



To: An Bord Pleanála
Directors of Services for Planning for each City and County Council

cc: Chief Executives, City and County Councils
Senior Planners, City and County Councils
Office of Planning Regulator

Circular Letter: NRUP 05/2021

24 September 2021

A Chara,

Temporary Change of Use of Student Accommodation

I am directed by Mr. Darragh O'Brien T.D., Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, to draw your attention to the critical need for purpose-built student accommodation to be available to serve the needs of the higher education sector, now that Covid related restrictions are easing and there is a general return to in-person learning in our third-level institutions.

In considering planning applications for the change of use of existing student accommodation for a temporary period, planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála must be satisfied that there are compelling non-Covid related grounds to grant permission for any such proposed change of use, while demand for student accommodation remains high. The removal of student accommodation from availability for student use runs contrary to the National Student Accommodation Strategy.



Accordingly, the onus must be on any applicant for change of use from existing purpose-built student accommodation to demonstrate that there is no longer a need for such use in the area in question. Otherwise, student accommodation should be retained, where appropriate.

I also wish to highlight references to student accommodation in circular PL8 of 2016, which remain applicable and seek to ensure that student accommodation is:-

- (1) not used for residential accommodation of a permanent nature;
- (2) safeguarded for use by students and other persons related to higher education institutes during the academic year; and
- (3) capable of being used for legitimate occupation by other persons/groups during holiday periods, when not required for student accommodation purposes.

While these requirements may be subject to a planning application for change of use, in assessing any such application, the overriding consideration must be the need for student accommodation in the area.

Is mise le meas,

Paul Hogan

Chief Planning Adviser

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage