

Where are the best areas for Students to live in Exeter, UK?



Introduction

Exeter University provides Student Halls for students to live in for their first year at university. For subsequent years of study students find houses in the city to rent, in groups which typically range from 3 to 7 students but can be larger, depending on the accommodation available.

There are some specific regulations for shared housing based on the number of unrelated people sharing a property and the number of floors in the property. This is because research has shown a much higher fire risk for this type of housing. The legislation means that 'Houses of Multiple Occupancy' (HMOs) must have a licence, and the licence confirms the number of people that can live in the house. The owner also has to comply with more stringent fire regulations (eg fire doors and walls with higher fire resistancy). Each local council has to maintain and publish a public register of HMOs for their town/city. This legislation makes the properties safer, but also incurs extra costs for the Landlord, and can reduce the housing supply.

It is currently very hard for students to identify properties that are available for rent – this is because they are rented out via a variety of different agencies, privately direct from the Landlord, or promoted at the annual 'Student Housing Fair'. This results in many students racing each other to look at houses as they become available and making decisions quickly in order to secure the properties. Some properties are only found by walking around the student areas and looking for signs that the property is available to let as a student house – posted up on a piece of paper in the window – but as students are new to the city, they often don't know which streets are likely to have student houses in.

There is no central place where students can see which locations the student houses are in, and they tend to become available in small numbers between October (ie one month after the students have started at university, living in Halls), and June the following year – with contracts starting typically in July, August and September in time for the second academic year at university.

As a result, students are not able to research which properties or areas they want to live in, in advance of them becoming available and tend to panic that they will not find a suitable property, with the right number of bedrooms for their friendship group. They often end up quickly choosing a property in a poor location just to secure a house, and then later on in the academic year, discovering there were better choices available later on.

Because the students are also fairly new to the city at the time they are seeking second year accommodation, they also don't have a good sense of where is a good place to live. Generally, accommodation needs to be close to the university of course, but some students would also prioritise living close to social venues – such as pubs and nightclubs, whereas others might prefer to be nearing to sports facilities or train stations to get to the beach or for visits home.



Data Sources

For this project I will be using Foursquare data for the city of Exeter.

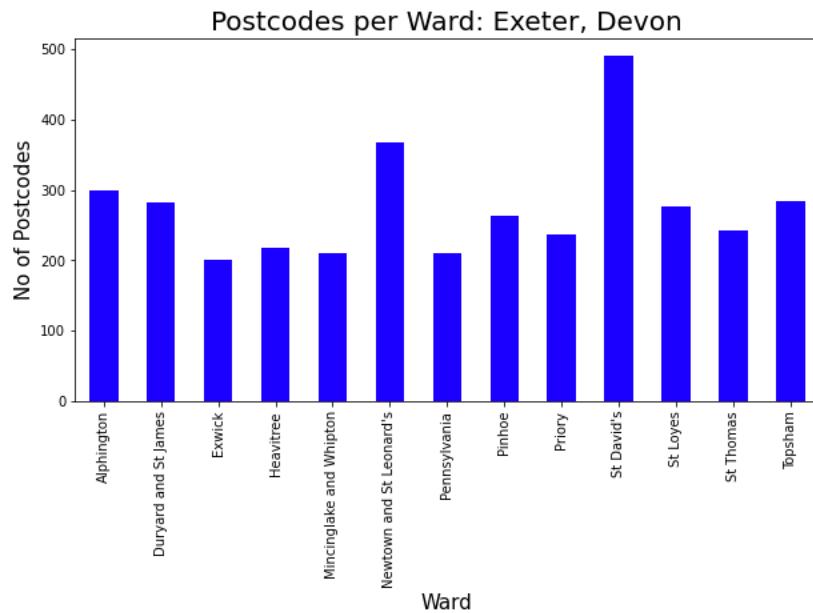
Information about Exeter postcodes and Wards is available online, so I will extract that data to identify which Wards (Neighbourhood) and Postcodes are the closest to the university and therefore the logical area of the city for students to live.

I will also be using the HMO Register – public data provided by Exeter City Council to map the location of the Houses of Multiple Occupancy in relation to the university. Not all HMOs are student houses, but most are.

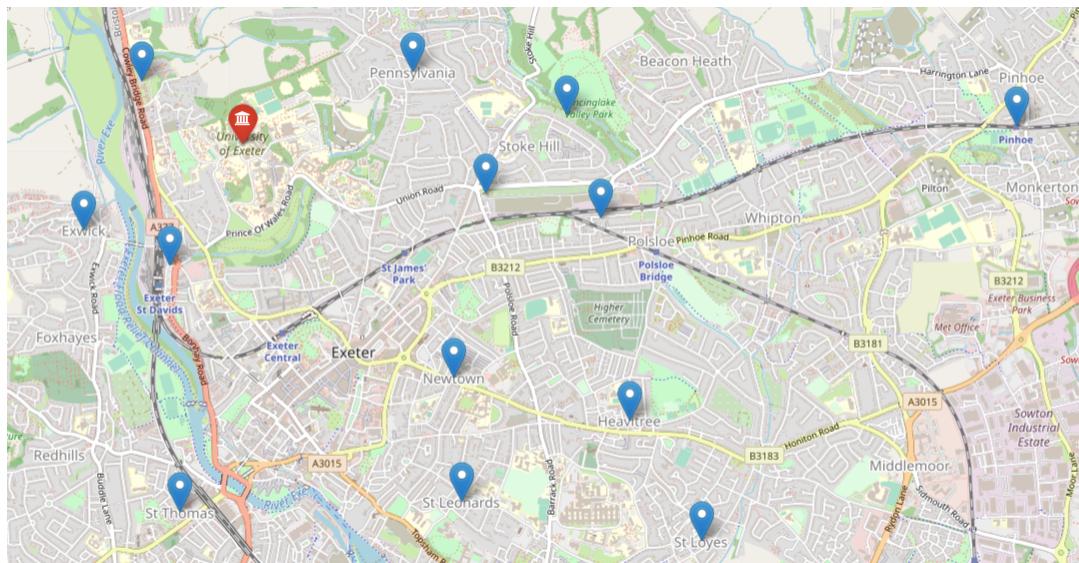
I will also be looking to map information about other relevant facilities – such as cafes, pubs, bars, supermarkets, train stations, parks and sports facilities – which could help students identify a list of potential properties and which area of the city would suit their requirements the most.

Methodology

Pandas ‘read csv’ capability was used to import Exeter city postcode data from a .csv file that I downloaded from the internet. I cleaned the data to get a subset of information that would show only postcodes that were currently ‘in use’, and also dropped data that I did not need. I used matplotlib to show the number of postcodes in each Ward (neighbourhood).



Nominatim’s geolocation service was used to find the central co-ordinates for each of Exeter’s wards (neighbourhoods), and these used to show the location of the wards in relation to Exeter University – using Folium maps.



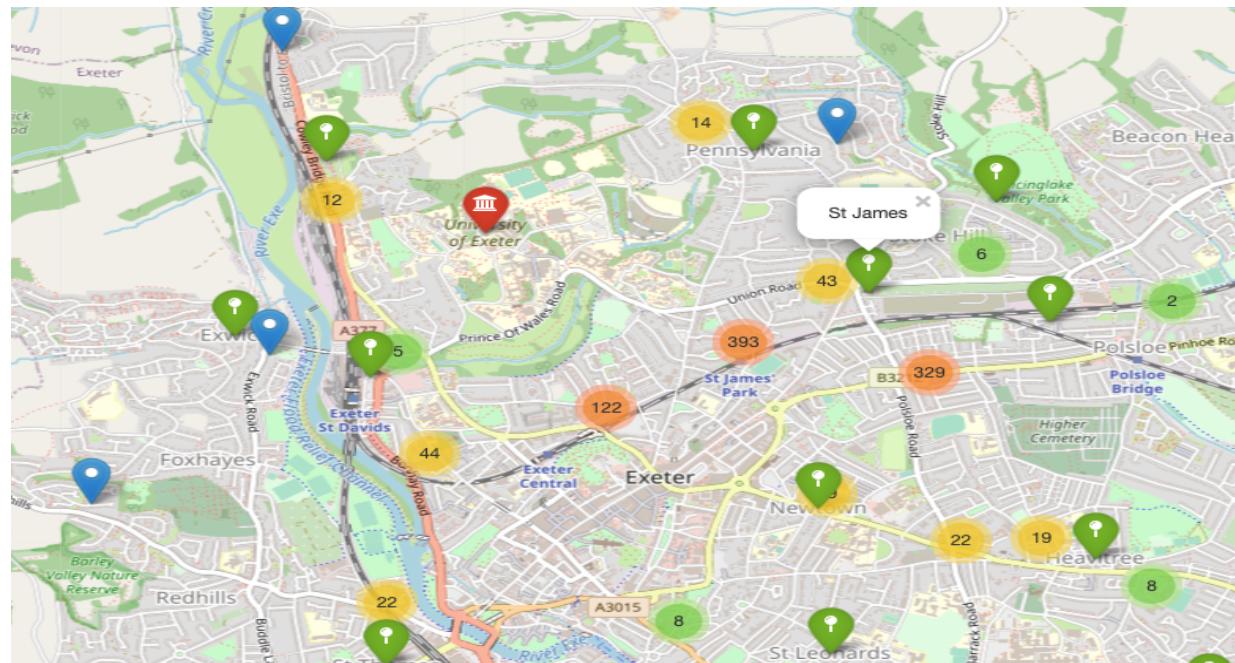
Information about Exeter's supply of 'Houses of Multiple Occupancy' is published on Exeter City Council's website - <https://exeter.gov.uk/media/5550/hmo-licensing-register-april-2021.pdf>

Tabula was used to read the pdf and extract the data into a pandas dataframe, which was then cleaned up and merged with the postcode and ward data retrieved previously:

Geolocator was then used again, this time to pull in the co-ordinates of each property listed in the HMO register into the pandas dataframe:

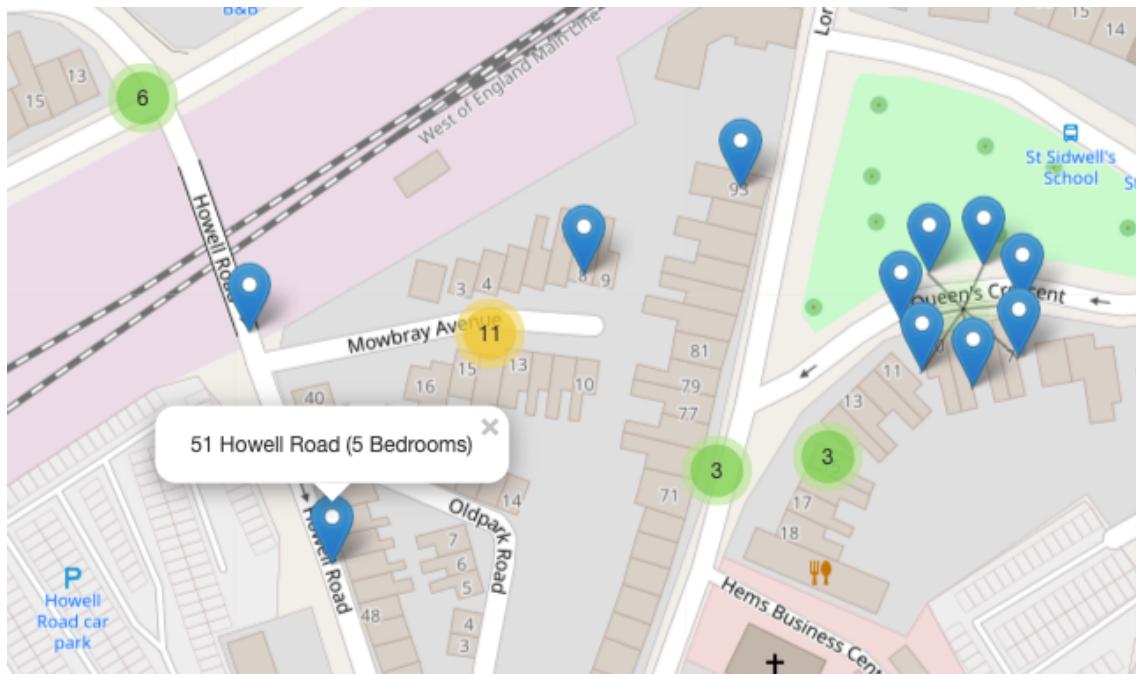
Address	Bedrooms	Postcode	Ward	Co-ordinates	point	lat	lng
26 New North Road, Exeter, Devon, EX4 4HF	1	EX4 4HF	Duryard and St James	(26, New North Road, St Thomas, Exeter, Devon, ...)	(50.72785705, -3.5333916530181653, 0.0)	50.727857	-3.533392
1 Pennsylvania Road, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6BP	6	EX4 6BP	Duryard and St James	(Kilmorie Mews, 1-4, Pennsylvania Road, Pennsy...)	(50.732897, -3.5246034, 0.0)	50.732897	-3.524603
73 Monks Road, Exeter, Devon, EX4 7BE	6	EX4 7BE	Pennsylvania	(73, Monk's Road, Stoke Hill, Exeter, Devon, S...)	(50.73096915, -3.510695869453042, 0.0)	50.730969	-3.510696
25 Well Street, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6QL	6	EX4 6QL	Duryard and St James	(Well Street, Newtown, Exeter, Devon, South We...)	(50.7296927, -3.522795, 0.0)	50.729693	-3.522795
61 Blackboy Road, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6TB	5	EX4 6TB	Newtown and St Leonard's	(Blackboy Road, Stoke Hill, Exeter, Devon, Sou...)	(50.7301344, -3.51422, 0.0)	50.730134	-3.514220
34 Regent Street, Exeter, Devon, EX2 9EH	6	EX2 9EH	St Thomas	(Regent Street, St Thomas, Exeter, Devon, Sout...)	(50.7130483, -3.5407452, 0.0)	50.713048	-3.540745
46 Regent Street, Exeter, Devon, EX2 9EH	5	EX2 9EH	St Thomas	(Regent Street, St Thomas, Exeter, Devon, Sout...)	(50.7130483, -3.5407452, 0.0)	50.713048	-3.540745
35 Prospect Park, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6NA	6	EX4 6NA	Duryard and St James	(35, Prospect Park, Stoke Hill, Exeter, Devon, ...)	(50.732886050000005, -3.519989046301486, 0.0)	50.732886	-3.519989
18 Powderham Crescent, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6DA	9	EX4 6DA	Duryard and St James	(Powderham Crescent, Newtown, Exeter, Devon, S...)	(50.7310674, -3.5240655, 0.0)	50.731067	-3.524065
112 Mount Pleasant Road, Exeter, Devon, EX4 7AB	7	EX4 7AB	Pennsylvania	(112, Mount Pleasant Road, Stoke Hill, Exeter, ...)	(50.7305988, -3.513863, 0.0)	50.730599	-3.513863
30 Oxford Road, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6QU	6	EX4 6QU	Duryard and St James	(30, Oxford Road, Newtown, Exeter, Devon, Sout...)	(50.728826, -3.5226343, 0.0)	50.728826	-3.522634
32 Oxford Road, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6QU	6	EX4 6QU	Duryard and St James	(32, Oxford Road, Newtown, Exeter, Devon, Sout...)	(50.7288671, -3.5225941, 0.0)	50.728867	-3.522594
6 Leighton Terrace, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6AZ	6	EX4 6AZ	Duryard and St James	(6, Leighton Terrace, Newtown, Exeter, Devon, ...)	(50.728244, -3.5246835, 0.0)	50.728244	-3.524684
6 St James Road, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6PU	6	EX4 6PU	Duryard and St James	(6, St James' Road, Newtown, Exeter, Devon, So...)	(50.7298458, -3.5212364, 0.0)	50.729846	-3.521236
31 Polstoe Road, Exeter, Devon, EX1 2HW	7	EX1 2HW	Pennsylvania	(Polstoe Road, Newtown, Exeter, Devon, South W...)	(50.7280327, -3.5132907, 0.0)	50.728033	-3.513291

Then Cluster Markers were used within Folium maps to show the student houses on a map of Exeter. The map shows the areas with the largest cluster of HMOs:



Zooming in on the clusters then reveals individual markers for each property in that area.

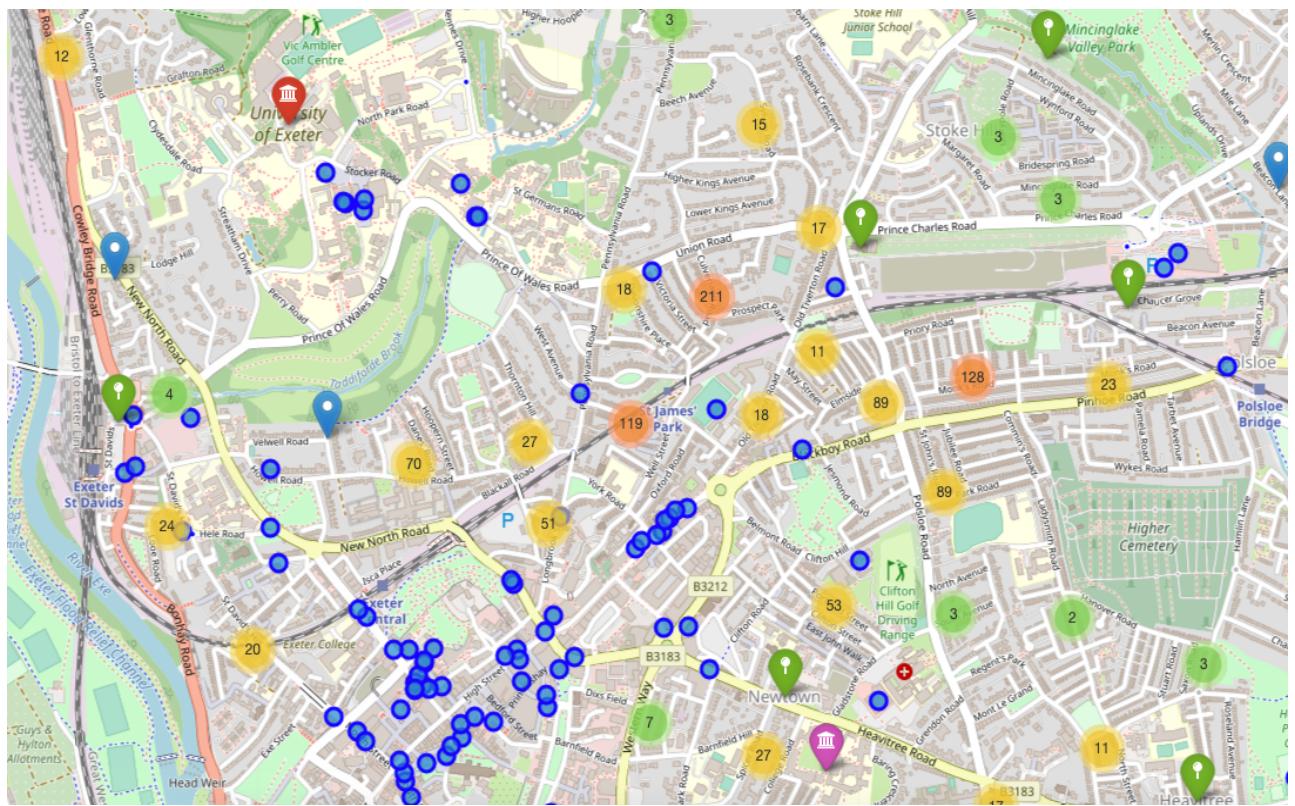
Code was added to the popup for each marker, to show both the address of the property and the number of bedrooms it had – helping students to identify whether there were houses with the right number of bedrooms, in the area in which they wished to live.



The Foursquare API was then used to pull details of the top 100 venues in the vicinity of the University.

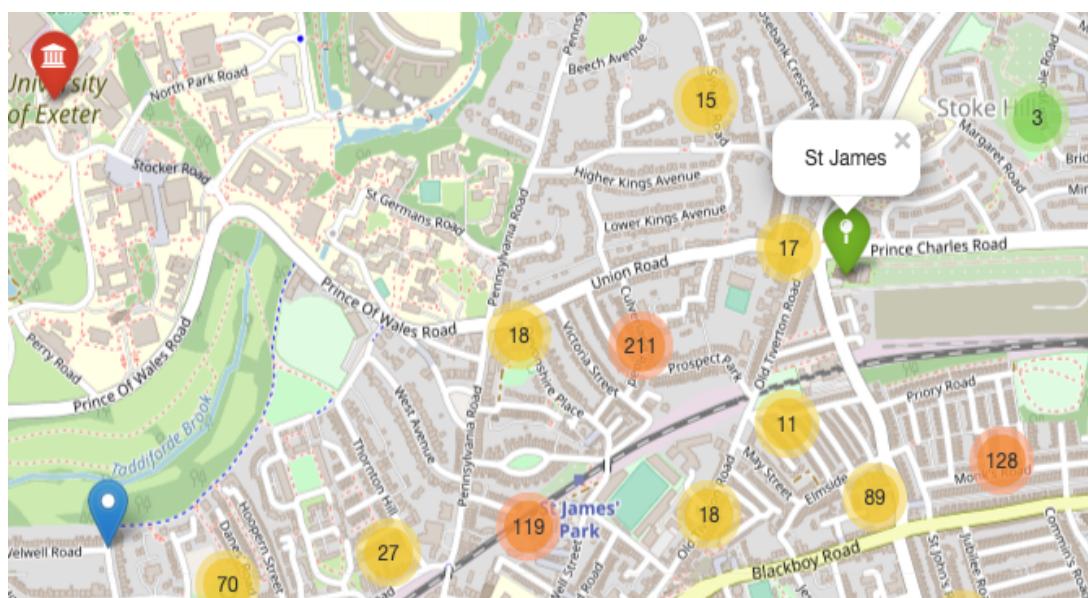
	name	categories	lat	lng
	The Bowling Green	Bar	50.729666	-3.517665
	The Old Fire House	Pub	50.726681	-3.528233
	Waterstones	Bookstore	50.725610	-3.527093
	Devon Coffee	Coffee Shop	50.724410	-3.531537
	Apple Princesshay	Electronics Store	50.724506	-3.527933
	Waitrose & Partners	Supermarket	50.724063	-3.514905
	Harry's Restaurant	Restaurant	50.728175	-3.526547
	Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery	Museum	50.725199	-3.532055
	Tea On The Green	Café	50.723253	-3.530109
	Artigiano Espresso Bar	Café	50.725210	-3.528111
	Coté Brasserie	French Restaurant	50.722857	-3.530698
	Bill's Restaurant	English Restaurant	50.724399	-3.530852
	Real Food Exeter	Gourmet Shop	50.725037	-3.526023
	Coffee #1	Coffee Shop	50.723935	-3.527017
	Chococo	Café	50.724914	-3.531498

The data was then all combined and shown on folium maps, giving an interactive way of exploring the city, the student houses and the different venues:

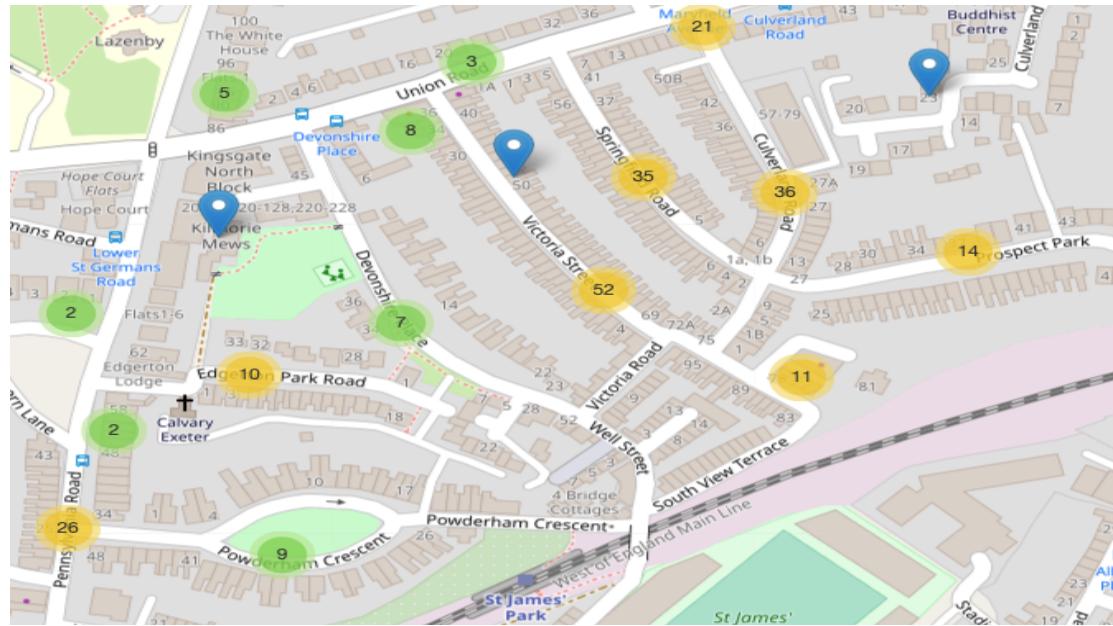


Results:

The largest concentration of student houses was found to the South East of the university, in the area around St James' Park. This area is conveniently located close to the university, the city centre, and also local train stations providing a link through to St David's, Exeter's mainline train station connecting it to other cities in the UK.

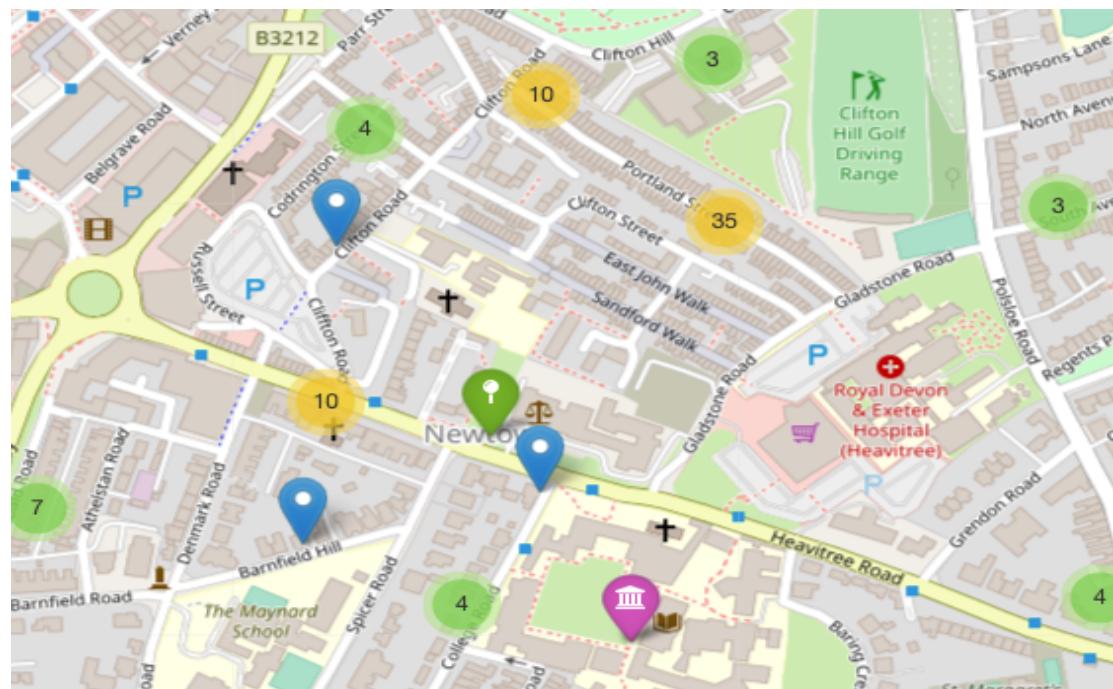


Some streets in the area between St James's train station and the university campus have a high proportion of student houses, with 3 streets accommodating over 100 student houses, they are Culverland Road, Springfield Road and Victoria Street. For students who like to live in houses close to their friends, this is an obvious area to look at:



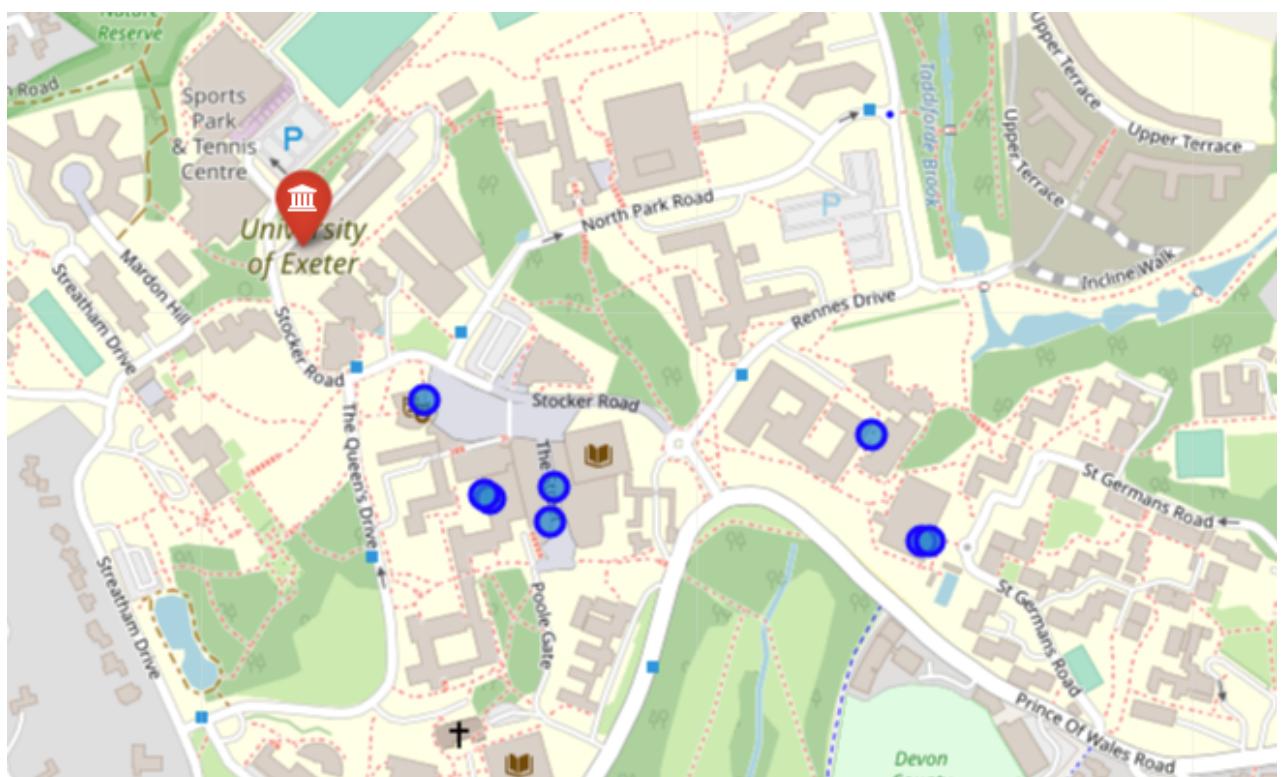
Exeter University has a secondary campus – St Luke's, which is located in the Newtown Ward of the City. This primarily houses those studying Medicine and is in close proximity to the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital.

From the map we can see that Portland Street is a popular place for those studying at this campus to live:

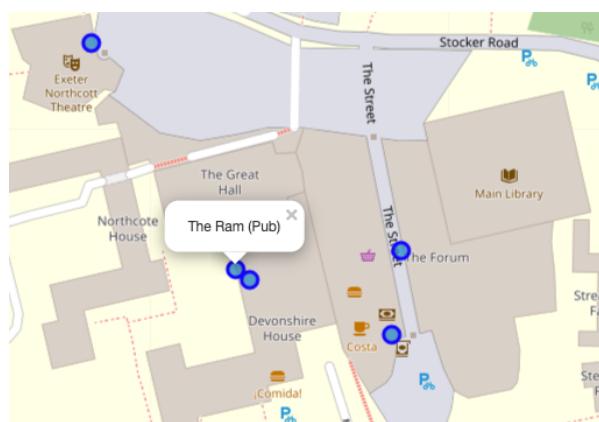


Data pulled from Foursquare using the Foursquare API showed that there were a number of venues listed on the main Exeter university campus. These included:

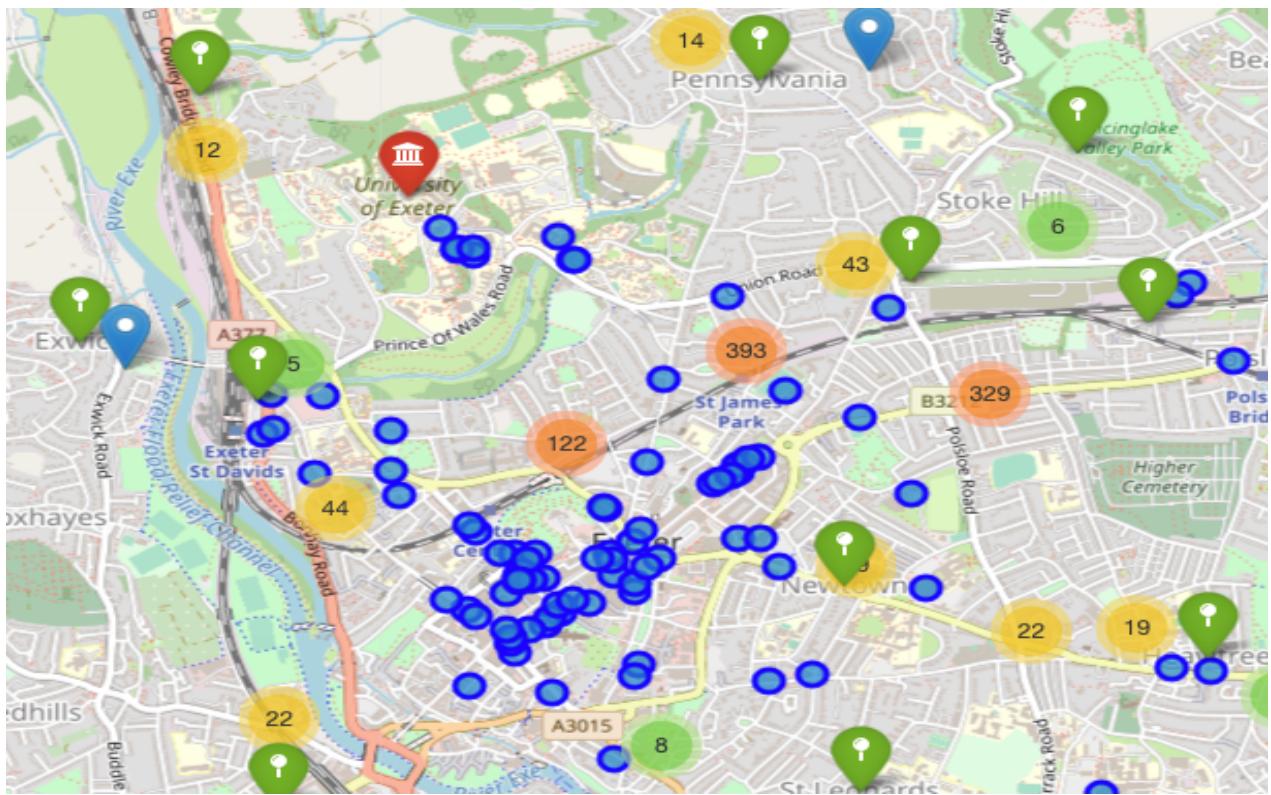
- Northcott Theatre
- Pret a Manger
- 2 x Costa Coffees
- The Lemon Grove Nightclub
- The Ram pub
- La Touche restaurant
- Market Place convenience store



This meant that there was a reasonable range of venues within the campus itself.



A much larger concentration of venues was, unsurprisingly found in the City Centre (blue circles indicate a venue):



Discussion

Being able to visualise the location of student houses, and the nearby venues and facilities should make it easier for students to locate their preferred areas, or even roads in which to live. They can check that there are houses with the right number of bedrooms, and if not look at splitting into different size groups and maybe targeting the same road, to remain in close proximity to their friendship group.

The map might also be useful for anyone looking to purchase a property in Exeter – perhaps as an investment – to let out as a student house. Understanding where other student houses are can guide that decision.

Likewise those buying a family home to live in might want to avoid a high density student house area, as these areas are likely to be noisier.

Conclusion

The largest concentration of student houses is found to the South East of the university, in the area of St James' Park. This area is situated between the university and the city centre where most of the venues are - making it a popular student area. It also has a train station, which connects in a few stops to the City's main train station at St David's.

There are student houses located in St David's, close to Exeter's main train station - also close to the university, but further away from the city centre venues. This location would suit students who prioritise being closer to the train station, or perhaps are less interested in the city centre venues.

Pennsylvania is also close to the East of the university campus, and is a residential area, but with no venues in close proximity, however there is a small selection situated on the university campus itself.

South of the City Centre is the university's St Luke's Campus, housing primarily students studying medicine. The most popular road in this area seems to be Portland Street with around 45 Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). There aren't many venues here, but medical students are known to work long hours, so this is unlikely to be a priority for them anyway.

There are some areas which have a high density of student houses, which might make those areas less attractive to families.