

**Executive Board – 18 July 2023**

<b>Subject:</b>	Student Living Strategy (SLS)
<b>Corporate Director(s)/Director(s):</b>	Paul Seddon, Director of Planning & Transport Sajeeda Rose, Corporate Director for Growth and City Development
<b>Portfolio Holder(s):</b>	<a href="#">Cllr Jay Hayes</a> , Portfolio Holder for Housing
<b>Report author and contact details:</b>	<a href="#">Matthew Grant</a> 0115 8762561
<b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>	<a href="#">Karen Shaw</a> 0115 876 3969
<b>Subject to call-in:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Criteria for Key Decision:</b>	
(a)	<input type="checkbox"/> Expenditure <input type="checkbox"/> Income <input type="checkbox"/> Savings of £750,000 or more taking account of the overall impact of the decision
<b>and/or</b>	
(b)	Significant impact on communities living or working in two or more wards in the City <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Type of expenditure:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Capital If Capital, provide the date considered by Capital Board Date: N/A
<b>Total value of the decision:</b>	<b>Within existing budgets</b>
<b>Wards affected:</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s):</b>	<b>8 June 2023</b>
<b>Relevant Council Plan Key Outcome:</b>	
Green, Clean and Connected Communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Keeping Nottingham Working	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carbon Neutral by 2028	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Safer Nottingham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Child-Friendly Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Living Well in our Communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Keeping Nottingham Moving	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve the City Centre	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Better Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Serving People Well	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):</b>	
Adoption of the Student Living Strategy (SLS) which is a jointly authored initiative between Nottingham City Council, University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University. The draft document has now been subject to wider public consultation and is ready to be formally adopted by all three partners.	
<b>Does this report contain any information that is exempt from publication?</b>	No
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	
<b>1 To adopt the Student Living Strategy (attached as Appendix A) in its current form.</b>	
<b>2. To delegate authority to the Director of Planning &amp; Transport, to make any further non-material typographical, formatting, mapping and other minor amendments considered necessary prior to publication.</b>	
<b>3. To note that the document is a “live” document and will be updated as and when required in co-ordination with the other partners. It is anticipated that monitoring updates and revisions to the document will be reported back in a timely manner.</b>	

## 1. **Reasons for recommendations**

- 1.1 Following the non-statutory period of consultation, the draft Strategy has been amended in light of the comments made as appropriate.
- 1.2 The Universities will also adopt the document through their own approval processes ready for implementation for the 2023/24 academic year.

## 2. **Background (including outcomes of consultation)**

- 2.1 The need for a SLS has been discussed within the City Council for some time. The Universities along with the Council agreed to act as equal partners and committed resources to enable a jointly authored Strategy. This was a significant milestone and critical to achieving long-term commitment from the Universities and is an important component of the Universities for Nottingham Civic Agreement which the Council has signed with the two Universities.
- 2.2 The Strategy originated with its primary aim of improving the quality and quantity of appropriate student accommodation across the city in accordance with planning policies embedded within the Local Plan. However, the Strategy has evolved to help promote a clean, safe, attractive, and sustainable environment, and above all to encourage neighbourliness and assist in creating balanced communities. The Strategy will meet many of the Key Principles of the Strategic Council Plan 2023-27.
- 2.3 Having commenced work on the SLS, it was agreed in 2020 that work on the Strategy was put on hold due to the pandemic and the necessary focus of the 3 partners during that time and an expectation that any consultation would inevitably be focussed on more temporary covid related issues rather than dealing with the longer-term issues associated with a large and growing student population across the city.
- 2.4 In summer 2021, there was renewed discussion and the Universities gave capacity and resources for the SLS with the Council remaining as an equal partner.
- 2.5 Initial scoping of the Strategy was reported to both CLT and Executive Panel in early 2022 to inform them about the approach to the document.
- 2.6 The Universities commissioned and funded an independent company – ‘Ampersand Research’ - to undertake focus group research to engage stakeholders for the initial engagement exercise for the SLS. The focus groups took place at the beginning of February 2022. Those invited to the sessions included;
  - Student Accommodation Providers
  - Local Business
  - Student Unions
  - Residents’ Groups
  - Services (Policy and Community Protection)
  - Councillors
- 2.7 This work allowed the draft priorities to be challenged and amendments made resulting in a joint ambition and 3 key priorities, which are outlined below.

**Ambition:** Working together to make Nottingham a great city to live, learn and grow in. Where diverse, sustainable communities support the health, wellbeing and potential of all residents and individuals are treated with equity, giving and receiving mutual respect for the benefit of all.

Priority 1	Diversify and innovate to improve the quality, safety, affordability and location of available accommodation for all students across the city. Actively promote a growth in affordable alternative accommodation options to encourage a better balance of student housing choice across the city
Priority 2	Encourage neighbourliness, where students contribute to creating a clean, attractive and sustainable environment which supports the wellbeing of the entire community. Proactively tackle the social and financial impact of waste and noise issues.
Priority 3	Ensure students are valued members of the communities they reside in and proactively work to maximise graduate retention by developing and promoting opportunities to increase community cohesion and mutual benefit for all citizens.

### **Partner Action Planning Workshops Sessions**

- 2.8 Following on from the Focus Group session, two separate full day workshop sessions were held with key colleagues from across the three organisations as well as both Student Unions. The workshops were held to discuss in detail the priorities and how best to respond to these and subsequently enable the production of a detailed action plan to address these along with success measures. Following on from these, the project team refined these elements and completed the drafting of the document with continued dialogue with the established NCC SLS working group (**see Appendix B**).

### **Portfolio Holder Meetings & Trilateral**

- 2.9 The strategy has regularly had internal engagement through the SLS working group and been taken to the relevant portfolio holders and Executive Board members to inform the strategy development.
- 2.10 The regular Trilateral meetings with the Universities have also promoted a high-level awareness of the SLS.

### **Structure of the Strategy**

- 2.11 The Student Living Strategy outlines the collective priorities of the partnership, the actions that will deliver these priorities and how success will be measured. The document explains why the priorities are important to the partnership and what the current picture is including the actions that are being undertaken and then leads on to actions grouped around shared goals. The actions flowing from the SLS are categorised into short, medium and long term actions. It is vital that progress can be shown on the actions and as such clearly defined success measures have been identified and these are set out for each of the shared goals. The document then outlines the importance of review based on the success measures and identifies that governance arrangements that will be set up following the adoption of the document.

### **Wider Engagement**

- 2.12 Prior to wider engagement of the Strategy an update was reported to CLT and Executive Panel in 2022/2023 to inform them about the approach to the document and the planned engagement.
- 2.13 To ensure that the Strategy is seen as a positive vehicle to help address some of the many issues that have been associated with high levels of student concentrations in the city for many years public engagement was undertaken in early 2023.
- 2.14 Consultation was undertaken with those who attended the focus group earlier in 2022, as well as publicising to members of the public, residents, students, resident associations, landlords, property owners and other interested parties.
- 2.15 The online survey was promoted through various channels of the partners and other stakeholders including the Student Unions, Unipol, landlord and agents forums etc.
- 2.16 An interactive web site was created to help steer people through the issues and allow them to submit their online consultation comments.
- 2.17 Those responding were able to select which priorities they were interested in and to score the shared goals and success measures and then promoted to give further feedback they considered the shared goals would have limited impact.
- 2.18 The local, regional and several specialised national media outlets picked up on the consultation including BBC Today news programme, local press and radio.
- 2.19 All responses have been consolidated and subject to detailed analysis. In total, just under 250 responses were received. The survey requested that people self-select which group they mostly align to. To allow analysis they were only permitted to select one group. The majority of those that responded were residents (46%) along with residents groups (2%) and students (34%) along with Student Unions (2%). It is acknowledged that the residents' groups and student unions both represent a large number of individuals. Other consultees included Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) providers, property agents, landlords and businesses.

### **Results of the Engagement and changes made as a result**

- 2.20 Set out below are the main finding from the engagement.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Summary of main issues raised</b>
<b>Overarching consultation outcome messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfied that around three quarters of respondents thought the actions would have at least some benefit.</li> <li>• The importance of choice – students not one homogenous group.</li> <li>• Need to continue to further understand student needs.</li> <li>• Need to maintain the scope of the strategy – other documents (e.g. Local plan) consider needs of other city residents.</li> <li>• Increasing supply and choice of accommodation will help improve quality and affordability.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority 1:</b> Quality, safety, variety, affordability and location of student accommodation options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability of student accommodation is key.</li> <li>• Success measures are too PBSA focused.</li> <li>• Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are preferred by most students.</li> </ul>

Priority	Summary of main issues raised
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure sufficient housing choice.</li> <li>• Understanding what students want (specific ref. to international and those with families).</li> <li>• More emphasis on students' rights as tenants.</li> <li>• Better utilise existing enforcement powers.</li> <li>• PBSAs can isolate students.</li> <li>• Universities should provide more / invest in their own accommodation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 2:</b> Encouraging neighbourliness and tackling issues associated with waste and noise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further clarity is required on how the £1M additional funding by the Universities is being spent.</li> <li>• The Strategy is silent on student safety / welfare.</li> <li>• PBSA providers and landlords should be held more accountable.</li> <li>• More fines and sanctions should be used to discourage waste and noise.</li> <li>• The actions considered against students when issues are caused are too aggressive.</li> <li>• Restorative justice only good in some cases.</li> <li>• Community engagement projects, working together to solve problems is useful.</li> <li>• No support for communal bins as they become a fly tipping hotspot.</li> <li>• NCC should commit more resources to enforcement, carry out more routine inspections and publish outcomes.</li> <li>• NCC should report contaminated bins and give notices to perpetrators.</li> <li>• General support for aligning bin rounds in areas of the city with high student population.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 3:</b> Building community cohesion and promoting graduate retention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students may not want to engage as they may only be here for a while.</li> <li>• Need to make more of the contributions students make, with role models, incorporate initiatives into the curriculum, and reward volunteering.</li> <li>• Too much focus on voter registration.</li> <li>• Community events are important – good for communities to mix, but can be difficult to achieve.</li> <li>• Job opportunities and non-student accommodation impact graduate retention.</li> <li>• The success measures that are proposed are too narrow and should be widened out.</li> </ul>

2.21 As a result of the consultation there are a number of positive changes that have been made to the document in light of these comments which in brief are;

### Specific changes to the Strategy

<p><b>Priority 1:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater emphasis on affordability and choice.</li> <li>• Consider 2 additional success measures – student satisfaction and rental prices.</li> <li>• Greater emphasis on understanding diverse student needs and rights as tenants.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 2:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give a more detailed breakdown of how the £1m is spent.</li> <li>• Add more detailed information about student safety and welfare.</li> <li>• Remove the action on communal bins.</li> <li>• Reference restorative justice balanced with other sanctions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 3:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change priority wording to 'maximise' graduate retention rather than</li> </ul>

### **3. Other options considered in making recommendations**

- 3.1 The SLS is a non-statutory document however it is considered that the Strategy will bring forward real change in the communities affected and aligns with the Universities for Nottingham Civic Agreement. The Strategy is being used to foster and develop much greater working arrangements across the partnership and bringing forward new ideas to tackle issues.

### **4. Consideration of Risk**

- 4.1 As the Strategy is rooted from the planning policies of the Local Plan, co-ordination of the Strategy to date has been undertaken by the Planning Policy Team at the City Council, in partnership with officers at the two Universities. It is important to highlight that continued active involvement from various teams within the Council is required to ensure the City Council's input to the Strategy is successful. This is focussed on existing areas of responsibility or statutory duties but without this prioritising, there is a risk that the Strategy and action plan will not be as effective, and the commitment of partners may be reduced. This will be addressed by continuation of the SLS working group and appropriate governance arrangements with owners of the various actions that the Council has agreed to focus on needed to report progress.
- 4.2 Opinion and feelings from interested stakeholders are strong. There is an inherent risk throughout the development of the SLS that the 3 partners may diverge. The chance of this is much reduced given current commitments, and the efforts sustained by all partners to improve relations and networking across the three organisations. It is proposed that more formal governance arrangements will be put into place including an "SLS Implementation Board" which will oversee progress on the various actions outlined and also ensure that the Strategy is reviewed and kept alive to issues on student accommodation and within communities.

### **5. Best Value Considerations, including consideration of Make or Buy where appropriate**

- 5.1 The Strategy has Best Value at its heart by working with the two partner organisations and has resulted in notable successes including improved networking and collaboration amongst the three organisations. This has been fostered by regular meetings, and the action planning workshops, to the extent that relations have been built at all levels, enabling effective responses to identified issues. Tangible improvements have already been seen. Furthermore, improved collaboration will stand partners in good stead to deliver the remaining actions in the future and come together to deliver responses to issues as they arise.
- 5.2 Significant national interest has been received from various organisations and the press and is being seen as a pioneering initiative that other cities with high numbers of students are likely to replicate.

### **6. Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money/VAT)**

- 6.1 The Decision for Nottingham City Council to adopt (in Partnership with Nottingham Trent University and University of Nottingham) the Nottingham Student living Strategy (SLS) for the academic years 2023 to 2028 is supported.

- 6.2 The SLS does not have any direct financial implications for the Council, however the universities have allocated a spend of £1m in the 2022-23 academic year for the prevention and enforcement of issues relating to Waste, Sound pollution and other Anti-social behaviours, with this spend intended to continue in future years, subject to review. The SLS incorporates the principles of Best Value by looking for more efficient and effective solutions towards addressing the problematic impacts of high concentrations of students in communities and aligns with Nottingham City Council's current objectives for a clean City.

Paul Rogers Commercial Finance Business Partner (G&CD) 12 June 2023

## 7. **Legal colleague comments**

- 7.1 As indicated in the main body of the report the SLS is a non-statutory document. Whilst rooted in planning policy the SLS will neither form part of the Council's Policy Framework nor Local Plan Documents and as such cannot carry weight in planning decision making. The benefits of the SLS will come from promoting collaborative working between the Council and the two universities aligned to other Council plans and priorities and the SLS provides a commitment for the Council to develop more formal planning policy guidance (which can carry weight in planning decision making) at a future date. Any data sharing arrangements will need to be subject to appropriate agreements and compliance with the relevant legislation and the use of enforcement will need to be proportionate and comply with the Council's relevant enforcement policies.

Ann Barrett, Team Leader Legal Services 15 June 2023.

## 8. **Strategic Assets and Property**

- 8.1 Strategic Assets & Property welcome the Student Living Strategy as it will provide key information on disposal options of sites which are located in desirable and recognised student/PBSA locations. We will work with Council Planning Officers and organisations to bring sites forward for student development wherever possible.
- 8.2 The Student Living Strategy is fully supported by Strategic Assets & Property.

Beverley Gouveia MRICS

Disposals & Development Manager - Strategic Assets & Property 12 June 2023.

## 9. **Other relevant comments**

- 9.1 The strategy has been developed in collaboration with the internal SLS Working Group (see Appendix B).

## 10. **Crime and Disorder Implications (If Applicable)**

- 10.1 It is anticipated that actions within the Strategy will reduce antisocial behaviour and help the work of Community Protection.

## 11. **Social value considerations (If Applicable)**

- 11.1 N/A

## 12. **Regard to the NHS Constitution (If Applicable)**

12.1 N/A

**13. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

13.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

Yes   
An EIA is required and is attached as Appendix B

**14. Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)**

14.1 Has the data protection impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No   
As no data has been collected for the Strategy itself, no DPIA is required. A DPIA was produced for the consultation which can be made available on request.

**15. Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA)**

15.1 Has the carbon impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No

Yes   
Attached as Appendix C, and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

**16. List of background papers relied upon in writing this report (not including published documents or confidential or exempt information)**

16.1 None

**17. Published documents referred to in this report**

None.