Policy J/VA: Visitor Accommodation, Attractions and Facilities

The University of Cambridge objects to this policy on the basis that it is not effective as set out in **National Policy PM15**.

Cambridge and the wider plan area benefit from a range of visitor accommodation. The Greater Cambridge Future Hotel Need Study (2025) identifies that by the end of the plan period, between 1,600 and 3,800 additional rooms will be needed, depending on the growth scenario and success of the Destination Management Plan to convert more day visits (currently 90% of visits), to overnight stays.

However, these projections are subject to changing economic conditions and market trends over the plan period. As such, the level of need for additional hotel accommodation may fluctuate and could reduce in the future. In these circumstances, the policy's current requirements for the loss of visitor accommodation are overly restrictive.

In particular, the requirement to demonstrate that the use is no longer economically viable and that the property has been actively marketed for at least 12 months with no interest in continued hotel use places a significant and unnecessary burden on applicants.

This approach is slow, resource-intensive and insufficiently responsive to changing market conditions. It restricts the ability of buildings to adapt to economic signals, prevents the efficient re-use of underperforming assets and can delay the delivery of alternative uses that may provide greater planning benefits. Notably, the City of York Local Plan (2025) and the emerging Bristol Local Plan, both identified in the Hotel Need Study as comparable city authorities, do not impose equivalent requirements on proposals involving the loss of visitor accommodation.

Given Greater Cambridge's sustained growth and pressing need for housing and student accommodation, there is a strong justification for adopting a more proportionate and flexible approach to proposals involving the conversion of visitor accommodation. Rather than relying solely on a stringent viability and marketing test, the policy should allow appropriate redevelopment proposals where they contribute towards identified accommodation needs and deliver sustainable planning outcomes.

Such an approach is consistent with national policy TC1 (our emphasis), which states that local planning authorities should:

'Be informed by a strategy for town centres in the area, to ensure that the full range of potential needs and opportunities for development is considered. This includes the scope to accommodate additional floorspace, ***to broaden the mix of uses beyond main town centre uses (including residential development) where this would not undermine the vitality and viability of a centre,*** *to strengthen or re-introduce markets,*

to bring vacant sites and premises back into use, and to reduce or expand the boundaries of town centres where appropriate'

To ensure that the policy is effective, draft policy J/VA needs to be amended at paragraph 8 to the following (in red):

Loss of visitor accommodation

8. Development will not be permitted which would result in the loss of existing visitor accommodation unless it can be demonstrated that:

a. All reasonable efforts have been made to preserve the facility, but it has been proven that it would not be economically viable to retain the visitor accommodation in its current form; ~~and~~ or

b. The property or site has been appropriately marketed for at least 12 months in order to confirm that there is no interest in the property or site for visitor accommodation use; or

c. Where the change of use to other appropriate uses can contribute to identified needs within the Plan and/or can deliver viable uses within heritage assets that would secure their long-term use.

On this basis, some modification to the wording of the policy is necessary to ensure that the policy is justified and that the DLP can be found sound at examination.