

This is **MySurrey.**



Renting made simple

A student's guide to
living off campus



University of Surrey Lettings

10 Steps to securing your accommodation off campus

Moving off campus can seem daunting. Selecting housemates, finding a suitable property and managing your rent and utilities. However, this is a process that everyone must undertake at some point and we hope that by providing you with the skills, knowledge and support you will be prepared to approach the rental market confidently and successfully.



01 **January** – Consider how much you can afford, who you want to live with and where. p4

04 **March** – Arrange viewings with the agent or landlord. p6

03 **Mid-February** – You can apply for USL accommodation. Outcomes are communicated at the beginning of March. p10

02 **February** – Start by looking online for available properties that suit your needs. p5

05 **April** – Once you find a suitable property, make an offer and pay a holding deposit. p7

06 Gather the documents you need for the reference checks and ensure you have a guarantor in place. p7

07 Review your tenancy agreement, have it checked by USL and sign it. p8

08 Pay the remainder of your deposit and your first month's rent.

09 Collect your keys on the day your contract starts. Make sure to get a copy of the inventory and ask to be present when this is being done.

Once you have moved in remember to send your Council Tax exemption certificate to the council and check your waste collection schedule.

10



Where to start

WHO do you want to live with?

WHERE do you want to live?

WHAT is your budget?

To give yourself the best chance at living in a happy home with the right housemates, it is essential that you consider these three aspects carefully. Your friends don't always make the best housemates. You may want to consider living with people who have similar course schedules or who are looking for a property within the same price range as you. The location may be important depending on how you travel to University or your placement.

Where do I look?

Online search engines are the way to go. Don't be too trusting of property adverts, ask plenty of questions and ensure you do some research on the property history, the letting agent or landlord and whether the rent is competitive. You can view our preferred agents on the USL page on MySurrey. If you are only looking for a room or have a room to advertise, you can do this via our StudentPad page or Facebook group.

Facebook group

University of Surrey Lettings (USL)

You can also use these popular websites:

- [rightmove.co.uk](https://www.rightmove.co.uk)
- [zoopla.co.uk](https://www.zoopla.co.uk)
- [surreystudentpad.com](https://www.surreystudentpad.com)

Viewings

We would always recommend that you view the property in person and that all tenants see the property before making a decision. It is a good idea to arrange a second viewing to give you time to look around properly. You don't want to let the excitement of a nice property taint your view of warning signs and make a rushed decision. ASK, ASK, ASK! This is your chance to find out as much as possible about a property. If the landlord or agent are unsure of the answer, don't rely on their assumption. If they agree to improvements or changes these must be written into the contract. If it's not, it is likely the landlord won't get it done.

Checklist

- ▶ What heating system is in the house?
- ▶ Look for signs of damp especially behind furniture pushed up against the wall.
- ▶ Are there smoke alarms and a CO detector near the boiler?
- ▶ Do the windows open and shut properly?
- ▶ Is the house in good decorative order?
- ▶ Are there fire labels on the furniture?
- ▶ Ask the current tenants about their experience.
- ▶ Look at the neighbouring properties and outside lighting.
- ▶ Where will you keep your bike or car?
- ▶ What storage is available in the house?

Paying a holding deposit

When making an offer on the property you have selected, you will be asked for a holding deposit. This is equivalent to one week's rent and must be paid before the landlord or agent will take the property off the market. The cost should be deducted from your overall invoice.



The referencing process

Your agent or landlord has an obligation to carry out references, some of which are a legal requirement. You will complete an application form and can expect to be asked for any of these documents. Make sure to get them ready before you even start looking.

- ▶ Passport (you will need to show this in person), visa or biometrics residence permit
- ▶ University enrolment letter
- ▶ Landlord reference, email hive@surrey.ac.uk to get a reference if you have lived on campus
- ▶ UK based guarantor.

Ensure your group has this ready as a delay in completing these checks could cause you to lose out on the property. Ask USL if you are unsure about the information being requested.


Contracts

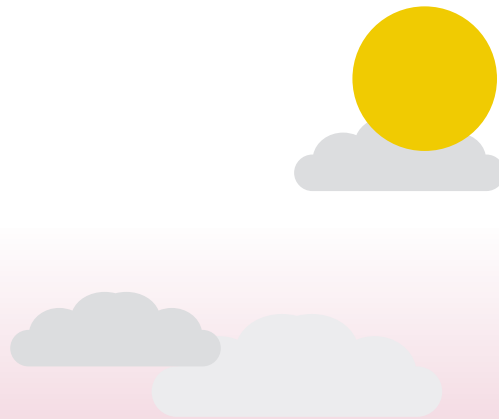
Review your contract thoroughly and ask questions. Be vigilant if you are being pressured to sign quickly. Make sure anything you agreed on while viewing the property has been written into the contract. Once you have read through it, highlight the clauses you are uncertain about and email USL to double check the contract for you.

Fees are banned

Your landlord or agent can no longer charge fees before or during your tenancy. They may charge you for the below, but these costs should be clearly written into your contract.

- ▶ Lost keys or security fobs
- ▶ Late rent payments
- ▶ Changing a tenant (capped at £50 or reasonably incurred costs if higher)
- ▶ If you decide to end your tenancy early.

 **Not all agents and landlords accept guarantor services so check before making an offer.**



Guarantors

A guarantor is a third party, such as a parent or a relative, who agrees to pay your rent if you fail to do so. As a student you need a guarantor who is employed and able to prove their income in order to pay your share of the rent. Most contracts make you jointly and severally liable for rent meaning guarantors are liable for the rent if any tenant fails to pay.

Without a guarantor, you can expect to pay your rent in advance.

There are many external companies who offer guarantor services, but make sure you confirm the fees first.



Applying for a USL property

There are many benefits of living in a USL managed property. Your rent includes your gas, electricity and water charges as well as gardening. You won't be responsible for the rent of your housemates, only your own and the finance team can help if you are having trouble with your rent payments. You do not need a guarantor or reference checks and won't even need to pay a deposit. This is a nice way to ease yourself into living off campus.

- USL properties are limited, however, we always encourage students to apply! Applying for a USL house is simple.
- Log into your accommodation account ams.surrey.ac.uk to apply.
- Applications open around mid-February for two weeks.
- Each member of the group must complete an application for accommodation before the deadline.
- You will be able to apply by banding and location preference although this is not guaranteed.
- Accommodation is allocated at random through a ballot system.
- Once the ballot has been run you will be notified of your application outcome, usually at the beginning of March.
- Where accommodation is offered, details of the property will be sent to you and include a floorplan, photos and virtual tour.
- You will not be able to view the property in person.
- If you want to accept your offer, each student will pay £250 prepayment which will offset against the first month's rent.
- You will be given full details of the rent payment plan and due dates with your offer.



USL Support Services

Not only do USL offer accommodation, but we also provide expert advice and support on any issues you may encounter. Our services can be accessed by any student whether you are a USL resident or not.



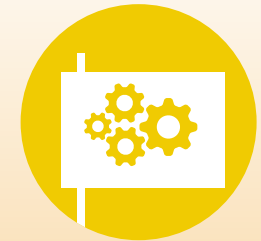
Property search



University managed accommodation



Mediation service



Letting process



Contract checking



Legal advice



Deposit disputes

Top tips

Money

You can speak to the Student Money team about the hardship fund if you are having financial difficulties.

EPC

Check the EPC rating to see how energy efficient the property is as this indicates how much you will spend on utilities.

Council Tax

Council Tax exemption only applies until the end of your course so final year students are required to pay Council Tax from their graduation date until their contract end date.

Support

USL are here to provide support and advice on any problems you encounter during your tenancy.

Legal

Carry out a £3 Land Registry, Title Deed check to ensure the landlord named on the contract matches that of the legal owned as shown in the Deed. bit.ly/37H8nlw

Testimonials

“USL were a great help when my friends and I got into legal difficulties with a landlady who was trying to take advantage of us. They supported us throughout the process of getting our deposits back, which led to a court case that we won. On top of this they helped us find last minute accommodation when we thought we would have nowhere to go and they also ensured we could take out a hardship loan to repay once we won the court case. The staff are all super supportive and doing it because they obviously care about students; it's great to know someone's looking out for us.”

Josh

“After arriving at a house on move in day which was completely different to what we saw during the original viewing, we didn't know what to do. The house was messy, furniture broken and appliances unchecked for safety. The estate agents refused to come and inspect the property so we contacted USL. They arrived in just under half an hour to inspect the house and agreed that the property was in a bad state. They gave us great advice on how to deal with the issue and arranged for an emergency place to stay until the issue was solved. Through constant communication over the following weeks, USL were able to help us get out of the original contract, get a refund on the deposit and arrange for the emergency property to become our permanent place of residence. The assistance that USL provided us was exceptional and we will without a doubt use them for our final year of study”

Ben Waites



MAP OF GUILDFORD

Park Barn

- Great location for:
- Surrey Sports Park
 - Tesco
 - Vet School
 - Hospital

£450 - £575

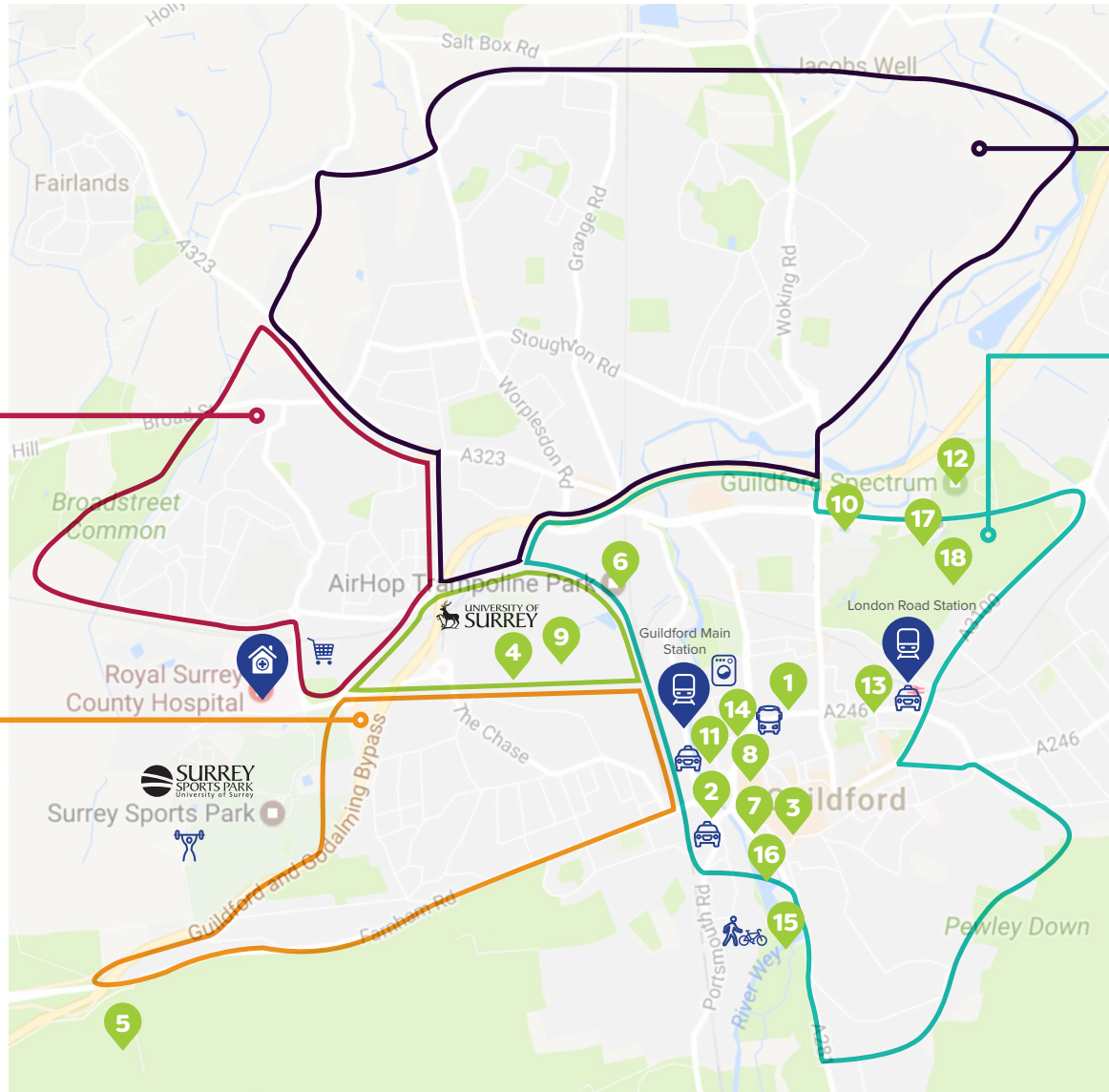
Guildford Park

- Closest proximity to University

£525 - £650



- Tesco supermarket
- Bus stops
- Taxi Rank
- Gym/fitness
- Hospital
- Ideal for walking/cycling
- Train station
- Trend launderette



Stoughton

- Cheaper rent
- High number of student residents

£425 - £575

Town Centre

- Walking distance lots of amenities

£550 - £700

Things to do/visit

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 The Boilerroom
13 Stoke Fields,
Guildford, GU1 4LS | 10 Guildford Lido
Lido Rd, Stoke Park,
Guildford, GU1 1HB |
| 2 Electric Theatre
Onslow St, Guildford,
GU1 4SZ | 11 ODEON cinema
Bedford Rd, Guildford,
GU1 4SJ |
| 3 Guildford Castle
Castle St, Guildford,
GU1 3SX | 12 Guildford Spectrum
Parkway, Guildford,
GU1 1UP |
| 4 Guildford Cathedral
GU2 7UP | 13 G Live
London Rd, Guildford,
GU1 2AA |
| 5 Watts Gallery
Watts Gallery Down
Lane, Guildford, GU3
1DQ | 14 The Friary Centre
GU1 4YT |
| 6 AirHop Trampoline Park
12 Middleton Industrial
Estate Rd, Guildford,
GU2 8XW | 15 River Wey
GU1 4RR |
| 7 Komo Cocktail Bar
Mill St, Weymead
House, Millbrook,
Guildford, GU1 3YA | 16 Yvonne Arnaud Theatre
Millbrook, Guildford,
GU1 3UX |
| 8 Casino Nightclub
GU1 4SQ | 17 Wild Wood Adventure
Peacock Wood,
Lido Road, Guildford,
GU1 1HB |
| 9 Rubix Nightclub (on campus)
GU2 7XH | 18 Stoke Park
Nightingale Rd,
Guildford, GU1 1ER |

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The University of Surrey
Students' Union