

Anne Milton, Conservative Candidate for Guildford

Living at the Limit was a fantastic piece of work from the students. It was great to be able to meet representatives of the Students Union in Parliament and discuss it in person. It is clear that standards of private rented housing and rental prices are common concerns. In the long term, building more homes will help with reducing rents but more can be done now to make sure that safety and standards are improved, and landlords are made more accountable.

I was pleased to see a focus on improving the rental market included in the Government's recent Housing White Paper. If I am re-elected on 8 June, I will continue to support action on this, including:

- The implementation of measures introduced in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, which will introduce a national database of rogue landlords and property agencies, and new banning orders on the worst landlords or agents to prevent them continuing to rent out substandard accommodation;
- Allowing local councils to issue fines as well as prosecute;
- Continued work with industry experts to discuss whether to mandate electrical safety checks for rented properties (it was surprising that they are not already);
- Consultation on and the introduction of legislation to ban letting agent fees to tenants;
- Extension of mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (*see below*).

It is of note that councils also have a range of powers to tackle breaches of housing law, including unsafe accommodation and breaches of environmental health. Councils also have powers to introduce selective licensing of rental accommodation. Councils can and should use these powers.

Living at the Limit clearly demonstrates the need for purpose built student accommodation and importantly highlights that “*students are residents*”. I will always work to promote the housing need of all local people – students are residents! I am pleased to see progress being made at the Manor Park campus and I will continue to do all I can to act as a link between students, university staff, other local residents and the Local Authorities to identify student accommodation needs and suitable areas for development. If anyone faces a particular problem with their landlord or letting agent, I will always be happy to write to landlords although I do understand why students are sometimes reluctant to do this.

I have already raised with the Vice-Chancellor the issues that have become a problem with rising rents in Guildford. Students are having to live further away from the University so they will often spend all day on campus and the facilities at the University are not sufficient. The library is often full and there are not always lecture theatres and available up-to-date teaching facilities. I gather there are plans to build a new Students Union Building and improved teaching, learning and study places, including expansion of the library.

The issue of London weighting for the student maintenance loan is an ongoing problem and I know that this doesn't just affect students. We need to be careful to maintain a balance, as achieving an increase in London weighting could well result in rents and living costs rising. There can be unintended consequences to this, although sliding scales of London weighting is an idea that has been discussed from time to time.

With my established links with local Councillors, officers at Guildford Borough Council, and Ministers at the Department for Communities and Local Government, I remain, if re-elected, well placed to lobby any future Government for vital investment in infrastructure, including train services and cycle routes, and the raising of standards to help all local residents. I hope to have the opportunity to continue to work with the University.

An HMO is a property rented out by at least 3 people who are not from 1 'household' (e.g. a family) but share facilities like the toilet, bathroom and kitchen.

Currently a **large HMO** is classified as being at least 3 storeys high, at least 5 tenants (forming more than 1 household) and sharing a toilet, bathroom or kitchen. You must have a licence if you're renting out a large HMO.

Summary of the Government Response to the Consultation on Extending mandatory licensing of HMOs

Most significant problems identified in non-licensable HMOs:

- Fire Safety Measures
- Poor management
- Overcrowding
- Excess Cold/Insulation
- Electrical and gas safety
- Lack of Amenities
- Waste/Refuse Issues
- Safety Measures

Next steps to extend mandatory licensing in HMOs as included in the Government's Housing White Paper:

- Remove the reference to storeys from the prescribed description of large HMOs, so that all HMOs occupied by five or more people from more than one household, are included;
- Include flats above and below business premises;
- Clarify that the minimum room size 6.5m² for sleeping accommodation does apply to all licensable HMOs.