

# London Plan Examination in Public, Matter 30 Student Accommodation

## University of London (3017)

M30. Would Policy H17 provide a justified and effective approach to the provision of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) in London? In particular:

**a) Would the criteria set out in Policy H17A be justified and effective in delivering PBSA to meet identified need?**

The University of London is a federation of 18 member institutions. These range in size from those with less than 1,000 full-time students through to those with over 35,000. We currently manage 3,100 bed-spaces. Our last two developments have been partnerships with the private sector. In 2016, we delivered a 1,200 bed Hall in Camden and this year we will deliver a 500 bed Hall in Stratford.

We are looking to increase our bed-spaces by a further 2,500 by 2022. The new London Plan will be essential for us to achieve that aim.

Higher Education Institutions are best placed to identify the need for student housing. The requirement that “the accommodation is secured for occupation by members of one or more specified higher education institutions” will ensure that new PBSA meets the needs of all students rather than simply those with the ability to pay full market rents. In turn, this will support the academic, social and economic missions of London’s Higher Education sector.

**b) Would the approach to affordable student accommodation be justified and effective?**

In principle, we support having a defined target for affordable student housing. Student satisfaction rates in London lag behind those in the regions. A large part of this is attributable to high living costs in the capital. If the HE sector in London is to continue to thrive, we need to deliver affordable, well-located housing for our students.

Nevertheless, many Higher Education Institutions are in central London locations and it will be a challenge to deliver 35% affordable student housing on sites that are close to these institutions.

In addition, there are issues regarding accommodation for postgraduate students. The policy is designed around UK undergraduate students in receipt of maintenance grant, on 38-week contracts. Postgraduate students are not in receipt of maintenance grant and typically want 51-week contracts. This creates some issues regarding the policy that will need Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Our preference would be to apply the implied weekly rent, offered by the policy, over 51 rather than 38 weeks. The implied affordable weekly rent is 55% of the annual full maintenance grant (£11,354) divided over 38 weeks; which comes to £164.33 per week. Therefore, for postgraduate students, the affordable rent would be £8381 (£164.33 multiplied by 51 weeks).

**c) Would the approach to living space and layout provide good design in PBSA to meet the objectives of good growth policies GG1 to GG4?**

Our Garden Halls development won a number of good design awards, and is our most popular Hall. PBSA needs to be attractive to students.

Developments built in partnership with Higher Education Institutions tend to have generous communal space for students to socialise. Direct let developments on the other hand tend to rely on a large amount of studios combined with less communal space. In our view, the former works better to improve the student experience and enable students to develop friendship networks.

When students are able to develop friendship groups within their Hall, this provides a boost to the local economy as students socialise locally. The alternative is that they treat their accommodation as a dormitory and focus their socialising around campus.

Higher Education Institutions are keen to deliver new models of PBSA that will combine some aspects of their academic, social and economic missions with student housing. For example, some may look at combining ground floor business incubators with student housing above. Others may look at offering some ground floor academic/teaching space.

One of the main aims of most Higher Education Institutions in London is to serve the local communities to which they belong. Whilst students' safety and security are paramount, we wish to do everything possible to prevent us developing gated communities that offer nothing to the local communities in which they are located.

On that basis, the link between PBSA and specified Higher Education Institutions should serve to meet the objectives of good growth set out in policies GG1 to GG4.

**d) Overall, would Policy H17 meet the objective of Policy GG4 in delivering the homes Londoners need?**

Students studying at Higher Education Institutions in London are Londoners. They need more PBSA. Therefore, a policy that facilitates more affordable PBSA will meet the objectives of Policy GG4.

In addition, the majority of students live in the PRS. The Plan specifies that every three PBSA bed-spaces equate to one conventional housing unit. Building PBSA in bulk should, therefore, reduce inflationary pressure on the PRS and serve to make this more affordable.

Policy H17 therefore meets the objective of Policy GG4 both explicitly and implicitly.