

## Introduction

### Mobile Website

A demonstration was given of the Unipol Mobile website which will be launched for the forthcoming house hunting season. As web access from a mobile device is expected to become more popular than PC use in the coming years it is seen as an important service to assist students.

One of the key features of the site is a 'my location' search which enables users to find properties within a given distance of where they are accessing the website. The site will also have cut down house hunting information and property checklists as well as allowing use of the student notice board.

The site can be viewed on a mobile phone at [www.unipol.org.uk/bradfordmobile](http://www.unipol.org.uk/bradfordmobile). Screen shots of the site are displayed below:



## Market Briefing

### National Picture

Government policy for Higher Education has a significant impact on the number of students entering Higher Education and on demand for places on University courses nationally. Therefore, as a useful starting point, owners were informed of the latest developments nationally and its relevance to Bradford.

The national picture sees almost static intake due to strictly imposed restrictions, a situation that has seen relatively low growth over the past three years. In spite of this, there has somewhat surprisingly been an increase in demand for student accommodation in some parts of the country, with some areas even reporting accommodation shortages during intake in September 2010.

This increase in demand for accommodation has been fuelled by increased A Level scores due to greater competition for places. As a result, a number of local based students have been squeezed out in favour of the highest grade students.

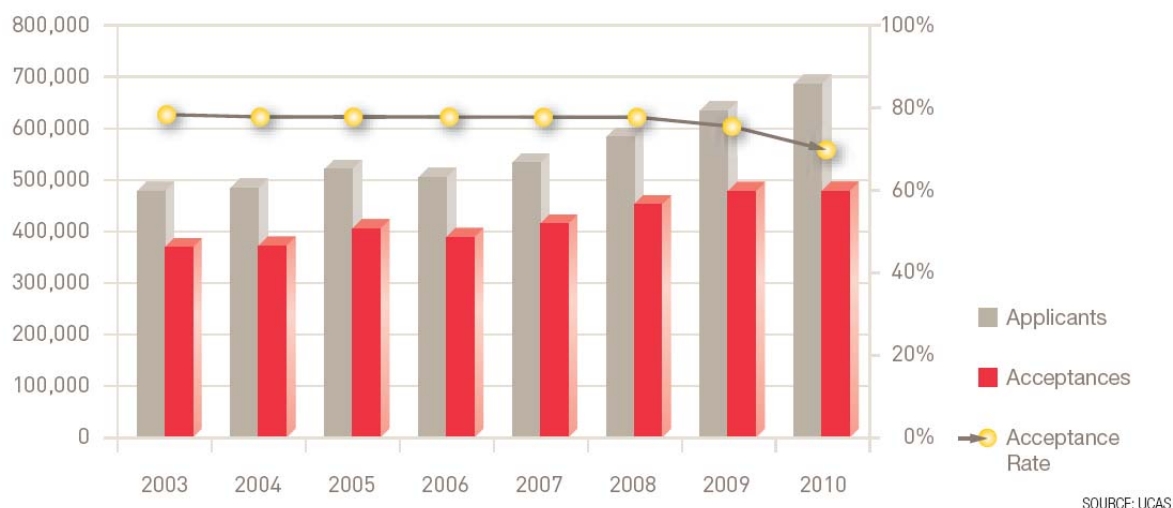
For example:

- University of Kent down from 18%-15% of local students to 11%
- Leeds Metropolitan University needed to "buy in" an additional 400 beds.
- University of Bradford – further details within this briefing

Applications to University were again up, but there was almost no change in the number of students arriving at University in 2010, with a 1.1% increase on the 2009 figure.

- 487,329 in 2010
- 481,854 in 2009

More significant is the 209,253 unsuccessful applicants in 2010, a total that continues to increase when compared with 156,315 in 2009. The graph below illustrates how the rate of acceptances has slowed owing to Government restrictions across the sector.



### Future Demand

There are a number of factors that will impact on demand for places at University for September 2011 intake and again the national trend is likely to significantly impact on Bradford.

Looking firstly at applications for the forthcoming year, as of Monday 20th December 2010 there had been 344,064 applications for courses commencing in September 2011 which represents an increase of 2.5% from this point in 2010. Many of the 209,253 unsuccessful applicants referred to above are likely to apply for a place at University again for 2011 which was reflected in early figures showing an 11.7% increase. Add to this, the fact that changes to University funding have recently been announced, it is reasonable to predict that 2011 will be a bumper year for applications.

This has been confirmed since the meeting as reported on January 4th in a number of newspapers - [click here](#) for a sample story

Whether 2011 sees any expansion in actual student numbers (further than 0.4% in 2010) will depend on funding constraints and matters imposed by the Government later in the cycle.

### Future Demand: Spending Review and Fees

The Government has announced details of the comprehensive spending review which revealed Higher Education funding to be cut by 40% (from £7.1billion to £4.2billion) by 2014-2015.

In addition, responses to the Browne Review are being considered and we have seen the raising of the cap on tuition fees from £3,290 per year with effect from 1st September 2012. This will be replaced by a 'tapered levy' on institutions charging more than £6,000 per year with the maximum fee that can be charged will be £9,000 per year.

More than this is currently unknown because the Government is still considering responses to other aspects of the report. Institutions charging over £6,000 per year will be required to demonstrate improved standards of teaching and fair admission but a number of other questions remain as to the shape of Higher Education from 1st September 2012.

In terms of estimating how the new fee regime will impact demand for University places, but The Browne Review suggests that a 10% increase in student places should be factored into the system over the next four years. Looking back to 2006 when 'top-up fees' were introduced, demand for places saw a dramatic one year drop before strengthening to a position where there have been year on year increases each year subsequent.

#### University of Bradford 2010-2011

The University of Bradford was one of the institutions to be affected by the squeeze on local based students owing to the competition caused by over 200,000 students missing out on places nationally. The University recruited an additional 333 students from elsewhere in the UK this year which meant that in During September 2010, over 250 students arrived at University unable to get a place in halls and were housed in off-street properties.

There are now 10,115 students at the University, and a significant number (almost ¼) continue to be recruited from overseas, although there was a decrease of some 100 students recruited internationally against some growth in other areas. Almost 5,000 students attend University from within Bradford or West Yorkshire, so not all of the UK based students have a requirement for accommodation.

The University plans to open a new development called The Green which will add 1,014 bed spaces on campus.



*An artist's impression of The Green*

#### Bradford College 2010-2011

Bradford College continues to perform well against a difficult backdrop for FE providers with various changes to funding programmes continuing to hit institutions. During this year, the college saw its numbers remain broadly level for students on FE courses. The college filled all of the 120 bed spaces that it allocates to its students in Laisteridge Lane and around 280 students house themselves elsewhere within the private sectors.

#### Supply and Demand Summary

The combined requirement of the University and College amounts to 5,639 students although between them, 1,135 students are housed directly in partnership with large providers. The overall demand for accommodation within the private sector has increased by around 330 to 4,504 following the increased demand for accommodation from University of Bradford students.

There are a currently 3,197 bedspaces in large developments, and these are generally fully let which leaves a total of 2,915 students living in off street properties.

## Future Supply and Demand

As mentioned previously, The Green is currently being built on the University campus which will provide 1,014 bed spaces from September 2011. In addition, the same developer is currently renovating a mill building behind the new development with 50 bed spaces. The University will manage The Green and house its first year, and some returning, students in this development whilst ending its nomination arrangements and closing University Hall. This will have an aggregate impact of increasing the supply of purpose built student accommodation by 750 rooms to a total of 4,026 bed spaces. Assuming no rapid growth during September 2011, demand for off-street accommodation is likely to fall to around 1,613 meaning there will be increased competition amongst large developments, which has been full in recent years and some extra pressure on landlords of off-street properties.

## Market Activity 2010

There was a lot of letting activity at the start of the house hunting season with many off-street properties letting in February and by August 2010, 67% of bed spaces displayed on the Unipol web site were let and by December, 90% of properties advertised had been let. This shows that the website is a highly useful marketing tool for landlords and results in strong lettings. A total of 1,216 bed spaces were advertised in off-street properties throughout 2010, with many landlords taking advantage of special advertising offers in June - ahead of the traditional late increase in activity.

Students looking for a house in February generally had a good idea of where they wanted to live and had already formed in to groups. These students mostly search for their properties remotely or by collecting property lists from outside the office. They appear later at Unipol to either ask a more technical question about the Code or ask about contract checking. Over the summer the many of the students that came into the Bureau looking for housing were students from overseas who needed additional support and guidance and it is important for students to have access to as wide a variety of accommodation as possible.

There was an increase in demand for large developments, which were mostly fully let by mid-September leaving those students who secured places at the University of Bradford later in the cycle to find accommodation in shared housing. In addition, there was increased activity around July, with returning students looking to secure accommodation before leaving for the Summer and others looking for short term lets over the Summer period.

The percentage of beds let remained strong over the last three years:

2008 – 84%  
2009 – 84%  
2010 – 90%

The percentage of beds let from January to June has remained constant:

2008 – 58%  
2009 – 58%  
2010 – 60%

This shows activity has clearly shifted to later in the year

The average rent level for off street properties has remained stable across the year, with some clear shifts depending on the amount of activity in the market. Big increases are seen in April, and this is followed by a large drop in May. Overall, the average rent for a room in a shared house during 2010 was £47.01, an increase of £1.68 (3.7%) from 2009 when the average rent was £45.33

Very few owners in Bradford ask for a guarantor, with the figure static at just 5% of the bedspaces advertised. This is positive for many students as many are from overseas which can make finding a guarantor difficult for the student to find and for the landlord to enforce. Over 3/4 bed spaces are let with summer rent concessions, again reflecting the cycle of activity in Bradford. The average deposit in a shared house was £158.46, although there continue to be a number of owners who charge no deposit at all.

## Amenity Levels in Off-Street Properties

### **Amenity** **Percentage of Bed Spaces**

|                        | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|
| <b>Smoke Detection</b> |      |      |      |
| Main interlinked       | 43   | 48   | 43   |
| Fully zoned            | 36   | 34   | 45   |
| Battery                | 18   | 15   | 8    |

There has been a notable decrease in the number of battery operated smoke detection systems, which is a sign that owners are adhering to the code and increasing expectations of tenants in this area. With large developments offering safe and secure accommodation it is important that off-street properties are seen as a credible alternative in a competitive market.

### **Security**

|                        |    |    |    |
|------------------------|----|----|----|
| Burglar Alarm Provided | 75 | 77 | 79 |
| Off street parking     | 46 | 54 | 48 |

### **Sanitation**

|        |    |    |    |
|--------|----|----|----|
| Shower | 99 | 97 | 99 |
| Bath   | 83 | 83 | 77 |

### **Communal Space**

|                      |    |    |    |
|----------------------|----|----|----|
| Separate Living Room | 62 | 60 | 47 |
| Living Space         | 26 | 31 | 42 |
| No Living Space      | 11 | 9  | 11 |
| Garden               | 78 | 74 | 78 |

### **Facilities**

|                 |    |    |    |
|-----------------|----|----|----|
| Washing machine | 93 | 96 | 93 |
| Microwave       | 90 | 93 | 96 |
| Dishwasher      | 10 | 10 | 8  |

### **Double Beds**

|                          |    |    |    |
|--------------------------|----|----|----|
| Double beds in all rooms | 69 | 79 | 82 |
| Some double beds         | 23 | 19 | 5  |
| No double beds           | 8  | 2  | 13 |

### **Double Glazing**

|                     |    |    |    |
|---------------------|----|----|----|
| Full Double Glazing | 73 | 75 | 81 |
| Some Double Glazing | 14 | 16 | 12 |

## Promotional Initiatives

Unipol has maintained a high profile building on a large promotional campaign to both students and landlords carried out in recent years which has seen activity on the website from landlords and students remaining high.

This promotional activity has included;

- Free promotional tabloid
- Housing Fair
- Unipol presence at University and College run events

To assist students further Unipol organised a number of additional events for this lettings year:

- February - Information stalls in the Atrium, University of Bradford
- March –Unipol and University of Bradford SU Housing Fair exclusive to accredited landlords

From Monday 7th February 2011 additional material is available to students as they begin house hunting including printed property lists for students to take away from the bureau, and hundreds will be distributed in the opening couple of weeks. These only feature accredited properties, giving members of the Unipol Code a marketing advantage.

#### Web Statistics

|            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| Hits up 9% | 3,279,713 |
|            | 3,567,467 |
| Page Hits  | 631,689   |
|            | 633,434   |
| Searches   | 69,534    |
| up 9%      | 76,054    |
| Hosts      | 21,468    |
| up 25%     | 26,776    |

#### Unipol Code

A total of 81 owners are currently signed-up members of the Unipol Code in Bradford, with 22 of these having achieved Golden Owner status. This covers 80% of properties advertised with 1,089 bed spaces in the Code.

During 2010 there were 35 property inspections with all new members having at least 1 property visited. It is likely that there will be an increase in inspections and associated activity around the Unipol Code with reallocation of resources to ensure the Code remains robust and up to date in Bradford.

The Code will shortly undergo a review which will see a Code Review Group established to include landlords, students, interested bodies, BMDC and the community. Work will start in April 2011 with the new standards being adopted from January 2012 for that house hunting year and the new Code will include a revision of the starred system as these standards are met by many owners. Existing members will be moved to that new Code.

All of the main large developments in Bradford are covered by National Code for Larger Student Developments, except for Chellow Mount House which is a small development not currently in the Code.

#### Deposit Protection

Awareness of deposit protection amongst students and landlords in Bradford is low and this briefing provided a reminder of the obligations of landlords upon receiving deposits from tenants. All deposits taken must be protected in one of three Government approved schemes and to assist landlords with this process, Unipol has set up a scheme with the largest scheme operator The Dispute Service especially for Unipol Code landlords. More details are available at <http://www.unipol.org.uk/Bradford/IFS/Deposits/DPS/>

The service is exclusive for Unipol Code owners and benefits from:

- No registration fee to use the site
- Low cost fees (£14.00+VAT) for each tenancy you protect
- Keep the deposit for the duration of the tenancy meaning returning the deposit is under your control
- Access to a fast disputes panel administered by Unipol