Newsletter 1: Accommodation

There is no way of avoiding the fact that Oxford is a very expensive city in which to live and that, even with subsidised rates, the cost of student accommodation in Oxford is among the highest globally. The private rental market is also extremely competitive and monthly rents are very high, although there is some variation across the areas in which Oxford students usually live. This newsletter, which is the first of a series that you will receive throughout the summer months, is intended to help you explore all options to find accommodation that best suits your individual circumstances.

Living in College or living-out?

Your Offer Pack included information about College accommodation and an application form – please remember that you will need to have returned your form to us by Monday 3 July to be eligible for the ballot. In common with most Oxford colleges, St Antony’s is unable to house all new students who would wish to live in, however, and so it is important to think about options in the event that your application is unsuccessful. It is also important to appreciate that a significant number of students choose to live-out each year and that it represents an alternative, rather than inferior, scenario.

The Oxford University Student Union (OUSU) has published a guide for students living-out, which contains very good general advice. They have also recently launched podcasts to advertise the support that they can provide, including the Student Advice Service, which will feature within a number of newsletters across the summer. When reading material published by OUSU, it might be helpful to know that Oxford undergraduates usually spend their first-year living within colleges and there is an annual tradition of many of them camping outside of letting agents at the start of Hilary (Spring) Term to get the pick of available houses for the following year. Despite the impression this creates, please be reassured that it is possible to find accommodation throughout the year and that, should you find yourself looking for a room/flat/house during the summer months, you will not be in an unusual position among incoming Oxford graduate students.

There are some perceived benefits to living in College accommodation:

- It is the easiest option, particularly if you are coming to Oxford from overseas
- You will necessarily live among a community of fellow students
- You will be very close to College facilities, such as the Hall and Library, and to on-site events
- You can sign a 38 week lease, which might well be ideal if you are coming for a taught Master’s course that is shorter than 12 months

Whilst these points are valid, the difference between living-in and living-out in Oxford is less stark than one might imagine:
It is undeniably true that finding somewhere to live outside of College is more involved than completing the College’s accommodation form, but there are a number of resources, provided by the University and others, to help make the task less difficult.

Due to the size of the student population in Oxford, it is very likely that you will be among fellow students wherever you live.

Oxford is a small city and it is therefore perfectly possible to get around quickly and easily, whether on foot, by public transport, or by bicycle. As a graduate, your teaching is delivered by your department, rather than by the College, and so it might well be that you are away from St Antony’s for the majority of your time, regardless of whether you live on-site.

Because letting agents and landlords can be confident of a ready supply of students, it’s entirely possible to agree tenancies of less than 12 months duration, should that be your requirement.

Depending on location, it might also be cheaper to live out, particularly if you are coming to Oxford with a partner.

**University accommodation**

In addition to information about College accommodation, your Offer Pack contained links to the University’s Graduate Accommodation Office. The Office are responsible for managing a range of rooms, flats and houses around the city, including Summertown House, which is close to St Antony’s as well as convenient for local shops and amenities. The details of the full range of accommodation available (locations and prices) are provided [here](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters). (Should you wish to apply, you can do so [here](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters).)

**Private accommodation**

The University also runs a website called Studentpad, which provides a search engine for private properties and rooms. The advantage of using the site is that the University ensures that landlords are certified and that the accommodation offered is of a relatively high standard; the disadvantage is that the site has a relatively low turnover of properties at any one time. The site also provides some very useful advice, including details of budgeting and relevant contract law. (The advice is available in a range of languages.)

Oxford has a number of commercial letting agents who have specialist staff to cater to Oxford’s student population. Please be advised that St Antony’s does not specifically recommend any of the following and that you should ensure that you are clear about the terms, conditions, and fees, in each case:

- North Oxford Property Services
- Finders Keepers
- Lucy Properties

There are also a number of independent search engines through which accommodation can be found. ‘Dailyinfo’ is an Oxford institution and you will see their printed lists of events and
classified adverts around Oxford, both town and gown. The online ‘dailyinfo’ property search is available [here](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters). [Propertyads](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters) is a similar online search engine.

**For reassurance**, OUSU provides a [Community Wardens](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters) service for Oxford students in private accommodation in Jericho and East Oxford, which is confidential and completely free. (They can offer general advice to students in other areas of the city.) The City Council also runs a [Landlord Accreditation Scheme](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters) and publishes a list of [accredited landlords and letting agents](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters).

**Maps and Locations**

Dailyinfo provides very a useful [online map](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters) that shows the location of the various districts within Oxford and also their respective distances from the city centre. The University also provides an online [interactive map](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters), which can be used to locate Departments and Libraries as well as various facilities such as bars and restaurants to help with your search.

Even a brief online search will confirm that there are districts of Oxford that are particularly popular with Oxford students. The [OUSU guide to Living Out](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters) provides a very brief description of each; please note that [Jericho](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters) and [North Oxford/Summertown](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters) are very close to St Antony’s, but are also relatively expensive areas.

**What should I do now?**

If you have not yet applied for College accommodation, but wish to do so, please apply immediately using the form that was included in your Offer Pack. **The deadline is Monday 3rd July.**

If you have applied for College accommodation, the ballot will take place following the application deadline and you will receive the outcome of your application between **Monday 17th and Friday 21st July**. There is nothing to prevent you applying for University accommodation whilst waiting for the outcome of your College application.

As you will recall from your Offer Pack, students with a disability that impacts upon their living needs and students awarded a College scholarship are guaranteed the offer of a room in College. If you do not fall into one of these categories, it would be sensible to begin to think about alternative options, should you be unlucky with the ballot.

**Further support**

Emma Troop, a current MPhil student in Russian and East European Studies and Co-VP Welfare Officer on the GCR Committee, has organised a [Facebook group for St Antony’s students living-out](https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/prospective-students/newly-admitted-students/new-students-newsletters). We would encourage you to join the group in order to help pool advice and to access support from current Antonians.