

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Local Plan 2025 – 2043

Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (Reg 19)

September 2026

Student Accommodation Topic Paper

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**

Improving People's Lives

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Evidence of Need	2
3. Local Plan Strategy up to 2029/30	4
4. Student accommodation beyond 2029/30	5
5. Conclusion	6
Appendix 1 - Student numbers and accommodation requirements schedule	8
Appendix 2 – Existing / Consented PBSA	9

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Topic Paper explains the Council's approach to planning for student accommodation needs as part of the Local Plan. It summarises the evidence of student growth provided by the University of Bath and Bath Spa University, explains how accommodation needs will be addressed up to 2029/30, and sets out the rationale for relying on a future plan review to address longer-term requirements.
- 1.2 Bath is home to two major higher education institutions, the University of Bath and Bath Spa University. Student accommodation plays an important role in supporting the success of both institutions whilst helping to manage impacts on the wider housing market.
- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (updated Feb 2025) requires planning authorities to assess and reflect the housing needs of different groups within the community, including students.
- 1.4 Saved policy H2A sets out the Council's approach to purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA), providing flexibility for accommodation supported by educational establishments while reducing pressure on the city's housing stock, particularly HMOs, and ensuring that development is delivered in suitable locations.

2. Evidence of Need

Student Growth up to 2029/30

- 2.1 The universities are only able to provide detailed growth forecasts to around 2030. Beyond this point there is uncertainty regarding institutional growth strategies and future student numbers.
- 2.2 For the purposes of preparing the growth predictions set out in the evidence base at appendix 1, broad assumptions have been applied beyond 2029/30 for the rest of the Plan period, based on 1% annual growth for both universities.

However, these are not based on confirmed university growth plans and should therefore be treated as indicative only.

2.3 Given this uncertainty, the Council does not consider it appropriate to identify specific long-term student accommodation requirements extending beyond 2030. As such, the Council intends to address longer-term requirements through a future review of the Local Plan.

2.4 The latest information supplied by the universities' forecasts continued growth in student numbers. Total student numbers across both universities are forecast to increase from approximately 25,482 students in 2025/26 to approximately 28,913 students by 2029/30. This represents growth of around 3,479 students over the period for which the universities can currently provide robust forecasts.

2.5 Applying accommodation assumptions agreed with the universities (78% for University of Bath, and 56% for Bath Spa University) indicates that total student housing need is forecast to increase from approximately 18,507 bedspaces in 2025/26 to approximately 20,864 bedspaces in 2029/30.

2.6 Current student accommodation provision is set out in appendix 2, including a number of committed schemes that have not yet been delivered.

2.7 Even allowing for these committed developments, the evidence indicates that a significant proportion of student accommodation demand will continue to be met within HMOs and other forms of accommodation across the city.

2.8 Taking account of planned and committed accommodation, and assuming that at the start of the Plan period, 9,895 bedspaces will be accommodated within HMOs and other forms of accommodation, the evidence suggests a need for around **1,258 additional bedspaces between 2025/26 and 2029/30.**

3. Local Plan Strategy up to 2029/30

- 3.1 The Council does not propose to allocate specific PBSA sites within the Local Plan. The Council will therefore continue to rely on windfall delivery through saved Policy H2A. The saved policy allows for provision of new student accommodation where an application demonstrates a need through either a formal agreement with a relevant higher education institution, or evidence that the accommodation will primarily serve second and third year students who might otherwise occupy HMOs.
- 3.2 By retaining flexibility within saved Policy H2A for educational establishments to support purpose-built student accommodation through formal agreements, student housing needs arising from forecast university growth up to 2029/30 can continue to be met through windfall delivery. This flexibility helps to ensure that the availability of suitable accommodation does not constrain the growth aspirations of the universities.
- 3.3 Provision of additional PBSA for second and third year students can also increase the availability of university-managed and other accommodation for first-year students by reducing demand for existing student housing stock and creating greater flexibility within the overall student accommodation market.
- 3.4 This approach reflects the historic pattern of student accommodation delivery in Bath, where PBSA schemes have generally come forward as windfall developments rather than through site allocations, apart from site allocations relating to university campuses.
- 3.5 Student accommodation proposals continue to come forward through the development management process, including the recently consented scheme at Cramer House for 103 PBSA bedspace (25/04893/FUL).
- 3.6 The Sulis Club site was tested as an option during regulation 18 options consultation. However, this site has not been allocated. The University of Bath

are no longer promoting the site as part of this Local Plan. It is highly sensitive with regards to landscape impact and ecology.

3.7 The strategic site allocations, including those along the A4 corridor which are in locations more accessible for students, do not specifically identify purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) as an allocated use, reflecting the Council's corporate priority of delivering general market and affordable housing. However, neither do the site allocation policies expressly preclude PBSA. Consequently, where universities are willing to enter into nomination agreements with developers outside Bath, there remains scope for PBSA proposals to come forward on allocated sites, provided they are appropriately designed and comply with relevant planning policies. In such instances the role PBSA plays in meeting the need for student accommodation will need to be balanced against the reduced role of the site in meeting general housing needs.

4. Student accommodation beyond 2029/30

4.1 As set out previously, the universities are currently only able to provide detailed growth forecasts up to around 2030. Beyond this point there is increasing uncertainty regarding future student numbers. Given this uncertainty, the Council does not consider it appropriate to identify specific long-term student accommodation requirements beyond 2030. The Council intends to address longer-term requirements through a future review of the Local Plan.

4.2 The Council recognises that accommodation pressures cannot be addressed solely through planning for additional PBSA within Bath City, due to the many competing land interests in the city, including general and affordable housing, and employment floorspace.

4.3 As part of future plan-making work, the Council will work closely with both the University of Bath and Bath Spa University to understand their longer-term growth aspirations and accommodation strategies. This should include exploration of the following:

- Opportunities for future on-campus development, including potential use of existing car parking to accommodate student accommodation, and
- Opportunities to accommodate student growth outside Bath City.

4.4 The Council must play an active role in shaping this work to ensure that future accommodation strategies are aligned with the Council's wider sustainable development objectives.

4.5 As these discussions and universities' strategies are still evolving, and because growth data is not currently available beyond 2030, the Council considers that a future plan review is the most appropriate mechanism through which to address longer-term student accommodation needs.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The evidence demonstrates a continuing need for additional student accommodation in Bath and North East Somerset, with demand forecast to increase by around 1,529 bedspaces between 2024/25 and 2029/30. Whilst a significant proportion of student accommodation demand will continue to be met through HMOs and other forms of accommodation, there remains a need for additional purpose-built student accommodation to support forecast growth at the University of Bath and Bath Spa University.

5.2 The Council considers that this need can be addressed through the continued application of saved Policy H2A, which supports the delivery of purpose-built student accommodation where a need is demonstrated through formal agreements with higher education institutions or where accommodation is intended to meet the needs of students who might otherwise occupy HMOs. By retaining this flexibility, additional accommodation can come forward through windfall development in response to identified university needs, helping to ensure that accommodation availability does not constrain future growth and reducing pressure on the city's existing housing stock.

5.3 The Council does not consider it necessary or appropriate to allocate specific sites for purpose-built student accommodation within the Local Plan. This reflects the historic pattern of delivery in Bath, where student accommodation has predominantly come forward through windfall proposals, and recognises the competing priorities for land within the district, including the need to deliver general market and affordable housing.

5.4 Given that the universities are currently only able to provide robust growth forecasts to around 2029/30, the Council considers that a future review of the Local Plan will provide the most appropriate mechanism for addressing longer-term student accommodation requirements for the rest of the Plan period. This will be informed by updated evidence and continued engagement with the universities regarding future growth aspirations and accommodation strategies, including opportunities both within and beyond Bath City.

Appendix 1 - Student numbers and accommodation requirements schedule

	2025 /26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38	2038/39	2039/2040	2040/41	2041/42	2042/43	Increase 25/26 - 42/43	Annual require ment
UoB Student Forecast	19,261	20,315	20,731	20,948	21,240	21,452	21,667	21,884	22,102	22,323	22,547	22,772	23,000	23,230	23,462	23,697	23,934	24,173		
Bath Spa Student Forecast	6,221	6,259	6,607	7,222	7,673	7,720	7,797	7,875	7,954	8,033	8,114	8,195	8,277	8,360	8,443	8,528	8,613	8,699		
Total Student Forecast	25,482	26,574	27,338	28,170	28,913	29,172	29,464	29,759	30,056	30,357	30,660	30,967	31,277	31,590	31,905	32,224	32,547	32,872		
UoB Housing Need (approx:78% of total student no)	15,024	15,846	16,170	16,339	16,567	16,733	16,900	17,069	17,240	17,412	17,586	17,762	17,940	18,119	18,300	18,484	18,668	18,855		
Bath Spa Housing Need All (approx:56%)	3,484	3,505	3,700	4,044	4,297	4,323	4,366	4,410	4,454	4,499	4,544	4,589	4,635	4,681	4,728	4,776	4,823	4,871		
Total Housing Need	18,507	19,351	19,870	20,384	20,864	21,056	21,267	21,479	21,694	21,911	22,130	22,351	22,575	22,801	23,029	23,259	23,492	23,727		
UoB on-campus	3,586	3,586	3,856	4,126	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396	4,396		
Bath Spa on-campus	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870	870		
UoB off-campus	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766	1,766		
Bath Spa off-campus	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861	861		
Private	1,529	1,529	1,632	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818	1,818		
Beds Total	8,612	8,612	8,985	9,441	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711	9,711		
Residual demand 2022/23 assumed to be met by HMOs or other accommodation	9895	10739	10885	10943	11153	11345	11556	11768	11983	12200	12419	12640	12864	13090	13318	13548	13781	14016		
Additional bedspace required to meet the forecasts		843	146	58	210	192	211	213	215	217	219	221	224	226	228	230	233	235	4120	229
Cumalative bedspaces required			990	1047	1258	1450	1660	1873	2088	2305	2524	2745	2969	3194	3422	3653	3885	4120		

Notes

UoB - 1% annual growth assumed from 2030/31 onwards

Bath Spa - 1% annual growth assumed from 2031/32 onwards

870 bedspaces at Claverton Campus included over 3 years (i.e. 290 per year from 2027/28 to 2029/30)

186 bedspaces at Hartwells included from 2028/29

103 bedspaces at Cramer House included from 2027/28

Appendix 2 – Existing / Consented PBSA

PBSA	Bedspaces	Planning ref	Postcode
University of Bath			
On Campus			
West Wood	659		BA2 7AY
East Wood	632		BA2 7AY
Norwood House	143		BA2 7AY
Brednon Court	126		BA2 7AY
Polden Court	126		BA2 7AY
Osborne House	34		BA2 7AY
Marlborough and Solsbury Court (2003)	468		BA2 7AY
Woodland Court (2008)	397		BA2 7AY
The Quads (2014)	708		BA2 7AY
New Polden (2018)	293		
Total	3586		
Off Campus			
Carpenter House	135		BA11UB
John Wood Building	81		BA1 1AG
John Wood Court	196		BA11AL
Canal Wharf, Sydney Wharf	22		BA2 4EF
Cleavelands Building	152		BA2 4EP
Pulteney Court	137		BA2 4JQ
Thornbank Gardens	221		BA2 3HA
Green Park House	461		
Total	1405		
Nomination Agreements			
Aquila Court (CRM)	203		BA2 3GX
Centurion House (Host)	55		BA2 4FE
Radway House (Hello Student)	31		BA2 2UB
The Exchange, (Hello Student)	48		BA1 1BS
Widcombe Wharf (Hello Student)	24		BA2 6AA
Total	361		
University of Bath Total	5352		
Bath Spa University			
On Campus			
Lakeside	309		
The Gardens	561		
	870		
Off Campus			
Bankside House	43		
Total	43		
Nomination Agreement			
Charlton Court	295		
Waterside Court	316		
The Old Bakery Jews Lane	28		
Twerton Mill	179		
Total	818		
Bath Spa University Total	1731		

Private PBSA			
The Quasar Building	48	BA1 1UA	
1-3 Westgate Buildings	20	BA1 1EB	
Brougham Hayes	104	BA23GF	
Twerton Mill	151		
Weirside Court	32		
Former St. Johns School	183	BA2 4EZ	
Bath Sea Cadet Corps	18	BA2 6PX	
Land At Rear Of Argos (Avon Studio)	93		
The Old Bakery Jews Lane	35		
James House (Hello Student)	169		
Canal Bridge (Hello Student)	20		
Picadilly Place (Hello Student)	47		
Frome House	66		
Jubilee Centre	120	21/02354/FUL	
Dick Lovett	335	20/03071/EFUL	
Scala	88	21/04049/FUL	
Total	1529		
Consented / allocated but not yet delivered			Delivery estimate
Hartwell	186	19/01854/OUT	28/29
Claverton Campus	870	Policy SB15	27/28
Cramer House	103	25/04893/FUL	27/28
Total	1159		