

# Planning Committee

10am, Thursday, 4 December 2014

## Edinburgh Planning Guidance: Student Housing – Issues Paper

Item number	5.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	ALL

### Executive summary

---

Purpose-built student accommodation is required to support the city's higher education. The Edinburgh City Local Plan (ECLP) and emerging Local Development Plan (LDP) include a policy to control their location. To assist with the implementation of this policy, non-statutory planning guidance has been in use since 2010, and is now due for review. The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval of an Issues Paper on Student Housing, for consultation, to inform the preparation of revised planning guidance.

### Links

---

Coalition pledges	<a href="#">P15</a>
Council outcomes	<a href="#">CO7</a> , <a href="#">CO8</a> , <a href="#">CO19</a> , <a href="#">CO21</a>
Single Outcome Agreement	<a href="#">SO1</a> , <a href="#">SO4</a>

## Edinburgh Planning Guidance - Student Housing – Issues Paper

### Recommendations

---

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the Issues Paper for a period of consultation.

### Background

---

- 2.1 In February 2014, Planning Committee noted the annual programme for the review of planning guidance. It stated that a review of the guidance for assessing applications for purpose-built student accommodation was to take place in late 2014.
- 2.2 Following a review of the existing guidance and publication of the 2011 census data, this report presents the main issues for consultation.

### Main report

---

#### Main Issues

- 3.1 The Issues Paper (Appendix 1) presents background research into the following issues:
- student population trends;
  - student concentration and distribution;
  - impact of students on the economy; and
  - locational guidance.
- 3.2 Seven consultation questions are embedded in the Issues Paper relating to the above matters. The intentions of these questions are to focus discussion with consultees on possible revisions to planning guidance.

#### Next steps

- 3.3 There will be a period of public consultation. The comments received during the consultation process will be taken into account in the preparation of draft revised planning guidance, which will be reported to Committee in Spring 2015.

## Measures of success

---

- 4.1 The development of student housing in locations supported by the guidance, which meet the needs of the city's higher education sector while contributing to mixed sustainable communities.

## Financial impact

---

- 5.1 There are no direct financial impacts arising from this report.

## Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

---

- 6.1 There are no perceived risks associated with this report. The preparation of non-statutory planning guidance is supported by circular 6/2013: Development Planning. The Issues Paper represents the first stage in the preparation of revised planning guidance.

## Equalities impact

---

- 7.1 The impacts of this report in relation to the Public Sector Equalities Duty and the ten key areas of rights have been considered. The Issues Paper will have no negative impacts on the three equality duties with regard to the eight protected characteristics. The Issues Paper will also have no negative impacts on the ten key areas of rights.

## Sustainability impact

---

- 8.1 The issues in this report help achieve the right mix of land uses to support sustainable communities.

## Consultation and engagement

---

- 9.1 No engagement has, thus far, taken place with external stakeholders.
- 9.2 The Second Proposed Plan was published for a statutory period of representations from 22 August to 3 October 2014.
- 9.3 It is proposed that consultation on the revised guidance will involve:
- Meetings with the city region's universities (University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, Heriot Watt University and Queen Margaret University) and Edinburgh College;
  - A workshop with the main private student housing providers, including iQ and Unite, and their professional agents;

- Engagement with local communities where student housing has been built since August 2010 and where proposals are pending; and
- Internal focus groups with staff from Planning, Economic Development and Transport Services.

## Background reading/external references

---

[Annual Review of Guidance report](#) to Planning Committee (27 February 2014)

[Edinburgh Planning Guidance](#) – Student Housing (August 2010)

### John Bury

Acting Director of Services for Communities

Contact: Emma Rigg, Planning Officer

E-mail: [emma.rigg@edinburgh.co.uk](mailto:emma.rigg@edinburgh.co.uk) | Tel: 0131 529 3794

## Links

---

<b>Coalition pledges</b>	P15 Work with public organisations, the private sector and social enterprise to promote Edinburgh to investors
<b>Council outcomes</b>	CO7 Edinburgh draws in new investment in development and regeneration CO8 Edinburgh's economy creates and sustains job opportunities CO19 Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm CO21 Safe – Residents, visitors and businesses feel that Edinburgh is a safe city.
<b>Single Outcome Agreement</b>	SO1 Edinburgh's economy delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all SO4 Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix 1: Issues Paper – Student Housing

\*

## **Appendix 1**

### **ISSUES PAPER - STUDENT HOUSING**

#### **1. Introduction**

Edinburgh's universities and colleges play a major part in the economy and life of the city. One of the core aims of the Edinburgh City Local Plan is to "support the growth of the city as a centre of learning and higher education". Likewise, Aim 3 of the emerging Local Development Plan (LDP) recognises higher education as one of the key sectors in contributing to the strength of Edinburgh's economy.

The Council's 2010 Student Housing planning guidance supports the application of Edinburgh City Local Plan Policy Hou 10 and the LDP Policy Hou 8, which both state:

*Planning permission will be granted for purpose-built student accommodation where:*

- a) The location is appropriate in terms of access to public transport and university and college facilities; and*
- b) The proposal will not result in an excessive concentration of student accommodation in any one locality*

**Question 1:** Do you agree that the Council should continue to support the development of purpose-built student housing to support the growth of further and higher education in Edinburgh? Please provide a reason for your answer.

#### **2. Student population trends**

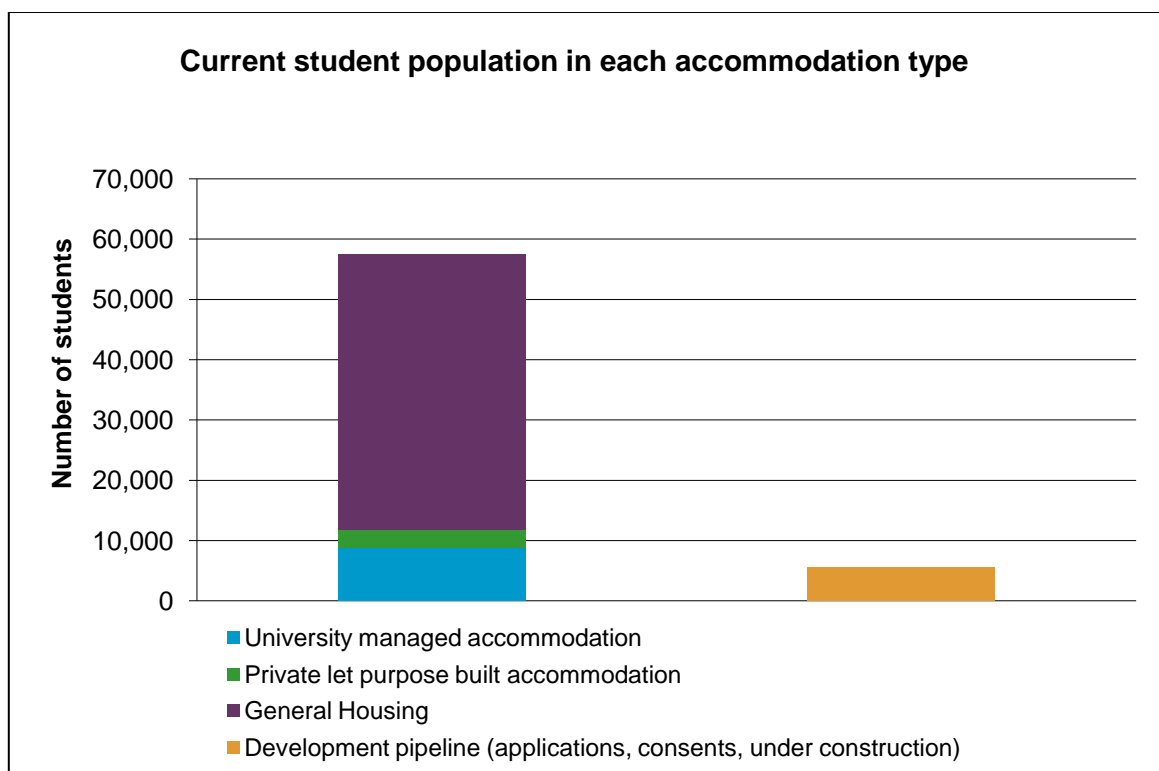
The number of full time students at the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University and Heriot-Watt University has increased by 26.6% from 34,615 in 2001/2002 to 43,815 in 2011/2012 (Higher Education Statistics Agency). The number of students in Edinburgh as a percentage of the total population, based on the 2011 census, is 12.1%.

The total number of students does not automatically translate into demand for purpose-built accommodation, as a large majority of students either choose to stay at home, live in privately rented shared accommodation or are owner occupiers. This, and the relative lack of purpose-built student accommodation, has led to the

historic tendency for students to gravitate towards the general housing stock, which continue to fuel the demand for Houses in Multiple Occupation licences (HMOs).

Future trends in student numbers are difficult to project. There are a number of factors that could influence this, including the economy, tuition fees, online learning, and overall university funding. Given the number of uncertainties, it is not possible to estimate the demand for purpose-built student accommodation. Nevertheless, as universities are required to provide accommodation to all first year students, there is a 'need'.

Map 1 shows the distribution of operational student accommodation in the city centre. To date, a total of 12,249 bedspaces are currently being supplied in new private and university provided purpose-built student accommodation. A further 5,657 bedspaces are proposed, have planning permission or are under construction. Therefore, at present, only 21% of the total student population is being housed in purpose-built accommodation. If all of the live permissions are implemented, this figure could increase to 31%.



### **3. Student concentration and distribution**

As ‘demand’ and ‘need’ for purpose-built accommodation are difficult to quantify, the Council’s approach to date has been to consider whether there is an issue of student concentration in particular locations. Since 2001, there has been a noticeable increase in concentration of students living in and around the city centre and expansion into Leith and along western arterial routes. These changes reflect the overall increase in number of students and HMO licences, the opening of Edinburgh Napier University’s Sighthill campus and the development of new purpose-built accommodation in Fountainbridge and Leith. The majority of students housed in the more recent purpose-built accommodation developments, assessed using the 2010 guideline, are not included in the 2011 census records.

The most densely concentrated areas are in the city centre, located within walking distance of the George Square campus. Map 2a uses the 2001 census data to show full time students (ages 16+) as a percentage of the total population. These are split into data zones which are fixed small areas, created from census output areas. Map 2b presents the 2011 census data.

Since 2010 when the guideline was approved, there have been 30 student housing applications granted or minded to grant, totalling 7,338 beds. Two applications were refused by the Council on the grounds of over-concentration – Lutton Court and Calton Road. The application at Lutton Court has since been allowed at appeal (although currently subject to a legal challenge). The Reporter considered its location as adjacent to a campus and concluded that the proposal would not result in an excessive concentration.

Map 3 shows the distribution of city centre developments assessed using the 2010 guideline. The guideline has been effective in directing development to campuses, whilst supporting it in more peripheral but accessible locations, such as Gorgie/Dalry and Abbeyhill. By consistently applying a numerical approach, which requires the inclusion of information relating to general housing and student bedspaces, it has enabled a large proportion of general housing to be secured on some of the larger sites, like Fountainbridge. In doing so, it has acted as a tool in promoting balanced and mixed communities. Map 3 suggests that the Fountainbridge data zones exceed

the 30% threshold - this is because, whilst some of the student development is now complete, much of the residential development is yet to be fully implemented.

**Question 2:** Should the revised guidance identify preferred sites for purpose-built student accommodation? Please provide a reason for your answer.

#### 4. Impact of students

Despite the often negative perceptions of students, there are many positive factors allied to this group. According to a report prepared by the Council's Economic Development Service (2010), students at the main universities in Edinburgh have an estimated expenditure of up to £372.4million and provide the labour market with an estimated 20,307 extra employees. Having a larger proportion of the student population living away from home yields greater added value to the economy of the city. In 2008, 15.8% of students in Edinburgh lived at home, compared to a median of 30.5% for the 62 UK university cities.

Therefore, it is recognised that there is a need for more student housing and, as stated in the existing guidance, it is preferable that student needs are met as far as possible in purpose-built managed schemes. This is because such developments can help:

- reduce the need for further conversion and use of family housing stock, although it is important to note that HMOs do provide for a range of housing needs, not solely for students;
- create sustainable locations for student housing which reduce the need for travel where students are located on or adjoining campuses or close to local services and shops; and
- provide a stock of well-managed and secure environments, which minimise the impact on amenity for other households in the neighbourhood. The table below shows that since 2010, there have been a negligible number of noise complaints received by the Council.

<b>2010</b>	16 complaints about 7 purpose-built student properties (10,522 total complaints)
<b>2011</b>	22 complaints about 8 purpose-built student properties (10,935 total complaints)



<b>2012</b>	7 complaints about 7 purpose-built student properties (10,589 total complaints)
<b>2013</b>	4 complaints about 4 purpose-built student properties (9,648 total complaints)

**Question 3:** Do you agree that student ‘needs’ should be met as far as possible in well managed purpose-built student accommodation? Please provide a reason for your answer.

## 5. Locational guidance

The criteria in ECLP Policy Hou 10 and LDP Policy Hou 8 are currently being applied to proposals for student housing using the locational guidance set out in the existing guidance and a percentage threshold of 30% outwith University campus locations.

**Question 4:** Should we continue to use a 30% percentage threshold or introduce different thresholds to reflect the roles of different areas? Please provide a reason for your answer.

**Question 5:** On larger sites, should the Council be requiring a proportion of general housing as part of the proposed development? Please provide a reason for your answer.

The current guidance requires proposals to be accompanied by a planning statement justifying the suitability of the location for purpose-built student housing. Such statements are required to use the Council’s concentration calculation table (Table 1). The Council holds the following information, which is required to complete the table:

- Population figures for each data zone\*
- A schedule of planning applications for student accommodation and general housing development. This includes information on their status (i.e. proposal of application notice, pending consideration, granted, minded to grant) and if permission has been implemented.
- Housing Land Audit - includes housing sites under construction and completed and sites in the adopted local plans.

\*The 2011 census data showing 16+ full-time students as a percentage of the total population should be used as a starting point in the assessment. As 17 year olds comprised 10.7% or 1,150 of the new intake for all Edinburgh universities in 2012, data for 16-24 is used in the assessment calculation.

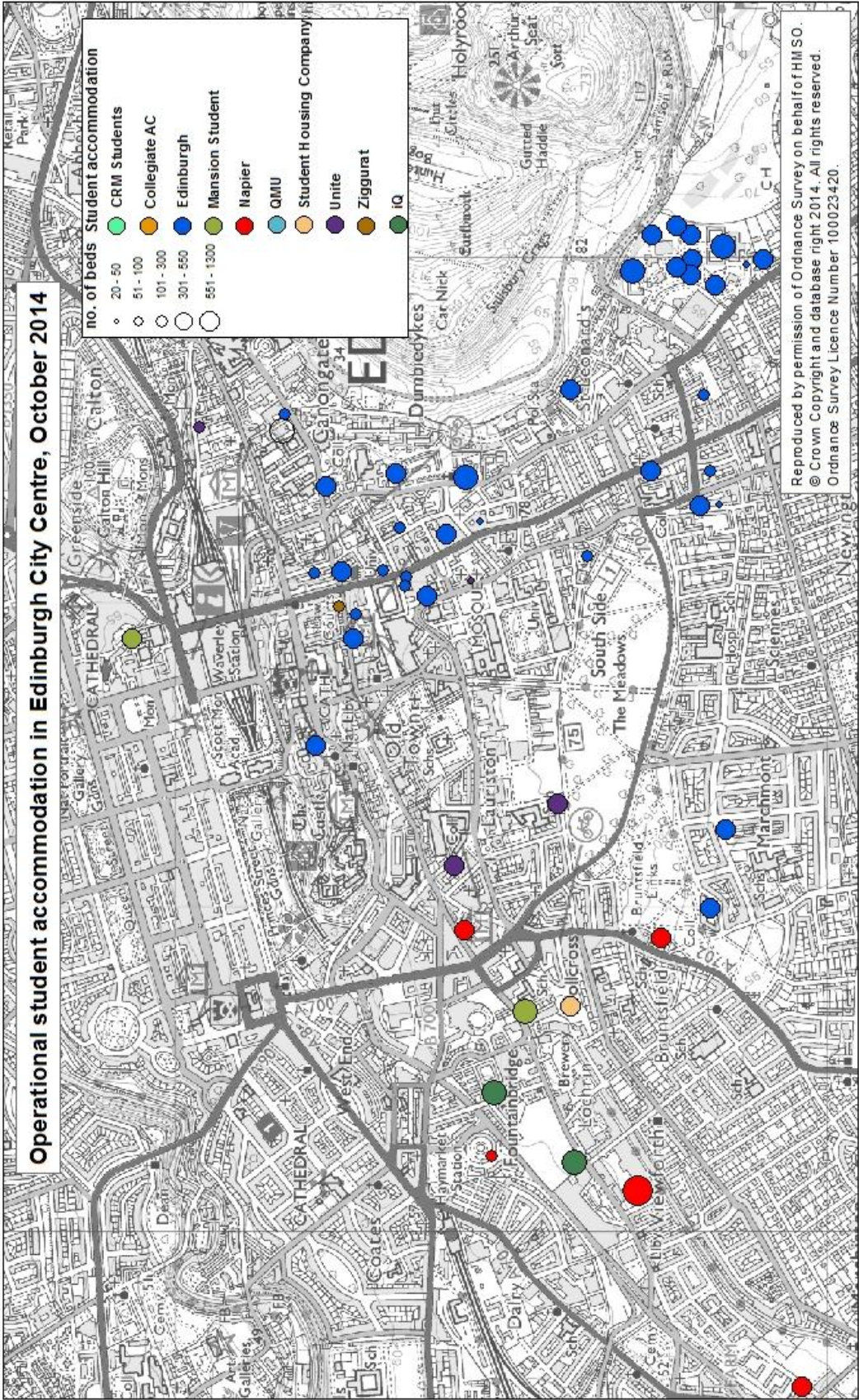
**Question 6:** Do you agree with the numerical methodology currently being used to calculate student concentration? Please provide a reason for your answer.

## **6. Other issues**

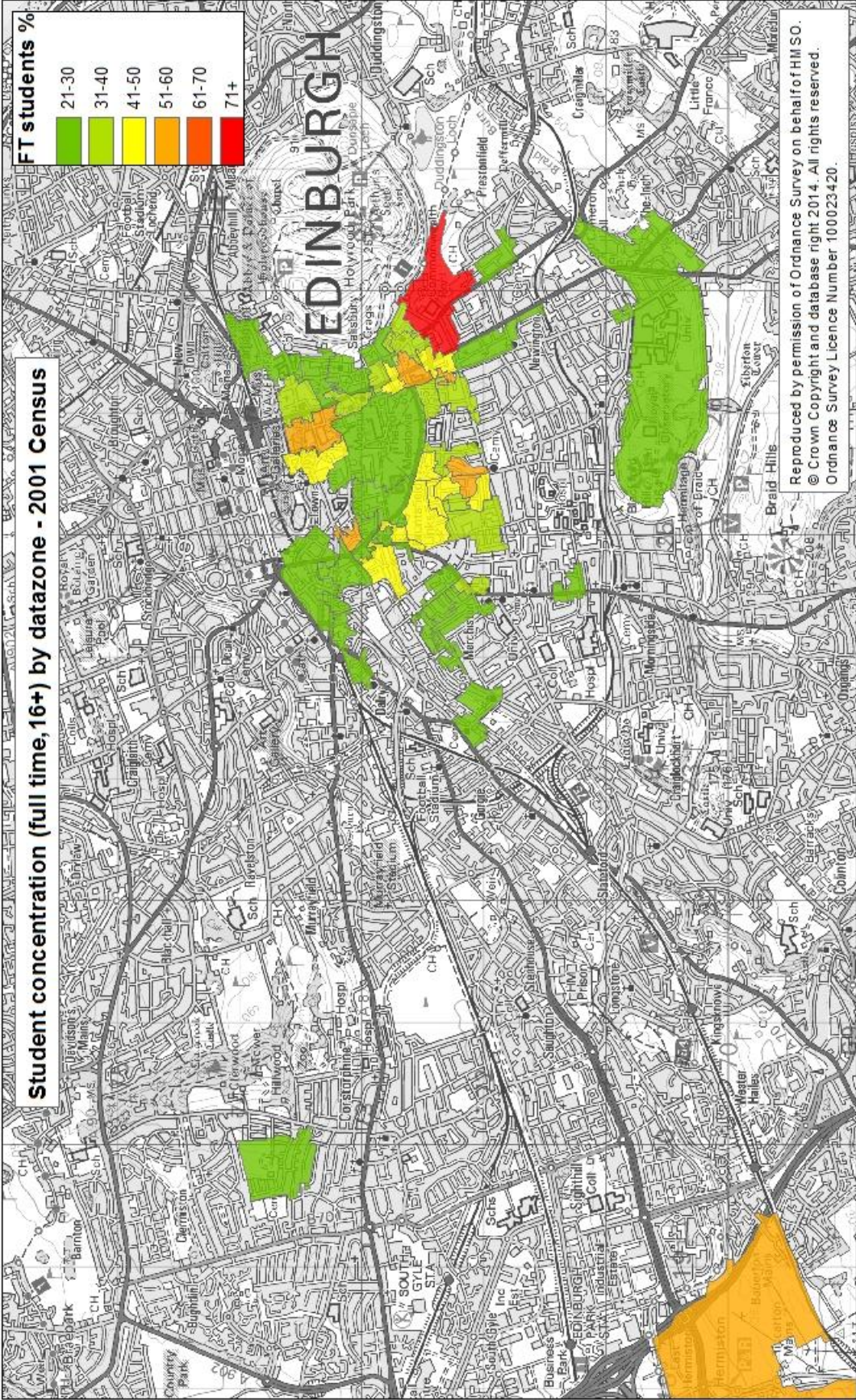
This consultation exercise aims to be inclusive of relevant interests and to support a better understanding of the issues relating to the development of student housing in the city.

**Question 7:** Are there other issues, which revised planning guidance should address? Please provide a reason for your answer.

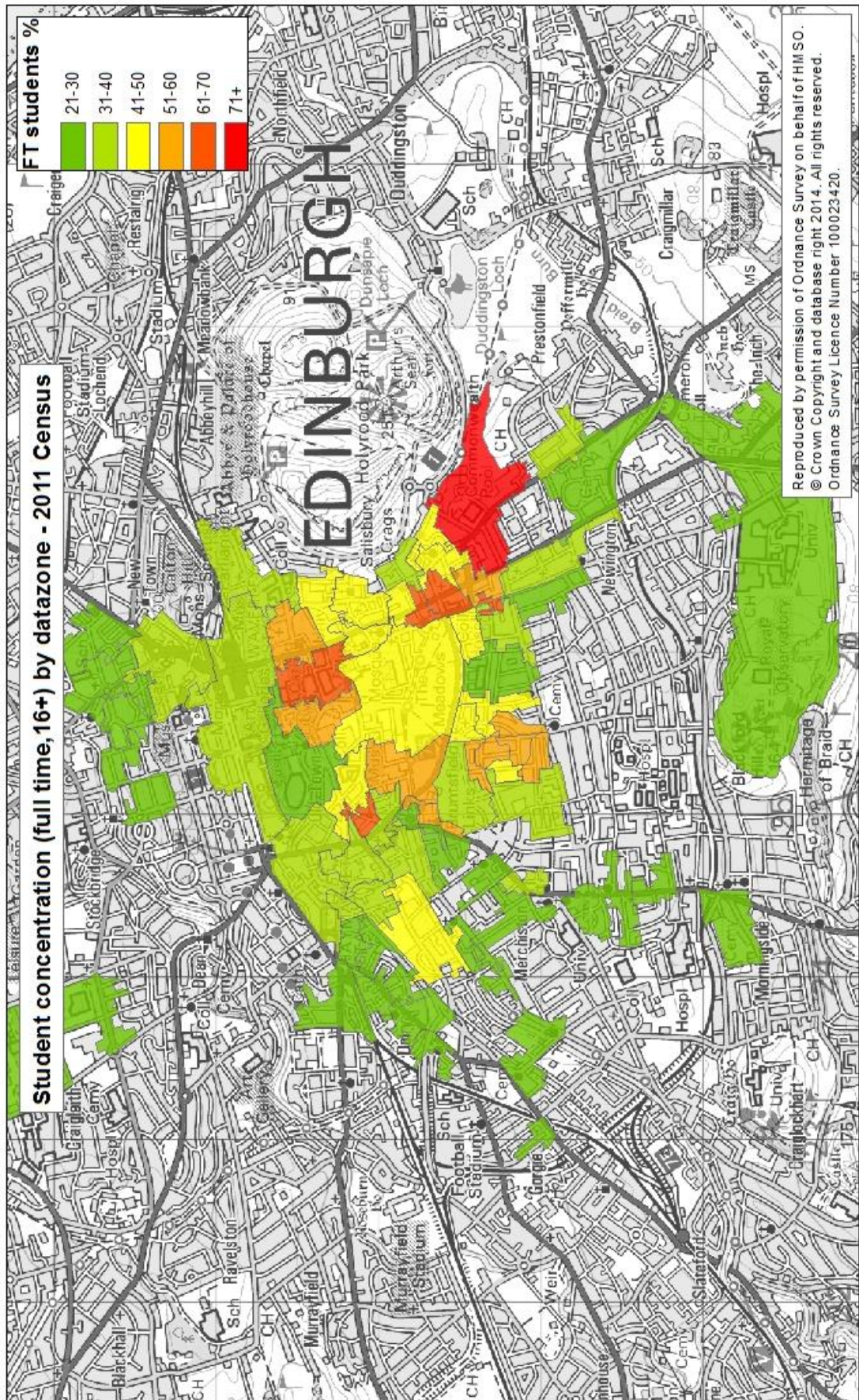
Map 1: Operational student accommodation



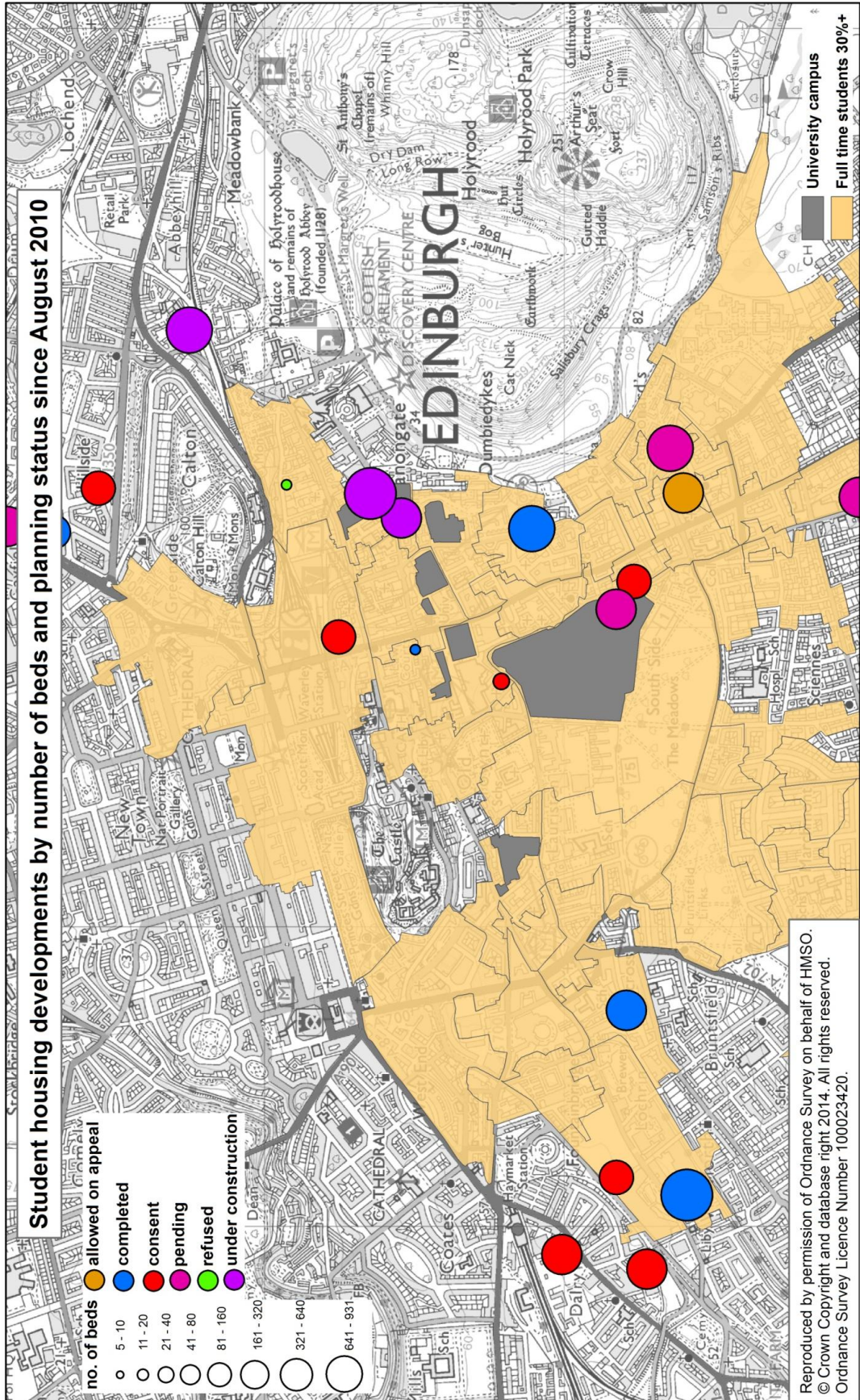
Map 2a: Student concentration by data zone using 2001 census data



Map 2b: Student concentration by data zone using 2011 census data



**Map 3: Student housing developments by number of beds and planning status since August 2010**



**Table 1: Student concentration calculation table**

Student Housing Concentration	
	Data zone .....
2011 total Census population for the Data Zone*	
2011 student Census population for the Data Zone*	
2011 Student Census population as a percentage of total population (%)	
Number of additional student bed spaces completed after 2011**	0.00
Number of additional student bed spaces in the pipeline after 2011***	0.00
Number of additional general housing units completed after 2011**	0.00
Number of additional general housing units in the pipeline after 2011***	0.00
Local household size for each Data Zone*	
Total number of additional projected general housing occupants	0.00
Total number of additional general housing occupants after 2001	0.00
Total number of additional student bed spaces in the Data Zone after 2001	0.00
Proposed number of student bed spaces****	
Overall total student population in the Data Zone since 2001 plus proposed number	0.00
Overall total student and general housing population since 2001	0.00
Total proposed student population as a percentage of the overall total population (student and general housing) (%)	
* Information obtained from Table 1	
** Figure calculated from development which has now been completed since 2011	
*** Figure calculated from development which is still under construction, pending determination or in the pre-application process since 2011 and includes Local Plan Allocations for Housing	
**** Number of student bed spaces being proposed by the applicant	
Formulas inserted into the cells	