

Mayor's Academic Forum Meeting Notes

Date: 2 December 2016

Time: 10:00-12:00

Location: City Hall committee room 1

1. Aim of Academic Forum

GLA outlined aim of academic forum

2. Projections for number of HE students in London

GLA presented the methodology used to project student number in 2013 for the Further Alterations to the London Plan:

i. Composition of London's student population

London University HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) students and Other students

London University HESA students

- UK domiciled full time undergraduate
- UK domiciled full time postgraduate
- All overseas domiciled full-time undergraduates (including EU)
- All overseas domiciled full time postgraduate (including EU)

Other students

- All undergraduate
- All postgraduate

ii. Sources of information for London's student population

From HESA and Other Students from varied data sources collated by London Higher & University of London Housing Service

iii. 2013 Growth scenarios

This was based on taking midpoint from a high growth scenario and three low growth scenarios (details of the methodology are provided in: Mayor's Academic Forum

Recommendations Paper - Strategic planning issues for student housing in London 2014)

This gave a projected annual increase in full time students of 7,682 to 9,519 between 2011/12 and 2026/27.

iv. Current HE student numbers

Actual student numbers from 2011/12 to 2014/15 have decreased for UK domiciled undergraduates and postgraduates. Overseas undergraduates have increased slightly and postgraduates dipped in 2012/13 and have since recovered by 2014/15 (see presentation slides)

What new scenario should we use in the projections?

The forum discussed the factors that should be taken into account for producing new projections of student numbers in London. The main points raised were:

- **Need for PBSA different with the type of university**

Different universities will have different types of student with different needs for accommodation thus the overall student numbers do not necessarily reflect the need for student accommodation. The Russell Group universities have more students from outside

London and thus their students will need PBSA more than other universities that mainly attract existing London residents such as South Bank University.

- **Student rooms and Conventional housing**

The boroughs raised the issue of how many PBSA rooms are equivalent to a self-contained home. One student bedroom should be the equivalent of one bedroom in a self-contained house. Thus some form of conversion should be agreed to equate student housing to boroughs housing targets.

- **Issues to consider for London's attractiveness as a student destination**

- London is a destination in its own right which attracts students to its universities. The London brand is very important, which is composed of its cultural offer.
- Unite - The drop in the value of the pound has made it a more favourable destination to foreign students, however ability to stay and work after studies have become harder which makes the UK less attractive student destination.
- London Higher - London has creative specialist universities (11 of the 39) and these have
- London has a halo effect – its attractiveness that surpasses its problems

- **No growth scenario**

It was suggested by London Higher that as well as the low and high growth scenarios used in 2013 a no growth scenario should be added. The extra scenario would reflect the recent low growth which was not predicted by the 2013 approach to forecasting student number.

- **Alternative providers**

London Higher - Government wants to increase provision of alternative HE providers so this element of London's student number may increase proportionally

3. What percentage of students should be accommodated in PBSA?

GLA outlined that the current approach to PBSA is to seek to accommodate a percentage range (26-30%) in the projected growth of London HE students, and asked forum if this approach should be continued or what other factors needed to be considered. The Forum raised the following points:

- London has more PG and overseas students than other UK cities and so this should be taken into account when deciding what percentage of London's HE students should be accommodated in PBSA.
- London currently has empty PBSA rooms so the relationship between need and rooms provided is not straightforward
- NUS suggested that PBSA should be prioritised for poorer students and those with access needs.
- Private providers - highlighted that housing is a more viable land use than student accommodation and can outbid for site. The high land values and borough CIL rates make it difficult to develop student accommodation and has implications for the cost of the accommodation.
- It was highlighted that Manchester had a moratorium on development of PBSA and this had led to students moving into the private rental sector (PRS). Thus if London restricts PBSA it will have implications for demand for conventional housing.
- Accommodation for academic staff was raised as an increasing issue as they could not afford to live in London and thus universities would like to provide specific housing for them.

The GLA asked if it would be useful to focus on the type of students that are likely to be most in need of student accommodation e.g. First year UG: UK non-Londoners + overseas students, and PG masters: UK non-Londoners + overseas students. The forum members felt that first year UG as well as some second and third year UG were the most in need of PBSA, but UK PG students were not considered to be in high need of PBSA as they tended/preferred to live in conventional housing.

The GLA to consider the following policy options for new London Plan:

- keep the strategic target for PBSA to be a number based on 26-30% of all projected growth in HE student population
- Set strategic target to be to have enough PBSA in London by end of plan period to house all first year UG that are: UK non-Londoners + overseas students. To also consider of other groups of students should be included. The student numbers would be based on HE student projections

4. Affordable student accommodation policy

GLA summarised the current approach to defining affordable and requiring student accommodations as set out in the Housing SPG 2016, and asked the forum if the current approach should be take forward into the new London Plan or wanted to change the approach. For example, require all student accommodation to be provided at the affordable rate to be except from the obligation to provided conventional C3 use class affordable housing, or change the approach entirely to defining affordable student accommodation.

The general consensus of the Forum was that the policy approach is new and needs to be continued for a while to see how it works.

- However, some members of the Forum felt that universities should also have to provide an element of accommodation at the affordable rate.
- University of London Housing Service suggested that if it was going to be changed there should be a fixed percentage of rooms required and it should be based on a percentage of market rent rather than a fixed amount linked to student income, and as per their original consultation comments on the proposal for affordable student accommodation.

The Forum highlighted many issues that affect affordability of PBSA

- Design is key to affordability
- High borough CIL and land values increase costs

Policy approach for new London Plan:

- Keep current definition of affordable student accommodation as set out in Housing SPG.

5. University led regeneration lessons from USA

University of London Housing Service outlined approach in USA to collaboration between local authorities and universities in university estate development.

- Land granted from local authorities to build university buildings including student accommodation
- High level of engagement by the university with the local community which raises local perceptions of university
- This university developments plays a key role in the regeneration of an area
- The collaboration of local authorities and universities could be replicated in the

The Forum highlighted some good examples of engagement between Universities and local authorities and local communities – Queen Mary’s in east London, and Loughborough University’s development in Hackney Wick (London Legacy site).

The Forum considered that greater community engagement by Universities would help local residents and council have a more favourable view of HE development.

6. What other HE sector policies are needed in the London Plan?

GLA asked the Forum for other HE issues that could be relevant to the London Plan policy and the following issues were raised.

- The need for teaching space is a key issue for London’s universities
- The impact of PBSA on local services should be addressed by PBSA providing the students facilities they need.
- The impact of high borough CIL rates on PBSA prevents development coming forward

Policy approach for new London Plan:

- Policy support for collaboration between HEI and LA and GLA for HE led regeneration, particularly in Opportunity Areas