

## Redevelopment of East Slope

### Student Consultation Survey February 2014

#### Executive Summary

A questionnaire was sent to all 13,500 students to ascertain their views on the plans for the East Slope Redevelopment. The aim was to find out from students how the accommodation should look and what they would like included in the development. The questionnaire covered type and sizes of bedrooms, bathroom facilities as well as information on communal spaces both inside the accommodation and as part of the overall development plan.

The questionnaire was designed in three sections. The first to establish some demographics such as where respondents live or previously lived. The second sought to ascertain students' views on the current housing provision and to identify any lessons that could be learnt for future development. The Third part of the survey focussed on how students wanted the new housing to be developed.

#### **SECTION 1 – DEMOGRAPHICS AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

In total 2,538 students responded to the survey representing approximately 18% of the student population. 47% (1,213) of those who responded were currently living in University managed accommodation. Of those currently living in University managed accommodation 22% (258) are living in Northfield, and 16% (191) in East Slope. Whereas for those not currently living in University managed housing the highest percentage 22% (263) of the respondents had previously lived in East Slope and 14% (177) in Northfield. A small percentage 7.7% stated that they had not stayed in University managed accommodation at any time.

The survey identified that the key priorities students have when initial choosing their accommodation were cost, rated as the number one priority by 51.3% of respondents followed by en-suite which was rated number one by approximately one third of respondents (27.3%). The size of the flat as well as the location of the accommodation were also identified as key concerns for new students.

#### **Housing Preference**

Overall, it would appear that the majority of applicants receive their first choice of accommodation when applying: However, when asked which accommodation would have been their preferred choice having lived in the accommodation, students showed a clear preference for the Brighthelm Houses.

#### **SECTION 2 – RATINGS OF CURRENT ACCOMMODATION**

Overall, respondents were happy with the size of the bedrooms, the bedroom furnishings and fittings, the ratio of baths, showers and toilet to users and the en-suite provision where appropriate; all of which received positive ratings. However, whilst kitchen furnishings and fittings were rated positively; the ratings for fridge and freezer capacity within kitchens were less positive with 28.7% and 31.4% rating these respectively as poor and very poor. The ratings for kitchen storage space and cooking facilities received average ratings with 53.4% and 52.9% rating them respectively as being excellent or good.

Respondents were also generally satisfied with the social areas within their flats with 65.7% giving positive feedback compared to 34.5% who felt they were inadequate. However when asked about additional features they would like to see in their current accommodation, social areas and

appropriate dining spaces with tables and chairs received the highest number of responses followed by sofas and comfortable seating in communal areas.

### **SECTION 3 – WHAT STUDENTS ARE LOOKING FOR WITH THE NEW ACCOMMODATION**

**Flat sizes** –the optimum flat size selected by respondents is for 6 person flats -51.8% (1,127) followed by 8 person flats 21.5% (468). There was a very small demand 2.4% (52) for 1 person studios and 1.1% (24) for 2 person flats.

**Bathrooms** – overall there was a preference for a mixture of shared bathrooms and en-suite accommodation in the development 52% (1,153) compared with 18% (395) stating a preference for en-suite accommodation and 30% (668) wanting shared facilities alone.

#### **Laundry facilities**

A significant number of students responded saying that they would like to have increased laundry facilities, preferably free and within the flats. In addition to washers and dryers several respondents also felt that it would be good to have a space either outside, in a basement or in the kitchen area for drying clothes to avoid the constant need to use dryers.

#### **Storage facilities**

Students would like additional storage facilities in bedrooms (wardrobe & shelving), kitchens (food storage, hoovers, ironing boards and cleaning products) and bathrooms (for toiletries). Other storage requirement included communal storage areas for luggage, shoe racks and sports equipment as well as storage in communal areas for TVs/DVDs/games console etc. There was also a requirement for some kind of lockable space for storing valuables.

#### **Fridge and freezer**

Generally it was felt that current provision did not adequately cater for the number of students sharing and respondents would like to see enhanced provision.

#### **Dining tables and chairs**

There is a desire to have better sized kitchen/diners capable of accommodating a dining table with chairs for the numbers of residents.

#### **Sofas**

Respondents wanted to have more comfortable seating generally within the accommodation and where possible sofas in kitchens and communal areas. Sofas being preferred to individual chairs.

Other features that warrant comment include sufficiently sized study desks with holes for computer cables; sinks and mirrors in non-en-suite bedrooms; dual sinks in kitchens and hooks on the back of doors to hang towels and other items on.

#### **Bedrooms – flooring, curtains and blinds**

Students clearly expressed a preference for carpets (70%) over laminate flooring and a marginal preference for curtains (56.6%) over blinds (43.4%)

## **Social space**

Comfortable social space (s) is of key concern to respondents. Both in relation to the internal social spaces within the flats and the requirement for spaces away from the accommodation. It was generally felt that a number of alternative spaces where a range of activities could be undertaken would be preferable to one large multi-purpose social space. Many respondents wanted a replacement bar for East Slope, a café venue of some sort and a small student union run shop.

## **Environmental Features**

The following is a quote from one respondent that summaries many of the key environmental features students would like to have incorporated in the development:

*“Recycling and food waste facilities, solar panels, sustainable insulation systems, it should be built from natural materials (so as to reduce Sussex uni’s carbon footprint) energy efficient light bulbs, efficient water systems such as water tanks and irrigation systems, it should have furniture and features made from recycled materials. It would be highly beneficial to Sussex and the planet if the next development was sustainable”*

In addition, a number of respondents are keen to see allotments for growing herbs and vegetables and there is a general desire for plenty of trees and planting with seating areas within the development.

## **Cycle storage**

Approximately 52.6% (1,179) respondents stated that it was important or very important to have secure storage facilities for bicycles with a further 10.2% (228) responding that it was critical to them.

## **Rents**

Overall respondents wanted rents to remain inclusive of utilities costs, contents insurance and network facilities. Several of the respondents also commented that they would also like to have laundry costs, gym fees and cleaning of their bedrooms included in the costs.