

Short-term lettings questionnaire – response for Airbnb round-table discussion 6th March 20 by P A Rotheram on behalf of Federation of Bath Residents’ Associations

1. The short-term lettings’ (STLs) sector has been associated with the following benefits. Which of the listed options do you think brings the greatest benefit to your local area? Please tick as many as apply, identify the one most important to you and explain your answer in the box below.

- Greater choice of affordable accommodation for guests
- Increased visitor numbers in communities
- Accommodation availability beyond what is offered by traditional hospitality infrastructure
- Extra income for hosts from letting out their rooms / properties
- Increased spend across communities as visitors explore the local community and hosts recommend restaurants and cafés and cultural activities.
- Flexibility for guests and hosts in choosing/offering a wide set of accommodation options.
- Other (please specify)

While we can see the advantages of STLs for their owners and visitors, a city like Bath has little or no need for increased visitor numbers; many residents believe that it already suffers from 'over-tourism'.

The use of the cosy term 'host' implies that STLs are primarily about rooms being let out in houses occupied by the owner. In reality a large part of the market has become a large-scale commercial operation using properties bought and operated exclusively for the purpose. It is this latter category which is our primary concern.

2. The STLs’ sector has been associated with the following issues. Which of the below, if any, are you familiar with or have been raised with you? Please tick as many as apply, identify the one most important to you and explain your answer in the box below.

- Risks of non-compliance with tenancy agreements
- Tax compliance of hosts
- The potentially distorting effect on the housing market – i.e. reduction of the housing stock *This is an actual, rather than a potential effect.*
- Increase in littering and waste *placing an increased burden on local authorities*
- Risks of noise disturbance and anti-social behaviour of guests in host properties
- Safety of properties
- Changing the makeup of local communities *'Hollowing- out' of communities as local people are forced out due to reduced availability of long-term rentals and higher rents.*

- ✓ Other (please specify)
- ✓ *Reduced security for neighbours when houses are left unoccupied.*
- ✓ *STLs are outside the scope of planning control. A separate Use Category is required for STLs to control their establishment (as with C1 or C4) and enable control of concentration of STLs, similar to Article 4 Direction for HMOs.*
- ✓ *Non-compliance and lack of enforcement of regulations.*

Reduction of long-term housing stock and the impact on communities are the most important factors.

3. Introducing a STLs' National Registration Scheme could result in the following benefits for local communities. Which of these would be most important to you? Please tick as many as apply, identify the one most important to you and explain your answer in the box below.

- ✓ Increased transparency for all stakeholders
- ✓ Allow Local Authorities to focus their enforcement efforts effectively
- ✓ More visibility of tax earnings
- o A system of regulation that creates minimal barriers to entry for hosts
- o Greater host protection
- ✓ Greater consumer/guest protection *especially safety*
- o Other (please specify)

Better enforcement is the most important benefit. At present the enforcement of regulations is difficult because local authorities are frequently unaware of the existence of STLs; for example the local Fire Service in Bath was not aware even of large STLs used as 'party houses' and in practice there was no enforcement of something as fundamental as fire safety.

Registration is a necessary first step but needs to be complemented by the creation of a separate Use Category (C5?) for STLs to give local authorities and communities a say over their spread and concentration.

4. Do you have any further thoughts on the potential impacts of a STLs' National Registration Scheme in your local area? Please write your answer in the box below.

It would have a positive effect, but by itself is insufficient.

5. Do you have any questions about the introduction of a STLs' National Registration Scheme? Please indicate these in the box below and we will address this in the roundtable session.

Are you proposing a compulsory registration scheme for STLs, with penalties for non-compliance?