

Draft for Consultation

Student Housing Guidance

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• EDINBURGH •
YOUR COUNCIL – YOUR CITY

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This constitutes non-statutory planning guidance that supports the application of Edinburgh City Local Plan Policy Hou 10 and the emerging Edinburgh Local Development Plan (LDP) Policy Hou 8, which both state:

Planning permission will be granted for purpose-built student accommodation where:

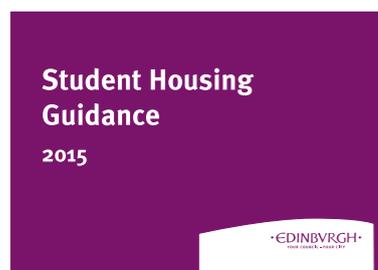
- a. The location is appropriate in terms of access to public transport and university and college facilities; and

- b. The proposal will not result in an excessive concentration of student accommodation in any one locality

The guidance sets out how the Council will encourage the further provision of purpose-built student accommodation in locations which balance the needs of the existing community and the need for general housing. This guidance applies to new buildings and changes of use for student accommodation.



Misc: Radio Telecommunications, Open Space Strategy etc.



Context

The Council recognises the important contribution that higher education makes to the city. Aim 3 of the emerging LDP recognises higher education as one of the key sectors in contributing to the strength of Edinburgh's economy.

Analysis of 2011 census data shows that full-time students comprise over 12% of Edinburgh's population. The most visible impact of students is in the accommodation sector. This comes in a number of forms including university-provided halls of residence, private purpose-built student accommodation, or shared properties in the private rented sector, often in the form of licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).



Student accommodation is defined as managed communal accommodation which forms student's primary residence. This form of development shall be considered to fall outwith a specified use class and is defined as Sui Generis. Planning permission is therefore required for a change of use to or from student accommodation including other Sui Generis uses such as flats.

Student population and concentration

Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) shows a 26.6% increase in the number of full time students at the three universities in the Council's area (University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University and Heriot-Watt University) between 2001 and 2012. The HESA data also shows that the number of full time students since 2011/12 has remained almost constant at just under 44,000.

The total number of students does not automatically translate into demand for purpose-built student accommodation, as a large number of students choose to stay at home or live in privately rented accommodation. Where students have to rent accommodation they have gravitated towards privately rented housing stock. This, and the relative lack of purpose-built student accommodation, continues to fuel the demand for HMOs.

The limited provision of purpose-built student accommodation combined with the increase in student population has resulted in a noticeable increase in student concentration in and around the city centre, as well as expansion into Leith and along arterial routes in the west of the city. The most densely concentrated areas are located within easy walking distance of the University of Edinburgh's George Square campus, as identified on Map 1. Map 2 uses the 2011 census data to show full time students (ages 16+) as a percentage of the total population. These are split into data zones

which are fixed small areas, created from census output areas.

Impact of student accommodation

A high student population in these central areas can bring benefits, for example in supporting local services. Purpose-built accommodation can reduce potential antisocial aspects of locating significant numbers of students within the community. However, the quantity of students can place pressures on the physical and social infrastructure of an area and change the area's character. The concentration of students, as a proportion of the transient population, can undermine the social and physical fabric which defines a community and place.

Historically the increasing number of licensed HMOs has led to the loss of larger flats, which might otherwise have been occupied by families with children. This has resulted in:

- a rapid turnover of population;
- less stable communities; and
- properties left vacant for extended periods in the summer.

Despite the increasing proportion of purpose built student accommodation there is no evidence to suggest the number of students living in general housing or HMOs has reduced (Map 2). Therefore there is a need for more purpose built student housing in order to free up general housing stock through an increased offer and increased competition. It is preferable that student needs are met as far as possible in well managed and regulated schemes.

A significant element of Edinburgh's character is the balanced sustainable communities which make up the whole city including the city centre. These communities are made up of groups of people with common interests which are located in one place. Balanced

sustainable communities require the dominant residential component to be permanent and not transient. The student population, (where not living at home), can be a significant element of the transient population. While students make many positive contributions to society, in excessive concentrations they can significantly change an area's character and potentially undermine a community. Where the student population is dominant, exceeding 50% of the population, there will be a greater potential imbalance within the community. This may result in a poor quality of place, a diminished sense of community and make an area less attractive to all sections of the population.

The existing level of students living centrally, is a result of a number of historic factors including, the attraction of city centre living, the availability of suitable accommodation and the location of further education buildings. It is logical to locate purpose-built student accommodation close to campuses, however, this must be balanced with the needs of the existing communities and the suitability of sites for housing to meet the need identified in the LDP. These considerations are reflected in locational and design guidance criteria a) and b), including the support for development within campus and the application of a 50% threshold within 800m walking distance.

In recognition of the services required by students and the economic benefits students bring to the city including their contribution to supporting local services, and in line with the Town Centre First principle set out in Scottish Planning Policy, an intermediate threshold of 40% is set out in relation to town centres.

Locations outwith main campuses and defined Town Centres are less suitable in meeting the needs of students locally and sustainably and this is reflected in the lower concentration level of 30%. Where access to public transport facilities is good, purpose-built accommodation will generally be acceptable up to 30%. Good access to university and college facilities by public transport is defined as being within 400m walking distance of a public transport stop/halt which provides direct access to a main campus at a minimum frequency of four services per hour at peak times.

Purpose-built student accommodation can have a significant impact on the physical environment and the overall quality of a place. Creating Places - A policy statement on architecture and place for Scotland sets out the six qualities of successful places which all development should consider. It is particularly important that the design of purpose-built student accommodation should create safe and pleasant places for residents and the wider community, create a mix of uses avoiding a single land use and ensure adaptability.

Edinburgh has a housing requirement set out in the Local Development Plan (LDP). It is the role of the LDP to determine how the housing requirement up to 2024 will be met, taking account of the contribution made from existing sites and other allowances such as completions from windfall sites and demolitions.

The windfall assumption is set out in the Housing Land Study (June 2014). Meeting this windfall assumption relies on brownfield sites identified as having a high development potential to be delivered for general housing. It is appropriate to apply specific guidance upon these sites to encourage the delivery of much needed housing and help mitigate the impact of purpose built student housing on communities.

Large mono-use development has significant potential to harm the character of an area. Locational and design guidance criterion f) seeks to guide the mix within larger proposals to ensure a balance between the need for student accommodation and housing, while mitigating the impact upon the character of an area.



Locational and design guidance

The criteria in ECLP Policy Hou 10 and LDP Policy Hou 8 will be applied to proposals for student housing using the locational and design guidance set out below:

- a. In locations within or sharing a boundary with (or separated only by a road) a main university or college campus, as identified in Map 1, student housing will generally be acceptable.
- b. Outwith locations identified in a) and within 800m walking distance from a university or college campus boundary, as identified in Maps 5-13, student housing will generally be acceptable provided it will not result in a student population of over 50% in the locality (data zone).*
- c. Outwith locations identified in a) and b) and within a 400m walking distance from a defined town centre boundary, as identified in Maps 14-21, student housing will generally be acceptable provided it will not result in a student population of over 40% in the locality (data zone).*
- d. Outwith locations identified in a), b) and c), where there is good access to university and college facilities by public transport, walking and cycling, student housing will generally be acceptable provided it will not result in a student population of over 30% in the locality (data zone).
- e. Elsewhere student housing will generally not be permitted.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned guidance the following points should be observed:

- a. Outwith locations identified in a) sites identified as a high probability of delivering housing within Map 4 taken from the LDP Housing Land Study (June 2014) and sites with greater than 0.25ha developable area must comprise a proportion of housing as part of the proposed development, to balance the mix of land uses and to contribute to housing land need. On these sites the new build residential net floor area shall represent

a minimum of 50% of the total gross new build housing and student accommodation floor area. Additional alternative uses may be required in addition to student accommodation and housing.

- b. Development should be designed to positively contribute to place through the location of alternative ground floor uses where this is characteristic of the street or area.

*The 2011 census data showing 16+ full-time students as a percentage of the total population should be used as a starting point in the assessment. As 17 year olds comprised 10.7% or 1,150 of the new intake for all Edinburgh universities in 2012, data for 16-24 years old is used in the assessment calculation. Students living in the same residence as their parents are likely to be permanent members of the community and therefore it is reasonable to remove these students from the overall student proportion of the data as they are not judged to be transient.

The guidance will not be applied in isolation and consideration must be given to other matters addressed in the LDP and planning guidelines including The Edinburgh Design Guidance. Development should be of an appropriate design to positively contribute to the areas character or appearance. Development should accord with the Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing Guidance.

Student accommodation is a primary place of residence and therefore it is critical that design is of a high quality with adequate amenity to contribute to healthy and sustainable lifestyles. The Edinburgh Design Guidance 2013 applies to all development, and of particular relevance to amenity is section 2.9 Daylight, sunlight, privacy and outlook. Where development cannot reasonably accord with the associated technical guidance, which sets out the minimum standards required, development will not be supported.

For the purpose of the application of locational and design guidance criterion f) set out above, developable area is the application site area less any areas of existing highway retained within the boundary.

List of Figures

Map 1 identifies the main university and college campuses where it is deemed that further student housing would be acceptable in principle.

Map 2 (a) & Map 2 (b) illustrates student concentrations based on the 2001 and 2011 census.

Map 3 identifies the town centre boundaries, as defined in the Edinburgh City Local Plan and emerging LDP.

Map 4 identifies sites in the LDP Housing Land Study (March 2014)

Maps 5 – 13 illustrate the 800m/10 minute walk from each main campus

Maps 14 – 21 illustrate the 400m/5 minute walk from each defined town centre

Table 1 illustrates the methodology table used to calculate student concentration



Assessment methodology

Proposals should be accompanied by a planning statement justifying the suitability of the location for purpose-built student housing. This applies to all proposals except those within or sharing a boundary with a main university campus.

The protection and formation of balanced communities with adequate amenity is a concern in areas where the transient population is concentrated. For this reason, applications should be accompanied by information on existing student housing provision and the impact of the proposal upon the population demographics. Excessive concentration of students is defined differently for different situations to encourage student accommodation in suitable locations and while achieving balanced sustainable communities;

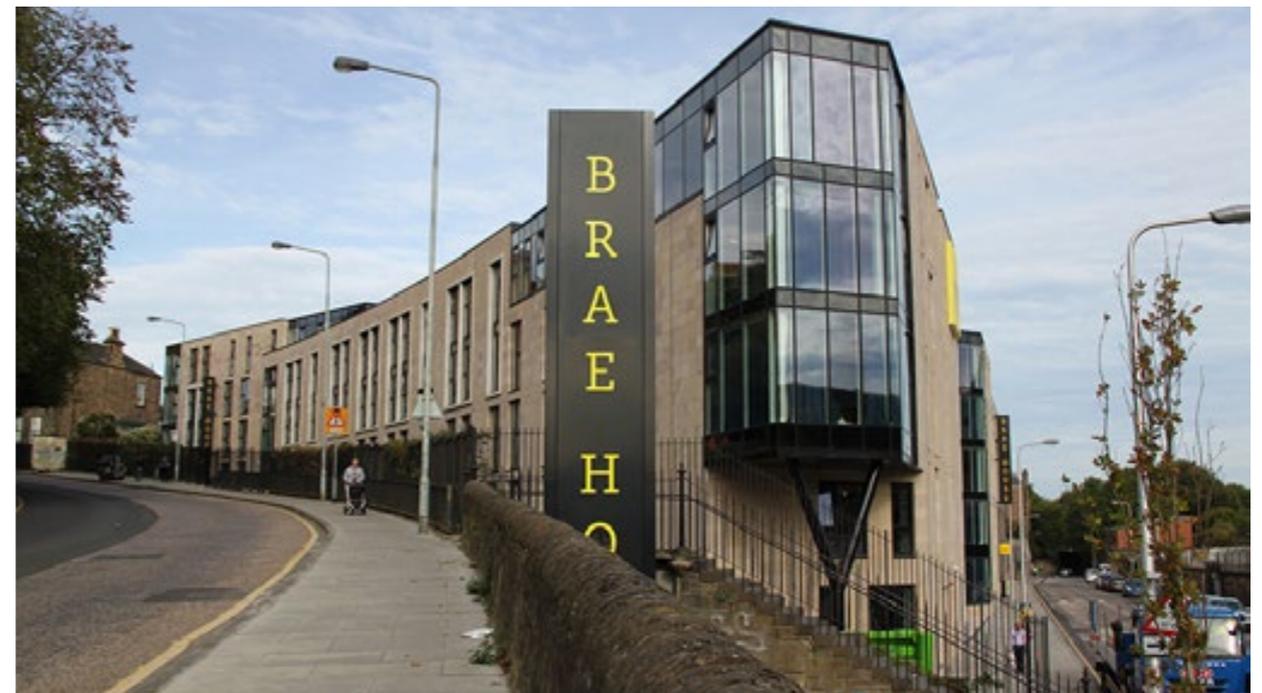
- Over 50% within a 800m/10 min walking of a university or college campus
- Over 40% within a 400m/5 min walking of a town centre
- Over 30% elsewhere

These levels are intended to address the issues, as identified in the 'Impact of student accommodation' section above.

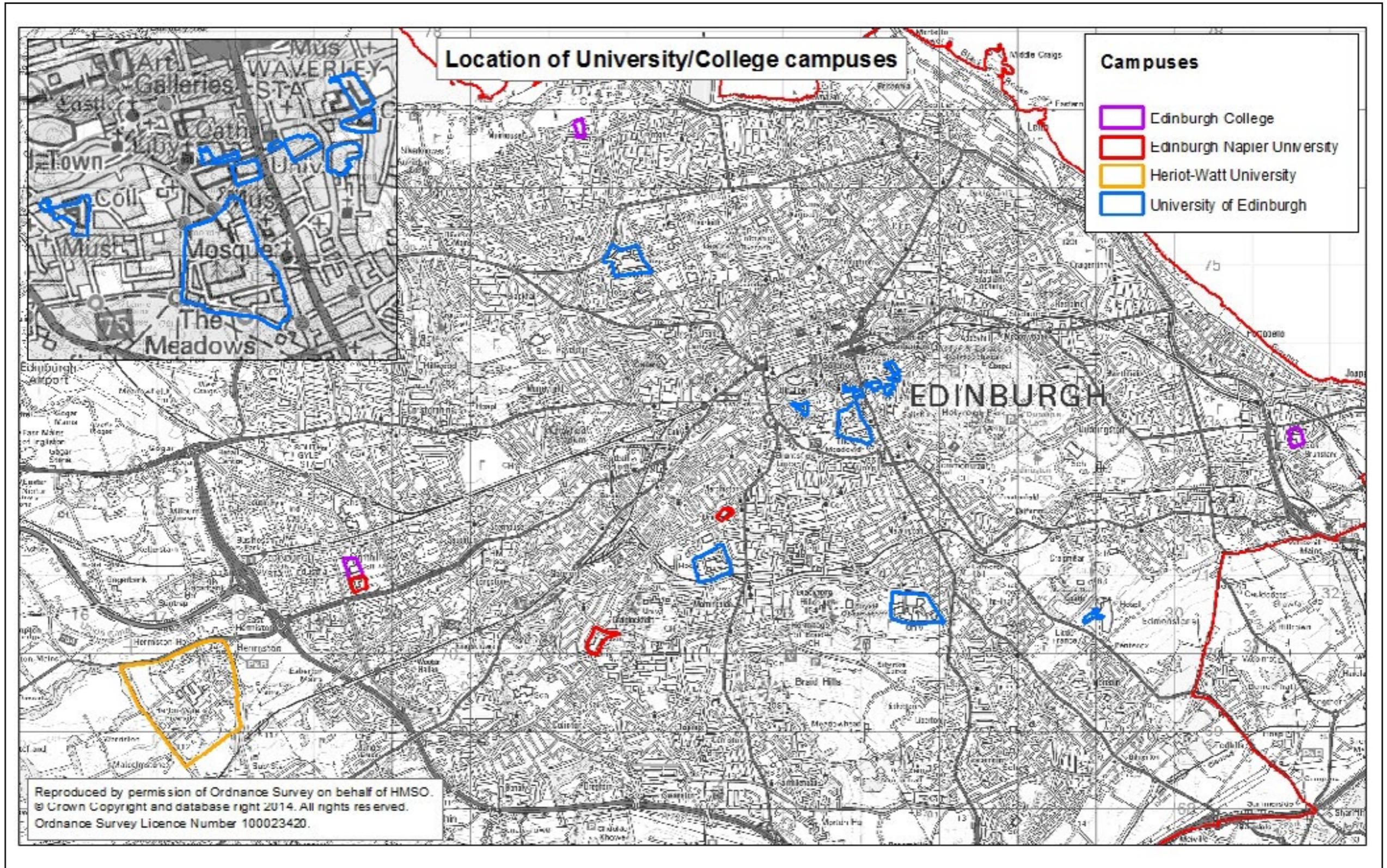
Locality is defined by census data zones. These are introduced across the whole of Scotland by Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics. They each represent the key small area statistical geography in Scotland and are common, stable and consistent. Data zones are groups of census output areas and as such, provide readily accessible population data. Where the proposed site straddles or lies along the boundary of two or more data zones, the data should be combined to provide a more realistic representation of the locality in which the site is located.

Supporting statements are required to use the Council's concentration calculation table (Table 1). The information relating to student and general housing figures can be obtained from the Council. The Council holds the following information:

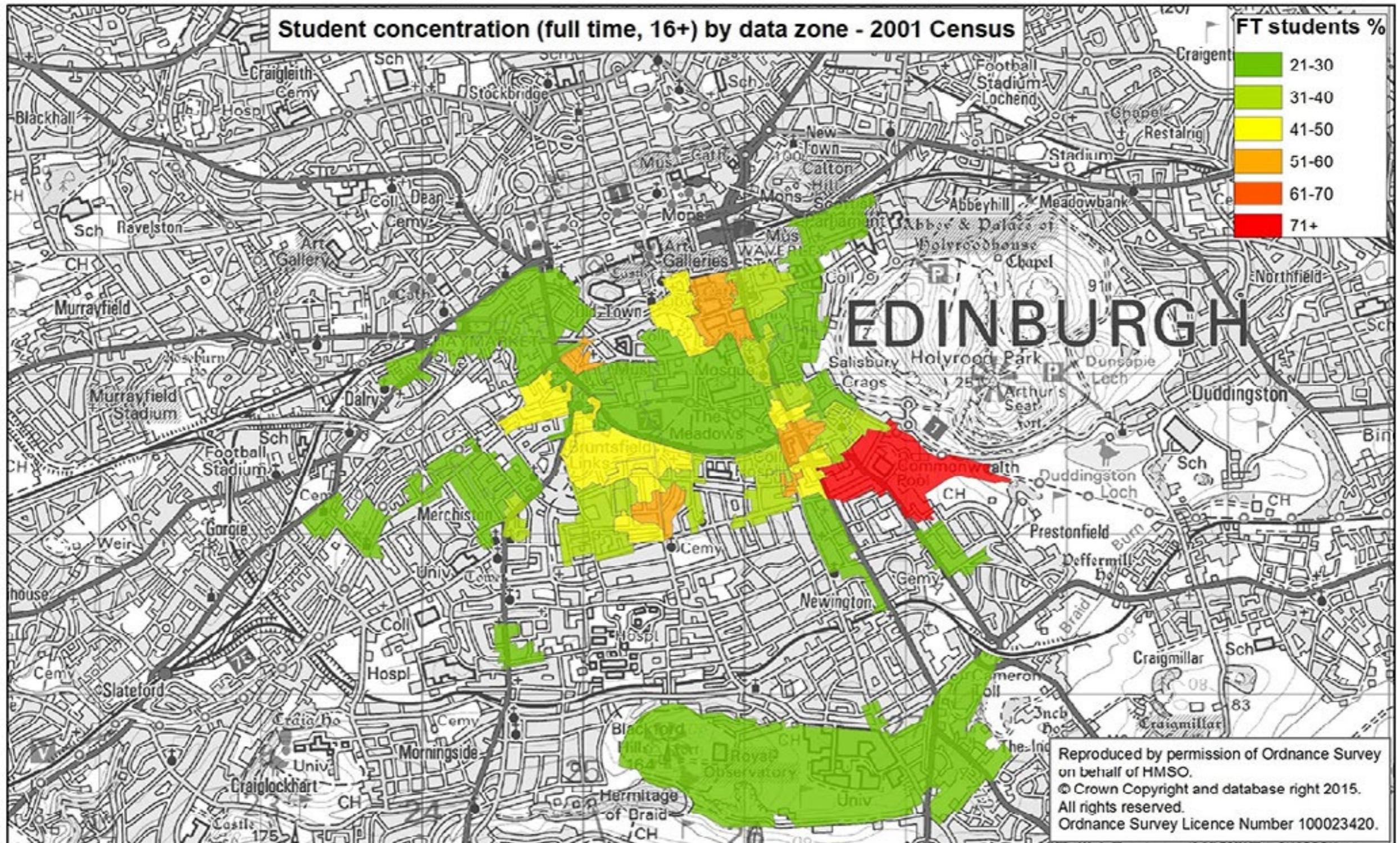
- Population figures for each data zone.
- A schedule of planning applications for student accommodation and general housing development. This includes information on their status (i.e. proposal of application notice, pending consideration, granted, minded to grant) and if permission has been implemented.
- Housing Land Audit - includes housing sites under construction and completed sites in the adopted local plans.
- [LDP Housing Land Study \(June 2014\)](#)



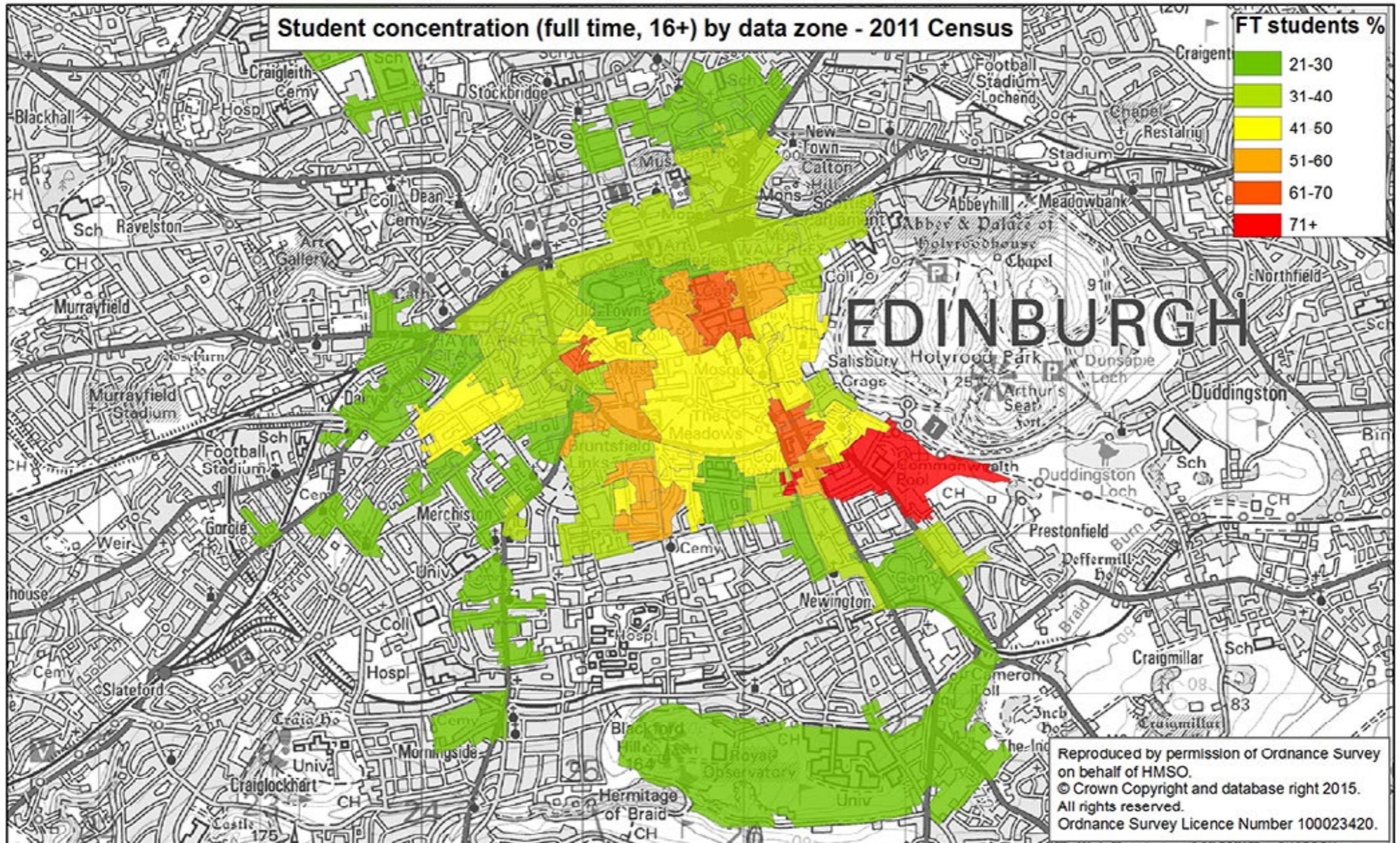
Map 1: Locations of university and college campuses



Map 2 (a): 2001 census data on student population



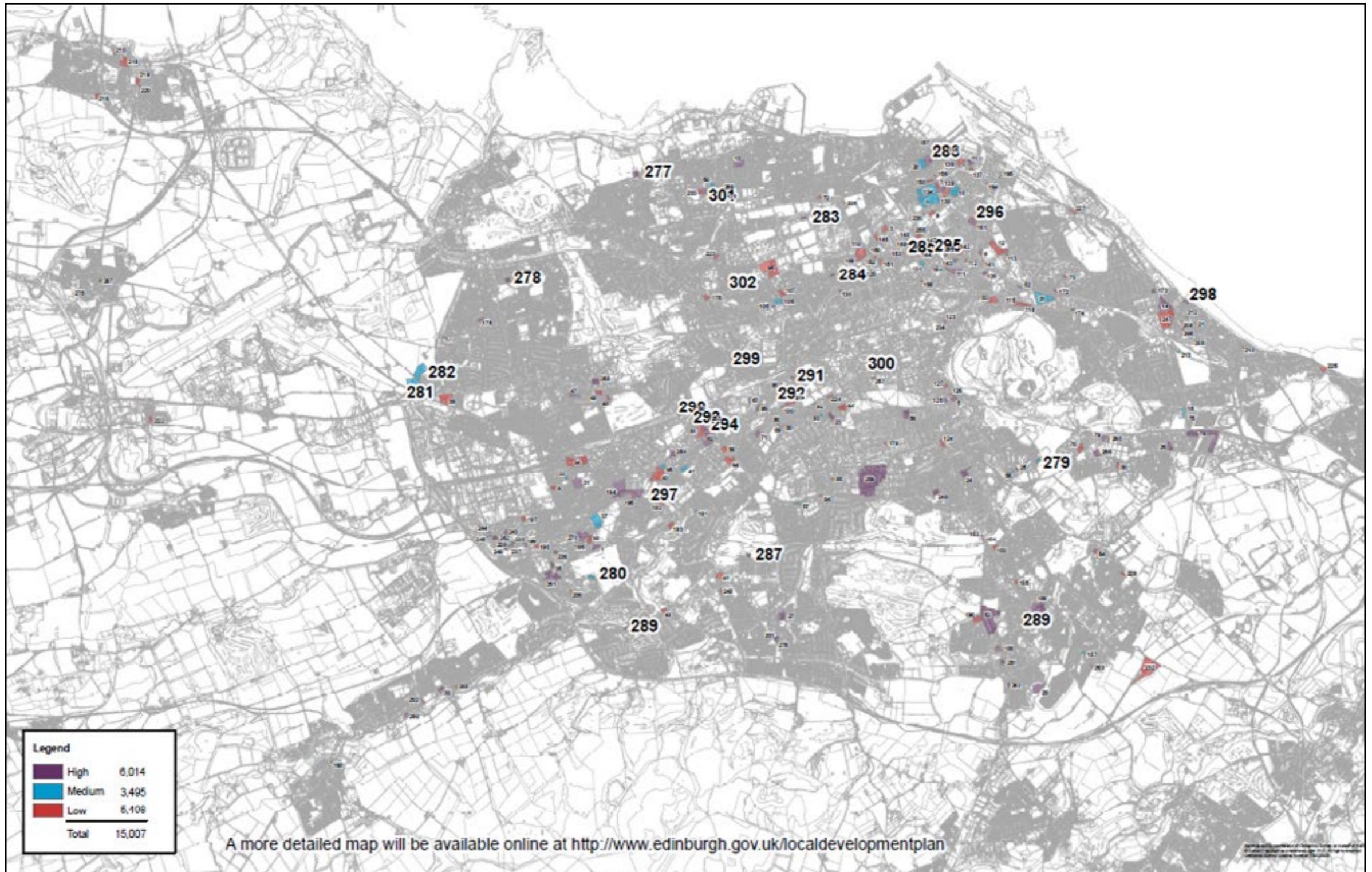
Map 2 (b): 2011 census data on student population



Map 3: Town Centres as defined in the adopted Local Plan and emerging LDP



Map 4: LDP Housing Land Study – potential sites for housing (June 2014)



This information is available online as part of the Edinburgh Local Development Plan Second Proposed Plan interactive

Maps 5 - 13 showing 10 min walk time from student campuses



Maps 14 - 21 showing 5 min walk time from town centres

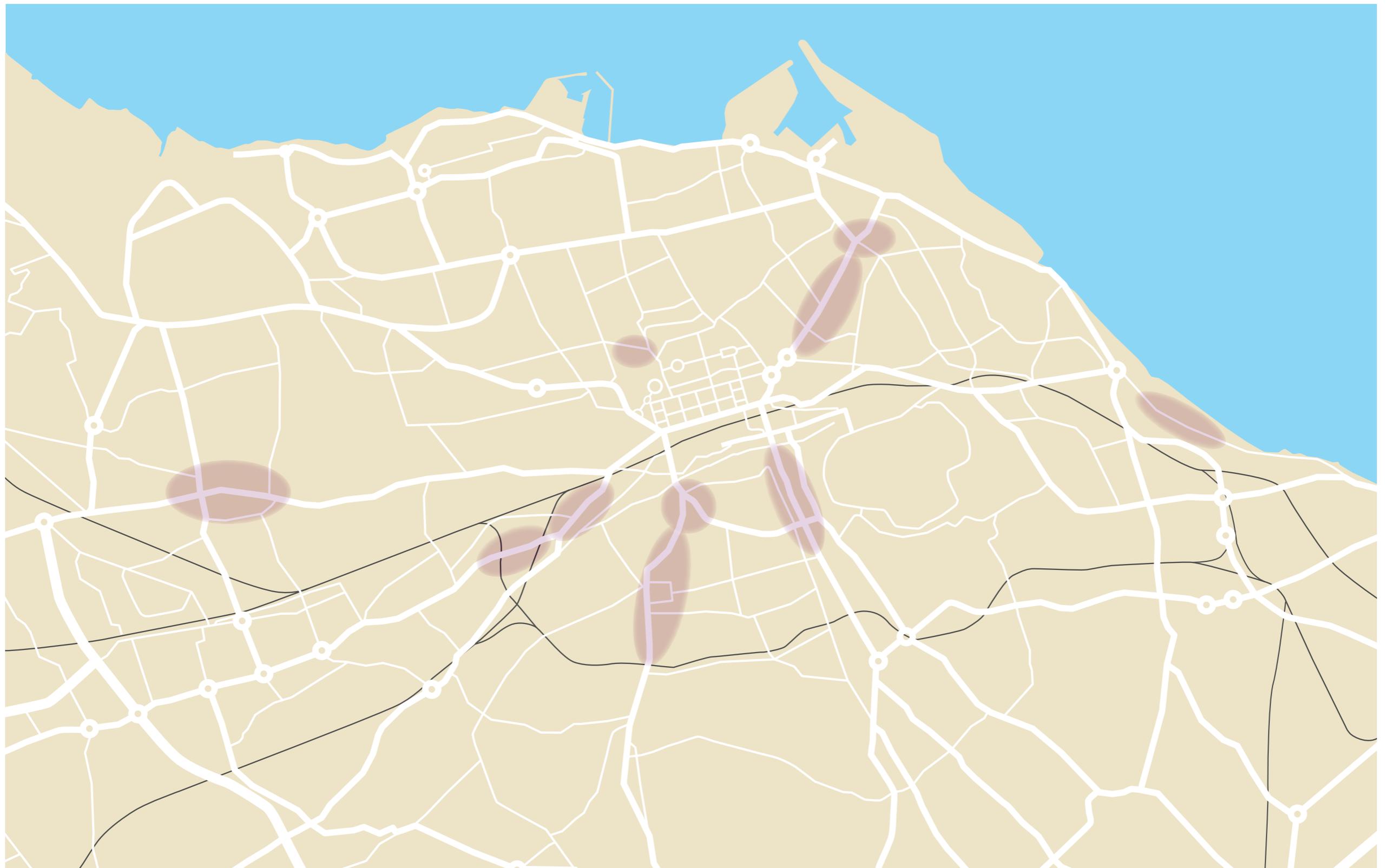


Table 1: Concentration calculation table

Student Housing Concentration

	Data zone
2011 total Census population for the Data Zone*	
2011 student Census population for the Data Zone*	
2011 Student Census population as a percentage of total population (%) less students living with parent/s	
Number of additional student bed spaces completed after 2011**	0.00
Number of additional student bed spaces in the pipeline after 2011***	0.00
Number of additional general housing units completed after 2011**	0.00
Number of additional general housing units in the pipeline after 2011***	0.00
Local household size for each Data Zone*	
Total number of additional projected general housing occupants	0.00
Total number of additional general housing occupants after 2001	0.00
Total number of additional student bed spaces in the Data Zone after 2001	0.00
Proposed number of student bed spaces****	
Overall total student population in the Data Zone since 2001 plus proposed number	0.00
Overall total student and general housing population since 2001	0.00
Total proposed student population as a percentage of the overall total population (student and general housing) (%)	

* Information obtained from Table 1

** Figure calculated from development which has now been completed since 2011

*** Figure calculated from development which is still under construction, pending determination or in the pre-application process since 2011 and includes Local Plan Allocations for Housing

**** Number of student bed spaces being proposed by the applicant