

Purpose-Built Student Accommodation Pipeline Review — Technical Note

Update to the PBSA pipeline evidence following the March 2026 Student Accommodation Update Report

Executive Summary

This review provides an updated assessment of Nottingham's Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) development pipeline based on direct engagement with developers, agents, operators and Council officers, supported by a review of wider market and development evidence. The review was undertaken to establish a more accurate understanding of the status and likely delivery of consented PBSA schemes held in the Council's PBSA Dashboard.

This review was undertaken between May and August 2026, ahead of the 2026/27 academic year. Going forward, reviews will be undertaken on a more regular basis to ensure the PBSA pipeline remains up to date and reflects the latest market and development activity.

The findings indicate that PBSA delivery is expected to be substantially lower than recent delivery rates. The overall pipeline has reduced from 5,519 bedspaces across 52 schemes to 4,354 bedspaces across 45 schemes. Only 1,828 bedspaces are expected to be delivered over the next three years (443 in 2026/27, 434 in 2027/28 and 951 in 2028/29), with the remaining 2,526 bedspaces not anticipated to come forward until 2029/30 or later.

The review also highlights increasing uncertainty within the longer-term pipeline. Although the majority of consented schemes remain active, a number have been delayed, and seven schemes are no longer progressing. Future delivery will be influenced by market conditions, viability considerations and changing development priorities, making long-term forecasts more uncertain.

Purpose of the Review

This review should be read alongside the Student Accommodation Update Report March 2026. It does not replace that report, but provides a focused update on the status and likely delivery of consented PBSA schemes, reflecting further engagement with developers, agents, operators and Council officers.

Promotion of additional student accommodation in the form of PBSA has been a key feature of the Council's strategy to mitigate the impacts associated with increasing student populations in Nottingham's neighbourhoods. However, the student accommodation market is now undergoing a period of transition. Although the number of students living in PBSA has continued to increase, PBSA supply has grown at a faster rate, while the wider pool of students requiring accommodation has reduced, reflecting changes such as declining international student numbers, affordability pressures and an increase in the number of students choosing to commute. This has occurred alongside a significant increase in the supply of PBSA bedspaces. As a result, overall PBSA vacancy rates have increased from consistently below 2% prior to 2023 to 12.7% in 2025/26, representing a material change in market conditions.

This is particularly evident in the studio market, where vacancy rates are higher at 16.1%, reflecting the combined effects of affordability pressures and changing student demand.

The strategic challenge facing the Council is therefore no longer solely how to accommodate rapid growth, but how to manage a maturing and increasingly segmented PBSA market. In light of this, a review of Nottingham's PBSA development pipeline has been undertaken. Previously, updates to the PBSA pipeline were made on a more ad hoc basis as new information became available; however, the scale of recent market change and the level of uncertainty around scheme delivery meant that a more systematic review was required.

The purpose of the review is to establish an up-to-date understanding of the status and anticipated delivery of approved schemes, ensuring that the Council maintains a robust and accurate evidence base to inform future planning policy and decision-making on student accommodation proposals. This also reflects the wider scrutiny focus on ensuring that future PBSA provision responds to demonstrable need and remains appropriate in a changing student accommodation market.

Methodology

Prior to this review, the city's consented PBSA pipeline comprised 52 schemes totalling 5,519 bedspaces expected to be delivered by the start of the 2029/30 academic year. To ensure the Council's evidence base accurately reflects current market conditions and the progress of individual developments, a detailed scheme-by-scheme review of the pipeline was undertaken to establish the current status of each development and its anticipated delivery timetable.

The review sought to validate the anticipated delivery of individual schemes rather than relying solely on planning status or standard construction assumptions. Developers, planning agents and PBSA operators were contacted directly by email and telephone to establish whether schemes remained active and, where applicable, to confirm anticipated delivery timescales. Input was also sought from Planning Officers and other relevant Council officers with knowledge of individual developments.

To supplement this engagement, a range of additional evidence sources was reviewed, including planning activity associated with each development, the discharge of planning conditions, site visits, construction activity, marketing information via PBSA operators' webpages, funding announcements such as press releases and other publicly available indicators of progress. Information from these sources was considered alongside feedback received from developers, agents and Council officers to inform an assessment of each scheme. Taken together, this provides a more comprehensive assessment of Nottingham's PBSA pipeline than was previously available.

While direct confirmation was obtained for the majority of schemes reviewed, this was not possible in every case. Where evidence from developers or agents was unavailable, the assessment was informed by the wider empirical evidence available. Consistent with the definition of 'Deliverable' set out in the Glossary Annex of the August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), schemes benefitting from detailed (full) planning permission, or those not involving major development, have been treated as deliverable by default, unless clear evidence identified that they will not be delivered within the five-year window. Conversely, major schemes holding only outline planning permission have only been included where clear evidence demonstrates a realistic prospect of delivery within five years. In a small number of cases where no substantive evidence was available, delivery

assumptions were informed by the date planning permission was granted and typical construction timescales, influenced by the scale and complexity of the individual schemes. For example, smaller conversion schemes were generally assumed to be capable of delivery within a shorter timeframe, while larger and more complex schemes were assumed to require a longer delivery period.

Findings

The review indicates that anticipated PBSA delivery is lower and more uncertain than previously assumed.

The original pipeline included 52 schemes delivering a total of 5,519 bedspaces expected to be delivered by the start of the 2029/30 academic year. Following the review undertaken, the expected delivery now includes 45 schemes delivering a total of 4,354 bedspaces to be delivered by 2029/30 and beyond, which is outlined in Figure 1.

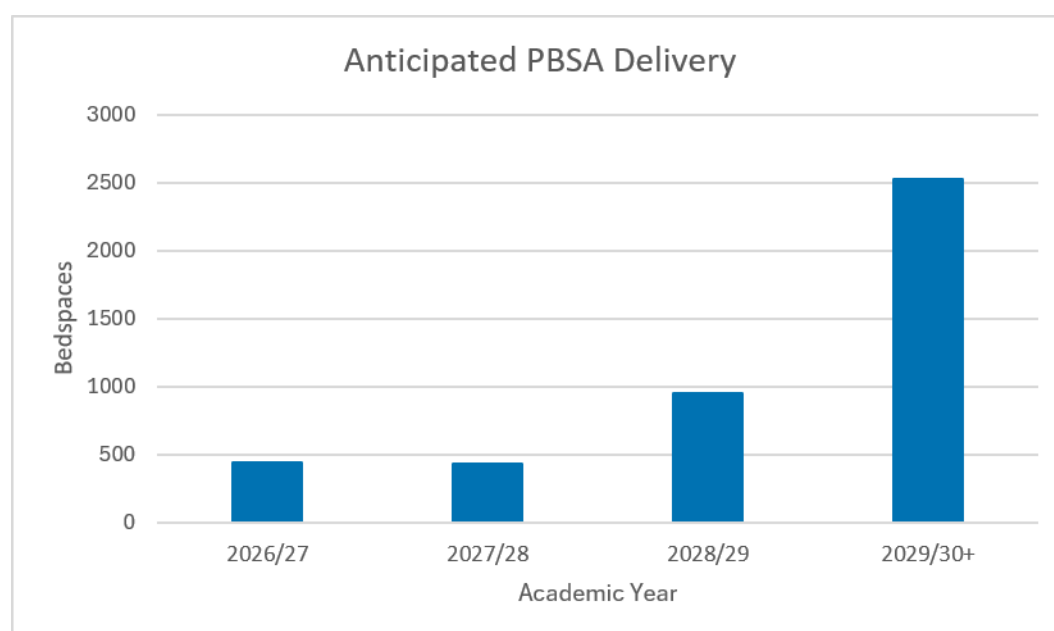


Figure 1: Anticipated PBSA Delivery in Nottingham City, 2026/27 – 2029/30+

Over the last five years, delivery has averaged around 2,086 beds per year, reaching a high of 2,775 beds in 2025/26. The review identifies a significant slowdown in anticipated delivery over the next three years. Based on current evidence, delivery is expected be 443 bedspaces in 2026/27, 434 bedspaces in 2027/28 and 951 bedspaces in 2028/29. This shows that PBSA delivery over the next three academic years is likely to be substantially lower than recent delivery rates.

The pronounced peak in the 2029/30+ category largely reflects a reassessment of delivery timescales across the consented pipeline. The pre-review profile was based on anticipated delivery dates associated with planning permissions and standard development assumptions. The review found that, while many schemes remain active, a number are now expected to come forward later than previously anticipated. Consequently, bedspaces have been redistributed from earlier years into later years, resulting in a more back-loaded delivery profile.

It should be noted that 2029/30+ represents a broad category capturing schemes anticipated to be delivered from the 2029/30 academic year onwards. The concentration of bedspaces within this category should therefore not be interpreted as an expectation that all such development will be completed all in 2029/30, or indeed that all remaining consented schemes will ultimately be delivered given the changing PBSA market. Rather, the review highlights increasing uncertainty within the longer-term pipeline, with some schemes potentially subject to further delay, lapse, or alternative forms of development (such as co-living). The 2029/30+ category should therefore be viewed as an indication of potential future delivery rather than a definitive forecast, as forecasting further ahead is increasingly difficult and the category captures all schemes expected beyond 2028/29.

Implications for the Pipeline

The review has resulted in a reduction in the overall anticipated PBSA pipeline from 5,519 bedspaces across 52 schemes to 4,354 bedspaces across 45 schemes. This represents a reduction of 1,165 bedspaces (21.1%) and seven schemes compared with the previously assumed pipeline.

Figure 2 demonstrates a significant shift in the timing of anticipated delivery, with a greater proportion of bedspaces now expected beyond 2029/30.

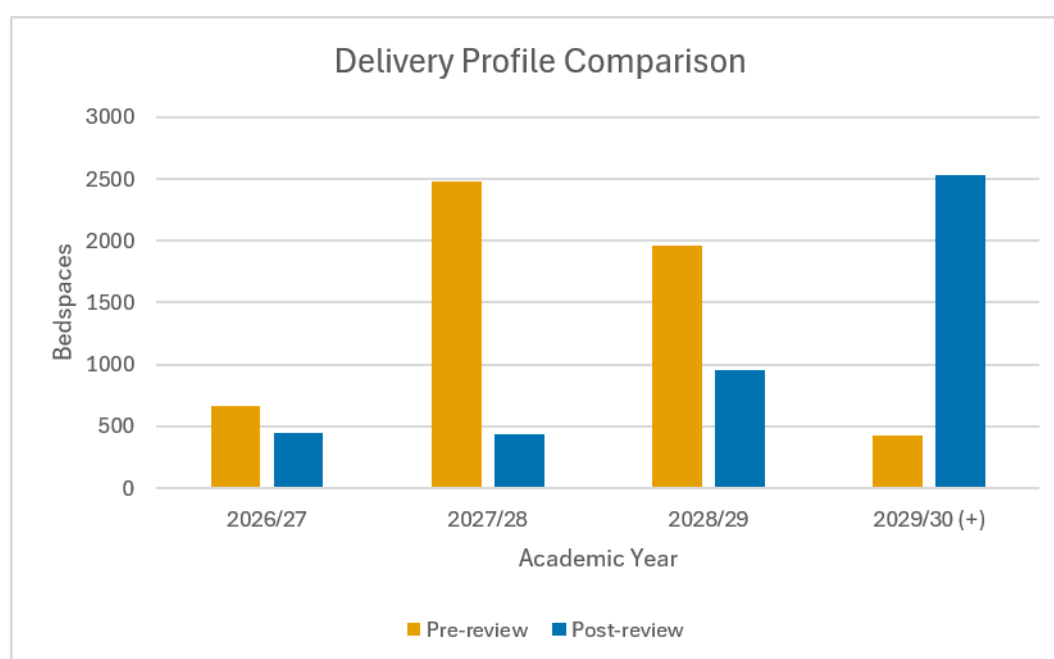


Figure 2: Comparison of Previous and Revised PBSA Delivery Profile, 2026/27, 2029/30 (+)

This is particularly evident within the 2029/30 (+) category. For the purposes of this comparison, pre-review figures represent bedspaces anticipated to be delivered by the start of the 2029/30 academic year, whereas post-review figures represent bedspaces anticipated to be delivered in 2029/30 and beyond. The increase in this category therefore reflects the re-phasing of a number of schemes into later years rather than additional bedspace provision.

The review found that the majority of consented PBSA schemes remain active and capable of delivery, although delivery of some developments is now expected to occur later than previously anticipated. However, it was also reported that seven PBSA schemes are no longer progressing.

These findings represent a shift in how the PBSA pipeline should be viewed. Prior to this review, consented schemes were often assumed to be deliverable within relatively predictable timeframes. However, increasing uncertainty within the longer-term pipeline, together with evidence that a number of schemes are no longer progressing, suggests a more complex picture. Delays, market conditions and viability considerations are having a greater influence on delivery outcomes, meaning that planning permission alone provides less certainty over future delivery than was previously assumed. Given this uncertainty, the pipeline should continue to be monitored regularly, with particular attention to schemes in the 2029/30+ (and rolled forward in future years) category and any permissions approaching expiry.

It should be noted that the analysis is limited to schemes located within the Nottingham City boundary. As a result, it does not reflect anticipated PBSA delivery elsewhere within the Greater Nottingham area. In particular, the delivery trajectory for 2026/27 is expected to be higher at the Greater Nottingham level due to the anticipated completion of Beckett House in Beeston town centre (Broxtowe Borough Council), which will provide 419 studio bedspaces.

Conclusions

The review indicates that Nottingham's PBSA pipeline is both smaller and more uncertain.

Through direct engagement with developers, agents, operators and Council officers, together with consideration of wider market intelligence and development activity, the review has established a robust and up-to-date picture of Nottingham's PBSA pipeline based on the evidence currently available.

The findings indicate that the deliverable PBSA pipeline is now lower. Whilst the original pipeline identified 52 schemes delivering 5,519 bedspaces by the start of the 2029/30 academic year, the review estimates that the current pipeline comprises 45 schemes delivering 4,354 bedspaces in total, with 1,828 bedspaces expected over the next three academic years and the remaining 2,526 bedspaces falling within the 2029/30+ category. This reduction reflects confirmation that a number of consented schemes are not progressing at the time of review, together with revised delivery assumptions for several active developments.

The results also highlight increasing uncertainty surrounding the delivery of consented PBSA schemes. Delays, market conditions, viability considerations and changing development priorities are having a significant influence on delivery outcomes, meaning planning permission alone provides less certainty over future delivery than was previously assumed.

The revised pipeline set out in this report therefore represents the Council's best current estimate of likely PBSA delivery based on the evidence available at the time of review. Whilst future market conditions, funding arrangements and development decisions may continue to influence delivery outcomes, the findings provide a significantly more accurate and realistic basis for monitoring PBSA supply and informing future planning policy and decision-making than reliance on planning permissions alone.