



Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation in Belfast

Supplementary Planning Guidance



June 2016



Belfast
City Council

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) provides additional advice and guidance specific to Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) in Belfast. It complements the information already set out in the associated Best Practice Guide published in January 2016 and the internal Planning and Place Advice Note published in October 2015. It is intended for use by developers, the public and by planning officers in the assessment of planning applications for PBMSA developments within Belfast.
- 1.2. SPG represents non-statutory planning guidance which supports, clarifies and/or illustrates by example policies included within the current planning policy Framework, including Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and development plans. The information set out in this SPG should therefore be read in conjunction with the existing planning policy framework, most notably the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland, the HMO Subject Plan for Belfast, the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) and PPS7 Quality Residential Environments.
- 1.3. Where relevant to a particular development proposal, this SPG will be taken into account as a material consideration when determining planning applications.

Consultation

- 1.4. The Council published draft SPG on PBMSA in Belfast for public consultation for a period of 12 weeks from 7 March-31 May 2016. In keeping with our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) we endeavoured to ensure that the exercise was meaningful, inclusive and fit for purpose. We aimed to provide clear information and encourage participation in an informative, user friendly, inclusive and open and transparent way.
- 1.5. At the end of the consultation period the Council considered all comments received and a number of changes have been made to the final SPG. A Consultation Report has been prepared and published alongside the final SPG summarising the comments received during the consultation period and the changes made to the final guidance as a result.

Sustainability

- 1.6. Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 requires the Council to act in the way that is best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This is embedded as the principle objective of the planning system – to secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving well-being¹.
- 1.7. According to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland, the planning system exists to positively and proactively facilitate development that contributes to a more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable Northern Ireland. Planning authorities should therefore simultaneously pursue social and economic priorities alongside the careful management of our built and natural environments for the overall benefit of our society.
- 1.8. This SPG has therefore been prepared within this context to ensure that the current needs for student accommodation can be met in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable way. Its preparation therefore helps the Council to meet its statutory obligations with regards to promoting sustainable development when exercising its planning functions in relation to PBMSA.

¹ Part 1, Section 1 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

1.9. In addition, under Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive² and associated NI Regulations³ certain plans and programmes that set the framework for the future development consent of projects require an SEA to be undertaken. The Council have therefore subjected this SPG to an SEA screening exercise and have determined, in consultation with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, that a full SEA is not required given that the policies to which the SPG relates have previously been subject to an SEA, or equivalent, and that the SPG is unlikely to have any significant environmental effects. The SEA Screening Report is published for information alongside this SPG.

Equality Impact

1.10. This Supplementary Planning Guidance has been prepared in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Section 75 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Between men and women generally;
- Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Between persons with dependants and persons without.

1.11. In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, the Council must also, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1.12. The Council have therefore also subjected the SPG to an Equality Screening exercise, in accordance with the Council's Equality Scheme, in order to identify those aspects of the proposals which may have impacts on people across the Section 75 equality categories in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations and to highlight opportunities to further promote these as the project is implemented. This Screening Report is also published alongside this SPG.

² *European Directive 2001/42/EC*

³ *Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004*

2. What is Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)

- 2.1. The Council recognise that students studying and living within Belfast make a significant contribution to local and regional economies. For Belfast, the continued growth in the number of students wishing to enter third level education in our universities and further education colleges; the re-location of the Ulster University to the north of the City Centre and growth in the international student market all present significant opportunities for the city.
- 2.2. However the rapid expansion of student numbers over the last two decades has also led to a range of negative side effects or 'externalities' to the presence of a large student population, in particular in relation to pressures on housing, local amenities and other environmental impacts. Taking the learning from experiences of areas such as the Holyland, student housing provision needs to be well planned and appropriately managed to ensure that there is a more positive integration with any existing communities.
- 2.3. PBMSA is accommodation that is built, or converted, with the specific intent of being occupied by students undertaking a full-time course of higher or further education – either individual en-suite units or sharing facilities. The inclusion of the word 'managed' highlights the importance of such accommodation being centrally supervised by the developer/landlord to provide welfare support for students and to ensure compliance with any code of conduct or tenancy agreements, etc.
- 2.4. These management arrangements are a significant difference between PBMSA and students living in the more traditional form of student accommodation often referred to as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the private rented sector. However, as a form of housing, PBMSA has many distinct characteristics that distinguish them from smaller-scale housing occupied by unrelated people (HMOs). They raise many different planning issues from other forms of student accommodation, HMOs or general housing that can have significant implications for the orderly and consistent development of the City.
- 2.5. Although 'residential' in nature, PBMSA has no formal definition within the planning system and is considered 'sui generis' (or unique/of its own class). It is therefore a form of development for which further guidance and clarification is appropriate to ensure the unique nature of the development can be adequately assessed.

3. Planning Policy Context

Regional Planning Policy and Guidance

Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

- 3.1. The RDS recognises the importance of Belfast as the major driver for regional economic growth. It notes that population decline in the City needs to be reversed in order to have a strong capital city which is the economic driver of Northern Ireland. Key to this population growth will be the provision of housing to meet the full range of need. The Council's Policy approach to PBMSA therefore seeks to manage housing growth and achieving sustainable patterns of development (Policy RG8) and help grow the population of the City (Policy SFG2).

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland

- 3.2. The Council is required by the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland to secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving well-being, simultaneously pursuing social and economic priorities alongside the careful management of the built and natural environments for the overall benefit of society.
- 3.3. In furthering sustainable development, the SPPS advises that it is important to manage housing growth in a sustainable way, placing particular emphasis on the importance of the inter-relationship between the location of local housing, jobs, facilities and services, and infrastructure. It is similarly important to successfully integrate transport and land use generally in order to improve connectivity and promote more sustainable patterns of transport and travel.
- 3.4. Whilst there are no direct references to student housing within the SPPS, it notes that planning authorities should seek to facilitate sustainable housing growth in response to changing housing need, support urban regeneration (including proposals to address dereliction and to promote investment in the physical regeneration of deprived areas), progress policies, plans and proposals that can improve the health and well-being of local communities and help build a strong and shared society. Offering a variety of house types, sizes and tenures, such as bespoke PBMSA, will help to meet the diverse needs of all the community.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7): Quality Residential Environments

- 3.5. PPS7 sets out regional planning policies for achieving quality in new residential development and applies to all residential development proposals except for single dwellings in the countryside. It seeks to achieve residential developments that promote quality and sustainability in their design and layout, are more in harmony with their townscape or landscape setting and which ultimately will make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of settlements.
- 3.6. Policy QD1 relates to the design quality in new residential development. As PBMSA is residential in nature, the provisions of this policy are a significant consideration when considering the design aspects of the proposal (see Appendix B).

'Creating Places' – Achieving Quality in Residential Developments

- 3.7. The regional Supplementary Planning Guidance, 'Creating Places', is the principal guide for use by developers in the design of all new housing areas. It describes the contributions to quality and sustainability that developers in Northern Ireland will be expected to make through the design of new residential developments. The guide is structured around the process of design and addresses the following matters:

- The analysis of a site and its context;
- Strategies for the overall design character of a proposal;
- The main elements of good design; and
- Detailed design requirements.

‘Living Places’ - An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland

- 3.8. ‘Living Places’ is ‘strategic’ regional guidance that seeks to raise the standards of urban places across NI. Whilst not formal policy, its contents can be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and planning appeals for development affecting all urban places.
- 3.9. As an Urban Stewardship and Design Guide it aims to clearly establish the key principles behind good place making, seeking to inform and inspire all those involved in the process of managing (stewardship) and making (design) urban places. The focus of the guide is urban areas, by which is meant all of our cities, towns, villages and neighbourhoods. It recognises the wider economic, cultural and community benefits of achieving excellence in the stewardship and design of these important places, be they existing or newly proposed.

Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS8): Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

- 3.10. PPS8 sets out regional planning policies for the protection of open space, in association with residential development and the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation, and advises on the treatment of these issues in development plans. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development, to the promotion of a more active and healthy lifestyle and to the conservation of biodiversity.
- 3.11. Of most relevance to PBMSA developments, PPS8 aims to ensure that areas of open space are provided as an integral part of new residential developments and that appropriate arrangements are made for their management and maintenance. It also seeks to achieve high standards of siting, design and landscaping for all new open space areas.
- 3.12. Policy OS2 requires that new large-scale residential developments provide public open space equating to at least 10% of the total site area, but also acknowledges that an exception to this could be permitted in the case of apartment developments or specialised housing where a reasonable level of private open space is being provided. It suggests that a provision of less than 10% may be acceptable where the residential development is in a city centre or is close to areas of existing public open space.

Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12): Housing in Settlements

- 3.13. PPS12 helps guide the future pattern on housing by managing future housing growth and distribution, support urban renaissance and achieve balanced communities. Its objectives are:
- To manage housing growth in response to changing housing need;
 - To direct and manage future housing growth to achieve more sustainable patterns of residential development;
 - To promote a drive to provide more housing within existing urban areas;
 - To encourage an increase in the density of urban housing appropriate to the scale and design to the cities and towns of Northern Ireland; and
 - To encourage the development of balanced local communities.
- 3.14. It outlines how need for housing should be addressed through the plan making process, including how evidence of housing need should facilitate a reasonable mix and balance of

housing tenures and types to cater for the identified range of housing needs. Student housing is recognised as one of a number of specialist housing categories to be considered as part of this process, including the following qualitative information in relation to the impact students will have on the housing market and any potential land use requirements:

- The numbers of students residing in the area, including any available trend analysis;
- Geographic hot spots of student concentrations; and
- Identification of issues/future proposals that will impact on student numbers.

Local Planning Policy Context

The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan for Belfast City Council Area 2015

3.15. The Council's current planning policy on PBMSA is contained in the HMOs Subject Plan for Belfast City Council Area 2015. It sets out a number of area-based planning policies for HMOs, as well as policy relating directly to the provision of PBMSA. Its four overarching objectives are:

- Protect the amenity of areas where multiple occupation is, or is likely to become, concentrated;
- Accommodate the need and demand for multiple occupation, while maintaining a community balance;
- Focus HMO development in areas where it can contribute to regeneration; and
- Promote appropriate development of purpose built student accommodation.

3.16. Policy HMO 7 relates to the provision of 'Large Scale Purpose Built Student Accommodation' and is the principal planning policy tool available when considering applications for PBMSA in Belfast City Centre. It states:

Policy HMO 7 – Large Scale Purpose Built Student Accommodation

Planning permission will only be granted for large scale purpose built student accommodation where all of the following criteria are met:

- A. *Development of any complex consists of a minimum of 50 units or a minimum of 200 occupants. This will not preclude proposals for smaller incremental extensions or consolidations of existing halls of residence and phased development of larger schemes;*
- B. *All units are self-contained (i.e. having a bathroom, w.c. and kitchen available for use by the occupiers);*
- C. *The location is not within a primarily residential area;*
- D. *Provision is made for management of all accommodation. This may require an Article 40⁴ agreement with Planning Service; and*
- E. *Landscaping and amenity space is provided in accordance with a landscaping plan indicating all landscaping proposals for the scheme and, where relevant making provision for future maintenance.*

3.17. The Subject Plan also designates a number of locations with suitable frontages for HMO development (HMO3 and HMO4). Such locations are designated specifically because they are able to accommodate higher density residential developments with a lower impact on traditional residential areas and are located where development can contribute to

⁴ As part of planning reform, Article 40 agreements referred to within existing policy documents have been replaced by Planning Agreements outlined within Section 76 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

regeneration. Whilst PBMSA is distinguishable from the common view of an HMO, they may have similar locational requirements and as such may be acceptable in similar locations.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015

3.18. BMAP is the development plan covering the Council areas of Belfast, Lisburn, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Newtownabbey and North Down. Its Strategic Vision for Belfast City is to promote it as the regional capital and major focus for regional administration, commerce, specialised services, cultural amenities and employment opportunities. To achieve this, the Belfast City Strategy includes 6 'planning actions' including:

- Promoting urban renewal in the City, which includes helping to revitalise the City Centre;
- Enhancing the Quality of Life in the City;
- Providing a focus for economic development in the City;
- Promoting equality of opportunity for all sections of the City population;
- Protecting the City's natural environment; and
- Promoting an integrated and inclusive transport system, consistent with the City's role as a major gateway to Northern Ireland and as the heart of the Regional Strategic Transport Network.

3.19. Of particular relevance to PBMSA, Policy HOU3 sets out a presumption in favour of proposals that increase the housing stock in Belfast's designated City Centre. Policy HOU4 also provides protection to a number of areas of existing housing within the City Centre which should be protected from any developments that would result in a change of use away from traditional housing. There are also a number of local land designations to be considered when assessing development proposals, including Social Housing Zoning (Policy HOU2), Development Opportunity Sites, Areas of Townscape Character, Character Areas and Conservation Areas.

4. Non-statutory Policy Context

Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy

- 4.1. The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy was published in September 2015 to provide a framework for change in Belfast City Centre. It sets out a strong vision for the future development of the City Centre to deliver the Council's aspirations for the continued growth and regeneration of the city core and its surrounding areas.
- 4.2. In relation to the provision of PBMSA, the Strategy seeks to increase the residential population in the City Centre, including "appropriate student housing" in "suitable locations." It argues that "student housing should be carefully directed, located and managed" and outlines the Council's commitment to build on the criteria-based approach outlined within the Framework Document to develop a balanced approach to student housing in the city.

Framework for Student Housing and Purpose Built Student Accommodation

- 4.3. Prior to becoming the planning authority in April 2015, a 'Framework for Student Housing and Purpose Built Student Accommodation' was published by the Council in March 2014 following a period of public consultation. This Framework Document advocates a vision and direction for the supply of student housing and PBMSA in Belfast and contains a criteria-based approach to be applied to proposals for purpose built student accommodation developments in the city.
- 4.4. This approach suggested that planning permission for purpose built student accommodation should only be granted where five criteria are met – proximity to a university/college campus, design quality, management arrangements, impact on surrounding residential neighbourhoods and meeting an identified need. At the time of writing, it was intended that the Framework document, and planning criteria in particular, would be used by the Council and its partners as they engage with the planning process.

PBMSA in Belfast – Planning and Place Advice Note

- 4.5. In December 2015, the Council adopted an internal Planning and Place Advice Note on PBMSA in Belfast. As a technical guide, the document provides non-statutory planning guidance around the Council's approach to PBMSA to pro-actively encourage good quality development in the right locations. It builds upon the criteria based approach developed through the Framework Document by setting out guidance in relation to six key criteria that will be considered when assessing applications for PBMSA. These include:
 - A. The development should be at a location which is easily accessible to university/college campuses by sustainable transport modes;
 - B. Policy designations specific to the City Centre;
 - C. Layout, design and facilities provided within the development are of high standards;
 - D. The development should be designed in a way that does not conflict with adjacent properties or the general amenity of the surrounding area;
 - E. The development has appropriate management in place to create a positive and safe living environment for students whilst minimising any potential negative impacts from occupants; and
 - F. The development meets and identified need for the type of accommodation proposed.

Planning and Place Best Practice Guide on Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation in Belfast

- 4.6. A Best Practice Guide on PBMSA in Belfast was formally published by the Council in January 2016. It was produced to assist applicants and agents in their understanding of the Council's aspirations with regards to PBMSA in Belfast and seeks to encourage the development of good quality PBMSA in the right locations by explaining how new developments can be best planned and designed prior to submitting planning applications.
- 4.7. It is structured around eight key areas containing best practice guidance in relation to:
- **Pre-application considerations** – Encouraging early engagement with the Council and local communities;
 - **Locational considerations** – Promoting suitable locations within the City Centre as preferred locations for PBMSA;
 - **Policy designations** – Outlining relevant planning policy constraints;
 - **Design Considerations** – Encouraging good quality, well-designed PBMSA in terms of layout, accommodation mix, open space, parking, facilities, waste and recycling, safety and crime prevention and energy reduction;
 - **Considering impact** – Helping reduce negative effects whilst capturing any positive impacts of PBMSA development;
 - **Management considerations** – Ensuring effective management arrangements to deliver a safe and positive environment for students, whilst reducing the risk of potential negative impacts on the local community;
 - **Considering need** – Ensuring the right balance between meeting student housing needs and preventing an over-supply of PBMSA; and
 - **Planning Agreement and Developer Contributions** – Summarising issues in relation to PBMSA where the Council may consider the use of planning agreements.
- 4.8. The Best Practice Guide should be read in conjunction with this SPG, designed to be referenced by developers when first considering proposals for PBMSA developments. Following the advice given will help to ensure an appropriate supply of good quality PBMSA in the right locations, helping the Council deliver an integrated approach to the management of student accommodation across the city.

5. Planning Issues

- 5.1. PBMSA proposals raise a number of planning issues, including locational considerations and accessibility; design quality; the scale and impact of the proposed development; the provision of appropriate management arrangements; and ensuring a supply of accommodation to meet identified needs. Developers should consider the guidance provided in relation to these issues at the earliest opportunity when planning new PBMSA developments to ensure that the final development will be of the highest quality and will respond to the relevant planning policy requirements.
- 5.2. The 'front loading' of work is fundamental to the new development management system introduced through the reform of the planning in April 2015 and our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlines a number of opportunities for early engagement with both the Council and local communities/stakeholders, including:
 - **Pre-application Discussions (PADs):** The opportunity to discuss any proposals for PBMSA with the Council prior to a planning application being submitted; and
 - **Pre-Application Consultation:** Although not all proposals will fall within the statutory definition of major development, the nature of PBMSA means that pre-application community and stakeholder consultation is highly recommended.
 - **Proposal of Application Notice (PAN):** Where pre-application consultation is required, applicants must submit a PAN to the Council detailing the proposed consultation process. Separate guidance on the PAN process and pre-application consultation is available from the Council's website.
- 5.3. Whilst these provisions represent the minimum requirements for pre-application consultation, early engagement with interested parties and the Council will help to enhance the quality of the design and reduce the potential delays at the application stage. Developers should therefore consider the need for engagement beyond the minimum level to increase the likelihood of delivering successful PBMSA, through better understanding of local concerns and circumstances. This early engagement ensures action can be taken to address issues before detailed designs are developed for a formal application.
- 5.4. The following sections address each of the key planning issue in turn and set out the type of supporting information that is likely to be required as part of a planning application in order to allow each of these issues to be fully considered.

Location and Accessibility

- 5.5. There is a need to ensure that the PBMSA is provided at a location appropriate to the character and scale of the development which benefits from easy accessibility to university/college campuses by sustainable transport modes.

Accessibility to a University/College

- 5.6. The SPSS seeks to influence the location of new housing in order to shape new development patterns that satisfy the environmental aims of re-using previously developed land and reducing car usage by improving connectivity and promoting more sustainable patterns of transport. A location within 15 minute walking distance (1,200m) of a university/college campus will help to achieve these aspirations by allowing relative ease of access to campus for students, promoting walking and cycling.
- 5.7. PPS12 seeks to ensure that suitable sites are identified for housing, which includes good access to key services and infrastructure. It notes that City Centre and other locations that

benefit from high accessibility are the preferred locations for higher density housing, which could include PBMSA. A Belfast City Centre location for PBMSA also benefits from close proximity to the expanded Ulster University campus and being within comfortable walking distance of Queen's University's main campus. This also aligns with the Council's aspiration to increase the residential population in the City Centre contained within the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.

Regeneration and Optimising Existing Infrastructure

- 5.8. BMAP aims to increase the housing stock in the designated City Centre, delivering a range of regeneration benefits through the revitalisation of the physical fabric, re-use of vacant buildings and redevelopment of derelict and unattractive land. The HMOs Subject Plan's HMO Strategy also aims to focus development in areas where it can contribute to regeneration and optimise existing infrastructure and designates a number of locations with suitable frontages for HMO development (HMO3 and HMO4).
- 5.9. Such locations are designated specifically because they are able to accommodate higher density residential developments with a lower impact on traditional residential areas and are located where development can contribute to regeneration. Whilst PBMSA is distinguishable from the common view of an HMO, they may have similar locational requirements and as such may be acceptable in similar locations.
- 5.10. It should be noted that there are a number of locations within the City Centre where land zoned for Social Housing may fall within an HMO Development Node. In such locations, PPS12 defines Social Housing as housing provided by a registered Social Landlord for rent which is allocated by reference to an approved allocation system. Consequently, applications for PBMSA on such sites would need to demonstrate through reference to the NIHE's Common Waiting List that there is no demand for social housing in order to justify a departure from this allocation. Alternatively, PBMSA could be acceptable on such sites as part of a mixed-use regeneration scheme that could include an appropriate element of social/affordable housing.

Location Not Within a Primarily Residential Area

- 5.11. Policy HMO7 seeks to protect existing residential communities from unacceptable impacts by requiring that PBMSA developments are not located within a primarily residential area. Within the City Centre there are a number of established residential areas designated as Protected City Centre Housing Areas (BMAP). Whilst PBMSA could be considered a form of residential development the scale and impact of PBMSA is likely to be incompatible with existing residential communities. Such areas are also likely to be impacted by the provision of PBMSA in close proximity, particularly where concentrations may occur.
- 5.12. Outside of the City Centre, PBMSA may be acceptable in principle in some highly accessible locations, such as on arterial routes. However, such locations could increase pressure on existing established residential communities and care should be taken to avoid an overconcentration of student accommodation, particularly in areas nearby a university or college campus.

Supporting information

- 5.13. To allow for the full assessment of a proposed location and accessibility, the following supporting information should be submitted as part of any application for planning permission for PBMSA developments:
 - A location plan illustrating the location of key facilities and services, including university/college campuses; and

- Information identifying key walking routes, distances and walking times to relevant university/college campus or public transport halts.

Design Quality

- 5.14. The layout, design and facilities provided within a development should be of a high standard to ensure a quality residential environment.

Design

- 5.15. It is important that the nature, layout and design of proposed schemes are appropriate to the location and context and would not result in an unacceptable impact on local character, environmental quality or residential amenity. Good quality PBMSA will help to maximise the positive effects of development, including multiple regeneration benefits, whilst minimising any potential harm to local character, environmental quality or existing residential amenity.
- 5.16. Policy QD1 of PPS7 relates to design quality in new residential development (see Appendix B) and is applicable to PBMSA development given that they are residential in nature. To ensure conformity with these policy standards, planning applications for PBMSA will be tested against the nine design criteria. They seek to ensure integration with the surrounding context and minimal impact on neighbouring uses, the protection of the built and natural heritage, adequate provision of open space and local neighbourhood facilities, accessibility and appropriate parking provision, and the promotion of personal safety. As well as applying to new residential developments, the same design criteria also apply when converting or changing the use of existing buildings to PBMSA (PPS7 Addendum Policy LC2).
- 5.17. In addition to the PPS7 design requirements, there are a number of broader policies and relevant land designations within the existing planning policy framework that provide specific design advice, depending on the specific location of a proposed development. These include:
- **Conservation Areas:** There are three Conservation Areas designated within Belfast City Centre – Belfast City Centre, the Cathedral and Linen – as well as four in the vicinity of Queen’s University. PBMSA developments within, or affecting, a Conservation Area will need to preserve or enhance the setting and character of the Conservation Area. There is a presumption in favour of retaining any building which makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, as identified within the Design Guides available for each Area.
 - **Listed Buildings:** There is a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings unless there are exceptional reasons to justify a demolition. The change of use of listed buildings to PBMSA is likely to be appropriate where this secures its upkeep and survival and where the development is in conformity with the wider planning policy framework. PBMSA developments within the vicinity of listed buildings will be subject to tighter policy controls in accordance prevailing regional policy (PPS6 and PPS7 Addendum ‘Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas’) to help control the impact on the setting of the listed buildings.
 - **Development Opportunity Sites:** BMAP identifies five Development Opportunity Sites within Belfast City Centre. Although potential uses of the sites are not always specified, PBMSA may be acceptable as part of a mixed use developments, assuming other policy requirements are met, including specified urban design requirements relating to density of development, heights, scale, massing, etc.
 - **Areas of Townscape Character:** BMAP designates a number of Areas of Townscape Character (ATC), including Victoria Street/Oxford Street in the City Centre. PBMSA developments within an ATC will be assessed in accordance with prevailing regional

planning policy currently set out in PPS6 'Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage' and the Addendum to PPS6 'Areas of Townscape Character'.

- **Character Areas:** There are nine Character Areas within the City Centre, where planning permission will only be given to PBMSA development proposals which are in accordance with Urban Design criteria specified within BMAP.

Open Space

- 5.18. Policy HMO7 requires that landscaping and amenity space is provided in accordance with a Landscaping Plan, which should detail the proposed provision of open space within the overall design concept for the scheme, including details of future maintenance required. PPS8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation seeks to ensure that areas of open space are provided as an integral part of new residential development and that appropriate arrangements are made for their management and maintenance in perpetuity. This is also reflected in Criterion (c) of PPS7 Policy QD1 (see Appendix B).
- 5.19. PPS8 Policy OS2 requires that new residential developments of 25 units or more provide public open space equating to at least 10% of the total site area as an integral part of the development. However, it acknowledges that an exception to this could be permitted in the case of apartment developments or specialised housing where a reasonable level of private open space is being provided. It suggests that a provision of less than 10% may be acceptable where the residential development is in a city centre or is close to areas of existing public open space.
- 5.20. 'Creating Places' expands on these policy requirements, suggesting that adequate provision would range from 10-30 sq m per unit. In the case of apartment or flat developments it advises that "private communal open space will be acceptable in the form of landscaped areas, courtyards or roof gardens." A flexible approach should be applied when developing PBMSA proposals so that the appropriate level of provision is determined by the particular context of the development and an overall design concept.
- 5.21. Developments in inner urban locations, such as the City Centre, "will tend towards the lower figure" and the provision of private open space in the form of patios or balconies can help to reduce the need for communal open space. Conversely, higher requirements for public open space or landscaped areas would be required for developments within or adjacent to existing residential areas, or where a building in the City Centre does not take up the entire plot.
- 5.22. In the case of PBMSA, it may be acceptable for planning consent to be granted for schemes providing amenity space towards the lower standards by virtue of the very nature of the development. For example, where proposals are in accessible location, close to a university campus where potential for the provision of open space is likely to be more limited, small squares or formal spaces should be considered. In these circumstances it is likely that streetscape, public realm and parking areas may become a focus for improved design.
- 5.23. Where concession are made in open space standards, planning agreements may be sought to ensure provision of open space off-site or to secure funding for the enhancement to existing areas of public open space. In addition, conditions or planning agreements may also be used to ensure the policy requirement for the management and maintenance of any open space provided is secured.

Space Standards

- 5.24. It is important that new PBMSA developments should create a quality and sustainable environment for future residents (PPS7 Policy QD1). Policy HMO7 requires that all units within PBMSA are self-contained (i.e. having a bathroom, w.c. and kitchen available for use

by the occupiers), but there are no direct policies relating to space standards or the layout of such accommodation.

- 5.25. In the case of PBMSA, a number of unique features such as the provision of indoor amenity space mean that lower unit space standards may be appropriate than for other residential development. A series of space standards for PBMSA, adapted from the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) HMO Standards, provide an appropriate benchmark and are set out in Appendix C. Whilst this outlines a basic minimum standard it should be recognised that many institutions have standards that would exceed this level.
- 5.26. PBMSA developments should also seek to incorporate a high level of accessibility and inclusive design, and are required to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements. Provision should therefore be made to ensure a development is accessible to all and that accommodation could be suitable for students with disabilities. This includes not only within individual study bedrooms but also within the accommodation as a whole and along key access routes to and from the site.
- 5.27. In order to justify a reduction in standard residential requirements it will be necessary for approvals for PBMSA development to ensure the proposed accommodation will be restricted to use, by students through appropriate conditions or a planning agreement. In order to get approval to depart from that restriction at a later date, it will need to be demonstrated at that time that all of the policy requirements for general needs housing, including space standards, can be met.

Parking

- 5.28. The negative impacts of the parking demands from students on existing provision should be addressed when considering planning applications for PBMSA developments. Criterion (f) of PPS7 Policy QD1 sets out the policy requirement to provide adequate parking provision, and this is closely linked to the need to support walking, cycling and access to public transport referenced in Criterion (e). Within or immediately adjacent to the City Centre a standard of one space per dwelling would usually be required for residential developments (BMAP Policy TRAN1), although it is acknowledged that reductions in this standard will be considered “where evidence of alternative transport arrangements can be clearly demonstrated, or other material considerations exist that justify an exception to the policy.”
- 5.29. The provision of PBMSA in close proximity to a University campus would also help to justify a reduction in parking provision due to a reduced need for private cars to travel to the place of study. However, potential reductions in parking provision need to be balanced against the risk that the provision of PBMSA without any parking provision could lead to increased demand for on-street parking. This could be difficult to absorb in an area where demand for parking is already high and could lead to additional congestion to the detriment of highway safety, and is likely to impact on the residential amenity of existing communities.
- 5.30. Detailed Transport Assessments and Travel Plans should be required in relation to PBMSA to provide the necessary evidence to justify the level of parking proposed and detailing how walking and cycling will be promoted. For example, ‘green’ Travel Plans are now widely utilised to actively encourage the use of alternative modes of transport, particularly cycling. Planning conditions or legal agreements will be utilised as necessary to ensure that parking and travel arrangements, such as operating as a car-free facility, can be effectively enforced as part of a wider management plan for a scheme.

Waste and Recycling

- 5.31. According to PPS3 Policy AMP7, all new PBMSA developments should have adequate provision of waste and recycling storage facilities and appropriate arrangements for the

collection of such waste. This should be designed in accordance with Development Control Advice Note (DCAN) 15: Vehicular Access Standards, the Local Government Waste Storage Guide for Northern Ireland (2010) and the Council's Supplementary Waste Storage Guidance.⁵

- 5.32. Developers are advised to liaise with the Council's Planning Service and Building Control Service for support and advice at an early stage to help clarify requirements and ensure that a suitable and satisfactory design is achieved.

Sustainable Development

- 5.33. The SPPS states that the whole planning system exists to positively and proactively facilitate development that contributes to a more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable Northern Ireland. It is therefore essential that new development simultaneously pursues social and economic priorities alongside the careful management of our built and natural environments for the overall benefit of our society.
- 5.34. It is therefore important that new PBMSA delivers sustainable development in its broadest sense and there are a number of elements of PBMSA developments that will contribute to the delivery of sustainable development, such as locating developments so as to reduce the need to travel and promote walking or cycling, the use of Green Travel Plans and providing a quality residential environment. As with all new buildings, the design concept should consider the sustainability of the overall design from the outset. This could include the use of energy efficiency and sustainable construction methods, such as green roofs, or the installation of energy reduction and zero-carbon generating technologies, such as solar panels and rainwater harvesting, as appropriate. Green roofs can also contribute to the overall open space provision, as well as offering energy reductions through their isolating effect.
- 5.35. These are a number of rating systems, such as the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM (Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method), available to help in the consideration of overall sustainable development. Reference to such considerations should be included within the Design and Access Statement submitted to support any planning application.

Supporting information

- 5.36. To allow for the full assessment of the design quality of a proposed development, the following information should be submitted as part of all planning applications for PBMSA developments:
- **Design and Access Statement** – This should explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposal, taking account of relevant built heritage considerations, especially where proposals fall within a Conservation Area or affect the setting of a listed building. It should include:
 - Site Appraisal;
 - Concept Design;
 - A statement explaining the design objectives for the site;
 - Local design considerations; and
 - The relationship of the proposal to the surrounding context.
 - **Landscaping Plan** – This should outline the proposed provision of any landscaped areas, open space or amenity spaces within the overall design concept for the scheme, including future maintenance arrangements required.

⁵ Available from: www.belfastcity.gov.uk/buildingcontrol-environment/buildingcontrol/wasteguidelines.aspx

- **Transport Assessment** – This should provide a comprehensive review of all the potential transport impacts of the proposed development, including a plan to mitigate any adverse consequences.
- **Travel Plan** – This should be drafted to actively encourage the use of alternative modes of transport to the private car, particularly cycling, walking and public transport, including justification for any reduction in parking standards to be considered. Issues to be considered, including any potential mitigation measures, should include:
 - Staff and Student travel issues;
 - Control of beginning and end of term traffic;
 - Provision of secure cycle parking and links to existing or planned cycle networks;
 - Travel packs for students at the beginning of each term (including appropriate routes to and from university); and
 - A Car Parking Management Plan (if parking is to be provided).

Impact and Scale

- 5.37. The development should be designed in a way that does not conflict with adjacent properties or the general amenity of the surrounding area.

Impact

- 5.38. The creation of balanced and inclusive communities is one of the major themes underpinning the RDS and the SPPS notes that the planning process has an important role to play in the delivery of good quality housing that supports the creation of more balanced communities. It is also widely recognised that an overconcentration of student accommodation relative to the wider community can lead to an imbalance in the community resulting in harm to residential amenity.
- 5.39. Well designed, appropriately located and effectively managed PBMSA should, in a general sense, help reduce the negative impacts associated with concentrations of student housing, nevertheless even with PBMSA a concentration of relatively short term residents in a small geographic area can have an unwelcome impacts, especially when in close proximity to established communities. Assessing the impact of a PBMSA development, whether in itself or when considered alongside existing or approved student housing provision, is therefore important to ensure integration into surrounding areas and to minimise the risk of adverse impacts on existing residential amenity.
- 5.40. The HMO Subject Plan's Strategy seeks to protect residential amenity in areas where multiple occupation is, or is likely to become, concentrated and Policy HMO7 addresses this through the requirement that PBMSA should not be located in a primarily residential area and by requiring that appropriate provision is made for the management of accommodation. Policy QD1 from PPS7 also contains a number of design criteria aimed at minimising conflict with adjacent land uses, assisting integration with the surrounding area, ensuring adequate provision of necessary local facilities and ensuring there are no unacceptable adverse effects on existing or proposed properties in terms of overlooking, loss of light, overshadowing, noise or other disturbance. Comments received in response to public consultation on a planning application will be considered when assessing the likely impact of a proposed development.
- 5.41. For PBMSA development, consideration will also be given to the cumulative impacts of student housing to ensure that balanced communities are achieved. Within primarily residential areas (Policy HMO1 and HMO5) and areas outside of designated HMO Nodes (Policy HMO3 and HMO4) a 'threshold-approach' can be implemented to ensure a community balance is maintained.

5.42. However, it is less straightforward to accurately assess the threshold at which the cumulative impact of PBMSA developments outside of residential areas or within the City Centre may lead to an over-concentration relative to other land uses in a specific locality, such as retail, office provision or general housing. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis utilising up to date information on existing and proposed student housing provision, capacity of existing infrastructure and services and any positive impacts arising from the development.

Scale of Development

5.43. When considering the impact of PBMSA, consideration should also be given as to whether the scale of a proposed development is appropriate to the location so as to enable adequate management, to maintain a community balance and to minimise any conflict with surrounding residential neighbourhoods.

5.44. The first criterion of Policy HMO7 requires PBMSA developments to be over a threshold of 50 units or 200 occupants, without precluding smaller incremental extensions or consolidations of existing accommodation and phased development of larger schemes. However, there is no specific policy for planning applications relating to PBMSA with fewer than 50 units or 200 occupants and such smaller schemes could be considered to fail this policy test.

5.45. At the time of developing this policy, the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) noted that this threshold exists because full time management would not be economic for complexes of less than 200 students and that a fifty unit complex may not support the management staff required.

5.46. However, where smaller schemes are able to meet the other Policy HMO7 requirements, such as the provision of appropriate management arrangements, planning applications may still be considered acceptable. In addition, all PBMSA proposals are also subject to a range of other relevant policies, such as those relating to design quality and impact on surrounding areas (see Policy QD1 in Appendix B).

Supporting information

5.47. To allow for the full assessment of the impact of a proposal, including the cumulative impact, information should be submitted as part of the planning application in relation to:

- Existing student housing provision within an area;
- Likely impact of the proposal upon demographics and local facilities/ service provision in an area;
- Information on the social, economic and environmental benefits of a proposal, particularly specific benefits of the proposed scheme as opposed to the well documented benefits of PBMSA in general; and
- Details of any measures included to help protect residential amenity and mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the surrounding area.

Management

5.48. The development has appropriate management in place to create a positive and safe living environment for students whilst minimising any potential negative impacts from occupants.

Management Plan

5.49. It is vital that the PBMSA provision is well managed in order to provide a safe and positive living environment for students, whilst reducing the risk of adverse impacts upon residential amenity. Policy HMO7 requires that “provision is made for the management of all

accommodation”, so a Management Plan should be prepared to accompany any planning application for PBMSA. Advice and guidance as to what should be contained within the management plan is set out in the associated PBMSA in Belfast Best Practice Guide (January 2016).

- 5.50. Policy HMO7 also notes that a planning agreement may be required to ensure delivery of proposed management arrangements, such as any formal links to a University or College or to ensure permanent occupation as student housing. Planning Agreements, and related developer contributions, may therefore be required in relation to PBMSA where management arrangements cannot be adequately addressed by the imposition of conditions alone. See later section on use of Developer Agreements for more information.

Accreditation

- 5.51. As part of management arrangements, developers should commit to securing accreditation under one of government-approved Codes of Standards for the management of PBMSA. This provides assurance to respective tenants that quality standards are being met and reassures the Council that appropriate management arrangements will be in place for operation of a development. This will help to demonstrate compliance with the HMO7 requirement that provision is made for the management of the accommodation. The Available Codes of Standards are available as follows:

- The Universities UK Code of Practice for University Managed Student Accommodation⁶
- The Accreditation Network UK (ANUK)/Unipol Code of Standards for Larger Residential Developments for Student Accommodation Managed and Controlled by Educational Establishments⁷
- The ANUK/Unipol Code of Standards for Larger Developments for Student Accommodation NOT Managed and Controlled by Educational Establishments⁷

Supporting information

- 5.52. Planning applications for PBMSA should be accompanied by a Management Plan addressing general management arrangements associated with the operation of the building. This should include details of:

- Arrangements for the management and maintenance of the site, including any landscape or amenity space;
- Travel and transport plans, including the management of parking. This should include measures to improve access and encourage use of sustainable methods of transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport;
- Servicing arrangements, including details of any deliveries required and provision for the storage and collection of waste and recycling;
- Special features to improved the safety and security of students; including, for example, any CCTV provided, adequate lighting, intercoms, etc;
- Arrangements to ensure the well-being of residents;
- Arrangements for the management of noise and anti-social behaviour, including details of any soundproofing, noise control measures, a code of conduct to govern tenant behaviour and any proposed liaison arrangements with the relevant education institution(s), the Council and the PSNI in relation to tenant behaviour; and
- Any formal accreditation scheme (e.g. ANUK/Unipol or Universities UK) the operator plans to secure for the management of the completed development.

⁶ Available from: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/acop

⁷ Available from: www.nationalcode.org

Need

- 5.53. PBMSA development should meet an identified need for the type of accommodation proposed. This should help secure a supply of accommodation in response to evidence of need.
- 5.54. The SPPS places sustainable development in the long-term public interest at the heart of the planning system and seeks to ensure that sufficient new houses are built to meet housing need and demand. It expects planning authorities to facilitate sustainable housing growth in response to changing need (Paragraph 3.3) and highlights the importance of managing housing growth in a sustainable way (Paragraph 3.5). The HMOs Subject Plan's HMO Strategy also seeks to "accommodate the need and demand for multiple occupation, while maintaining a community balance" and the supporting text for Policy HMO7 states that it is "designed to facilitate" this need and demand.
- 5.55. It is therefore important that PBMSA development is provided to meet an identified need for the type of accommodation proposed to ensure that housing growth is managed and that the varied housing needs of the whole community are met. This should be based on an understanding of local student demand and the current and future supply, linked to published growth aspirations of the city's further and higher education institutions.

Supporting information

- 5.56. To allow for the full assessment of need, a Need Statement should be submitted as part of any planning application for PBMSA. Such a Statement should provide evidence, as appropriate, to enable the assessment of need, based on known demand and supply indicators at the time within the student housing sector, including details of:
- The specific need that is being addressed, with reference to relevant Corporate Plans published by the city's further and higher education institutions;
 - Why this need is currently unmet;
 - The type of existing accommodation the potential student occupiers are likely to be drawn from;
 - Confirmation that the facilities are to be used exclusively for student accommodation;
 - Any recorded increase in student numbers;
 - University support, if available;
 - Current waiting lists for student accommodation; and
 - Bank funding available to deliver proposals.

Planning Agreements

- 5.57. Planning Agreements, and related developer contributions, may be required in relation to PBMSA where what is secured cannot be adequately addressed by the imposition of conditions alone. SPPS provides the policy basis for planning agreements generally, whilst Policy HMO7 notes that a planning agreement⁸ may be required to ensure delivery of agreed management arrangements relating to PBMSA.
- 5.58. There are a number of areas in relation to PBMSA where the Council may consider the use of planning agreements, to facilitate or restrict the development and/or use of land or to require land to be used in any specified way (SPPS). Whilst not exhaustive, a number of examples of obligations that may be placed on developers of PBMSA through the use of Section 76 Agreements⁸ are provided in Appendix D.

⁸ As part of planning reform, Article 40 agreements referred to within existing policy documents have been replaced by Planning Agreements outlined within Section 76 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

- 5.59. The Council will consider the need for any such obligations on a case-by-case basis in relation to individual PBMSA proposals and will endeavour to provide an early indication of the use of particular types of legal agreements/conditions appropriate to the circumstances, taking account of all relevant factors which may impact on the financial viability of the scheme proposed.
- 5.60. The Council will negotiate and deal with planning obligations in a timely manner, particularly where pre-application discussions on such matters have take place, and welcome the opportunity to discuss the nature of any agreements with developers at the earliest opportunity.

Developer Contributions

- 5.61. Whilst many of the example Planning Agreements listed in Appendix D could be delivered directly by the developer as an integral part of an approved development, many could also take the form of financial payments to the Council, particularly where it is necessary for developers to contribute to off-site works either directly or through pooled financial contributions. Where contributions are required, the associated costs will be calculated on a case-by-case basis in an open and transparent manner, taking account of the specific context and up-to-date cost information.
- 5.62. For example, contributions towards transport related initiatives could be calculated with reference to the total number of trips a development will generate during peak periods, whilst the level of financial contribution for green/open space could be calculated with reference to the type, scale and quality of space to be provided, based on average costs in Belfast for providing or improving open space. For specific capital items, planning obligations will be based on up-to-date average build costs for the specific items required. In all cases, costs will be inclusive of all costs including fees and construction costs.
- 5.63. In addition, where the Council incurs legal and administrative costs and expenses in preparing, negotiating and settling an Agreement, it may be necessary for the Council to require contributions from a developer towards reasonable costs associated with this administration. Similarly, contributions may also be required where additional work is required to monitor specific elements of an agreement, such as the effectiveness of a Travel Plan.
- 5.64. To facilitate the timely progress of a planning application, it is important that Developers discuss the likely levels of contributions with the Council at the earliest opportunity.

Community Benefit

- 5.65. The Council would also encourage developers to consider any benefits that could be offered voluntarily to local communities likely to be affected by a development. The SPPS notes that this could take the form of payments to the community, in-kind benefits or shared ownership arrangements. However, such 'community benefits' cannot be considered material considerations in decision-taking and are distinct from developer contributions that may be required to enable a development to go ahead.

Supporting Information

- 5.66. To help facilitate discussions in relation to We will require applicants to prepare a planning obligations statement for major development proposals that addresses the issues outlined in the SPG where they are relevant to the particular proposals. The planning obligations statement should be submitted as part of the planning application.

Appendix A: Glossary

Accreditation Network UK (ANUK)	ANUK is a network of professional and organisations that promotes accreditation in private rented residential accommodation. It was formed in response to the increasing popularity of accreditation across the UK May 2002 to publicise, promote and share good practice in accreditation.
Area of Townscape Character (ATC)	ATCs are specific areas designated within a Local Development Plan that exhibit distinct character and intrinsic qualities, often based on the historic built form or layout in many of our cities, towns and villages. In assessing planning applications within ATCs, the key consideration will be to ensure that development proposals respect the appearance and qualities of each townscape area and maintain or enhance their distinctive character.
Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP)	The local Development Plan for Belfast and the surrounding metropolitan area. It defines the policy framework and land use proposals that will be used to guide development decisions within a specified area.
BREEAM (Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method)	BREEAM is an internationally recognised method of assessing, rating, and certifying the sustainability masterplanning projects, infrastructure and buildings. It promotes best practice for all aspects of sustainable property development using independent, licensed assessors to rate developments against scientifically based criteria covering a range of issues in categories that evaluate energy and water use, health and wellbeing, pollution, transport, materials, waste, ecology and management processes.
Code for Sustainable Homes	The Code for Sustainable Homes is a UK national method for rating and certifying the sustainable design and construction of new homes. It covers nine categories of sustainable design including energy and CO2 emissions, water, materials, surface water run-off, waste, pollution, health and wellbeing, management and ecology.
Development Control Advice Note (DCAN)	DCANs set out the criteria and technical standards to be considered when dealing with specific categories or aspects of development. Produced by the Department for Environment, they are regional-level Supplementary Planning Guidance documents.
House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	For planning purposes, a HMO is a house occupied by more than 2 qualifying persons, being persons who are not all members of the same family. A "qualifying person" is a person whose only or principal residence is the HMO.
Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)	NIHE is Northern Ireland's single comprehensive regional housing authority. It is a non-departmental public body providing a range of services to people living in socially rented, privately rented and owner occupied accommodation. It administers the Northern Ireland's Home Energy Conservation Authority and also administers the Housing Benefit Scheme, which provides help with rent to people on low income.
Planning Appeals Commission (PAC)	An independent body which deals with a wide range of land use planning issues and related matters. Its functions fall into two broad categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decisions on Appeals against decisions on a wide range of planning and environmental matters; and• Hearing and Reporting on Public Inquiries/ Hearings/ Examinations, making recommendations on a wide range of cases referred to it by Planning Authorities.

Proposal of Application Notification (PAN)	For major development proposals, developers are required to submit a 'Proposal of Application Notice' 12 weeks before submitting a formal planning application, explaining how they will engage with the local community. The Council then has 21 days to consider the proposal and can either confirm their acceptance of the proposal or direct the applicant to modify their approach.
Planning Policy Statement (PPS)	Set out the policies of the Department of the Environment on particular aspects of land-use planning. They apply to the whole of Northern Ireland and their content must be taken into account in preparing development plans and are also material to individual planning applications and appeals.
Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA)	PBMSA is accommodation that is built, or converted, with the specific intent of being occupied by students undertaking a full-time course of higher or further education – either individual en-suite units or sharing facilities. The inclusion of the word 'managed' highlights the importance of such accommodation being centrally supervised by the developer/landlord to provide welfare support for students and to ensure compliance with any code of conduct or tenancy agreements, etc.
Regional Development Strategy (RDS)	The spatial strategy of the Executive, which sets out policies for the delivery of the spatial aspects of the Programme for Government. It provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors, influencing the future distribution of development throughout the Region.
Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland	The SPPS is a statement of the Department of Environment's policy on important planning matters that should be addressed across Northern Ireland. It identifies the objective of the planning system as being to secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving well-being. Its provisions must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs) and are material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.
Student Accommodation	A generic term that covers all forms of housing suitable for occupation by student, including both HMOs and PBMSA.
Sui Generis	A Latin phrase literally meaning "of its own kind; in a class by itself; unique". It is used in planning to refer to developments that do not fall within a specific class of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015.
Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)	Guidance to support, clarify and/or illustrate by example planning policy statements and plans. This can take the form of design guides or guides prepared for Conservation Areas and the suite of DCANs. Where relevant to a particular development proposal supplementary planning guidance will be taken into account as a material consideration in making decisions.

Appendix B: PPS7 Policy QD1 Quality in New Residential Development

Planning permission will only be granted for new residential development where it is demonstrated that the proposal will create a quality and sustainable residential environment. The design and layout of residential development should be based on an overall design concept that draws upon the positive aspects of the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

In established residential areas proposals for housing development will not be permitted where they would result in unacceptable damage to the local character, environmental quality or residential amenity of these areas.

In Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character housing proposals will be required to maintain or enhance their distinctive character and appearance. In the primarily residential parts of these designated areas proposals involving intensification of site usage or site coverage will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

All proposals for residential development will be expected to conform to all of the following criteria:

- a) The development respects the surrounding context and is appropriate to the character and topography of the site in terms of layout, scale, proportions, massing and appearance of buildings, structures and landscaped and hard surfaced areas;
- b) Features of the archaeological and built heritage, and landscape features are identified and, where appropriate, protected and integrated in a suitable manner into the overall design and layout of the development;
- c) Adequate provision is made for public and private open space and landscaped areas as an integral part of the development. Where appropriate, planted areas or discrete groups of trees will be required along site boundaries in order to soften the visual impact of the development and assist in its integration with the surrounding area;
- d) Adequate provision is made for necessary local neighbourhood facilities, to be provided by the developer as an integral part of the development;
- e) A movement pattern is provided that supports walking and cycling, meets the needs of people whose mobility is impaired, respects existing public rights of way, provides adequate and convenient access to public transport and incorporates traffic calming measures;
- f) Adequate and appropriate provision is made for parking;
- g) The design of the development draws upon the best local traditions of form, materials and detailing;
- h) The design and layout will not create conflict with adjacent land uses and there is no unacceptable adverse effect on existing or proposed properties in terms of overlooking, loss of light, overshadowing, noise or other disturbance; and
- i) The development is designed to deter crime and promote personal safety.

Any proposal for residential development which fails to produce an appropriate quality of design will not be permitted, even on land identified for residential use in a development plan.

Appendix C: Minimum Space Standards for PBMSA

The following space standards for PBMSA have been adapted from the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland)(Clause 43) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) HMO Standards⁹:

Room / Unit Layout	Number of Occupants	Minimum Size
Bedroom	1	6.5 m ²
	2	11 m ²
	3	15 m ²
	4	19.5 m ²
	More than 4	An additional 4.5 m ² per person
Combined Bedroom / Living Room	1	10 m ²
	2	15 m ²
	3	19.5 m ²
	More than 3	An additional 4.5 m ² per person
Combined Bedroom / Living Room / Kitchen	1	13 m ²
	2	20.5 m ²
	More than 2	An additional 4.5 m ² per person
Kitchen	1-2	5 m ²
	3-5	7 m ²
	6-10	10 m ²
Combined Kitchen / Dining Room	1-2	9 m ²
	3-5	11 m ²
	6-10	19.5 m ²
Combined Kitchen / Living Room	1-2	9 m ²
	3-5	11 m ²
	6-10	19.5 m ²

⁹ Houses in Multiple Occupation Standards, NIHE, 2002. Available from: www.nihe.gov.uk/hmo_standards.pdf

Appendix D: Examples of Planning Agreements

Facilities

- Provision of and access to local facilities/services required to support and enhance the development, such as additional local community facilities arising as a result of the development.
- Ensure appropriate access to communal facilities / living space, such as common rooms.

Open Space

- Provision of and access to amenity/open space, in accordance with agreed Landscaping and Management Plans;
- Ensuring the appropriate management and maintenance of any amenity/open space provided; or
- Off-site provision of amenity/open space or contributions to the enhancement of existing areas of public open space, where sufficient on-site provision is not possible.

Transport and Travel

- Where parking standards have been reduced as a result of arrangements agreed as part of an approved Travel Plan, such as:
 - Operating as a car-free facility;
 - Providing adequate space for the secure storage of bicycles;
 - Improving pedestrian routes/cycleways to key destinations, such as a nearby university or college campus by providing, for example, improved pedestrian/cycle crossings, street lighting, public realm, etc.
 - Improving access and use of public transport through providing, for example, new bus stops, improvements to bus service, annual passes for public transport, etc.
- Effective monitoring and review, as required, of approved Travel Plans to ensure compliance and effectiveness.

Impacts

- Public realm improvements required to address any site-specific development impacts and to make a development acceptable. This could include:
 - Carriageway surfacing;
 - New or improved footways;
 - Hard or soft landscaping improvements;
 - Upgrading paving or landscape materials;
 - Street furniture, such as seating, bins, bollards, etc.
 - Public cycle stands or Belfast Bike docking stations;
 - Signage;
 - Public art; or
 - Community safety measures.
- Contributions to planned public realm improvements in the surrounding area.

Management Arrangements

- Delivering management arrangements in accordance with an approved Management Plan, including, for example:
 - Formalising links to a relevant university or college; or
 - Regular liaison takes place with residents and surrounding communities around the management of the facility, through for example the establishment of a Community Forum.
- Ensure occupation solely by students where concessions are allowed on normal standards (open space, space, parking provision, etc.) by virtue of the nature of the PBMSA development. This may involved the maintenance of an up to date register of students and their enrolments at relevant higher education institutions.