



LETTER TO KEITH HILL

Keith Hill MP
Minister for Housing
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
26 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2WH

4th December 2003

Dear Keith,

Housing Bill

I want to set something up that lobbies you in respect of the forthcoming bill. I have done a considerable amount of work on the issue of HMOs, as you know full well. Some of this has been with local communities and the local authority in Nottingham . Some of it has been in conjunction with other colleagues who represent university cities/constituencies.

The local authority in Nottingham have agreed to bring a group of local people to the House in order to press for specific points in the legislation. I know that some of our colleagues would wish to do the same and I thought it might be sensible to try and identify a date when you could say a few words to all of us at the same time rather than being pursued in dribs and drabs.

Caroline Watson from my parliamentary office will be ringing in the next few days to see if we can identify a date when you might be free probably for a lunchtime meeting in the middle of the week.

Just to simplify matters I thought it might be helpful if I identified the three themes that seem to unite people in this lobby. In many respects these are in line with aspects raised in the report of the Select Committee –

1. Definition of an HMO . Most groups recognise that there are good reasons for the complexity of the definition. The concern is that there isn't a succinct statement of it anywhere. Filling this gap would be helpful.
2. Mandatory Licensing . Whilst this is welcomed there are enormous reservations about allowing so many properties to be exempt from it. It has to include two story properties and apply to four or more residents rather than five.
3. Discretionary Licensing . Most of the local groups believe that all HMOs should be subject to licensing. The de minimus position must however be that this should not be necessary for local authorities to require central government approval for such schemes. If licensing is deemed to be locally appropriate it ought also to be easy to introduce at this local level.

In order to build incentives into this you might also wish to consider, in the case of HMOs they should be required to pay business rates rather than council tax and that these payments should go direct to the local authority. In this way you could avoid imposing any fee for licensing at all. The money would just come out of revenues that are not currently paid in respect of student properties.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Simpson MP

alansimpsonmp.co.uk Labour 