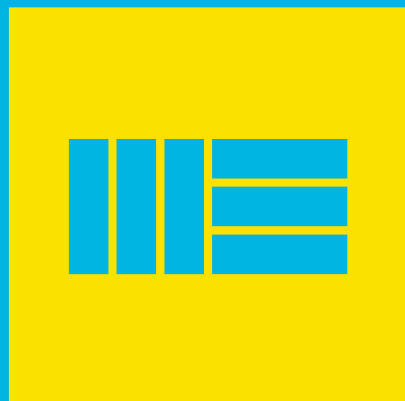


# UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

## STUDENT RESIDENCES

## FIFE COUNCIL LDP EVIDENCE REQUEST

24 NOVEMBER 2023



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# 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Montagu Evans LLP on behalf of the University of St Andrews and presents information in response to a request from Fife Council for details of the current and future position on student residences, and to inform the preparation of the Evidence Report for the new Fife Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 1.2 This report presents relevant context and background on the University's accommodation strategy and provides specific comment and proposals in relation to the preparation of the new Fife LDP.
- 1.3 The University of St Andrews is a key stakeholder within the town and wider Fife region, and their input to the progression of the new LDP is a key opportunity to underline the synergies of the University activity throughout the region, and to ensure that the plan can support their strategy and vision.
- 1.4 The University is acutely aware of the increasing pressures on St Andrews from the accommodation demands of students and are also seeing increasingly high demands from students in terms of the quality and configuration of university provided accommodation.
- 1.5 This representation is submitted as a positive contribution to the process, and the University look forward to continuing their successful relationship and engagement with Fife Council along with other key stakeholders and communities across the region.
- 1.6 The report is structured as follows:
  - **Section 2** provides context to the key objectives of the University's growth strategy and commitment to providing additional student accommodation.
  - **Section 3** provides an overview of the existing accommodation within the University of St Andrews estate.
  - **Section 4** considers the existing policy context for student accommodation within St Andrews and provides comment as to how the next LDP can support the provision of appropriate student accommodation within St Andrews over the next plan period.
  - **Section 5** presents overall conclusions.

# 2.0 UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

- 2.1 For the first semester of the academic year 2022 – 2023, the University had 10,360 students including 8,260 undergraduates and 2,164 postgraduates. Additionally the University is the most international in Scotland which places unique requirements on the accommodation estate.
- 2.2 The University's Strategy sets out the intention to maintain student numbers to ca. 10,000 students. Delivering World Class facilities to meet student needs will require investment into its estate across its four principal sites: the town centre, North Haugh, East Sands (where Albany Park student residences are proposed), and the Eden Campus. This will also require investment in PBSA across the town.

## STUDENT RESIDENCES

- 2.3 The University currently provides c.4,181 bed spaces in University provided accommodation, with additional facilities secured through partnership arrangements including 80 beds at Leuchars, 250 in Dundee, and 217 in managed properties throughout St Andrews.
- 2.4 In addition to this the University has developed a further 40 beds for post graduate students and families at The Grange, St Andrews, with a further 100 beds to be delivered in 2024. This development was delivered in partnership with Kingdom HA, and the University would like to explore additional partnership approaches to the delivery and operation of postgraduate and family accommodation, to the benefit of University staff and students and the local housing market,
- 2.5 This overall quantity of accommodation, when viewed in comparison to other university locations, represents a very high proportion of university provided bed spaces against the overall student population. This, however, requires to be considered in the context of the constrained housing market in St Andrews and pressures from the local community and tourism markets, especially in terms of HMO properties, meaning that available accommodation is at a premium.
- 2.6 There is a significant shortage of student accommodation in St Andrews which in recent years has resulted in students having to be placed in student accommodation in Dundee and Leuchars. This is unsustainable and makes the need to deliver sustainable accommodation choices even more fundamental to tackling the student bed shortage. The University is committed to helping to alleviate this pressure through its provision of PBSA.
- 2.7 It is for these reasons that the University is committed to increasing the quantity and quality of student accommodation across its estate.
- 2.8 One of the key objectives of the University's strategy is to fulfil a commitment to the town that wherever possible, modern, university-managed accommodation will be provided for students, to alleviate the pressure on the private housing market in the centre of St Andrews. This objective is, we understand, supported by Fife Council.
- 2.9 The strategy to deliver more bed spaces is a testament to the University's ongoing commitment to continue to deliver an outstanding experience for students and graduates, and furthermore demonstrates the effectiveness of the close partnership between staff and student leaders, in tackling the community's biggest challenges.
- 2.10 In order to support the University population, and to replace existing residences within the estate which are no longer fit for purpose, the University has an initial requirement to deliver c.1,000 new student bed spaces taking the total residential capacity to ca.5,000. Delivery of the additional university-managed student beds will necessitate a considerable budget of approx.. £140m.

- 2.11 By seeking to maintain residential capacity to 50%+ of total student population (c.5,000 beds), which is one of the highest proportions of university provided accommodation in the UK, the University will seek to provide the accommodation to maintain the University's population of 10,000 students and deliver on the commitment to St Andrews to continue to reduce the pressure on the towns housing shortage.
- 2.12 It should however be noted that this initial requirement needs to be kept under review, and will likely require to be increased. This is driven by a number of factors:
- Ongoing review of the operation and fitness for purpose of existing accommodation, and where appropriate the potential need to replace and enhance provision;
  - In response to student preferences and market factors, increasing numbers of students seeking to live in purpose built student accommodation, fuelling demand, and pressures on existing stock;
  - Wider housing market impacts, through the availability of HMO properties to meet the demand from students who cannot access purpose built and University provided accommodation. The impact of the tourism market, short stay lets, and general pressures on the delivery of private sector housing influence the availability of other properties for student lets;
  - The need to provide a greater variety of residence product to cater for different needs e.g. mature students, families, and for visiting academics and staff.
  - Due to the age of the existing stock, not all residences are adapted nor adaptable for disabled students and further development of modern accessible PBSA is required to fulfil the University's commitments to be an inclusive university.
- 2.13 The very nature of the town of St Andrews will always have to balance the competing pressures from University, tourism / golf, and the local population, and the attractiveness and uniqueness of the town and surroundings are critical to this. The potential for significant expansion has been the subject of extensive debate in the past, and future consideration of any aspirations for growth and expansion will need to carefully balance the need and demand against the character and uniqueness of the town.
- 2.14 The University are a key stakeholder, and guardian of the town, and take their role, function and influence on the town very seriously. The impact of the student population needs to be balanced against the local need, to ensure that the quality and success of the town as a whole can be sustained.
- 2.15 The University is, and will continue to constantly review their requirements, and this needs to include the approach to provision of, and access to suitable accommodation to meet the needs of the student population, and to attract and retain staff.
- 2.16 The University welcomes the opportunity to work in collaboration with Fife Council to progress further discussion and explore scenarios for future patterns of accommodation in the context of the needs and demands of the student population, and will look to do so in the context of the next stages of the replacement FIFEPlan preparation.

# 3.0 EXISTING STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN ST ANDREWS

3.1 This section of the report provides an overview of the existing accommodation within the University of St Andrews estate, as well as a summary of the key opportunities and challenges in relation to student accommodation which are of relevance to the LDP.

## EXISTING ACCOMMODATION

3.2 The existing University accommodation estate comprises 17 student residences with capacity to accommodate 4,181 students.

NAME	BEDS & ROOM TYPE	COMMENTS
Andrew Melville Hall (built 1967)	276 beds.  Corridor style, mostly singles, standard, catered.	Internally refurbished in 2017. Constraints related to Category A Listing – window replacement ongoing.
Deans Court and Annexes (main building built 1540)	61 beds.  Corridor style, singles, mostly standard, some ensuite, catered.	A listed main building. All buildings have been refurbished in turn over last few years. Future works still required in some buildings (e.g. roofing, rewiring).
John Burnet Hall and Annexe (main building built 1890, annexe added 1995)	143 beds.  Mixture of singles and shared, standard and ensuite. All catered.	No major works required in next 8 years.
McIntosh Hall (built 1850 – 1890)	244 beds.  Mixture of singles and shared, standard rooms. All catered.	On going external fabric repairs. B listed.
St Regulus Hall and Annexe (built 1780)	177 beds.  Mixture of singles and shared, standard rooms. All catered.	Planned kitchen refurbishments.
St Salvator's Hall (built 1930 – 40)	192 beds.  Mixture of single and shared, mostly standard rooms. All catered.	Refurbishment required within 5 years. C listed.
Gannochy House (built 1971)	85 beds.  All single standard rooms. Mostly self-catered, some catered.	External improvements required

NAME	BEDS & ROOM TYPE	COMMENTS
University Hall (built in phases 1865; 1896; 1961)	313 beds.  Mixture of single and shared, mostly standard rooms, 15 ensuite. All catered. Spread over 3 buildings.	Each building has been refurbished. No major works required in near future. Category B listed.
Whitehorn Hall (built 2018)	184 beds.  Mixture of shared and ensuite bedrooms. All singles. Can be catered in University Hall.	Adjacent to University Hall. Sharing of facilities.
Agnes Blackadder Hall (built 1993)	536 beds.  Mixture of single and some shared rooms. All ensuite. About 75% catered, 25% self-catered.	Flexible building allowing all or none to be catered. In need of refurbishment. Currently going through window replacement programme.
Powell Hall (built 2018)	205 beds.  Single, ensuite bedrooms. Self-catered.	Built in 2018. Usage of Agnes Blackadder facilities.
David Russell Apartments (built 2003 to 2010)	1165 beds.  20 blocks of 11 or 12 flats for 5 persons + 3 or 4 studios. All rooms ensuite. Flexibility of being catered or self-catered.	Facilities building on site with catering facilities. Large site requiring ongoing maintenance.
Fife Park Apartments (built 2015 – 2017)	520 beds.  Mixture of ensuite blocks like David Russell + smaller blocks with 5 person flats with shared facilities. Flexibility of being catered or self-catered.	Use of DRA facilities building.
Angus and Stanley Smith Houses (built 1981)	45 beds.  4 person Flats in 2 blocks.	Planned external fabric repairs in 2024 and minor internal upgrade.
Gregory Place (built 1870)	14 beds.  Mixture of studio, 2 person flats and 5 person flat. Mixture of standard and ensuite. All self-catered.	Refurbished in 2017.
St Gregory's (built 1925)	8 flats of 2 or 3 bedrooms. Standard rooms. All self-catered.	Refurbishment in progress.
St Leonard's Cottage	4 beds.  4 single standard bedroom house. Self-catered.	

3.3 It is worth noting that the program of refurbishments noted above will require the decanting of some residences for the period of works, resulting in a short-term reduction in capacity.

### PROPOSED ACCOMMODATION

- 3.4 The University have an existing planning consent (application reference 20/02296/FULL & 23/01284/FULL) for a student accommodation development at Gap Site 03 on the North Haugh campus, adjacent to Agnes Blackadder Hall. This proposal provides for an additional ca.155 beds.
- 3.5 Application reference 23/02301/FULL for the erection of student accommodation at Albany Park is currently pending consideration by Fife Council and is due to be considered at Committee in December 2023. There is an extensive planning history to this site with consent previously approved on an earlier scheme. The proposed development comprises a total of ca. 703 bedrooms.

### PRIVATE STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

- 3.6 For completeness it is also worth noting that there are currently 2 private PBSA operations within St Andrews, providing an additional 376 beds. These include:
- Homes for Students East Shore – 135 beds.
  - Hello Student Accommodation Ayton House – 241 beds.
- 3.7 In addition, there are other PBSA developments in the pipeline. This includes two consented PBSA schemes at the former Madras College buildings and grounds at Kilrymont which we understand are under construction and due for completion next summer:
- 22/04107/FULL – 209 beds.
  - 23/01498/ARC – 241 beds.
- 3.8 There is one other development in the pipeline at St Leonards, Abbey Walk, with permission for a 100 bed PBSA block and a 90 bed 3 star hotel – currently scheduled for delivery in 2026.
- 3.9 Whilst additional private PBSA can assist in delivering supply to ease the pressures on the St Andrews market, it should be noted that the University has no control over the operations or pricing of these developments. As with many other University locations, private PBSA, and especially more recent studio led schemes present accommodation at a price point that is out of reach of the vast majority of St Andrews students.
- 3.10 The future approach to delivery of PBSA needs to consider the implications of affordability to students, and to balance University and private approaches to avoid the development of a two tier market, and unintended consequences of inflation of prices across the board.

### SUMMARY

- 3.11 This section of the report provides an overview of the existing accommodation. The existing University accommodation estate comprises 17 student residences with capacity to accommodate 4,181 students, with two proposed schemes expected to provide an additional ca. 858 beds over the next 5 years.
- 3.12 The summary of existing accommodation highlights the age and refurbishment requirements across much of the estate, including a number of listed buildings, which will require significant investment to meet modern sustainability requirements and demands from students in terms of the quality and configuration of university provided accommodation.

# 4.0 POLICY ANALYSIS

- 4.1 This section of the report considers the existing policy context for student accommodation within St Andrews and provides comment as to how the next LDP can support the provision of appropriate student accommodation within St Andrews over the next plan period.

## FIFEPLAN

- 4.2 The Fife Local Development Plan (FIFEplan) (adopted September 2017) provides the existing context for student accommodation in St Andrews, primarily through Policy 1: Development Principles and Policy 2: Homes. Policy 2 in particular notes that Fife Council “*supports the future development of purpose-built house accommodation which can specifically serve the needs of those who may benefit from this type of accommodation*”.

## NPF4

- 4.3 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) does not contain a specific policy in relation to student accommodation development, but provides some general context through Policy 15 – Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods which seeks to create connected and compact neighbourhoods where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling or using sustainable transport options, and Policy 16 – Quality Homes which encourages the delivery of more high quality, affordable and sustainable homes, in the right locations, providing choice across tenures that meet the diverse housing needs of people and communities across Scotland.
- 4.4 The absence of a specific policy in relation to student accommodation within NPF4 presents a key opportunity for the review of FIFEplan to provide an appropriate policy context for student accommodation in St Andrews which responds to the unique context of the local housing market.

## REPLACEMENT FIFEPLAN LDP

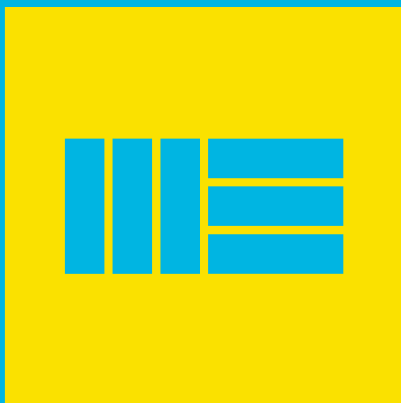
- 4.5 The preparation of the replacement for FIFEplan represents a key opportunity to create a positive context for the housing market in St Andrews, including in relation to student accommodation. This is particularly pertinent given the next LDP will have a 10 year lifespan.
- 4.6 Given the pace of change and reflecting the proposed 10 year lifespan of the plan, it is impossible to capture all eventualities in terms of future needs of the University. It is therefore critical that the content of the plan is viewed with a need for flexibility, and to allow a review of approaches where appropriate to reflect current needs whilst balancing viability and deliverability pressures.
- 4.7 It is suggested that Fife Council should consider the inclusion of a bespoke policy in relation to student accommodation in St Andrews, both in relation to the refurbishment of existing stock and the provision of further capacity, in order to positively respond to the unique context of the town and pressures on the local housing market. Such an approach would present no conflict with relevant policies of NPF4.
- 4.8 The University’s growth strategy is to fulfil a commitment to the town that wherever possible, modern, university-managed accommodation will be provided for students, to alleviate the pressure on the private housing market in the centre of St Andrews. The review of FIFEplan represents a key opportunity to create a positive framework which can help the University achieve this aim.

# 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The University is a key asset to the region and provides significant benefits from a local, regional, national and international perspective. As highlighted throughout this representation, the student accommodation estate is a critical element to deliver these benefits across the region.
- 5.2 The University is committed to increasing the quantity and quality of student accommodation across its estate, to fulfil a commitment to the town that wherever possible, modern, university-managed accommodation will be provided for students, to alleviate the pressure on the private housing market in the centre of St Andrews.
- 5.3 This paper has been prepared as a positive and proactive response to the preparation of the next Fife LDP. Reflecting the proposed 10 year lifespan of the plan, preparation of the replacement for FIFEplan represents a key opportunity to create a positive context for the housing market in St Andrews, including in relation to student accommodation.
- 5.4 As a key stakeholder in the area, the University wish to continue to work closely with Fife Council and other stakeholder interests to further the growth of the region and deliver against their own, and partner organisation objectives to meet defined needs and in a manner that can support the local housing market.
- 5.5 The comments and suggestions in this representation are presented to Fife Council for detailed consideration. The University would welcome further dialogue as required to help shape the future direction of the plan as it progresses through the next stages.

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WE REQUEST THAT THESE BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL.