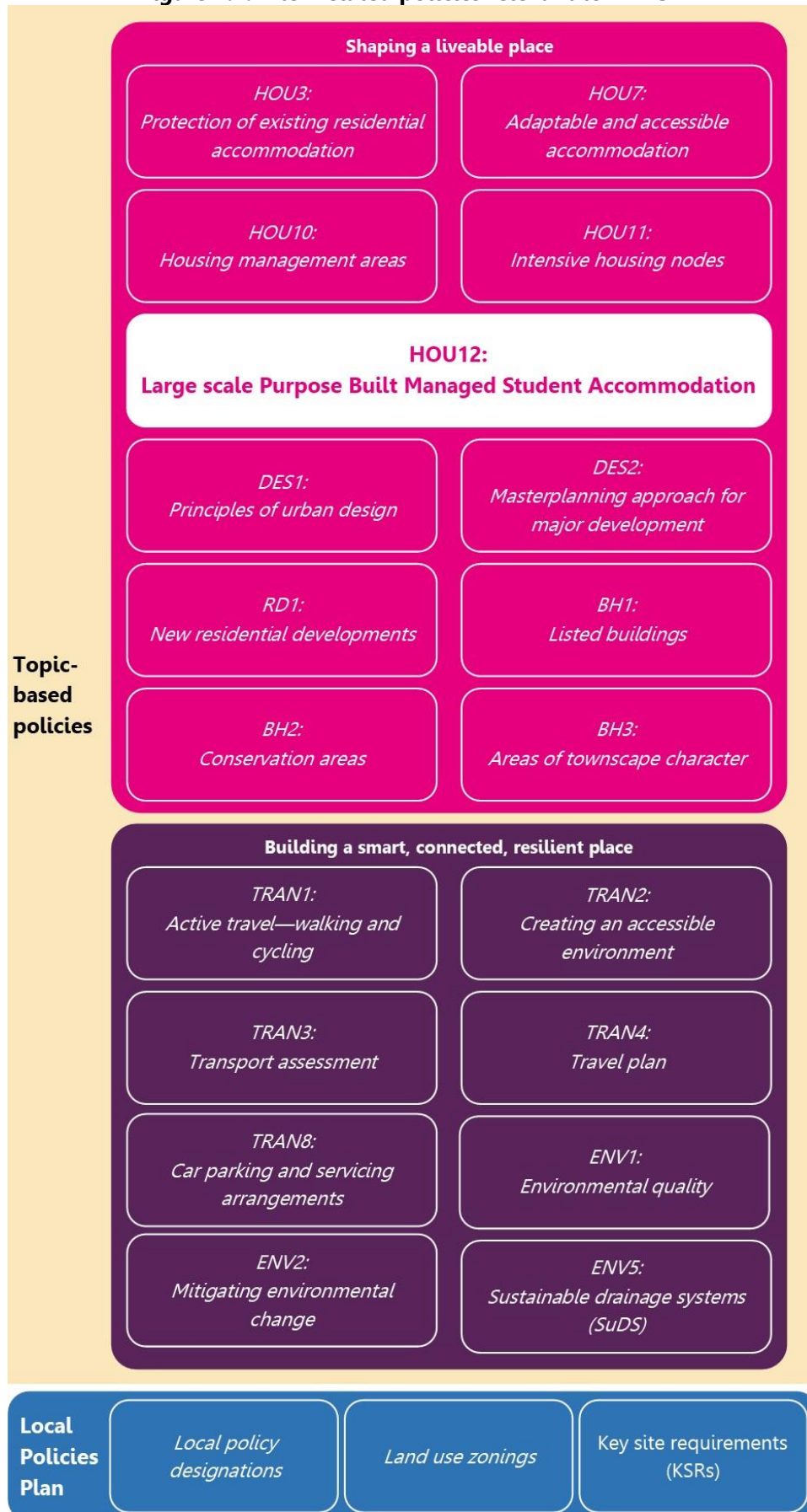
future housing requirements. The housing policies will therefore aim to ensure an appropriate supply of housing to provide for those with specialist housing need including specialist residential accommodation, including shared forms of housing and purpose-built student accommodation.

- 2.2.3 While this guidance supplements Policy HOU12: Large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA), there are also a range of other relevant policies within the Plan Strategy as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Local Policies Plan

- 2.2.4 The Local Policies Plan (LPP) will set out Key Site Requirements (KSRs) for certain land, which may in some cases be relevant to PBMSA development. This may include specific guidance or site-specific matters such as appropriate mix of uses, specific design requirements such as density of development, heights, scale, massing of buildings, etc.

Figure 2.1: Inter-related policies relevant to PBMSA



3 Large scale Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 PBMSA proposals raise a number of planning issues. Developers should consider the guidance provided in relation to these issues at the earliest opportunity when planning new PBMSA developments to ensure that the final development will be of the highest quality and will respond to the relevant planning policy requirements.
- 3.1.2 The Planning Act (NI) 2011 requires that prospective applicants for all regionally significant and major developments² must undertake formal public consultation prior to the submission of a planning application. This is to ensure that communities are aware of, and have an opportunity to comment on, such proposals before an application is made.
- 3.1.3 The 'front loading' of work is fundamental to the new development management system introduced through the reform of the planning in April 2015 and our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlines a number of opportunities for early engagement with both the council and local communities/stakeholders, including:
- **Pre-application Discussions (PADs):** The opportunity to discuss any proposals for PBMSA with the council prior to a planning application being submitted; and
 - **Pre-Application Community Consultation (PACC):** Due to the scale and the nature of PBMSA, pre-application community and stakeholder consultation is usually required. Even where a specific development does not meet the statutory definition of major development, the nature of PBMSA means that early engagement with affected communities is still highly recommended.
 - **Proposal of Application Notice (PAN):** When a pre-application consultation is required, applicants must submit a PAN to the council detailing the proposed consultation process. Separate guidance on the PAN process and pre-application consultation is available from the council's website.
- 3.1.4 Whilst these provisions represent the minimum requirements for pre-application consultation, early engagement with interested parties³ and the council will help to enhance the quality of the design and reduce the potential delays at the application stage. Developers should therefore consider the need for engagement beyond the minimum level to increase the likelihood of delivering a successful PBMSA

² See the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

³ Interested parties may include, people living within the area/neighbourhood, elected representatives, voluntary groups, community forums/groups/umbrella organisations, environmental groups, residents' groups, business interests and developers/landowners.

Large scale Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)

development, through better understanding of local concerns and circumstances. This early engagement ensures action can be taken to address issues before detailed designs are developed for a formal application.

- 3.1.5 The following sections address each key planning issue in turn and set out the type of supporting information that is likely to be required as part of a planning application in order to allow each of these issues to be fully considered.

3.2 Location and accessibility

Policy HOU12 – Large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA)

Planning permission will be granted for large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA) where all of the following criteria are met:

- a. **The proposal is easily accessible to higher education Institution campuses by sustainable transport modes and is not within an established residential area (see appendix B);**

Accessibility

- 3.2.1 There is a need to ensure that PBMSA is easily accessible to HEI campuses by sustainable transport modes, be it walking or wheeling, cycling or public/shared forms of transport.
- 3.2.2 To be easily accessible, an ideal location for PBMSA would be within walking and wheeling distance to a campus. A distance of 1,200 metres, approximately 15 minutes walking time, of an existing higher education institution campus will help to achieve the aspiration of this policy criterion by allowing relative ease of access to a campus for students via walking and wheeling.
- 3.2.3 The City Centre is a highly accessible location, almost entirely within a 1,200m distance to either of the principal higher education institution campuses and is recognised as a preferred location for higher density housing, which could include PBMSA.
- 3.2.4 Outside of the City Centre, PBMSA may be acceptable, in principle, in highly accessible locations, such as on City Corridors, which benefit from appropriate infrastructure for cycling and public transport. Similarly, Intensive Housing Nodes (IHNs) are designated specifically because they are able to accommodate higher density residential developments with a lower impact on traditional residential areas and because they can optimise existing infrastructure for sustainable transport.

Large scale Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)

Although IHNs are designated specifically because they are appropriate locations for HMOs and flats/apartments, PBMSA have many similar locational requirements.⁴

- 3.2.5 While PBMSA may therefore be acceptable within IHNs, care should be taken to avoid an overconcentration particularly in areas nearby a HEI campus or in locations where increased pressure could be placed on Established Residential Areas (ERAs).

Protecting Established Residential Areas

- 3.2.6 Whilst it is recognised that PBMSA is residential in nature, planning legislation acknowledges PBMSA as a more intensive land use, and so is a *'sui generis'* use class. It is acknowledged that high-quality PBMSA can make a positive contribution to the local environment, supporting regeneration through renewal of vacant/derelict sites and boosting local populations to sustain facilities and amenities. However, the potential benefits must be balanced against potential negative impacts that may arise from PBMSA.
- 3.2.7 As well as ensuring accessibility to HEI campuses, criterion a. of Policy HOU12 also seeks to protect existing residential communities from unacceptable impacts by requiring that PBMSA developments are not located within Established Residential Areas (ERAs). ERAs are not formally designated within planning policy, but whether or not a site falls within an ERA is established with reference to the definition within Appendix B of the Plan Strategy.
- 3.2.8 As is common case, planning policy is to be given its ordinary, natural, commonsense meaning within the policy itself. The relevant context is spelt out by the aims and justification of the policy. Therefore, as criterion a. states, planning permission will only be granted for PBMSA development where a site is not deemed to be within an ERA. Where it falls within an ERA, planning permission will be refused.
- 3.2.9 As a general guide where a proposed development for student accommodation is surrounded on more than two sides by residential properties then it may be considered to fall within an ERA, particularly where there is a recognisable form of housing styles, clear spatial structure, building form or plot sizes. However, according to the definition, ERAs can also have a greater range and mix of building styles or a less uniform pattern of development and are nonetheless still worthy of protection against redevelopment or infill at a significantly higher density than that found in the locality. The definition of an ERA also acknowledges that they may include buildings

⁴ Policy HOU11 deals with Intensive housing nodes. Paragraph 7.1.74 of the Plan Strategy explains that intensive housing nodes will be designated in the Local Policies Plan (LPP) and that in advance of this, Policy HOU11 will be applied to existing HMO Development Nodes as outlined within designation HMO 4 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan for Belfast City Council Area 2015. Existing HMO Development Nodes outside of the city centre are concentrated along existing arterial routes.

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in commercial, retail or leisure services use, proportionate in scale to the size of the neighbourhood being served.

- 3.2.10 Whether or not a site falls within an ERA must therefore be judged on a case-by-case basis with reference to the site context and the definition of ERAs outlined in Appendix B of the PS.

Cumulative Impact

- 3.2.11 It is widely recognised that an overconcentration of student accommodation relative to the wider community can lead to an imbalance in the community. Taking the learning from experiences of areas such as the Holylands, student housing provision needs to be well planned and appropriately managed to ensure that there is a positive integration with any existing communities.
- 3.2.12 For PBMSA development, consideration will be given to the cumulative impact of PBMSA, to ensure that the impact on existing communities is carefully assessed. In many locations, whilst a single PBMSA development of an appropriate scale may be accommodated without giving rise to any particular harm, multiple PBMSA developments in close proximity are more likely to be detrimental. This will be particularly important within the HMAs designated pursuant to Policy HOU10, as well as within ERAs.
- 3.2.13 As noted, some areas of the city may be more appropriate for PBMSA development based on existing land uses where cumulative impacts may be reduced and where additional benefits may be realised such as revitalising the physical fabric through re-use of vacant buildings and redevelopment of derelict and unattractive land. However, the prime planning issue is the location of PBMSA on sites where there is accessibility to third-level institutions by sustainable transport needs.
- 3.2.14 No specific threshold is set at which a community balance is likely to be lost, and so the cumulative impact will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the factors outlined above.

Protection of residential stock

- 3.2.15 The residential accommodation policies within the LDP seek to address current and future residential needs, by protecting existing residential stock and ensuring sufficient land is made available to meet future housing requirements. Policy HOU3: Protection of existing residential accommodation is applicable to any PBMSA developments that involve the conversion/re-development of existing residential buildings.
- 3.2.16 In such cases, Policy HOU3 would generally preclude the redevelopment and/or change of use of existing dwellings for PBMSA unless it is considered complementary

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to surrounding residential uses and will not result in any adverse effects on existing residential amenity. However, this will still be subject to meeting the requirements of Policy HOU12 and where an existing residential building is in close proximity to other residential uses it is likely that it may also be considered to fall within an ERA.

Supporting information

3.2.17 To allow for the full assessment of the location and accessibility of a proposal, including the cumulative impact, a **PBMSA Statement** must be submitted as part of any application for PBMSA developments which includes:

- A plan illustrating location of the development identifying key walking routes, distances and walking times to relevant higher education institution campus or public transport halts.

3.3 Scale of development

Policy HOU12 – Large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA)

- b. **The development consists of a minimum of 200 occupants. This will not preclude proposals for smaller incremental extensions or consolidations of existing halls of residence and phased development of larger schemes;**

3.3.1 When considering the impact of PBMSA, consideration should also be given as to whether the scale of a proposed development is appropriate to the location so as to enable adequate management, to maintain a community balance and to minimise any conflict with surrounding residential neighbourhoods.

3.3.2 PBMSA developments are required to have a minimum of 200 occupants, without precluding smaller incremental extensions or consolidations of existing accommodation and phased development of larger schemes. However, there is no specific policy for planning applications relating to PBMSA with fewer than 200 occupants and, as such, smaller schemes may be considered to fail this policy test. Student accommodation is measured in occupants/bed spaces and not individual units. 200 occupants would equate to 200 bedspaces.

3.3.3 However, where smaller schemes are able to meet the other requirements of this policy, such as the provision of appropriate management arrangements, planning applications may still be considered acceptable.

3.3.4 In addition, all PBMSA proposals are also subject to a range of other relevant policies, such as those relating to design quality and impact on surrounding areas (see Policy RD1).

3.4 Quality residential environment

Policy HOU12 – Large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA)

- c. The development provides a quality residential environment for students in accordance with the space standards for HMOs set out in appendix C;

Design Quality

- 3.4.1 The layout, design and facilities provided within a development should be of a high standard to ensure a quality residential environment. As outlined in Section 2, while Policy HOU12: Large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA) sets out the broad policy framework for PBMSA developments, there are a range of other relevant policies within the Plan Strategy with design implications (see Figure 2.1).
- 3.4.2 It is important that the nature, layout and design of proposed schemes are appropriate to the location and context and would not result in an unacceptable impact on local character, environmental quality or residential amenity. Good quality PBMSA will help to maximise the positive effects of development, including multiple regeneration benefits, whilst minimising any potential harm to local character, environmental quality or existing residential amenity. When considering design quality in the context of PBMSA, it is important to address residential design criteria, deliver development which is sustainable, and attend to matters of parking, waste and recycling, alongside open space.

Residential Design Criteria

- 3.4.3 Policy RD1: New residential developments relates to design quality in new residential development and is applicable to PBMSA development given that they are residential in nature. To ensure conformity with these policy standards, planning applications for PBMSA will be tested against the design criteria. They seek to ensure integration with the surrounding context and minimal impact on neighbouring uses, the protection of the built and natural heritage, adequate provision of open space and local neighbourhood facilities, accessibility and appropriate parking provision, and the promotion of personal safety. As well as applying to new residential developments, the same design criteria also apply when converting or changing the use of existing buildings to PBMSA.
- 3.4.4 Policy RD1 contains a number of design criteria aimed at minimising conflict with adjacent land uses, assisting integration with the surrounding area, ensuring adequate provision of necessary local facilities and ensuring there are no unacceptable adverse effects on existing or proposed properties in terms of overlooking, loss of light, overshadowing, noise or other disturbance. Comments

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received in response to public consultation on a planning application will be considered when assessing the likely impact of a proposed development.

- 3.4.5 In addition to the residential design requirements, there are a number of broader policies and relevant land designations within the existing planning policy framework that provide specific design advice, depending on the specific location of a proposed development. These include:
- **Policy BH1: Listed Buildings:** There is a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings unless there are exceptional reasons to justify a demolition. The change of use of listed buildings to PBMSA is likely to be appropriate where this secures its upkeep and survival and where the development is in conformity with the wider planning policy framework. PBMSA developments within the vicinity of listed buildings will also be subject to tighter policy controls to help control the impact on the setting of the listed buildings.
 - **Policies BH2: Conservation Areas and BH3: Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs):** PBMSA developments within, or affecting, a Conservation Area or ATC will need to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area or ATC. There is a presumption in favour of retaining any building which makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area or ATC, as identified within the Design Guides available for each area.
 - **Zonings and designations:** Although potential uses of the sites are not always specified, PBMSA may be acceptable as part of a mixed use developments, assuming other policy requirements are met, including specified urban design requirements relating to density of development, heights, scale, massing, etc
 - **Retail core:** Within Belfast City Centre, non-retail development is restricted to upper floors within the Primary Retail Core.

Sustainable Development

- 3.4.6 It is important that new PBMSA delivers sustainable development in its broadest sense. There are a number of elements of PBMSA developments that will contribute to the delivery of sustainable development, such as locating developments so as to reduce the need to travel and to promote walking or cycling, the use of Green Travel Plans and providing a quality residential environment. As with all new buildings, the design concept should consider the sustainability of the overall design from the outset. This could include the use of energy efficiency and sustainable construction methods, such as green roofs, or the installation of energy reduction and zero-carbon generating technologies, such as solar panels and rainwater harvesting, as appropriate. Green roofs can also contribute to the overall open space provision, as well as offering energy reductions through their isolating effect.
- 3.4.7 These are a number of rating systems, such as the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM (Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method), available to help in the consideration of overall sustainable development. Reference

to such considerations should be included within the Design and Access Statement submitted to support any planning application.

- 3.4.8 There are a number of topic based environmental policies within the Plan Strategy which should be implemented for any new PBMSA developments. Policy ENV1 (Environmental quality) is intended for new developments to enhance environmental quality where possible, ensuring the development must not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment including ground contamination, air and water quality, noise and light pollution. Policy ENV2 (Mitigating Environmental change) ensures new development will incorporate measures to mitigate environmental changes and reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by promoting sustainable patterns of development, while Policy ENV5 (Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)), will be implemented for all built development, where appropriate, SuDS measures to manage surface water effectively on site, to reduce surface water runoff and to ensure flooding is not increased elsewhere.

Parking

- 3.4.9 The negative impacts of the parking demands from students on existing provision should be addressed when considering planning applications for PBMSA developments. Criterion d. of Policy RD1 also sets out the policy requirement to keep hard surfacing to a minimum, which has direct relevance to car parking. Careful consideration should be given to the siting and organisation of car parking within an overall design for open space so that car parking does not negatively affect the use and appearance of open spaces. This is closely linked to the need to support walking, cycling and access to public transport referenced in criterion a. of Policy HOU12.
- 3.4.10 In accordance with Policies TRAN1: Active travel – walking and cycling and TRAN2: Creating an accessible environment, the provision of PBMSA in close proximity to a higher education institution campus can also help to justify a reduction in parking provision due to a reduced need for private cars to travel to the place of study. In reality, many PBMSA schemes operate without the need for parking bringing associated benefits such as reduction in emissions, health benefits of walking and cycling and increased use of public transport.
- 3.4.11 In accordance with Policies TRAN 3: Transport assessment and TRAN 4: Travel Plan, a detailed Transport Assessment Form should be completed to help understand the transport impacts of a development and to determine if a detailed Transport Assessment is needed. Travel Plans should also be provided in relation to PBMSA to provide the necessary evidence to support any reductions in parking provision and to detail how walking and cycling will be promoted. For example, 'green' Travel Plans are now widely utilised to actively encourage the use of alternative modes of transport, particularly cycling. Planning conditions or legal agreements will be utilised as necessary to ensure that parking and travel arrangements, such as operating as a

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car-free facility, can be effectively enforced as part of a wider management plan for a scheme.

Waste and Recycling

3.4.12 All new PBMSA developments should have adequate provision of waste and recycling storage facilities and appropriate arrangements for the collection of such waste. This should be designed in accordance with the Local Government Waste Storage Guide for Northern Ireland (2010)⁵ and the council's Supplementary Waste Storage Guidance for Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation in Belfast.⁶

3.4.13 Developers are advised to liaise with the council's Planning Service and Building Control Service for support and advice at an early stage to help clarify requirements and ensure that a suitable and satisfactory design is achieved.

Open Space/Communal Spaces

3.4.14 Criteria d. of Policy RD1 requires that appropriate open space is provided for new residential development and will be applicable for new PBMSA developments given that it is residential in nature. Adequate, quality open space is required within the development to provide recreational and social value.

3.4.15 Criteria i-n of Policy RD1 applies to new-build apartment developments over 30 units, in addition to criteria a. to h. Given a minimum of 200 occupants, PBMSA development will be of such a scale to share characteristics with a larger apartment development and so these latter criteria of RD1 will be applicable. This includes management arrangements, communal spaces throughout the development, storage space allocated within each individual unit, storage and disposal of water, provision for safe, convenient and secure cycle parking and communal facilities.

3.4.16 Policy OS3: Ancillary open space states that all new development proposals should include appropriate provision for open space, including hard and soft landscaped areas and outdoor amenity areas, to serve the needs of the development. A normal expectation would be at least 10% of the total site area, albeit the precise amount, location, type and design of such would be negotiated with the applicant.

3.4.17 Policy OS3 seeks to ensure that the provision of open space is integrated into the design for developments and is provided on-site. In this regard, it is important that any open space is safe and accessible, including consideration of opportunities for linkages to nearby facilities, whilst not resulting in any noise or nuisance for local occupiers and residents. It is also important that open space areas are robust and free

⁵ Available from: <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/building-control/waste-storage-guidelines#414-1>

⁶ Available from: [https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/Waste-Storage-Guidelines/Purpose-Built-Managed-Student-Accommodation-\(PBMSA\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/Waste-Storage-Guidelines/Purpose-Built-Managed-Student-Accommodation-(PBMSA))

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from encroachment from unplanned or undesirable uses, including for parking, tipping and anti-social behaviour. It is recommended that, in preparing development proposals, early consideration is given to the likely open space needs of occupiers. In accordance with the advice provided for apartment/flat developments in 'Creating Places', private communal open space may take the form of gardens, court yards, patios, balconies, recessed balconies or terraces, depending on the characteristics of the development proposed and surrounding context.

- 3.4.18 PBMSA should consider well designed space around buildings which can add greatly to the attractiveness of a development especially where principles of defensible open space are applied. Communal spaces are also often provided in student accommodation to suit the need of the occupants, which are often in the form of (but not limited to) common areas (spacious lounges, games room, recreational space), fitness area/gymnasium, cinema room, break out rooms, meeting rooms, etc. Applicants should consider function, orientation, maintenance, scale and qualities of proposed communal open space/amenity space (both indoor and outdoor). In some cases it may be necessary to provide a landscape strategy considering the provision of open space and how it meets the needs of all future residents of the development.
- 3.4.19 Where proposals for PBMSA are in an accessible location, close to a higher education institution campus, where potential for the provision of open space is likely to be more limited, small squares or formal spaces should be considered alongside internal amenity spaces throughout the development. In these circumstances it is likely that streetscape, public realm and parking areas may become a focus for improved design.
- 3.4.20 Where concessions are made in open space standards, planning agreements may be sought to ensure provision of open space off-site or to secure funding for the enhancement to existing areas of public open space. In addition, conditions or planning agreements may also be used to ensure the policy requirement for the management and maintenance of any open space provided is secured.

Space Standards

- 3.4.21 As PBMSA has a number of unique features, such as the provision of indoor amenity space and communal facilities, lower unit space standards are acceptable in comparison to other residential development. Nevertheless, it is still important that new PBMSA developments create a quality and sustainable environment for future residents. PBMSA developments are therefore still required to be built in accordance with minimum space standards for HMOs as set out in Appendix C of the Plan Strategy.
- 3.4.22 Whilst the space standards within the Plan Strategy outline basic minimum standards, it should also be recognised that many institutions have standards that would exceed

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these levels. However, there are no direct policies which inform the layout of such accommodation.

Internal storage space

3.4.23 Whilst there remains a requirement for minimum levels of internal storage space, this could be more flexibly applied to PBMSA development given general concessions accepted on space standards generally. However, to offset these lower general space standards, there is a general expectation that PBMSA will contain greater levels of communal space; more so than would be expected in a private housing development. Furthermore, it is where design features, such as space standards or storage requirements are provided below those of general residential development, the occupancy of PBMSA will usually be conditioned to limit occupation to students, particularly during term times.

Adaptable and accessible accommodation

3.4.24 PBMSA developments should seek to incorporate a high level of accessibility and inclusive design and are nevertheless required to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements. Provision should therefore be made to ensure a development is accessible to all and that accommodation could be suitable for students with disabilities. This includes not only within individual study bedrooms but also within the accommodation as a whole and along key access routes to and from the site.

3.4.25 In addition, Policy HOU7: Adaptable and accessible accommodation sets out a series of criteria to be applied to all new homes to ensure that they are designed in a flexible way that is adaptable and accessible. As PBMSA is residential in nature, Policy HOU7 is applicable. However, given that PBMSA is explicitly targeting students and that the accommodation would not therefore be intended for use throughout an individuals' lifetime, it is accepted that the policy should be applied flexibly.

3.4.26 Given the limited need for adaptability throughout an individuals' lifetime, it is not necessary for all units within PBMSA developments to meet all of the 'adaptable' criteria a-f of Policy HOU7. However, there remains a requirement that a minimum of 10% of the PBMSA units to be provided as wheelchair adaptable. This minimum requirement would help to accommodate students with a known disability in the UK and in NI⁷.

3.4.27 In relation to the specific criteria, detailed guidance relating to addressing all of the criteria of Policy HOU7 are outlined within the related 'Residential design (including adaptable and accessible accommodation) SPG'. However, specific notes in relation to

⁷ In 2021/22 c. 14% of all higher education students in NI had a known disability. Available from: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he#characteristics>

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PBMSA development and the criteria of Policy HOU7 are also provided in Figure 3.1 below:

Figure 3.1: Wheelchair adaptable PBMSA Requirements

Policy HOU7 Criteria	PBMSA Wheelchair adaptable unit requirements
a. Parking provision should have a firm surface and provide level or gently sloping access to the main entrance of the property	Building Regulations NI, Technical Booklet R requires parking provision to have a firm surface, which is level or gently sloping. Access from any car parking to the principal entrance(s) should also be level, or have a gentle gradient over a long distance.
b. Main entrances should be sheltered from the weather	Building Regulations NI, Technical Booklet R requires the area immediately in front of entrance doors to be protected from inclement weather.
c. Permanent living space or dining space should be provided within or in addition to a kitchen at entrance level;	An accessible PBMSA unit can be provided either as part of a cluster unit with communal living, dining space and kitchen or as a self-contained room, with bedroom, living, dining and kitchen space in accordance with HMO Space Standards (see criterion g.). In either case, the unit should be provided on a single level.
d. Accommodation should provide entrance level WC with space to provide an accessible shower in the future if required;	The PBMSA unit should be on a single level and include an accessible bathroom/shower.
e. An accessible bathroom should be provided on the same floor as the main bedroom; and	
f. Glazing in the principal living space should be sited to enable outlook when seated.	Requirement the same as all residential development. See Residential design (including adaptable and accessible accommodation) SPG for further detail.
g. A wheelchair accessible environment is provided in accordance with the space standards for wheelchair housing set out in appendix C;	There are no specific space standards outlined for an accessible HMO/PBMSA units either within the SPG or Appendix C of the Plan Strategy. However, where an accessible and adaptable wheelchair PBMSA unit is able to meet the HMO space standards set out in Appendix C of the Plan Strategy whilst demonstrating compliance with the remaining criteria of Policy HOU7, it will also be deemed to have complied with criterion g. of Policy HOU7.
h. In-curtilage or designated car parking meets disabled parking standards;	Requirement the same as all residential development. See Residential design (including adaptable and accessible accommodation) SPG for further detail.

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Policy HOU7 Criteria	PBMSA Wheelchair adaptable unit requirements
i. Pathways are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair and have a firm surface, level or gently sloping surface;	Building Regulations NI, Technical Booklet R requires access from the point of entrance at the boundary and from car parking provided to the principal entrance to be level, or have a gentle gradient over a long distance.
j. Entrance hallway, kitchen, living, dining area, bathroom and a main bedroom have an unobstructed turning circle;	At a minimum, an unobstructed turning circle of 1500mm should be provided within hallways, kitchens, living/dining areas, bedroom and accessible bathrooms. Within kitchens, there should be a turning circle of 1500mm clear diameter between kitchen units and other fixed objects, with additional space outside of the turning zone to assist manoeuvring throughout. Where a wheelchair adaptable unit forms part of a cluster of units with communal living/dining space and kitchen, the turning circles should be available within all communal spaces.
k. Entrances, doorways and halls should be an appropriate width and length allow for wheelchair access;	Building Regulations NI, Technical Booklet R requires accessible entrance doorway to contain a leaf which provides an effective clear width, manoeuvring space in front of the door. An unobstructed turning circle of 1500mm should be provided within hallways should permit a head-on approach to doorways.
l. Space should be provided in the entrance area to enable storage of a second wheelchair;	Requirement the same as all residential development. See Residential design (including adaptable and accessible accommodation) SPG for further detail. Provision for the storage of a second wheelchair should be at least 1100mm deep and 900mm and should not compromise the unobstructed turning circle required within the entrance or hallways. Where a wheelchair adaptable unit forms part of a cluster of units with communal living/dining space and kitchen, the storage space could be provided either within the wheelchair adaptable bedroom or at the main entrance within the cluster unit.
m. Space should be identified that is capable of accommodating a future lift accessed off circulation spaces on each floor;	Requirement the same as all residential development. See Residential design (including adaptable and accessible accommodation) SPG for further detail. This will usually be deemed to have been met if the PBMSA unit is on a single level within a building with wheelchair accessible communal lifts.

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Policy HOU7 Criteria	PBMSA Wheelchair adaptable unit requirements
n. Adequate built-in storage should be provided;	Requirement the same as all residential development. See Residential design (including adaptable and accessible accommodation) SPG for further detail. This should be separate to wheelchair storage provision (see criteria m. and areas containing boilers and other utility infrastructure).
o. Private amenity space shall be level or gently sloping and should incorporate an area of suitable hard surfacing.	Requirement the same as all residential development. See Residential design (including adaptable and accessible accommodation) SPG for further detail. Any communal and private amenity space provided should have a firm surface, which is level or gently sloping and access should also be level, or have a gentle gradient over a long distance.

Supporting information

3.4.28 To allow for the full assessment of the design quality of a proposed development, the following information must be submitted as part of all planning applications for PBMSA developments:

- **Design and Access Statement:** This should explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposal, taking account of relevant built heritage considerations, especially where proposals fall within a Conservation Area or affect the setting of a listed building. It should include:
 - Site Appraisal;
 - Concept Design;
 - A statement explaining the design objectives for the site;
 - Local design considerations; and
 - The relationship of the proposal to the surrounding context.
- **Landscaping Plan:** This should outline the proposed provision of any landscaped areas, open space or amenity spaces within the overall design concept for the scheme, including future maintenance arrangements required.
- **Transport Assessment Form:** This can be used to help the council and DfI Roads understand the transport impacts of the proposal and how those impacts may be mitigated, to determine whether a full Transport Assessment will be required (see the council's Validation Checklist for more information).
- **Travel Plan:** This should be drafted to actively encourage the use of alternative modes of transport to the private car, particularly cycling, walking and public transport, including justification for any reduction in parking standards to be considered. Issues to be considered, including any potential mitigation measures, should include:
 - Staff and Student travel arrangements (i.e. cycle parking, showers/changing facilities etc);
 - Control of beginning and end of term traffic;

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- Provision of secure cycle parking and links to existing or planned cycle networks;
- Travel packs for students at the beginning of each term (including appropriate routes to and from the higher education institution campus); and
- A Car Parking Management Plan (if parking is to be provided).

3.5 Management

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- d. **The development has appropriate management in place to create a positive and safe living environment for students whilst minimising any potential negative impacts from occupants;**

Management Plan

- 3.5.1 It is vital that the PBMSA provision is well managed in order to provide a safe and positive living environment for students, whilst reducing the risk of adverse impacts upon residential amenity. A management plan will be required to ensure a quality, safe and attractive place for residents.
- 3.5.2 Planning applications for PBMSA must be accompanied by a **Management Plan** addressing general management arrangements associated with the operation of the building. This should include details of:
- Arrangements for the management and maintenance of the site, including any landscape or amenity space (in accordance with proposed Landscape plan);
 - Travel and transport plans, including the management of parking. This should include measures to improve access and encourage use of sustainable methods of transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport;
 - Servicing arrangements, including housekeeping, cleaning, details of any deliveries required and provision for the storage and collection of waste and recycling;
 - Arrangement for the storage and collection of post and deliveries for residents;
 - Special features to improve the safety and security of students; including, for example, any CCTV provided, adequate lighting, intercoms, etc;
 - Details of any maintenance and servicing programmes, including procedures and timescales for overseeing repairs to property and a programme of both statutory and procedural maintenance and testing requirements, including procedures for emergency light testing, fire alarm testing and equipment maintenance or servicing, portable appliance testing, legionella testing, lift maintenance, window cleaning, etc. Supporting documentation should be provided, including:
 - Health and Safety Policies;

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- A Fire Safety Strategy;
- Waste and Recycling Policy;
- Copies of Maintenance Reports and procedures for reporting damage or repairs; or
- A Maintenance Lifecycle Chart, detailing the expected lifecycle of building components.
- Arrangements to ensure the well-being of residents;
- Arrangements for the management of noise and anti-social behaviour, including details of any soundproofing, noise control measures, a code of conduct to govern tenant behaviour and any proposed liaison arrangements with the relevant education institution(s), the council and the PSNI in relation to tenant behaviour;
- Arrangements for the management of periods of reduced occupancy; and
- Any formal accreditation scheme (e.g. ANUK/Unipol or Universities UK) the operator plans to secure for the management of the completed development.

3.5.3 A S76 planning agreement may be required to ensure delivery of proposed management arrangements, such as any formal links to a higher education institution campus or to ensure permanent occupation as student housing. Planning Agreements, and related developer contributions, may therefore be required in relation to PBMSA where management arrangements cannot be adequately addressed by the imposition of conditions alone. See Section 4.3 on use of Developer Contributions for more information. Where an operator is not known at the time of submitting a planning application to council, a draft Management Plan could be accepted as part of the application with a clause included to submit a final management plan, prior to occupation.

Security

3.5.4 Providing details of any special features proposed to improve the safety and security of students also helps strengthen Management Plans. This could include, for example, CCTV, the provision of lighting, intercoms, and arrangements for limiting access for residents, staff and visitors, etc.

Access

3.5.5 Access arrangements should also consider the details of travel to and from the accommodation, including measures proposed to improve access and encourage use of sustainable methods of transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport. This should refer to any Transport Assessments and Travel Plans prepared to support the planning application, clearly articulating how any policies, such as parking arrangements will be communicated to residents.

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- 3.5.6 Specific consideration should also be given to the arrangements for the arrival and departure of students, especially where it is likely that large numbers of residents may arrive or depart on the same day or weekend.

Student Behaviour

- 3.5.7 Details of a student tenancy agreement, including any conditions to ensure that students are responsible in their behaviour to respect fellow residents, neighbours and the building, are vital in assessing the appropriateness of management arrangements for proposed PBMSA. A copy of any information provided to residents, such as a tenant handbook or guide to living in the community, could help support a planning application, providing details of how agreed management arrangements would be communicated to the students, including key contact details and hours of operation, the standard of behaviour expected from occupants, complaints procedures and any disciplinary policies.
- 3.5.8 The management plan should also consider how the landlord will enforce the terms and conditions of the tenancy, including any liaison arrangements with the relevant education institution(s), the council and the police in relation to tenant behaviour. Any such plan could build upon any code of conduct provisions set out by the institution(s) to which the students belong. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of formal mechanisms to liaise between the operator and the local community, including where relevant any business community.

Accreditation

- 3.5.9 As part of management arrangements, developers should commit to securing accreditation under one of government-approved Codes of Standards for the management of PBMSA. This provides assurance to respective tenants that quality standards are being met and re-assures the council that appropriate management arrangements will be in place for operation of a development. This will help to demonstrate compliance with criterion d of Policy HOU12, that provision is made for the management of the accommodation. The Available Codes of Standards are available as follows:
- The Universities UK Code of Practice for University Managed Student Accommodation⁸
 - The Accreditation Network UK (ANUK)/Unipol Code of Standards for Larger Residential Developments for Student Accommodation Managed and Controlled by Educational Establishments⁹
 - The ANUK/Unipol Code of Standards for Larger Developments for Student Accommodation NOT Managed and Controlled by Educational Establishments¹⁰

⁸ Available from: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/acop

⁹ Available from: www.nationalcode.org

¹⁰ Available from: <https://www.nationalcode.org/download-codes>

3.6 Need

Policy HOU12 – Large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA)

- e. **The development meets an identified need for the type of accommodation proposed, demonstrated through submission of a statement of student housing need.**

- 3.6.1 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland expects planning authorities to consider the needs and aspirations of society and to facilitate sustainable housing growth in response to changing need when plan-making and decision-taking. The consideration of need for student accommodation is essential to ensure the right balance is struck between ensuring student housing needs are met and preventing an over-supply of accommodation that may be unsuitable for future use by non-student residents.
- 3.6.2 As PBMSA often involves concessions in relation to normal residential design standards (see Section 3.4 below), it cannot always be readily adapted for permanent occupation should it no longer be required for student occupation. It is therefore important, in accordance with criterion e. of Policy HOU12 that an oversupply of PBMSA in Belfast is avoided, particularly where this is competing for land for permanent housing supply.
- 3.6.3 It is essential to understand the profile of local student demand and the state of current and future accommodation supply to ensure the successful delivery of student housing to meet current and future need, linked to published growth projections of the city's further and higher education institutions.
- 3.6.4 This can be addressed through the preparation of a statement of need within the PBMSA Statement required to support any planning applications for PBMSA, based on known demand and supply indicators at the time within the student housing sector.

Demand

- 3.6.5 Demand for student accommodation is generally considered to be contained within one town or city and is determined by the number of students attending local higher education institutions. General population statistics, including the number of full-time student households are available from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), whilst information relating to the number of students currently attending HEIs across the UK and the various Northern Ireland institutions are available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the Department for the Economy's (DfE) websites respectively.

Large scale Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)

3.6.6 Whilst the level of full-time students, including those from non-EU countries who traditionally prefer PBMSA, is generally considered the key metric of student accommodation demand, within the Belfast context, the number of full-time students does not automatically translate into demand for PBMSA bed spaces. This is due to a number of unique local factors, including:

- A higher proportion of local students studying at Northern Ireland's HEIs, many of whom choose to stay at home whilst studying or with a tendency to commute on a weekly basis, returning home at weekends;
- A historical preference of first year students in Belfast to live in private rented accommodation with other students whom they already know but who may be attending different HEIs. However, rising rents in the private rented sector may encourage some domestic students to live in purpose-built accommodation in the future; and
- A low number of students from the rest of the UK study at Northern Ireland's HEIs (2,980 students, or 5.7%).

3.6.7 In the 2021/22 academic year, the total UK students which studied in Northern Ireland HEIs was 52,290. However, the majority of these students were from NI (49,310 students, or 94%).¹¹

Supply

3.6.8 There are a number of sources of information that can be accessed to assist in the evaluation of existing and future supply of PBMSA. They include:

- Information relating to the existing provision of student accommodation by Belfast's HEIs available from the higher education institution campus' respective websites¹²; and
- Planning application searches¹³ identifying any relevant planning applications for PBMSA to enable an appraisal of schemes in the pipeline, including developments with planning permission and current applications.
- Manual survey work may be required to confirm whether developments with planning consents in place are completed or under construction.

Supporting information

3.6.9 To allow for the full assessment of need, the **PBMSA Statement** that must be submitted as part of any planning application for PBMSA should provide evidence, as appropriate, to enable the assessment of need, based on known demand and supply indicators at the time within the student housing sector. This should include details of:

¹¹ Available from: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-from>

¹² [Queen's University Belfast accommodation information](#), [Ulster University accommodation information](#), and [Stranmillis University College accommodation information](#)

¹³ Available from: <https://planningregister.planningsystemni.gov.uk/simple-search>

Large scale Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)

- The specific need that is being addressed, with reference to relevant Corporate Plans published by the city's further and higher education institutions;
- Why this need is currently unmet by existing student accommodation stock, implemented and un-implemented planning permissions for PBMSA;
- The type of existing accommodation the potential student occupiers are likely to be drawn from;
- Any recorded increase in student numbers;
- Higher education institution campus support, if available;
- Current waiting lists for student accommodation; and
- Bedspace to student population ratio/percentage comparison to other university cities.

4 Delivery and implementation

Policy HOU12 – Large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA)

Planning permission will be subject to meeting all other policy requirements. S76 planning agreements are likely to be required in relation to PBMSA to provide a greater level of certainty in relation to management arrangements.

4.1. Occupancy conditions

- 4.1.1 The regional and local policy approach aims to raise residential design standards and ensure the key principles behind good placemaking are implemented in urban areas. It also recognises the wider economic, cultural and community benefits of achieving excellence in design.
- 4.1.2 PBMSA often involves concessions in relation to normal residential design standards, meaning that it cannot always be readily adapted for permanent occupation should it no longer be required for student occupation. The occupancy of PBMSA will usually therefore be conditioned through the associated planning agreement to limit occupation to students, including international and short-term students outside of term time.
- 4.1.3 Some operators may seek to utilise PBMSA bed spaces to provide short-stay holiday accommodation, which may help contribute towards the viability of the overall development. Such arrangements will be assessed on their own merits on a case-by-case basis but would only be permitted for a specified period of time using occupancy conditions, ensuring this does not harm the tourist accommodation markets and remains subservient to the main function to provide accommodation for full-time students. Details of any such use must be set out as part of the application submission.

4.2. Planning Agreements

- 4.2.1 Planning Agreements, and related developer contributions, may be required in relation to PBMSA where what is secured cannot be adequately addressed by the imposition of conditions alone. SPPS provides the policy basis for planning agreements generally, whilst Policy HOU12 notes that a planning agreement¹⁴ may be required to ensure delivery of agreed management arrangements relating to PBMSA.

¹⁴ *Legal agreements made in accordance with Section 76 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.*

- 4.2.2 There are a number of areas in relation to PBMSA where the council may consider the use of planning agreements, to facilitate or restrict the development and/or use of land or to require land to be used in any specified way (SPPS).
- 4.2.3 The council will usually require a S76 Agreement to secure the Student Management Plan and will endeavour to provide an early indication of the use of particular types of legal agreements/conditions appropriate to the circumstances, taking account of all relevant factors which may impact on the financial viability of the scheme proposed.
- 4.2.4 The council will negotiate and deal with planning obligations in a timely manner, particularly where pre-application discussions on such matters have take place, and welcome the opportunity to discuss the nature of any agreements with developers at the earliest opportunity.

4.3. Developer Contributions

- 4.3.1 Whilst many planning obligations could be delivered directly by the developer as an integral part of an approved development, some could also take the form of financial payments to the council, particularly where it is necessary for developers to contribute to off-site works either directly or through pooled financial contributions. Where contributions are required, the associated costs will be calculated on a case-by-case basis in an open and transparent manner, taking account of the specific context and up-to-date cost information.
- 4.3.2 For example, contributions towards transport related initiatives could be calculated with reference to the total number of trips a development will generate during peak periods, whilst the level of financial contribution for public realm works or green/open space could be calculated with reference to the type, scale and quality of space to be provided, based on average costs in Belfast for providing or improving open space. For specific capital items, planning obligations will be based on up-to-date average build costs for the specific items required. In all cases, costs will be inclusive of all costs including fees and construction costs.
- 4.3.3 In addition, where the council incurs legal and administrative costs and expenses in preparing, negotiating and settling an Agreement, it may be necessary for the council to require contributions from a developer towards reasonable costs associated with this administration. Depending on the nature of the Developer Contribution, the council will normally require payment of a monitoring fee for monitoring compliance with completed Planning Agreements. Similarly, contributions may also be required to monitor specific elements of an agreement, such as the effectiveness of a Travel Plan. Such monitoring fees will be secured as part of the Planning Agreement and will be expected to be paid on or before the date of commencement of development.

Delivery and implementation

- 4.3.4 To facilitate the timely progress of a planning application, it is important that developers discuss the likely levels of contributions with the council at the earliest opportunity.

4.4. Community Benefit

- 4.4.1 In some circumstances, community benefits may be offered voluntarily by developers to communities likely to be affected by a development. The SPPS notes that this could take the form of payments to the community, in-kind benefits or shared ownership arrangements. However, such 'community benefits' cannot be considered material considerations in decision-taking and are distinct from developer contributions that may be required to enable a development to go ahead.

4.5. Supporting Information

- 4.4.2 To help facilitate discussions in relation to planning agreements and any developer contributions, the council will expect the PBMSA Statement to be submitted as part of a planning application for PBMSA that addresses the issues outlined in the SPG where they are relevant to the particular proposals.

Glossary

Accreditation Network UK (ANUK)

ANUK is a network of professional and organisations that promotes accreditation in private rented residential accommodation. It was formed in response to the increasing popularity of accreditation across the UK May 2002 to publicise, promote and share good practice in accreditation.

BREEAM (Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method)

BREEAM is an internationally recognised method of assessing, rating, and certifying the sustainability masterplanning projects, infrastructure and buildings. It promotes best practice for all aspects of sustainable property development using independent, licensed assessors to rate developments against scientifically based criteria covering a range of issues in categories that evaluate energy and water use, health and wellbeing, pollution, transport, materials, waste, ecology and management processes.

City Corridors

Key routes into and out of the city, typically characterised by a mix of uses fronting onto a busy road, some passing through important Local Centres.

Code for Sustainable Homes

The Code for Sustainable Homes is a UK national method for rating and certifying the sustainable design and construction of new homes. It covers nine categories of sustainable design including energy and CO2 emissions, water, materials, surface water run-off, waste, pollution, health and well-being, management and ecology.

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is an Act to make it unlawful to discriminate against disabled persons in connection with employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services or the disposal or management of premises; to make provision about the employment of disabled persons; and to establish a National Disability Council.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Universities, colleges and further education institutions offering and delivering higher education.

Glossary

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

HESA, the Higher Education Statistics Agency collect, assure and disseminate data about higher education (HE) in the UK on behalf of their statutory customers. They work with HE providers in each of the four nations, collaborating with them to collect and curate one of the world's leading HE data sources.

House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

A house in multiple occupation is a property rented out by at least 3 people who are not from 1 'household' (e.g. a family) but share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen.

Housing Management Areas (HMAs)

Areas designated under Policy HOU10 in which certain types and sizes of housing, including HMOs and conversions to self-contained flats through the sub-division of larger residential units, will be carefully managed to help to meet the diverse needs of all the community.

Intensive Housing Node (IHN)

Areas which seek to prioritise locations with good sustainable transport connectivity and strong access to employment and educational opportunity, such as appropriate locations within the city centre, local centres, close to rail stations or halts and on city corridors. Intensive housing nodes will be designated within the Local Policies Plan (LPP).

Management Plan

A Management Plan addresses general management arrangements associated with the operation of the building.

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

NISRA is an Agency of the Department of Finance. NISRA is the principal source of official statistics and social research on Northern Ireland. These statistics and research inform public policy and associated debate in the wider society.

Pre-Application Community Consultation (PACC)

A statutory requirement for specific community consultation that prospective applicants must undertake with communities for certain types of development. Development proposals fall into three categories – regionally significant, major and local. All application for regionally significant or major developments submitted on or after 01 July 2015 must comply with the PACC process. Pre-application consultation does not replace the opportunity, or remove the need, for communities and individuals to make formal comments on proposals during the planning application process.

Pre-application Discussion (PAD)	A service offered by the council prior to lodging a planning application to give a better chance of getting planning permission. A PAD should improve the quality of the proposal, reduce the time it takes to determine the application, and give peace of mind that you are on the right lines before making a planning application. There may be a fee for this service.
Proposal of Application Notification (PAN)	For major development proposals, developers are required to submit a 'Proposal of Application Notice' 12 weeks before submitting a formal planning application, explaining how they will engage with the local community. The council then has 21 days to consider the proposal and can either confirm their acceptance of the proposal or direct the applicant to modify their approach.
Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)	PBMSA is accommodation that is built, or converted, with the specific intent of being occupied by students undertaking a full-time course of higher or further education – either individual en-suite units or sharing facilities. The inclusion of the word 'managed' highlights the importance of such accommodation being centrally supervised by the developer/landlord to provide welfare support for students and to ensure compliance with any code of conduct or tenancy agreements, etc.
Regional Development Strategy (RDS)	The spatial strategy of the Executive, which sets out policies for the delivery of the spatial aspects of the Programme for Government. It provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors, influencing the future distribution of development throughout the Region.

Glossary

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland	The SPPS is a statement of the Department of Environment's policy on important planning matters that should be addressed across Northern Ireland. It identifies the objective of the planning system as being to secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving well-being. Its provisions must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs) and are material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.
Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	The requirement to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was introduced in the Planning Act 2011. The Planning (Statement of Community Involvement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 sets out the process by which this should be done.
Student Accommodation	A generic term that covers all forms of housing suitable for occupation by student, including both HMOs and PBMSA.
Sui Generis	A Latin phrase literally meaning "of its own kind; in a class by itself; unique". It is used in planning to refer to developments that do not fall within a specific class of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015.
Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)	Guidance to support, clarify and/or illustrate by example planning policy statements and plans. This can take the form of design guides or guides prepared for Conservation Areas and the suite of DCANs. Where relevant to a particular development proposal supplementary planning guidance will be taken into account as a material consideration in making decisions.
Unipol	ANUK/Unipol Code of Standards for Larger Residential Developments for student accommodation managed and controlled by educational establishments. The Code establishes a set of management standards for all residential developments managed and controlled by educational establishments (with the exception of head leased properties) and specifies appropriate controls to ensure that the particular needs of students are delivered effectively.