

## **Annex D: Students' Unions Joint Response**



## **RE: Review of the Controlling the Concentration of Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document**

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Through the Student Community Partnership, the University of York Students' Union (YUSU) and York St John Students' Union (YSJSU) are working together to better understand the student housing market in York. A specific aspect of this is the impact of the recently imposed restriction on planning permission for new Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). This is a collaborative response from the Student Community Partnership to the review of the HMO Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in the City of York.

Our feedback is largely contained in the 'Rate Your Property' survey 2013 findings (attached as an annex to this document), a summary of student feedback on the availability and quality of housing. The 'Rate Your Property' student survey has been undertaken by YUSU in 2012 and 2013. Whilst we are unable to provide a direct comparison between years due to the inclusion of additional questions and a sample which includes York St John University students in 2013, we are able to report that some trends remain fairly static. Price and location of accommodation continue to be key determinants in student choice regarding housing, followed closely by housing quality.

Our primary concern is that Article 4 has prevented more HMOs for students nearer campus, driving prices up as competition is reduced, this forces students to look for houses in areas with fewer student houses, these may be new HMOs or HMOs not previously let to students. Our research shows that students living outside some of the typical 'student areas' (such as South Bank and Huntington) choose to do so due to cost of accommodation but also because of a lack of availability close to their place of study; over 10% of students were unable to find property in their chosen location and this is significant to the SPD (Rate Your Property, 2013). Increased demand in these areas may push up low prices so students will quickly end up paying similar accommodation costs to live further away from their place of study. Separately as students move into areas not traditionally occupied by students this will create the usual problems in new areas.

Student maintenance loans barely cover the cost of accommodation, the average annual rent being £3,900 (Rate Your Property, 2013) and the average student loan only around £3,760 (Student Loan Statistics, 2013 [[www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn01079.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn01079.pdf)]). We are very strongly against an increase in student debt upon leaving university thus would obviously not like to see an increase in maintenance loan and if Article 4 is set to increase accommodation prices across wider areas of the City then this is a major concern.

Whilst we support students wishing to remain on campus after the first year of their studies and lobby the universities to make adequate, affordable accommodation available, we also recognise that many students choose to live off campus for different reasons. Our research show us that some students prefer the independence and responsibilities which come with off campus living; cost is

also an important factor in this decision (Rate Your Property, 2013). The importance of choice should not be undermined and we believe that in order to provide this, more HMOs are needed in some areas.

If a HMO restriction is to continue to apply, we would request that consideration is given to the distribution of quality student housing which is available. The current restrictions on the number of HMOs should recognise the fact that the distribution of students is far from uniform, this is in part due to the planning consent applying only for new applications and therefore not reflecting the current distribution; further work could be done to assess the current distribution of HMOs which existed prior to the Article 4 directive. It is our opinion that more properties should be made available close to our campuses but we are not supportive of an approach which 'ghettoises' students as we think that students living out in the community should feel part of, and get involved in their local community. However we would campaign for a better balance and believe that ghettos can be easily avoided by continuing to pay close attention to the distribution of HMOs on individual streets.

We support the concerns made by the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) regarding the impact upon housing for students with families. Indeed, whilst the intention of the SPD was to limit student housing and therefore make privately rented accommodation available to families, the restriction appears to be having an opposite effect in some areas.

We know that renting to students is attractive to many landlords for a variety of reasons including the comparatively high revenue which can be drawn by charging rooms at an individual rate. However, the current approach to shared accommodation is having an adverse effect on the rental market. The type of landlords who might choose to have student tenants may not choose to rent to a family as an alternative. One example of this is outlined in the list of planning applications received to date: C4 planning consent has been refused in a property and now planning permission is being sought to convert the property into bedsit-type accommodation. Non-student residents living in houses in areas already over the HMO threshold are effectively trapped. Privately owned houses drop in value due to the fact that the properties cannot be converted to HMOs and the area is no longer attractive for families due to the large proportion of perceived 'problem neighbours'.

In terms of quality, we are mindful of the availability of advice for students regarding housing and have been working closely with the City of York Council as the YorProperty accreditation scheme has developed. We see our links with this as having potential to reassure the student population regarding privately rented accommodation and standards which are deemed acceptable, however we fear that this could be undermined by the lack of choice which could cause some student tenants to compromise on key standards.

In summary, we would support a redistribution of HMO allocations in order to balance the demand for quality student housing which is both affordable and conveniently located.

# Rate Your Property

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## Introduction

As part of a joint community strategy with York St John Students' Union, YUSU are asking students from the University of York and students from York St John University to tell them about their experiences of living off-campus. Some of the areas that were explored as part of this included the quality of off-campus housing and the efficiency of landlords. In addition, key areas of interest included safety and security and attitudes to refuse collection and recycling. The Students' Unions were also keen to explore what factors influenced decisions when selecting a property and

the issues that students experienced with fellow housemates and other local residents.

## Methodology

An online survey was designed (Appendix 1) to investigate the key areas of interest and was advertised via the YUSU newsletter, social media sites, via the YUSU website and by YSJSU. As an incentive, participants were offered the chance to win an iPad mini or one of twenty £5 iTunes vouchers upon completion of the survey. The survey was live for a total of three weeks from 17th October until 7<sup>th</sup> November and was fully completed by a total of 788 off-campus students including 564 students from the University of York and 222 students from York St John University. The full breakdown of demographics can be found in Appendix 2.

## Finding Your Property

### Landlord/Letting Agent

In the first instance respondents were asked to indicate who their letting agent or landlord was and why they had chosen to rent with them. Over 32% of the sample stated that they rented from a private landlord and 28.5% of these had found them through their University housing list. The most used letting agents for student accommodation included IG properties (16.3%), Sinclair (12.0%) and Adam Bennet (10.7%).

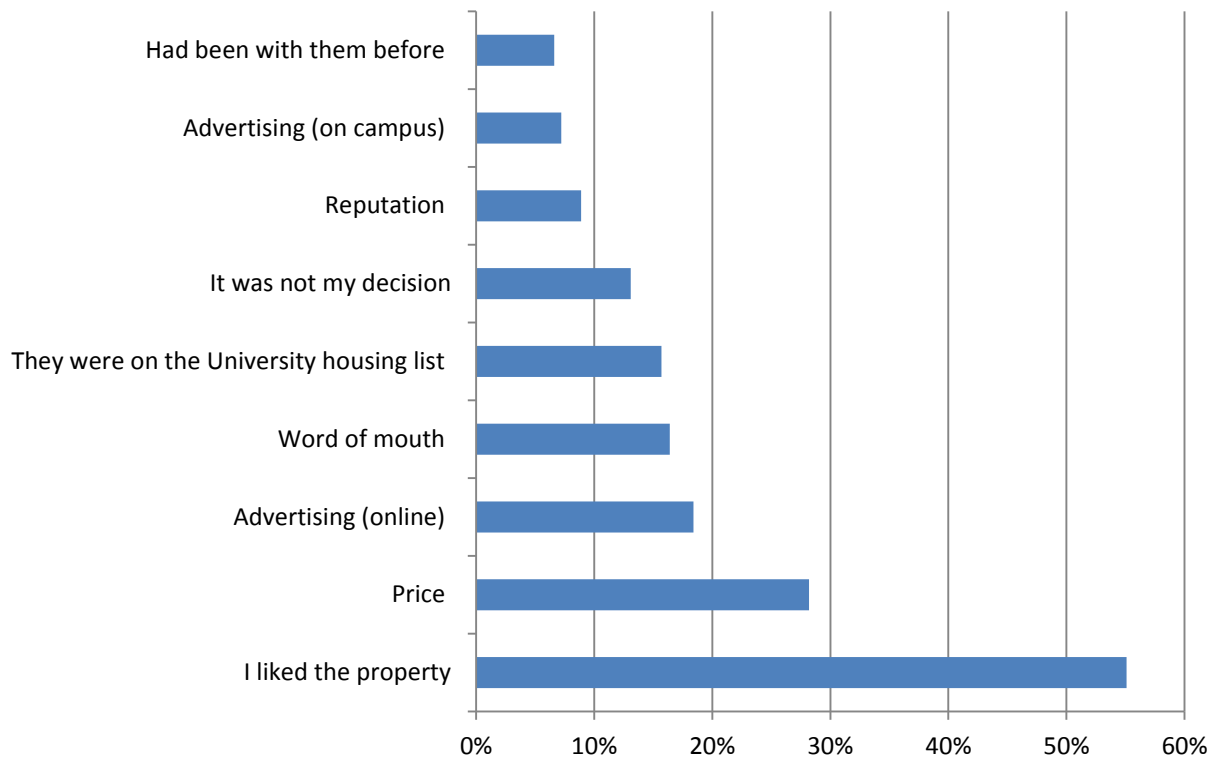


Figure 1: Reasons why respondents chose their landlord or letting agent

Students reported that the main reason that they had chosen to rent with their particular landlord or letting agent was because they liked the property. A high

percentage of students who rented with Sinclair stated that they had chosen them because of their reputation (37.6%), and word of mouth (32.3%). Those who had chosen private landlords had done so because of the price of accommodation (44.6%) and because they had been on the University housing list (28.5%). One of the most popular reasons why students had chosen Adam Bennett was because of advertising on campus (25.3%) and one of the most popular reasons respondents had chosen IG properties was because of the price (23%).

### Choosing a Property

In terms of choosing a property, the figure below demonstrates the main factors that influenced respondents when selecting a property.

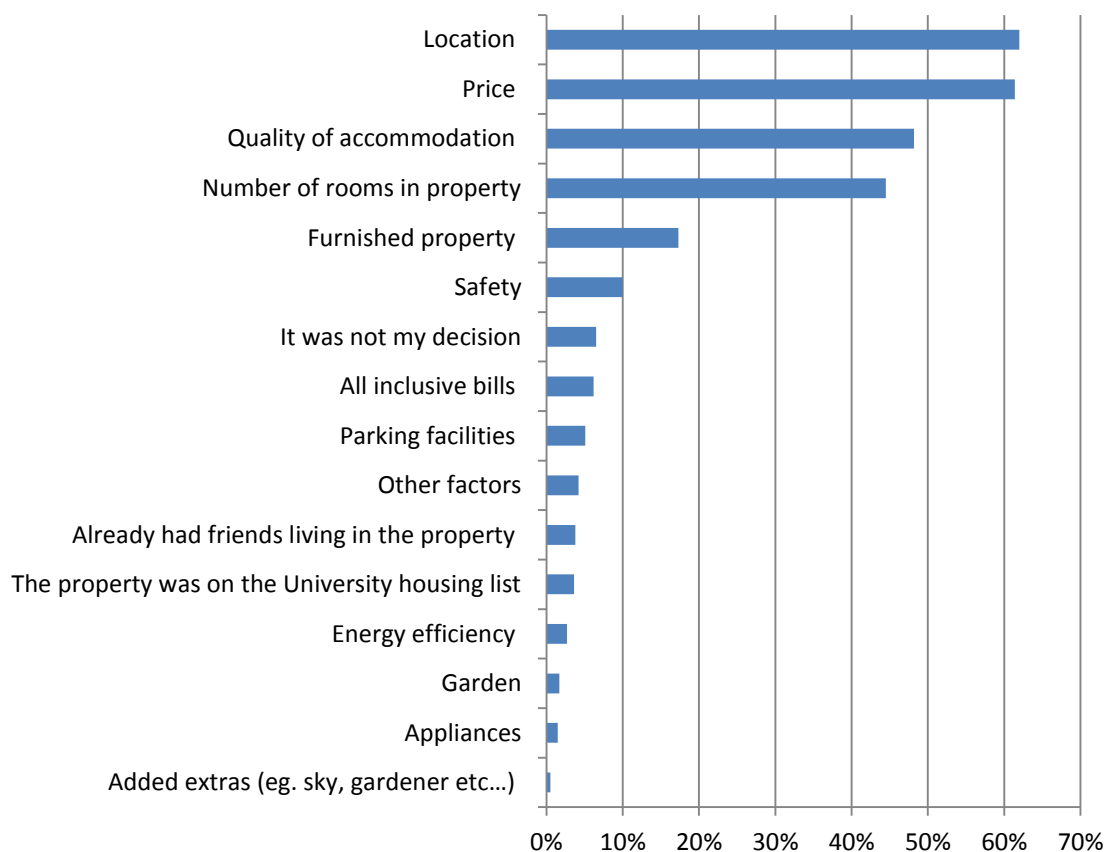


Figure 2: Factors influencing the choice of property

Interestingly there was a strong correlation between the importance of the number of rooms in a property and the number of students wanting to live in a household with the number of rooms proving more important as the number of students wanting to live together increased.

It can clearly be seen that price, location and quality of accommodation were the top three factors that influenced students when selecting a property. Students from outside the UK were significantly less likely to say that the quality of accommodation was a main factor that influenced their decision than UK students. Location of the property was significantly more important for non EU students than UK students but not other EU students. Price was equally important for all students and one of the most important factors for the majority of respondents. There were no significant differences in the factors influencing the choice of property based on state of study.

Location was deemed a more important factor based on where students lived and what University they attended. For University of York students, 83.1% of students living in Heslington and Heslington Road area said that location had been a key factor as well as 76.3% of students living in Badger Hill, 69.2% living in Fishergate and 66.2% living in the Hull Road area. For York St John students, 78.4% of students living in the Groves stated that location had been a key factor in their decision as well as 77.3% of students living in the Guildhall/City Centre area and 65% of students living in Huntington. Other areas were seemingly selected for their price with 87.5% of South Bank residents stating it was the main factor for selecting their property as well as 85.7% of residents in Bishopthorpe, 80% of residents in Clifton and 76.8% of residents in Tang Hall.

A total of 76.1% of respondents had been able to find suitable accommodation in their desired location with a further 12.5% stating that they had not had a preference of location. Those who hadn't been able to find accommodation in their desired location stated that they had wanted accommodation nearer to campus but that they had missed out on most of them and those properties that were left were either poor quality or too expensive:

*"We're a 40 minute walk from the University, I would have liked to have been closer, but we had trouble finding somewhere."*

*"Wanted to be closer to campus, but lacked the funds to pay for decent quality location close to campus. We substituted proximity for a house which isn't cramped or moulding."*

Some also commented that they had wanted to live on campus but that there had not been any on-campus accommodation left:

*"I'm a first year undergraduate student, I ended up here only because there weren't enough rooms available on campus. I would have liked to have been put in on-campus accommodation."*

Respondents were also asked whether they been able to find a property with the number of bedrooms that they had wanted, with almost 95% stating that they had. Some however stated that they had wanted to live in large groups but had been forced to split into two smaller groups due to a lack of properties available. Others had wanted to live alone but not been able to because of high rent prices and some had found that two bedroom properties in York were particularly expensive and they had been forced to move in with strangers:

*"We wanted 8 bedrooms to start with but were forced to split into smaller groups to find a house."*

*"I did initially want to live alone, but I was unable to and now live with 4 other people."*

*"We wanted a smaller house but ended up in a larger one sharing with strangers."*

## Your Property

### Household

The majority of respondents stated that they lived in a private or rented house with a further 5% stating that they lived in purpose built student accommodation. Very few residents lived alone and the average number of students per household was four. There was also 23.2% of the sample who stated that they lived in a household of six or more people. Interestingly postgraduate students were significantly more likely than undergraduate students to live in a household of 2 people. 66.8% of respondents were already friends with their housemates before moving in, 17.8% were friends with some of their housemates and as many as 15.4% did not know their housemates before moving in.

### Price of accommodation

Students were asked to indicate how much they paid in rent per month and whether bills were included in their rent. A total of 15.3% of students stated that their rent was all inclusive and these were removed from the following analysis of rent prices as it could not be determined how much was spent on bills and how much was spent on the rent itself.

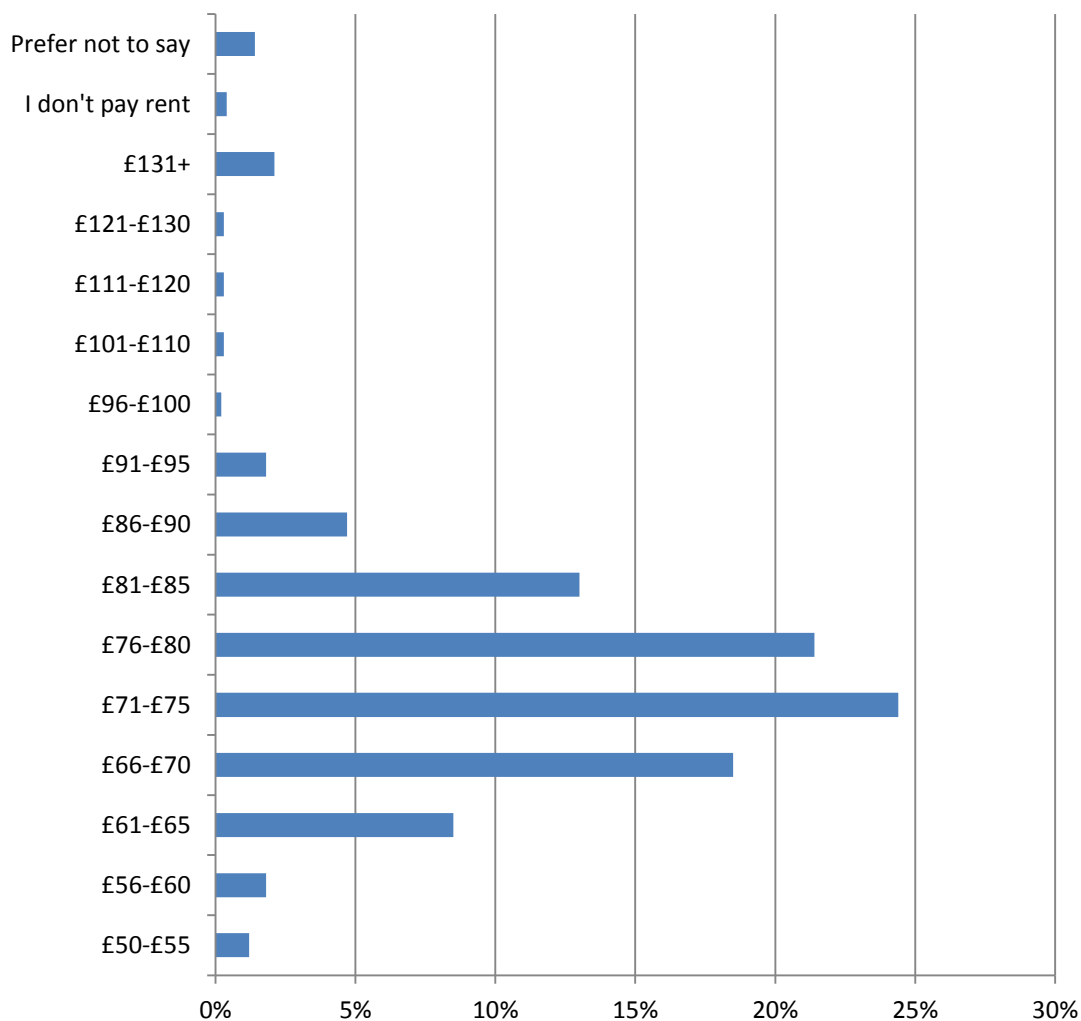


Figure 3: Weekly spend on rent



Students paid a range of different rates for their properties in York with over 64.3% stating that they paid between £66 and £80 per week. The average spend<sup>1</sup> of the sample was £75, with University of York students paying an average of £78 per week rent and York St John students paying an average of £70 per week. The cheapest areas to live in included Heworth and Haxby which had an average rent of £68 per week; this was followed by Clifton, Tang Hall, Fulford and the Groves all with an average rent of £71. The most expensive areas, with average rents of over £80, included Guildhall/City Centre, Holgate, Micklegate and Badger Hill. Interestingly postgraduate students spent an average of £80 compared to undergraduates who spent an average of £76 per week.

### Satisfaction with Property and Landlord/agent

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of their current property including: the quality of their accommodation, the ability to contact their landlord/letting agent, efficiency of their landlord/letting agent, their landlord/letting agent overall and the up-keep of the gardens/grounds.

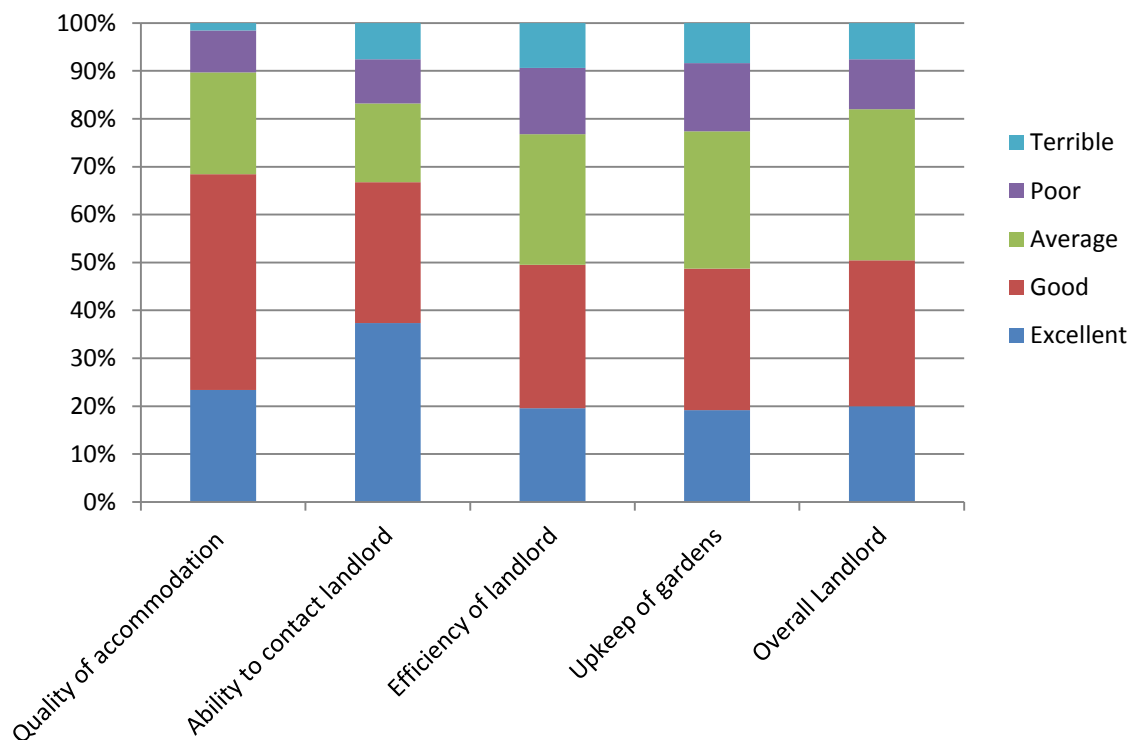


Figure 4: Ratings of property and landlord/letting agency

A total of 68.4% of respondents rated the **quality of their accommodation** as good or excellent and 10.3% rated it as poor or terrible. The areas that received the highest levels of poor or terrible ratings included Micklegate (28.6%), Clifton (23.3%), The Groves (22.8%) and Haxby (21.4%). The areas that received the highest levels

<sup>1</sup> Average spends were calculated using the average value of each price bracket.

of good or excellent ratings included Holgate (88.9%), Osbaldwick (90%), Fishergate (77.8%) and Fulford (76.5%). Encouragingly, South Bank, Holgate and Bootham received no poor or terrible ratings. There was also a significant correlation between the price of the rent and the quality of the property with more expensive properties receiving more positive quality ratings. Interestingly there was a significant difference in level of quality of accommodation depending on the University that the respondents were enrolled at with 72.9% of students at the University of York stating that the quality of their accommodation was good or excellent compared to only 57.2% of students enrolled at York St John University (see Appendix 3 for breakdown by University and area).

Many students reported that they had had lots of issues with their accommodation and that many items and appliances were broken:

*“We've had problems with slugs and sewage leaking into the kitchen and damp.”*

*“I have had mould in my room for over a year and the landlady just repaints the wall and it keeps coming back on the external wall of my room, I believe there is a problem with the wall but they won't look into it further.”*

*“Broken heating took 3 weeks to fix, broken tumble dryer took since July to fix this week, a number of problems with the property that simply aren't being addressed.”*

*“Mould all over the house, had trouble getting rid of making our clothes etc go mould.”*

*“The roof internally is damp with a patch on it that was painted over to hide it. If I put anything on the floor it gets damp, and the room is constantly cold and smells funny.”*

There were also several comments that revealed that some students were very satisfied with the quality of their accommodation stating that “the house is extremely nice, good size with good furnishings”.

Students were also asked several questions about their landlord:

Respondents were mostly satisfied with their **ability to contact their landlord/letting agent** with many commenting that their landlord was “easy to contact at any time of the day”. There were over 16% of respondents however who were not satisfied with their ability to contact their landlord or agent and had struggled doing so in the past. Many stated that “*the landlord is not replying to our calls or e-mails with regards to several issues we have with the property*”. Others commented that “*we report problems and they never come and sort them out, they don't get back to us if we have emailed them*”. Some also had landlords who lived outside the country and were very difficult to get hold of.

In some cases, despite being able to contact their landlord/letting agent, students were not satisfied with **the efficiency of their landlord/letting agent**, with 23% of respondents stating that they were poor or terrible. Students complained that problems were often not dealt with efficiently, repairs often took months to do and problems weren't taken seriously:

*“After making several complaints about the state of the house (poor hygiene, many appliances not working), it took several weeks for the agent to do anything about this.”*

*“[Agent] are atrocious at dealing with anything that goes wrong, it takes at least a week for them to come and look at, let alone fix, anything. When we had water pouring through our ceiling it took them half an hour to even pick up on the emergency line and even then they were very unhelpful and the guy was reluctant to come round and even look at the problem, despite it being a health and safety hazard.”*

*“We had several leaks in the house and when trying to contact him he either didn't reply or when he did he said he'd come round tomorrow - but never did, and one housemate stayed in all day to wait for him to turn up when he did say this.”*

*“Had a few issues with the property and had to call [agent] Very unprofessional in dealing with the problems and slow. I had to chase them up to do things, they frequently made promises to me that they didn't keep and only sorted a certain situation out once I'd spoken to a director of the company.”*

A further 57.2% stated however that the efficiency of their landlord was excellent or good:

*“Can get hold of both [agent] and the landlord very easily and any maintenance is carried out swiftly.”*

*“Landlords have been very helpful and pleasant and carried out prompt repairs and replacements to the damaged sofa, soiled carpets, broken oven, damp stain and collapsed doorstep.”*

*“Landlords are very nice and helpful couple. Despite living far away (Essex) all the problems we report are sorted out almost immediately.”*

*“The house is extremely nice, good size with good furnishings. Landlord is easy to contact at any time of the day, and is very quick in dealing with issues and the like. Also a very likable individual who has made some effort to talk to us and get to know us a bit more, so it feels less awkward to contact him as needed.”*

Students were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the **upkeep of the gardens/grounds** of their properties. Over 10% stated that the landlord/agent was not responsible for the garden; for those who were, just over 58% of respondents were satisfied with their landlord/agent's upkeep of the garden and grounds however some students commented that *“the garden is at an unacceptable condition, the landlord has always made excuses to not get the garden fixed”*. Others reported that the upkeep of their garden was poor but admitted that it was their responsibility to ensure that it was well maintained.

**Overall**, 62.1% of respondents rated their landlord/letting agent as good or excellent and some of the positive comments included:

*“Excellent landlord, particularly after hearing of horror stories, it is a great relief to have a very co-operative landlord”.*

*“The landlords are absolutely wonderful, we can contact them anytime about anything, and they fully encourage us to do so. As it is rented directly from the landlords themselves rather than through a company it is much more personal and we can tell they really care about the students in their house, not just the house itself”.*

There were however 18% of respondents who rated their landlord/letting agent as poor or terrible and some commented that they were inefficient, uncooperative and rude. Interestingly this was significantly higher for York St John University respondents where almost 30% of students rated their landlord/ letting agent as poor or terrible (see Appendix 4 for breakdown by University and area).

*“[Agent], however, are abysmal. They don't care, and I feel that they think they don't have to listen to us because we're students. If we have a persistent problem, they only try and sort it out properly if the parents get in touch- we're adults, this is pathetic.”*

*“They are just generally appalling, unhelpful and do not, in anyway, want to make our property a nicer place to live in.”*

*“We have had nothing but problems, and the landlord is awful, threatening and bullying behaviour.”*

Overall, private landlords were mostly rated more positively than any of the letting agents with 58.1% rating them as good or excellent and only 9.3% rating them as poor or terrible. In terms of the three most used letting agents, IG properties received 38% of positive ratings, Adam Bennett received 54.2% positive ratings and Sinclair was rated positively by 44.8% of their customers. Worryingly, there were 35.5% of IG customers who rated them overall as poor or terrible as well as 22.9% of Adam Bennet customers; Sinclair however only received 9.2% of negative ratings with 46% of respondents rating them as average.

## **Safety**

Students were asked how safe they felt in their property and a total of 88.2% of respondents stated that they felt somewhat or very safe. Only 4.5% responded that they felt somewhat unsafe and less than 1% stated that they felt very unsafe. When asked what would make them feel safer in their accommodation, the top responses included better locks on windows and doors, working alarms, secure garden gates and better lighting outside the property. Students also stated that they would like better doors, locks on bedroom doors and night latches on the front doors so that they could not be left unlocked. Some students also felt that the area itself made them feel unsafe; the areas where students felt most unsafe included Haxby, Clifton, The Groves and Tang Hall. The areas where students reported feeling safest included South Bank, Bishopthorpe, Fishergate and Osbaldwick. Interestingly, significantly more UK students stated that they felt unsafe than either International or

other EU students. Furthermore students under the age of 24 were significantly more likely to state that they felt unsafe in their property than students over the age of 25.

### Insurance

Students are encouraged to get insurance in order to cover their belongings when living in shared accommodation. Only 39% of the respondents stated that they had some insurance and the majority of these had insurance with Endsleigh (65%). Others had insurance under their parent's insurance or with their bank and almost 15% of respondents stated that they did not know whether they had any insurance. Interestingly undergraduates (41.8%) were significantly more likely than postgraduates (19.6%) to state that they had insurance and UK students (44%) were significantly more likely than both other EU (15.3%) and International (12.%) students to state that they had insurance.

### Refuse collection

A total of 13.3% of respondents were not aware of when their black bin collection day was although some of these commented that this was because they lived in apartment blocks and therefore used a communal bin facility. Only 14.5% stated that their bin was collected weekly with the majority of 75.8% stating that it was collected fortnightly.

Several students commented that they would like their bins to be collected more regularly:

*"I feel the bins need to be emptied more regularly as we have 6 students and often fill our black bin and recycling within one week."*

*"I wish the black bins were collected more than fortnightly, or we were at least given another black bin, as it is constantly overflowing."*

When asked how they would prefer to receive information about waste collection in their area, a majority of 52.4% responded that leaflets were the best way followed by 25.1% stating that they wanted to find out via email. A further 11% wanted to use the council website and 9.8% were interested in a smartphone application to inform them of the details. Some students just stated that they wanted it to be *"easier to find out what day the bins are"*.

Respondents revealed that they had a very positive attitude towards recycling with only 1.4% saying that they did not recycle, 26.5% stating that they would recycle if it does not require any additional effort and an impressive 70.9% stating that they would recycle even if it requires additional effort. However, several students were frustrated that they had not been provided with adequate recycling bins and at the level of recycling that took place in York: *"The small boxes do not provide much room for recyclables and many items that can be recycled in other cities cannot be recycled here"*.

### Car ownership and parking

Students were asked whether they owned and used a car in York and a total of 14.4% responded that they did. Unsurprisingly UK students were significantly more

likely than students from outside the UK to own a car. Of these, 49.5% stated that their property had allocated parking or a driveway and a further 45% used on street parking. Research postgraduates were significantly more likely than taught postgraduates and first, second and third year undergraduates but not fourth year undergraduates to have a car in York. Students who lived in Bootham, Huntington, Clifton and Badger Hill were the most likely to own cars and those who lived in the Guildhall/City Centre area were the least likely.

## Your Neighbourhood

### Students in the Local Area

Students were asked whether they knew of any student properties apart from their own in their local area and if so how many. Over 57% of respondents living in Bishopthorpe were not aware of any student properties in the area as well as 31.3% of students living in South Bank and 28.6% of students living in Micklegate. Furthermore, 28.6% of respondents living in Haxby stated that they knew of over ten student properties in their immediate area as well as 26.1% of students living in The Groves.

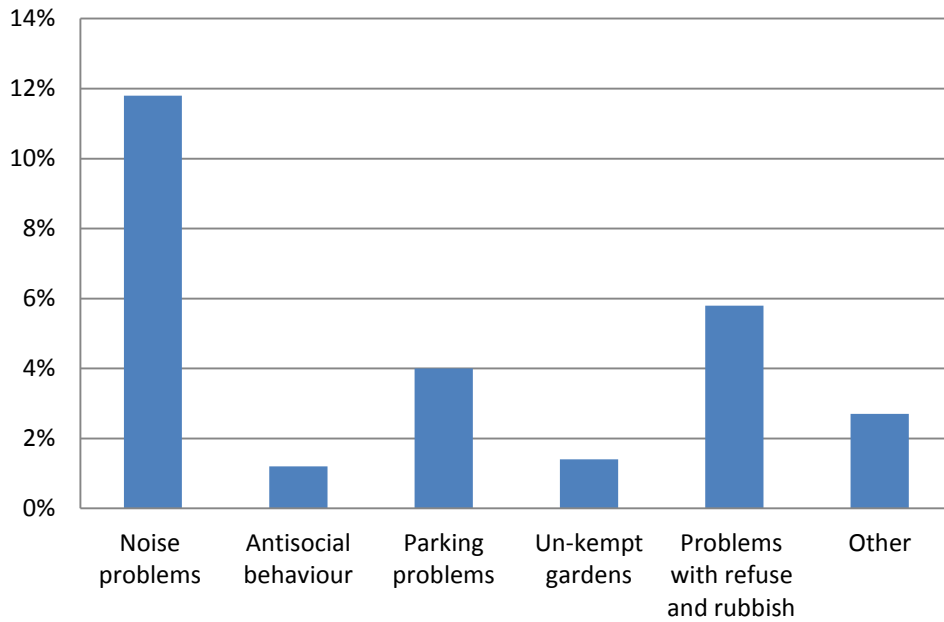
A total of 38.7% stated that they had direct neighbours who were students with a further 42% of respondents stating that they did not and 19.3% responding that they did not know. A total of 66.9% of students who had student neighbours had met their neighbours compared to a significantly lower 58.8% of those who did not have student neighbours. Interestingly some students commented that “*knowing the neighbours reassured both me and my house mates*”.

### Complaints

Respondents were asked to indicate whether their neighbours had complained to them about a range of issues or whether they themselves had experienced any issues from their neighbours. Issues included: Noise problems, antisocial behaviour, parking problems, un-kempt gardens and problems with refuse and rubbish.

A total of 79.5% of respondents stated that they had never received any complaints about any of the above issues from their neighbours. There was no significant difference depending on what University the respondents were enrolled at, although there was a significant difference between undergraduates and postgraduates with undergraduates receiving overall more complaints than postgraduates.

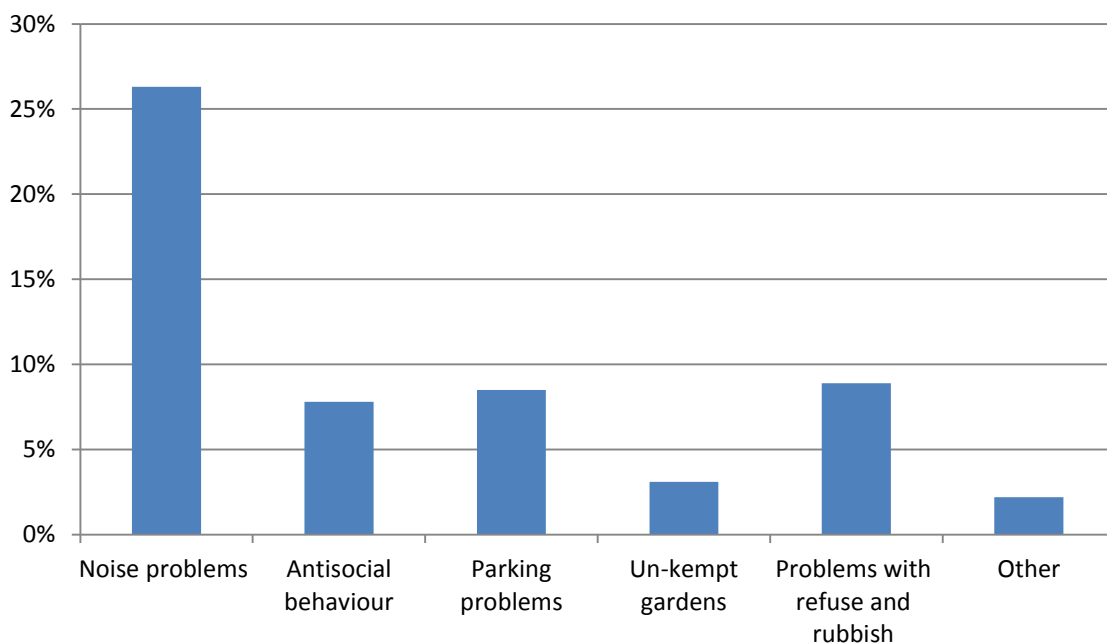
The graph below shows the percentage of respondents stating that they had received a range of complaints from their neighbours.



**Figure 5:** Range of complaint received from neighbours.

It can clearly be seen that most complaints were about noise and problems with refuse and rubbish. Interestingly, respondents were significantly less likely to report that they had received complaints from their neighbours about any of the issues, if they had met their neighbours; apart from complaints about un-kempt gardens where there was no significant difference.

Respondents were also asked if they themselves had experienced any of these issues from their neighbours:

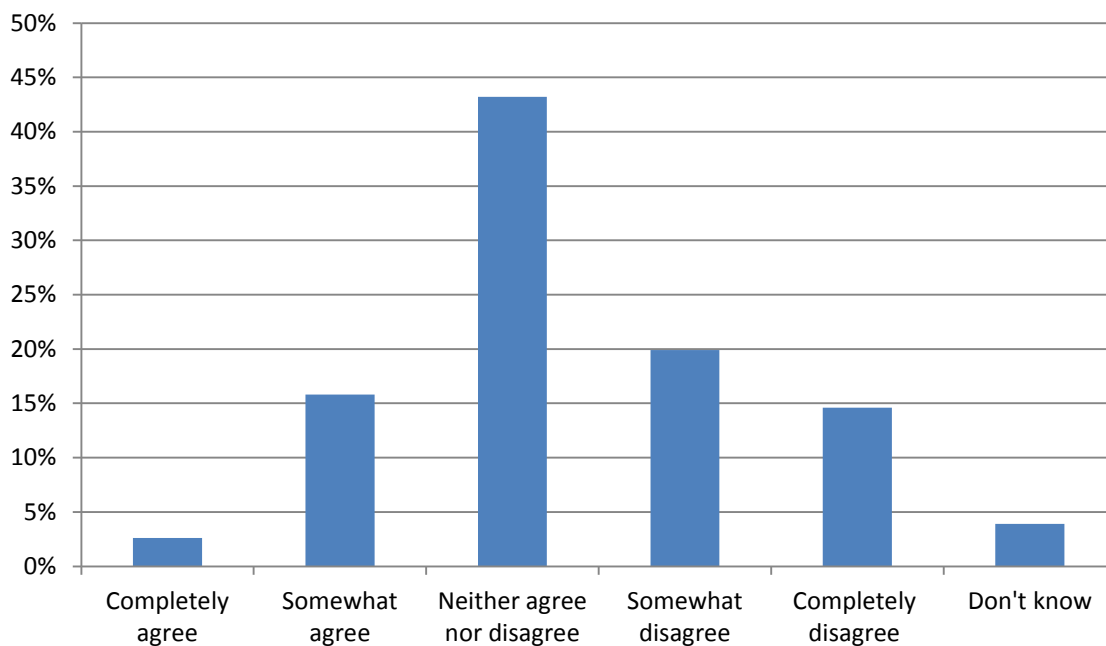


**Figure 6:** Range of issues experience from neighbours

Over 26% of respondents had experience noise problems from their neighbours whilst living in their property. Over 46% of these noise problems were reported by respondents who had student neighbours however 36% of them did not have any student neighbours. Respondents were significantly more likely to have experienced problems with refuse and rubbish if their direct neighbours were students than if they were not although there was no significant difference with any of the other issues.

## Community

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with the following statement: 'I feel like a valued part of the local community'.



**Figure 7:** Level of agreement with the statement 'I feel like a valued part of the local community'

Only 18.4% of the respondents agreed that they felt like a valued part of the local community with a further 34.5% actively disagreeing. Interestingly, International students were significantly more likely to state that they agreed with the statement than UK students but not students from other UK countries. Undergraduates were significantly more likely to disagree with the statement than postgraduate students however there was no difference in the level of agreement with the statement. Students under the age of 24 were significantly more likely to disagree that they felt like a valued part of the community compared to more mature students; students over the age of 36 were the most likely to feel part of the community.

There was no difference in agreement levels between the University of York and York St John University however there were differences between different areas of York. Respondents who lived in Holgate (57.1%) and Bishopthorpe (55.6%) were the most likely to state that they felt like a valued part of the community, this was followed by students living in Guildhall/City Centre (26.5%), Heworth (25%) and Huntington (25%). The areas where students most disagreed with statement



included Bootham (42.9%), Badger Hill (42.1%), Tang Hall (40.2%) and Osbaldwick (39.5%). Interestingly, Students who had met their neighbours were significantly more likely to state that they felt like a valued part of their local community.

## Future property

Lastly, students were asked whether they would consider living in University Halls in their next year. A total of 12.7% of students who were continuing at University stated that they would consider living in University halls next year, a further 61.7% stated that they would not and 23.4% said that they might consider it. International students (21.1%) were significantly more likely than UK students (10.3%) but not other EU (12.1%) students to state that they would be willing to live in University halls in the coming year. Interestingly, students from York St John University were significantly more likely than students from the University of York to state that they would not be willing to move into halls in the coming year.

Many students stated that although they had enjoyed halls during their first year they now felt it was **time to move on**:

*“I enjoyed the experience of halls in the first year, but for 2nd and 3rd year the peace and quiet of your own home (and the chance to experience running my own home too!) has been wonderful”.*

Some of the other main reasons why respondents stated that they would not be willing to move back into University Halls were because they were **too expensive, not value for money** and of a **poor standard**:

*“Considering the higher price of the on-campus accommodation, I would not consider living in university halls.”*

*“I would LOVE to live in halls for the entire duration of my degree but the rent is just too expensive- my maintenance loan barely covers it, let alone buying groceries etc”.*

*“The accommodation cost provided by university is too high, hence students doesn't have any option left, rather to look for private accommodation.”*

*“Resident in halls first year, did not enjoy the living conditions, overcrowded and generally run down.”*

Students also **liked the independence and responsibilities** that came with off-campus living as well as being able to **choose who they lived with**:

*“I like the freedom which living off-campus gives me. It is nice to be part of a community and I feel that moving back to campus would be a regression.”*

*“Living off campus allows for more flexibility, is cheaper, and allows for more independence than living on campus.”*

*“Off campus has more freedom and I believe experience living more independently will be beneficial for when I leave university.”*

*“When you move off campus, you enter the 'real world'. It makes you grow up a lot and you become even closer to your friends. You can really make the house your own and you have to make your own decisions about heating and bills.”*

*“I would prefer to live off-campus with people that I know and have chosen to live with.”*

Comments also revealed that halls **did not feel very homely**, especial due to the **lack of communal space** and the living conditions were **noisy, small and cramped**:

*“Halls are small and can be very isolated, when your living in a house it feels more of a home from home.”*

*“I like having a living room and the atmosphere living in a house with a few other people.”*

*“Lived in halls in first year, too noisy, especially when in final year of study.”*

*“Living in halls was fun throughout the first year - however it was hard to concentrate and the space was too confined.”*

There were several students however who liked the idea of moving back into University halls. Many liked the fact that it was **more convenient, nicer, more secure** and they would be **closer to campus**.

*“Being on campus is nice. It's close, slightly more social and you get most costs included in your rent.”*

*“Would be nice to be closer to campus and have everything sorted out ie bills and issues”*

*“Living in halls ensures a good standard of living conditions and also there is not the stress of having to organise the payment of bills and the way in which they are split between those you live with.”*

*“On campus accommodation would be more convenient for being involved with uni life and for getting to lectures; there is also the benefit of pre-paid bills!”*

Some also thought that it would be **overall cheaper** and **more sociable** than living off-campus:

*“University halls is cheaper as it includes bills and you are not paying for time that you are not there such as holidays”*

*“Easier to get involved with on campus events and feels more like you're part of a community than off campus.”*

Lastly there were others who stated that their decision would **depend on what their friends were doing** and **how much it would cost overall**.

*“Strongly depends on the coherence of my current housemate group, as well as on university accommodation prices, in comparison to private sector prices.”*

*“If I were to do another year I would prefer to be in halls, as long as I could be with people i specified.”*

## Conclusion

The research reveals that the majority of students are choosing their properties based on the property itself rather than the landlord or letting agent. However, for properties owned by private landlords, students are more likely to choose them if they are on the housing list. Other factors that influenced the choice of property included price, location and the actual quality of the accommodation. Whilst a high percentage rated the quality of their accommodation and their ability to contact their landlord/letting agent as satisfactory, much lower ratings were seen for the efficiency of landlords/letting agents and the upkeep of the gardens. Tenants felt that their landlord/letting agent was often too slow to respond to problems with the property and did not carry out certain repairs as promised. Students from York St John University also had lower levels of satisfaction than students from the University of York in terms of satisfaction with the quality of their property and their landlord.

The majority of students revealed that they felt safe in their property, although worryingly, very few respondents stated that they had insurance to protect their belongings with only 39% of the sample stating that they did. Respondents also reported having a high positive attitude towards recycling and waste disposal although many suggested that refuse needed to be collected more often.

The research revealed some of the issues that respondents had received complaints about as well as some of the issues that respondents themselves had received from their neighbours. It also revealed that very few students felt like they were a valued part of their community although those who did were significantly more likely to have met their neighbours. Lastly the research explored whether students would be willing to move back into University halls in coming years and their reasons behind this.

The results of this research will be used to provide key recommendations about off-campus student accommodation as part of the Community Strategy.

## Appendix 1: Survey


### Rate Your Property

#### Demographics

As part of a joint community strategy York St John Students' Union and the University of York Students' Union are asking their members to tell them about their experiences of living off-campus.

This is a great opportunity for you to tell us about your landlord and the standard of your living conditions. The survey should only take 10mins and you could be in with a chance to win one of 20 £5 iTunes vouchers or an iPad mini.

Thank you in advance!



**\*1. How old are you?**

Under 21

21-24

25-28

29-35

36+

**\*2. What is your state of study?**

Undergraduate 1st year

Undergraduate 2nd year

Undergraduate 3rd year

Undergraduate 4th year

Taught postgraduate

Research postgraduate

Other (please specify)

**\*3. Gender**

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Other (please specify)

## Rate Your Property

**\*4. Where are you from?**

- UK
- Other EU
- Non EU

**\*5. Which University are you enrolled at?**

- University of York
- University of York St John
- Other (please specify)

**\*6. Do you currently live in accommodation off-campus?**

- Yes
- No

## Location

**\*7. If you had the choice, would you consider living in University Halls next year?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Don't know
- N/A

Please use this space to expand on your answer

## Location

## Rate Your Property

### \*8. What area do you currently live in?

- |   |  |                                       |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acomb                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Guildhall/City Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> Micklegate   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Badger Hill                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Heslington            | <input type="checkbox"/> Osbaldwick   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bishopthorpe                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Heworth               | <input type="checkbox"/> Outside York |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clifton                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Holgate               | <input type="checkbox"/> South Bank   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishergate                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Hull Road             | <input type="checkbox"/> Tang Hall    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fulford                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Huntington            | <input type="checkbox"/> The Groves   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other areas in York (please specify) |  |                                       |

## Finding your house

### \*9. Who is your letting agent/landlord?

- Sinclair
- Coalters
- Adam Bennett
- IG Properties
- AP
- Private Landlord
- Other (please specify)

### \*10. What made you choose them? (please select as many as applicable)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising (on campus)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Reputation                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising (online)      | <input type="checkbox"/> They were on the University housing list |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth             | <input type="checkbox"/> I liked the property                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Had been with them before | <input type="checkbox"/> It was not my decision                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Price                     |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)    |   |

## Rate Your Property

**11. What factors most influenced your decision when selecting a property? (please select your top 3)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety of property               | <input type="checkbox"/> Appliances  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Number of rooms in property      | <input type="checkbox"/> Furnished property                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parking facilities               | <input type="checkbox"/> All inclusive bills                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location                         | <input type="checkbox"/> The property was on the University housing list     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quality of accommodation         | <input type="checkbox"/> Already had friends living in the property          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Price/ affordability of property | <input type="checkbox"/> Added extras (e.g. Sky subscription, gardener etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garden                           | <input type="checkbox"/> It was not my decision                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy efficiency                |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)           |  |

**\*12. Were you able to find suitable accommodation in your desired location?**

- Yes
- No
- Did not have a preference of location

If no, please expand

**\*13. Were you able to find suitable accommodation with the number of rooms that you were looking for?**

- Yes
- No

If no, please expand

## Your Property

## Rate Your Property

### \*14. What type of accommodation do you live in?

- Private/rented house
- Private/rented flat
- Private/rented bungalow
- Purpose built student accommodation (off-campus)
- Other (please specify)

### \*15. How much rent do you pay per week?

- <£50
- £50-£55
- £56-£60
- £61-£65
- £66-£70
- £71-£75
- £76-£80
- £81-£85
- £86-£90
- £91-£95
- £96-£100
- £101-£110
- £111-£120
- £121-£130
- £131+
- I don't pay rent
- Prefer not to say

### \*16. Does your rent include utility bills?

- Yes
- No

### \*17. How would you rate the following aspects regarding your property?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Terrible	Don't know/ not applicable
Quality of accommodation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to contact your landlord	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Efficiency of your landlord	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Landlord overall	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Up-keep of the gardens/grounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please use this space to expand on your answer



## Rate Your Property

### \*18. How safe do you feel in your property?

- Very safe     Somewhat safe     Neither safe nor unsafe     Somewhat unsafe     Very unsafe

What would make you feel safer?

## Your Household

### \*19. How many people live in your household?

- 1     4  
 2     5  
 3     6+

## Your Household

### \*20. What best describes your situation?

- I was already friends with my housemate(s) before moving in  
 I did not know my housemate(s) before moving in  
 I was friends with some of my housemates before moving in but not all

## Your Neighbourhood

### \*21. Do you know of any other student properties in your immediate area?

- No     7-8 properties  
 Don't know     9-10 properties  
 1-2 properties     10+ properties  
 3-4 properties     I live in purpose built student accommodation  
 5-6 properties

### \*22. Have you met any of your direct neighbours?

- Yes I have introduced myself  
 Yes they have introduced themselves  
 No

## Rate Your Property

**\*23. Are any of your direct neighbours students?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

**\*24. Have YOUR NEIGHBOURS ever complained about any of the following? (please select as many as applicable)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noise problems         | <input type="checkbox"/> Un-kept gardens                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Antisocial behaviour   | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with refuse or rubbish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parking problems       | <input type="checkbox"/> None of these                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |  |

**\*25. Have YOU ever experienced any of the following from your neighbours? (please select as many as applicable)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noise problems         | <input type="checkbox"/> Un-kept gardens                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Antisocial behaviour   | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with refuse or rubbish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parking problems       | <input type="checkbox"/> None of these                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |  |

**\*26. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I feel like a valued part of the local community"**

- Completely agree     Somewhat agree     Neither agree nor disagree     Somewhat disagree     Completely disagree     Don't know

**27. Do you have any other comments about your neighbours or neighbourhood?**

## Insurance

**\*28. Do you have any contents insurance?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

If yes, who with?

## Rate Your Property

### Refuse collection

**\*29. What day is your black bin collection?**

- |                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Monday    | <input type="radio"/> Friday     |
| <input type="radio"/> Tuesday   | <input type="radio"/> Saturday   |
| <input type="radio"/> Wednesday | <input type="radio"/> Sunday     |
| <input type="radio"/> Thursday  | <input type="radio"/> Don't know |

**\*30. How often do your black bins usually get emptied?**

- Daily
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Every 3 months
- Don't know
- Other (please specify)

**\*31. Which of the following best describes your attitude towards recycling?**

- I do not recycle
- I recycle if it does not require any additional effort
- I recycle even if it requires additional effort
- Don't know

**\*32. How would you prefer to be informed about details of waste collection in your area? (please select one option)**

- Council Website
- Smartphone app
- Leaflets
- Emails
- Other (please specify)

### Car ownership

## Rate Your Property

**\*33. Do you have a car in York?**

- Yes
- No

## Parking

**\*34. What best describes your situation with regards to parking?**

- My property has allocated parking
- There is on-street parking - permit needed
- There is on street parking - no permit needed
- Other (please specify)

## Thank you!

**35. Do you have any other comments about any of the issues raised throughout this survey?**

**36. Thank you for completing the survey! For your chance to win one of 20 £5 iTunes vouchers or an iPad mini, please enter your email address below:**

## Appendix 2: Demographics

The Rate Your Property survey was fully completed by a total of 788 students living off campus. Below is a brief summary of the demographics of respondents:

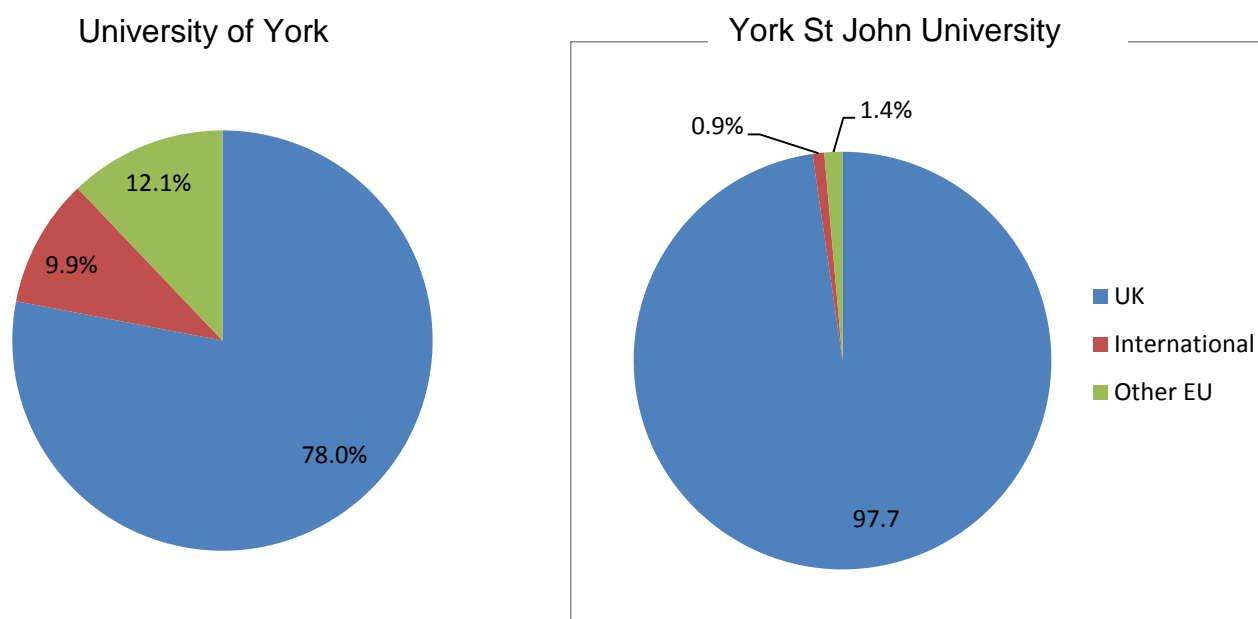
### Age

Age category	University of York (%)	York St John University (%)	Total (%)
21 or below	58.0	75.2	62.8
21-24	29.1	22.1	27.0
25-28	7.1	2.3	5.8
29-35	3.9	0.5	2.9
36+	2.0	0	1.4

### Gender

Gender	University of York (%)	York St John University (%)	Total (%)
Male	33.0	26.1	31.0
Female	66.1	73.4	68.2
Prefer not to say	0.9	0.5	0.8

### Nationality- Overseas status



## State of study

State of study	University of York (%)	York St John University (%)	Total (%)
Undergraduate 1st year	9.2	3.6	7.6
Undergraduate 2nd year	39.3	44.2	40.7
Undergraduate 3rd year	28.2	51.3	34.8
Undergraduate 4 <sup>th</sup> year	4.4	0.0	3.2
Taught postgraduate	11.0	0.4	8.0
Research postgraduate	7.1	0.4	5.2

## Area of property

Percentage of respondents living in each area of York based on what University they attend.

Area	Excellent & Good	Average	Poor & Terrible
Acomb	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%
Badger Hill	6.7%	0.0%	4.8%
Bishopthorpe	1.2%	0.0%	0.9%
Bootham	0.4%	2.2%	0.9%
Clifton	0.4%	12.5%	3.8%
Dringhouses	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%
Fishergate	4.6%	0.4%	3.4%
Fulford	12.1%	0.0%	8.6%
Guildhall/City Centre	2.1%	9.8%	4.3%
Haxby	0.0%	6.3%	1.8%
Heslington Road area	10.5%	0.9%	7.8%
Heworth	3.9%	9.8%	5.6%
Holgate	0.4%	3.1%	1.1%
Hull Road	27.9%	2.2%	20.6%
Huntington	0.0%	8.9%	2.5%
Laythorpe	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%
Micklegate	1.1%	0.4%	0.9%
Osbalwick	7.6%	0.0%	5.5%
Other areas in York (please specify)	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%
Outside York	2.8%	1.3%	2.4%
South Bank	2.8%	0.0%	2.0%
Tang Hall	13.7%	2.2%	10.4%
The Groves	0.7%	39.3%	11.7%

## Appendix 3: Quality of Property by Area and University

### All respondents

Area	Excellent & Good	Average	Poor & Terrible	(N)
Acomb	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Badger Hill	68.4%	21.1%	10.5%	38
Bishopthorpe	71.4%	14.3%	14.3%	7
Bootham	71.4%	28.6%	0.0%	7
Clifton	50.0%	26.7%	23.3%	30
Dringhouses	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
Fishergate	77.8%	18.5%	3.7%	27
Fulford	76.5%	17.6%	5.9%	68
Guildhall/City Centre	67.6%	23.5%	8.8%	34
Haxby	50.0%	28.6%	21.4%	14
Heslington Road area	63.9%	24.6%	11.5%	61
Heworth	70.5%	25.0%	4.5%	44
Holgate	88.9%	11.1%	0.0%	9
Hull Road	75.9%	19.8%	4.3%	162
Huntington	65.0%	15.0%	20.0%	20
Layertorpe	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	2
Micklegate	57.1%	14.3%	28.6%	7
Osbalwick	86.0%	7.0%	7.0%	43
Other areas in York (please specify)	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	2
Outside York	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	5
South Bank	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	16
Tang Hall	61.0%	26.8%	12.2%	82
The Groves	54.3%	22.8%	22.8%	92
(blank)				
Grand Total	68.4%	21.3%	10.2%	773

### Respondents Enrolled at the University of York

Area	Excellent & Good	Average	Poor & Terrible	(N)
Acomb	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Badger Hill	68.4%	21.1%	10.5%	38
Bishopthorpe	71.4%	14.3%	14.3%	7
Bootham	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	2
Clifton	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Dringhouses	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
Fishergate	76.9%	19.2%	3.8%	26
Fulford	76.5%	17.6%	5.9%	68
Guildhall/City Centre	91.7%	8.3%	0.0%	12
Heslington Road area	62.7%	25.4%	11.9%	59
Heworth	77.3%	18.2%	4.5%	22
Holgate	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Hull Road	75.8%	19.7%	4.5%	157
Laythorpe	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
Micklegate	50.0%	16.7%	33.3%	6
Osbalwick	86.0%	7.0%	7.0%	43
Other areas in York (please specify)	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	2
Outside York	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
South Bank	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	16
Tang Hall	62.3%	26.0%	11.7%	77
The Groves	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	4
Grand Total	73.0%	19.9%	7.1%	549

### Respondents Enrolled at the York St John University

Area	Excellent & Good	Average	Poor & Terrible	(N)
Bootham	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	5
Clifton	46.4%	28.6%	25.0%	28
Fishergate	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
Guildhall/City Centre	54.5%	31.8%	13.6%	22
Haxby	50.0%	28.6%	21.4%	14
Heslington Road area	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Heworth	63.6%	31.8%	4.5%	22
Holgate	85.7%	14.3%	0.0%	7
Hull Road	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	5
Huntington	65.0%	15.0%	20.0%	20
Laythorpe	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	1
Micklegate	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
Outside York	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	3
Tang Hall	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	5
The Groves	54.5%	21.6%	23.9%	88
Grand Total	57.1%	25.0%	17.9%	224



## Appendix 4: Rating of Landlord Overall by Area and University

### All respondents

Area	Excellent & Good	Average	Poor & Terrible	(N)
Acomb	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Badger Hill	70.3%	21.6%	8.1%	37
Bishopthorpe	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7
Bootham	71.4%	14.3%	14.3%	7
Clifton	50.0%	19.2%	30.8%	26
Dringhouses	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
Fishergate	69.2%	15.4%	15.4%	26
Fulford	64.6%	21.5%	13.8%	65
Guildhall/City Centre	64.7%	14.7%	20.6%	34
Haxby	38.5%	15.4%	46.2%	13
Heslington	66.7%	16.7%	16.7%	60
Heworth	69.8%	23.3%	7.0%	43
Holgate	88.9%	0.0%	11.1%	9
Hull Road	70.9%	16.5%	12.7%	158
Huntington	40.0%	45.0%	15.0%	20
Layertorpe	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	2
Micklegate	0.0%	42.9%	57.1%	7
Osbalwick	59.5%	31.0%	9.5%	42
Other areas in York (please specify)	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	2
Outside York	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	5
South Bank	73.3%	26.7%	0.0%	15
Tang Hall	53.8%	23.1%	23.1%	78
The Groves	47.8%	17.4%	34.8%	92
Grand Total	62.1%	20.0%	18.0%	751

## Respondents Enrolled at the University of York

Area	Excellent & Good	Average	Poor & Terrible	(N)
Acomb	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Badger Hill	70.3%	21.1%	8.1%	37
Bishopthorpe	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7
Bootham	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Clifton	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Dringhouses	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
Fishergate	68.0%	15.4%	16.0%	25
Fulford	64.6%	20.6%	13.8%	65
Guildhall/City Centre	91.7%	8.3%	0.0%	12
Heslington Road area	65.5%	16.9%	17.2%	58
Heworth	71.4%	22.7%	4.8%	21
Holgate	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Hull Road	71.9%	15.3%	12.4%	153
Laythorpe	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
Micklegate	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	6
Osbalwick	59.5%	30.2%	9.5%	42
Other areas in York (please specify)	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	2
Outside York	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
South Bank	73.3%	25.0%	0.0%	15
Tang Hall	57.5%	20.8%	20.5%	73
The Groves	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	4
Grand Total	67.5%	18.8%	13.2%	532

## Respondents Enrolled at the York St John University

Area	Excellent & Good	Average	Poor & Terrible	(N)
Bootham	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	5
Clifton	45.8%	17.9%	33.3%	24
Fishergate	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
Guildhall/City Centre	50.0%	18.2%	31.8%	22
Haxby	38.5%	14.3%	46.2%	13
Heslington Road area	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2
Heworth	68.2%	22.7%	9.1%	22
Holgate	85.7%	0.0%	14.3%	7
Hull Road	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	5
Huntington	40.0%	45.0%	15.0%	20
Laythorpe	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	1
Micklegate	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	1
Outside York	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	3
Tang Hall	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%	5
The Groves	47.7%	15.9%	36.4%	88
Grand Total	48.9%	21.0%	29.7%	219