

# USI Student Accommodation Position Paper

## 2023-2026

# USI Campaigns Strategy Committee

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# Introduction

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the representative body of 374,000 students across the island of Ireland and is an entirely student-led organisation. We are comprised of further and higher education member students’ unions across the island, both North and South, and seek to protect and enhance education, the rights of students, and the ability of all to access third-level education.

This position paper sets out the USI view on the current state of student accommodation availability. The accommodation crisis gripping the country requires clear and sustained action to ensure those who are being faced with spiralling rents, unsafe conditions and homelessness are protected. The Government’s housing strategy, Housing for All (2021) fails to adequately set out a plan for the development of new and affordable student accommodation. Furthermore, the Student Accommodation Strategy (2016) was written in line with the Government’s lapsed housing policy, Rebuilding Ireland. While the Student Accommodation Strategy makes projections up to 2024, a quarterly progress report on the strategy has not been published since Q3 of 2019. The lack of up-to-date data on the progress of the strategy, especially considering the effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on student access to affordable accommodation, has allowed the Government to avoid being held to account on the failures of the strategy.

This paper is an extensive piece of work that outlines the position of the Union of Students in Ireland in relation to the accommodation crisis including but not limited to supply, cost, and regulation. It will form the basis of all our lobbying efforts in the future. We believe students should have the right to safe, suitable, and affordable accommodation while attending college and we will continue to lobby and campaign to ensure that goal is achieved.

# Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)

Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) is student accommodation specifically built to meet the needs and demands of students. They range from studios to apartments with several private or shared bedrooms. PBSA is positive model of student accommodation and includes accessible rooms for students who need it.

**National Student Accommodation Strategy (NSAS)**

The National Student Accommodation Strategy was set out to create a strategy towards an important action in the Government’s overall plan to accelerate housing supply. The strategy was designed to ensure that there is an increased level of supply of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). The National Student Accommodation Strategy sets out a projection of 28,000 new beds built for students by 2024. However, while the NSAS was initially followed up by quarterly strategy updates to inform on the progress of these builds, a strategy update has not been released since Q3 2019. As a result, there are no up to date figures on the amount of builds that have been completed under the strategy. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant delay in many projects, but due to the lack of strategy updates we are unsure as to the extent to which it has affected the projected new builds.

The strategy also focuses on Digs as a solution to the student accommodation crisis, with initial aims of increasing the number of students taking up Digs accommodation to around 4,000 per year by 2019. This projected increase was conditional based on the continuation of the USI #HomesForStudy project. This USI project lost funding and as a result, the campaign was ended. The quarterly strategy updates did not provide data on the increased amount of digs accommodation places or where the increase in beds were located.

### *USI position*

* USI has a number of concerns about the NSAS, and the lack of up to date progress reports on the strategy.
  + The strategy outlines an unmet demand for 23,634 bed spaces – outlining a failure in the policy to house a huge number of students.
  + The strategy outlines how digs are an important solution to the student accommodation shortage, however the strategy does not outline any plan to grant tenancy rights for students in owner occupied accommodation.
  + The strategy has not delivered a progress report since Q3 of 2019, meaning the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on projected builds is not reported.
  + The strategy is based on an outdated government housing policy, Rebuilding Ireland, which was superseded by Housing For All in 2021.
  + The aim of the strategy is centred around the need for student accommodation beds, but the strategy as a whole does not examine the cost barrier that faces many students who are seeking out accommodation. While the strategy was written at a time when the primary issue facing student renters was a lack of availability, we are now facing the intersecting crises of accommodation shortages and high rents.
  + The strategy predates the existence of the Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.
* USI believes that a new student accommodation strategy is urgently needed, and that ensuring the affordability of student beds must be central to any new strategy.

## **Capital Grants for Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to build PBSA**

A capital grant is a contribution made by the government to an independent governmental body or authority to cover part of the cost, in this case it would be towards building PBSA accommodation.

The Cushman & Wakefield Student Accommodation Report Q4 2022 notes that publicly owned student accommodation accounts for 39% of PBSA in Dublin and 22% of PBSA in Cork.

The overreliance on the private sector is leading to the rising cost of PBSA as the majority of privately owned PBSA is unaffordable.

### *USI Position*

* USI are calling for the government to provide capital grants specifically for HEI development of purpose-built student accommodation. As a result of this, HEI’s could build what would be publicly owned student accommodation on campuses, and students would not be as reliant on the private sector.
* Capital grants should only be provided on the stipulation of affordability.

## 

## **Property Tax Breaks on College-Owned Student Accommodation**

A tax break means the government is offering you a reduction in your taxes. A tax break can come in a variety of forms, such as claiming deductions or excluding income from your tax return. The Irish Universities Association (IUA) have called for tax breaks on college.

### *USI position*

* USI Believe that colleges should receive a tax break on college-owned student accommodation, but only under the condition that this money is to be ring fenced, so that it’s to go directly back into the student accommodation.

## 

## **Luxury Student Accommodation**

Luxury student accommodation is a style of accommodation that provides great comfort and elegance at a great expense. Many of these student accommodation complexes include access to:

* Cinema room
* Roof terrace
* Courtyard
* Bowling alley
* Modern onsite gym

### *USI position*

* USI believe that luxury student accommodation is not what students need right now. Students need fit for purpose student accommodation.
* Where luxury student accommodation is seeking planning permission near a member organisation, USI should assist the member organisation in filing an objection to the planning permission based on the expected rental costs of the accommodation.

## **Nomination Agreements**

A nomination agreement is an agreement between the college and the private developer. It is an agreement to nominate a minimum number of students into the accommodation each year and for an agreed period usually in return for more control on rents and operational matters.

This means the college benefit from having secured student accommodation for their students without having to finance the build or manage it themselves, however colleges do have to cover the cost of empty rooms if they are not filled which is an issue. The extent of the college's power of control on rent is unclear and we know colleges have been covering the cost of unfilled rooms, most of which would have been unfilled due students not being able to afford the cost of the room.

### *USI Position*

USI supports college-owned accommodation on campus land of which nomination agreements would not be necessary (as they are between private developer and institution). USI do not agree with the fact that institutions cover the cost of unfilled rooms as part of a nomination agreement as this money is being taken away from institution services. USI also believe that if there are vacant rooms at a time where supply is an issue, then the cost is the problem and that should be addressed.

## 

## **Ending Artificial Price Caps and Building Affordable Student Accommodation**

An artificial price cap is essentially a perception of *“the going rate”* and acts as a measure for price setters to decide on a price for the rent they will charge to tenants/licensees. RPZs are Rent Pressure Zones. This is an area in the rental market were rent can only be introduced by a set amount over a defined period of time, e.g., 4% in Dublin every 12 months.

Before the introduction of Rent Pressure Zone legislation, many accommodation providers recognised the existence of an artificial price cap in the PBSA market and hence made moves to increase their rents to match that of the new builds that were coming on stream.

There is now an acceptance amongst the PBSA industry that the *“going rate”* or artificial price cap is around 255-280 per week or at the cheapest, €800 per month. Some rooms at the higher end come in at over €410 per week.

It is essential we push the government to address this new build price. This brings in the need to define affordability, and to introduce regulation to ensure all new builds are made affordable.

### *USI Position*

Government should ensure that student accommodation providers do not charge annual rents of higher than 25% of the Minimum Wage (annual).

In the case of public land not being available, the government should purchase land and

* a) provide Local Authorities with resources to build accommodation and absorb some of the cost as an investment or;
* b) provide funding to HEIs to build student accommodation.

## **Rent Freezes and Rent Reduction**

A rent freeze is a price ceiling on rents charged to tenants. Price ceilings prevent the price of rent from rising above a certain level. While the average cost of student accommodation varies, many complexes charge up to and over €1,000 per month for a private room in a privately owned PBSA complex. This is unaffordable for many in Irish society – but even more so for students who have limited opportunities to work and earn money due to their studies.

### *USI Position*

The government should, effective immediately; introduce a rent freeze to the rental market and lobby for a reduction in rent until such a time where market prices fall to a level in line where the average Living Wage salary would only be spending 15-25% of their monthly wage on rent.

## 

## **Social Housing for Students**

Social housing is cheaper to rent than privately rented housing. Part V refers to the requirement that within new builds of a certain number of units must contain 10% social housing. This rule does not apply to Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA).

PBSA is not subjected to Part V housing even in large builds despite many students coming from backgrounds where their families already live/qualify for social housing. This creates another barrier to accessing higher-level education for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and is contradictory to the efforts of institutions to improve access and to ensure that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education.

The rational from the Department of Housing is that student accommodation builds, shared accommodation in apartments, will not normally be subject to Part V requirements in relation to the reservation of 10% of the units as social housing because shared accommodation would not be suitable for social housing given that they are not provided as individual self-contained residential units.

### *USI Position*

* USI opposes this line of thought. Students do not require individual self-contained residential units, however many students – specifically those who access college through the HEAR and DARE schemes, or those who qualify for SUSI – would benefit from a designated proportion of student accommodation beds that are at a lower price point.
* We believe PBSA should have Part V provisions, and that social housing should be offered within PBSA builds specifically for students who access college through HEAR and DARE schemes.

## 

## **Over Saturation of Student Accommodation**

There exists a major issue in urban areas where there is too much student accommodation and little room for normal residential property to develop. These areas need residential development. There is a need to introduce planning law changes to ensure that land in areas where there is a significant need for affordable/social housing is not given to developers building for profit student accommodation, in line with the principles of the National Housing and Homelessness Coalition Principles.

### *USI Position*

* There should be restrictions on how many private student accommodation blocks can be built in one local area as over saturation drives up the prices of land in urban areas, and leads to the gentrification of our working class communities.

## **Change of Use for Purpose Built Student Accommodation**

Section 50, Finance Act 1999 provides for a scheme of tax relief for owners of rented residential accommodation for third level students. It was designed to encourage investment in rented self-catered accommodation for students. It is now no longer in practice. As we have recently seen, certain PBSA providers with buildings over ten years old is changing use to non-student accommodation. Section 50 states that PBSA must remain specifically for rental to students for ten years from the date the property is first let to students.

Change of use is typically with the intention of tourist or co-living accommodation, however in areas where there is an existing accommodation shortage, PBSA may convert to a non-student specific rental property.

### *USI Position*

* USI oppose any moves to change the use of these builds.
* Where there is a plan for PBSA to change use, USI should work with the Member Organisation affected to petition the local council to thoroughly investigate the matter and ensure that the change of use is occurring in a legal manner.

## **Student Housing Groups**

Student housing activist groups and student tenants/renters association/union are other groups that may organise around student accommodation, within SUs structures of outside of that. These groups are typically grassroots led and offer peer to peer support and advocacy.

### *USI position*

* USI believe these types of groups should be supported and assisted wherever possible.
* USI should work with Member Organisations to assist in the development and creation of tenants’ unions where none exist.
* USI should actively seek to form partnership with existing tenants’ unions.

**Rent Strikes**Rent strikes involve the withholding rent, typically from the college in college-owned student accommodation, in a form of protest of the cost of student accommodation with the objective that the college would reduce the rent.

Collective action and rent strikes have proven extremely effective. Victories include a 1.2 million rent cut at UK based colleges UCL and a 35% backdated rent cut at Goldsmiths, UK. Focusing on college-owned student accommodation, brings the fight for affordable student accommodation to the campus, creating a college that is more affordable and accessible for future students who otherwise wouldn’t be able to attend college. Colleges should be working to remove barriers to attending college and the cost of accommodation is a huge barrier currently.

### *USI Position*

* USI are supportive of students conducting rent strikes.
* Where a rent strike is taking place, USI will work with the member organisation involved to provide assistance and support where necessary.

# Rental

## **Transparent Rent Register**

A rent register shows the address of a property and the number of bedrooms. It does not show the identity of the landlord or the tenant, or the amount of the rent. Landlords must register their accommodation and tenancies with the Residential tenancies board (RTB) and update any changes they may have with their tenants. The RTB uses this information to create a public register. The Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 sets out a requirement for landlords to register tenancies annually. However, many students have found that their tenancy has not been registered with the RTB by their landlord, and as a result are not able to avail of the renters' tax credit outlined in Budget 2023.

### *USI Position*

* USI are requesting a rent register that’s published annually and has to be backdated so tenants can compare rent of previous years, as well as provide increased transparency and analytics from the rental sector
* USI believe that there should be more resources invested into the Residential Tenancy Board (RTB) so that they can proactively investigate cases and to ensure properties are registered with RTB
* USI will provide resources to MO’s annually to assist students with ensuring their tenancy is registered with the RTB to ensure all students can avail of tax credits on rental accommodation.

## 

## **Rental Deposit Protection Scheme**

A deposit is a sum of money that acts as a pledge for a contract / property, which is normally paid back later. A deposit protection scheme is a way of having your deposit protected by a third party. It is kept by them until the end of a tenancy. At that time the money will either be paid out to the tenant or landlord as agreed between them, or the money could be paid out as decided by arbitration/mediation. This scheme has been promised for over a decade, with no updates since 2017.

### *USI Position*

* USI echo Threshold’s call to establish a deposit protection scheme which would see deposits lodged with an independent third party, such as the Residential Tenancies Board.

## **Fraud/Scams**

Rental fraud and scams have seen a significant increase over recent years, and international students are especially vulnerable. While it is difficult to fully issue sanctions and fines to those involved in fraudulent activity (as many of the more recent student accommodation scams are conducted from overseas), the RTB should be adequately resourced to clamp down on any domestic providers who engage in fraudulent behaviour.

### *USI Position*

* USI to provide MO’s with resources aimed at students entering into the rental market on how to spot a rental scam. These resources should be developed in collaboration with Threshold or the RTB to ensure that they contain up-to-date information.

## 

## **AirBnB**

AirBnB is an online website which allows people to let out a spare room/apartment/house to someone for a short period of time. Lack of regulation in the sector of letting has led to a high concentration of properties available for short term let, meaning less properties are available for longer term tenancies. This has a major impact on the supply of property in the rental market, which is pushing prices upward.

People who own the properties are incentivized to use Airbnb over using a typical tenancy as their is typically increased profits to be made on tourist accommodation.

While the Department of Housing has introduced regulations which require people renting out entire properties on a short-term basis for more than 90 days per year to seek planning permission from their local authority to do so, there has been major issues enforcing this. Authorities have called on the government to provide financial resources to enforce these regulations.

### *USI Position*

* The over saturation of AirBnB properties is pushing up rental prices in areas, this is pushing people out of the rental market - making them homeless.
* The government need to allocate resources to local authorities to enforce regulations on short-term lets.
* The government should adopt the “Berlin” model, where landlords can only rent out their properties for up to 90 days per year, with permission from their local authority.

# APPROVED HOUSING BODIES

## **Student Accommodation Agency**

The creation of a not-for-profit vehicle such as the local authority, a dedicated state-back student accommodation agency, approved housing body (AHB) or a voluntary agency with support from the educational institutions would mean student accommodation could be provided for a slightly lower cost depending on the level of state subsidy.

### *USI Position*

* USI supports the progression of an AHB developed specifically for student accommodation.

## 

## **Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs)**

Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) (also called housing associations or voluntary housing associations) are independent, not-for-profit organisations. They provide affordable rented housing for people who cannot afford to pay private sector rents or buy their own homes; or for particular demographic groups, such as older people.

AHBs also include housing co-operatives, which are housing organisations controlled by their members/tenants who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. The Housing Alliance – a collaboration of AHBs - is campaigning for AHBs to be moved “off balance sheet”; meaning, off the Government's yearly budget balance sheet, which would have limited resources.

In 2018, it was deemed that large AHBs are now considered part of the General Government sector and, as a result, on the Government’s Balance Sheet. This may have significant negative consequences for the funding of AHBs in the medium to long-term, limiting the capacity of Housing Alliance members to source funds from Government or external sources. We believe AHBs should also look to the provision of student accommodation as an ‘off balance sheet’ model of building affordable/social student accommodation.

### USI Position:

* USI supports the Alliance in their lobby to allow them to borrow off balance sheet.
* USI to lobby AHBs to consider the provision of affordable student accommodation.

## **Student Accommodation Co-operatives**

Student housing co-ops (or co-operatives) are permanently affordable homes formed by students who democratically manage the property they live in. Members live in alternative cooperative housing that they personally own and maintain. These houses are specifically designed to lower housing costs while providing an educational and community environment for students to live and grow in. They are, in general, non-profit, communal, and self-governing.

Many student housing co-operatives share operation and governing of the house. These homes are isolated from the housing market and offer lower rents and better-quality accommodation than the private sector. They allow for students to pool their resources to create community style homes where everyone collaborates for their mutual benefit.

The rent students pay is only used to cover the upkeep of the house (lease, bills, repairs, etc.) and not to enrich landlords. Any surplus generated from the students’ pooled funds are reinvested into the co-op in the way the members decide. Typically, it can be used for improving energy efficiency, erecting greenhouses, or converting parts of the building.

Student housing co-operatives are being developed in Belfast and Cork. While they are still in the early stages, these projects have the potential to offer a radical new alternative approach to student housing.

Other advantages include:

* Improved student wellbeing, rents and living conditions,
* Live in affordable homes that students manage and control,
* Gain valuable life skills and learn co-operative values,
* Contribute to building a sustainable co-operative economy.

### *USI Position*

* USI should actively support this type of housing as a positive housing solution for students.
* USI should seek to form a working relationship with existing student housing co-operatives.

## 

## Cost Rental Housing

Cost rental housing is housing where the rents charged cover the cost of delivering, managing and maintaining the homes. As the rent paid by the tenant in a cost rental tenancy is designed to only cover the actual costs, rents will not be driven by market movements. While still a cheaper model of housing, there are still significant costs due to the increased price of construction. However, due to this type of housing being outside of the market (not being affected by rent increases) it is a more financially predictable form of housing. It removes the profit driven private developers from the equation and this would greatly benefit students in any new student accommodation builds.

### *USI Position:*

* USI support cost rental builds but proceed with caution due to rising costs of construction and land increasing the cost of building over what may be considered affordable for students.

# Digs-Style Accommodation

## **Rights for Students in Digs Accommodation**

Digs are a type of housing where a student stays in a family home, usually with the homeowner and pays a flat rate for lodgings and meals (optional). There are currently very little rights for students right now who are living in digs style accommodation. However, despite the very few rights afforded to students in digs tenancies, the Government has opted to encourage digs-style accommodation as a temporary solution to the student accommodation crisis.

### *USI Position*

* USI support the rights for students living in digs to obtain a license agreement.
* USI to lobby for increased protections for students in digs tenancies
* Until such a time as tenancy protections are guaranteed for students in digs-style accommodation, the government should stop presenting digs as a solution to the student accommodation crisis.

## **Rent-A-Room Relief - Minimum Room Requirements**

If you rent out a room (or rooms) in your home to private tenants, the rental income you earn will be exempt from income tax, provided this income does not exceed a certain limit in a tax year. This is called the rent-a-room relief. Currently, the total rent that you get, which includes money that the Tenant pays for food, utilities, laundry or similar goods and services, cannot exceed €14,000 in the tax year, however this could be based off one room or three rooms.

### *USI position*

* USI suggests the rent-a-room relief scheme should be aligned with the number of rooms that landlord provides.
* This means that landlords must have a minimum amount of rooms so that they can claim tax free income.

## 

## **Minimum Room Size requirements for Student Accommodation**

According to the *“Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities”* every single occupancy bedroom should be, at a minimum, 2.1 meters in width and 7.1 square meters. However, Purpose Built Student Accommodation and rooms in digs-style accommodation are not currently included in these minimum requirements.

### *USI Position:*

* USI believes that there should be minimum room size requirements in PBSA and digs, that allows a comfortable space for a desk, wardrobe and a bed.
* Students should not be subjected to below the minimum standards.

## **Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)**

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support for people who have a long-term housing need. At the moment, HAP cannot be used for Purpose Built Student Accommodation - putting many people at a disadvantage of being able to attend their institution as they cannot pay for accommodation.

### *USI Position*

* The government should adjust the regulations around Housing Assistance Payment to allow it to be used for Student Accommodation.

## 

## **Vulture Funds**

Vulture funds are investment firms that buy up properties from banks. These funds buy up a large collection or “portfolio” of properties that are deemed as bad debts. Ultimately, the net result of this is that the investment firms want to make a profit on their purchase, which causes inevitable evictions. After evictions, many properties re-enter the market at a significantly higher rent rate. This leads to an increase in homelessness and gentrification.

### *USI Position*

* USI believes vulture funds have been the vehicle in which this country’s assets have been sold off and regrets the human impact they have had on society.
* USI supports the resistance of evictions and
* USI to lobby for the introduction of legislation that ends evictions into homelessness.

## **Minimum Specifications on Student Accommodation**

Research taken from the USI Homes for Study Program’s National Student Accommodation Survey.

### *Self-Contained Room:*

Students place a premium, above all, on a self-contained room on their own in accommodation. This does not rule out shared rooms, but this option yielded the most consensus both in importance for the student and the premium the student would be prepared to pay to secure it. There are a small number of people indicating that this is not a major issue for them, and they may be indicating that they would enjoy sharing – but in this study, this amounted to less than 2% respondents.

### *Wi-Fi:*

Wi-Fi (particularly high- speed Wi-Fi) is considered a basic necessity by students, but students are not prepared to pay more for it in their rooms. As an essential basic facility for students today, it is considered very important but not worth a premium. This may be due to the availability of fast 4G mobile services. 

### *Proximity to college/facilities:*

Proximity to college and to shops are important to students, but the availability of dedicated study facilities or social areas in the accommodation complex are significantly less important. Access to reliable transport routes to college is necessary to ensure students can easily access their campus and are safe doing so if their living arrangement is further away.

### *On-Site Facilities:*

The presence of an onsite social area is deemed relatively unimportant for students – too much concentration on it may be a mistake for developers. The presence of an on-site gym also polled poorly as an important aspect of student accommodation – there seemed to be an active rejection of them by many students – although of course a cohort did report it as being important. It’s necessary for students to have access to good-quality cooking and cleaning facilities.

### *Minimum Sizing:*

According to the ‘Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ it outlines that for every Single bedroom, the minimum should be 2.1 meters in width and 7.1 square meters. PBSA and digs should be included in the minimum sizing requirements, and allow a comfortable space for a desk, wardrobe, and a bed.

### *Electricity Meters:*

Individual metering/monitoring should be provided for each student room to make them aware of their energy usage and incentivize energy waste reduction. The cost of bills and rent is a huge factor for students deciding on their accommodation. It’s important to keep the bills and rent as low as possible. 

### *Facility Desirability / Demand*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Self-contained room on my own | 9.02 |
| Wi-Fi | 8.39 |
| Closeness to College | 8.36 |
| Closeness to Shops | 8.16 |
| Onsite Dedicated Study Area | 6.67 |
| Closeness to Entertainment | 6.15 |
| Living with only students from my college | 5.8 |
| Onsite Social Area | 5.18 |
| Onsite Gym | 3.5 |

# Other Positions

## **Sale of Public Land**

There is an indisputable need for public housing in this country, which should be built on publicly owned land. This is further qualified by the need for student accommodation built by HEIs on campuses. The sale of public land to private developers has negative effects on not only the price of rents in an area, but also diminishes the numbers of public housing beds available.

### *USI Position*

* USI opposes the sale of public land to private developers, in the middle of a housing crisis.
* USI believes public land should be used for public housing, that student accommodation should be built on campus land by institutions/the state.

## 

## **Site Value Tax**

Site Value Tax (SVT) is a charge on the value of land without considering the value of physical capital built on the land. In this way, the charge is related to the value of the location.

The tax is calculated as a percentage of the value of the site. The value of any property has two components: (A) the land, and (B) what’s on the land. Subtract (B) from (A), and you have the value of the site, and thus the base for the SVT. It is differentiated from a vacant site tax as it concerns the value of the site itself, due to the factors surrounding the site.

The core argument for this is that the reason why properties have value is because of what is beside them. The value is generated by society and facilities surrounding it, as ultimately the site is the value, not the house. This would, firstly; give the value back to the people who created the value in the first place via their taxes. Secondly; it prevents hoarding because if the tax on the site is high landlords will be encouraged to bring it into use.

### *USI Position*

* The Irish government should replace the current Local Property Tax with that of a site tax. A Site tax would be a much fairer way of taxing property fit for residential use.

## **Raise the Roof**

USI are founding members of the Raise the Roof campaign. The full Raise the Roof manifesto is available [here](https://ictu.ie/publications/new-deal-housing).

### *USI Position*

* USI will work with the Raise the Roof campaign on actions and represent the student perspective in Raise the Roof committee meetings.
* USI will promote Raise the Roof events with our members.
* USI promotes the principles of the Raise the Roof manifesto.

## **National Homelessness and Housing Coalition**

The Coalition was formed in 2016 with USI becoming members in 2017.

*USI supports the coalition policies:*

* The housing and homelessness situation should be declared an emergency.
* An end to economic evictions
* No loss of principal residency due to economic distress.
* Regulation of the private rented sector.
* Security of tenure and rent certainty.
* Greater enforcement and inspection.
* Limit rent rises to a link such as the consumer price index.
* Public led provision of student accommodation.
* A charter of housing rights for all renters in the private sector (including students).
* A local authority led emergency response to the housing crisis addressing the issue of vacant units, including the use of compulsory purchase orders and the refurbishment of existing units to meet public housing targets.
* Public policy should aim to increase the output of public housing to an annual rate of 10,000 units per year by late 2018/early 2019 at an estimated cost of €1.8 billion per annum. At least three quarters of these must be provided by local authorities.
* Additional capital expenditure of €1,150 million in 2018 on top of 2017’s planned €655 million provided from the fiscal space available for 2018 and additional tax measures such as the fast-tracking of the vacant site levy and by borrowing. Greater flexibility as regards the application of EU fiscal rules for investment in public housing.
* An integrated strategy of well-planned mixed income housing provided by the local authorities on publicly owned land.
* Redirect the billions spent on subsidising private landlords to the provision of public housing while continuing and improving necessary rent assistance.
* The development of a cost rental model as a matter of urgency. Adoption and adaption of NERI’s March 2017 proposals for a European cost rental model.
* Land zoned for housing that is owned by local authorities should be used primarily to provide public housing by local authorities, instead of being made available to private developers.
* Decent pay and working conditions in the construction sector aiming for the use of unionised and direct labour.
* Full expenditure of improved funding for Traveller accommodation.
* Socially inclusive and energy efficient standards for public housing
* Steps taken to inscribe the Right to Housing in the constitution.
* An end now to emergency provision for families in bed and breakfast accommodation and the provision for them of suitable public housing.
* Improved and expanded hostel accommodation for homeless people on the street.