



BS3 beyond 2025

Increasing Student Population in BS3: What Impact will this have?

Another chance to assess the impact of a large number of students moving into our area

Thursday 16 November 2023, 6pm - 7.30pm
Windmill Hill City Farm

Student Life in BS3

As part of Action Greater Bedminster's BS3 beyond 2025 programme, developers Watkins Jones met with local residents to present their plans for student housing at Bedminster Green. The development of two plots by WJ will bring approximately 1300 students to the area.

A packed room learned that Watkins Jones have sites UK-wide: the average cost for students is around £150-200 a week across their national portfolio. The Bedminster Green plans have a range of 5-10 storeys, public space, private outdoor and communal space for students with access to the Malago River. Facilities include laundry, cleaning services, 24/7 security onsite, study spaces and maintenance of outdoor areas.

Watkins Jones have a long experience of student accommodation and see themselves as having a long-term presence in the area. Their subsidiary Fresh manages their student blocks - currently home to over 22,000 students nationwide. Sustainability and community links are very important. The programme run by Fresh supports community engagement, wellbeing and sustainability.

Fresh manages two buildings in Bristol already and believes their experience delivers for both the students and the local community.

How will local services cope?

The Council is working with the relevant departments on this (AGB's programme will look at this in more detail).

Does purpose-built accommodation relieve pressure on local housing?

About 35% of students re-book with Fresh nationally: there is a mix of ages/year groups. There are mixed views about this and no obvious evidence. At first it may reduce the number of HMOs (homes of multiple occupancy) rented by students, but the number of students who then leave purpose-built housing may increase the local need for HMOs. It is harder these days to be an HMO landlord – you need a license and planning permission.

What is the usual length of tenancy?

It varies from 44-51 weeks depending on the demographic. There will be occupation during the summer by language schools etc.

What about noise and disruption?

Local residents will be able to contact a manager for the block: issues can be raised directly. Fresh works closely with the community to ensure they feel welcome and heard. The roof terraces will be available for students but there will be curfews and rules in place: they will not be used for partying.

How is car parking managed?

The plan is for tenancy agreements to state that students must not have a car and there will only be disabled spaces onsite. However, Fresh cannot police it entirely. The Bedminster Green developers are supporting a local RPZ for Windmill Hill: it forms part of the planning application and residents on the site will not be eligible. Car ownership among students is generally lower than in the past.

What guarantee is there that the plans will not alter?

Watkin Jones states they have no intention of altering the plans. As soon as planning is granted they will start the development. There have been viability issues with inflation etc and WJ don't yet own the land.

What if student numbers change?

It's not happened yet and the universities are currently expanding. However, the buildings could be used for hotel or residential use. There are examples of mixed-resident/student accommodation on other sites. Bristol University have signed up with WJ on both buildings for Plot 3 Dalby Avenue, and are signing up on 2 of the 3 buildings proposed on Plot 1 Malago road development, with the other being proposed as a direct let.

The impact of student housing on our neighbourhood merits further discussion with the University, Bedminster BID and students. AGB will work on creating another community conversation on the subject.

For information on the BS3 beyond 2025 programme:

www.actiongreaterbedminster.org.uk or hello@actiongreaterbedminster.org.uk

Future meetings will address the increased need for healthcare support, the impact on our retail streets, support for families and young people.

