

Student Housing - Letter to Bath Chronicle

Stan Frith asks (Letters, August 11th), "When will councillors get tough with the universities regarding student numbers?" Students bring many benefits to the life of our city, but currently comprise a whopping quarter of Bath's population and our city hosts more full-time students per head of population than Oxford. Since 2005 Oxford City Council has seen fit to introduce a legal limit (currently 6,000) on the total number of full time students it is prepared to allow to live in accommodation not provided by its two universities. 6,000 students represent less than 4% of Oxford's population. Bath is reported (Chronicle, 4th August) to have 2,835 student HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation), depriving B&NES of much needed council tax, and the city of vital affordable housing for its non-student citizens. At four students per HMO, 11,000 students represent about 12% of Bath's population – three times Oxford's proportion. However, in its statement to the forthcoming Public Examination of its Placemaking Plan (BNES/PMP/002/18), B&NES suggests that the Oxford model "is not considered to be an appropriate tool to be deployed yet in Bath". As Chairman of the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations (FoBRA), I ask at what point might it become so? For years, FoBRA has been advocating a Student Housing Policy here, but so far to no avail. FoBRA calls on the residents of Bath now to demand one, as many other university cities already have.

Robin Kerr
Chairman, Federation of Bath Residents' Associations
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