

## **Where in Exeter, UK, are the best places for students to live?**

### **Introduction/Business Problem**

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 resistency). 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 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 near 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 use 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 train stations, social venues and sports facilities – which could help students identify which areas of the city would suit their requirements the most.

Once this data has been mapped, then it should be possible to identify where in the City has student houses, and what other facilities are nearby, to help students identify the best place for them to live.