

Student Halls of Residence: Planning Considerations

1. Student halls of residence are subject to the Council's policies on high rise buildings. This specifies places where high rise buildings are acceptable, and other places where they are not. They are also subject to building regulations, including fire regulations, and the Grenfell Tower inquiry evidence shows how important it is that these regulations be enforced.
2. Student halls risk being used as a way of getting round other planning regulations, e.g. over sizes of rooms, provision of kitchens and bathrooms, disabled access, parking, etc. And if the owners are unable to let them to students, there appears to be nothing stopping them letting to the general public. If this happens to a significant extent, then some of these buildings could degenerate very quickly, and become slums.
3. It is therefore essential that the Council has specific planning policies on student halls. These should specify where student halls will be acceptable, and, by implication, areas of the city and situations within those areas where they will normally not be given planning permission.
4. Students should live as close as possible to the campuses of the universities or colleges where they study, in locations where they can walk to those campuses in no more than 20 minutes.
5. A hall of residence should therefore be associated with a single university or college, which will have rights of access or inspection at any time, and an over-arching duty of care for the safety and wellbeing of the students living in the accommodation.
6. A hall of residence should be within half a mile of public transport.
7. Students may choose to cycle, and this should be encouraged. Halls of residence should therefore be required to provide secure cycle parking for at least 80% of their residents.
8. They should include very small numbers of car parking spaces, for students or visitors with disabilities or for pick-up and set-down from cars or taxis. However, the implication of this should be recognised, which is that it will put considerable extra pressure on parking in nearby residential streets. The capital costs of these, and in appropriate cases part or all of the revenue costs, should, therefore, be paid for by the developer.
9. A proportion of the rooms should be larger than the basic rooms, and adapted to be let to couples.
10. Dogs, other than guide dogs, would not normally be permitted in halls of residence.
11. As far as possible, halls of residence should be self-contained, i.e. not dependent on the relevant university for the provision of services. Thus every hall of residence should include a flat meeting hall of size sufficient to seat half or more of the residents at any one time. This hall should be adapted for suitable sporting uses, e.g. table tennis, volleyball, badminton, and there should be showers and changing areas for visiting teams. Or for use as a performance space, i.e. a theatre, the showing of films, or for commercial events such as the sales of posters, plants or exhibitions, or for religious services, or for weddings. This hall could also be used for conference lettings in the

vacations, in which case some of the smaller rooms might be used as breakout rooms or for cheques.

12. The meeting hall should be supported by a kitchen capable of delivering hot or cold meals, e.g. curries or sandwiches, for large numbers of people attending meetings or events in the hall.
13. Halls of residence should include a common room, possibly with a licensed bar, an office for a hall of residence student union, and some smaller public rooms for meetings or interviews, or mind-games such as chess, bridge or go, or for music practice by ensembles or choirs.
14. There should be a communal amenity area, South-facing, of attractive design, and suitable for sunbathing and for out-door sporting activities.
15. There should be provision of laundry and drying facilities, and a small number of shops.

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3 February 2020