

OWL Policy to halt ALL new student housing through the new Local Plan

The policy:

As evidence shows there is more than sufficient, through the new Local Plan, stop ALL further conversion of family homes to student accommodation and purpose-built student accommodation. Work with student landlords who want to return their properties to family homes by granting them 6 months additional council tax relief during the conversion works.

Detail:

Since around 2016 student numbers have been declining and Edge Hill have recently indicated their target of consolidating student numbers at present levels (c.11,000) through 2022. There is then a prospect of slow and steady increases in full time student numbers through to 2030, based on anticipated uptake in new courses/qualifications.

Over the same period the number of HMOs in Ormskirk and the on-campus accommodation has continued to grow with capacity currently around 1,700 in HMOs and 2,500 on campus. This growth in campus-based accommodation is a likely contributor to the stated waning in demand for HMOs and the significant number of unlet rooms. Based on the forecast increase in Full Time students of c. 2,000 and assuming that the ratio of students requiring live-in space remains consistent, then it is evident that there is already a sufficient number of student residences that will satisfy future demand, not including the higher density conversions that are presently ongoing in the town.

Therefore, the allocation of specific development sites in Ormskirk town centre for further purpose-built student accommodation is not supported.

To continue the current policy regarding HMOs and to expand the university campus to accommodate more purpose-built student dwellings is NOT supported as the demand and need has not been proven and supporting evidence is dated. There is evidence to support the declining demand for student accommodation in Ormskirk with growing numbers of rooms for let and instances of HMOs being converted back to residential use. This is both beneficial to the Council in terms of tax revenues and to the wider community and town economy.

Continuing to increase HMO numbers further will move us toward an inappropriate mix of residential accommodation, and indeed, even the existing numbers of student properties has a demonstrable impact on the availability and supply of homes for local families and a noticeable downward trend in neighbourhood quality.

Rather than increasing the number of HMOs or even limiting the ratio per street, local plan policy should reverse the growth in HMOs for student accommodation and look to return these homes to residential use. **Consequently, a tighter approach prohibiting any further conversion of family homes to HMOs should be pursued.**

The excess of supply over demand in relation to student properties will continue to provide choice to students and limit upward pressures on rents.

Student landlords currently pay no council tax even if the property is unoccupied with only one or two student occupants. Landlords wishing to make alterations to convert the properties for use by families, face paying full council tax after 3 months in many cases.

To encourage landlords to convert under occupied HMOs back to family homes, OWL would implement a local council tax discount. This would mean landlords would pay no council tax for up to a further 6 months during conversion works. As the alternative, is for the property to continue as a student property where no council tax is paid, then the costs of this incentive is negligible.