



The Student Accommodation Situation in Borlänge

The University Governing Board,
Dalarna University,
Sweden

28th Sep 2020

Respected University Governing Board members,

As a board member of Dalarnas Studentkår, representing international students, I am writing this letter to the Board of Dalarna University, voicing the opinion on behalf of students concerning the accommodation situation in Borlänge. Due to the consistent severity of the incidents in recent times with only discussions leading to no actions being taken, it calls for immediate solutions. I sincerely hope that this letter will lead to some concrete action to be taken.

As we know, some of the accommodation for students in Borlänge is situated in Tjärna Ängar. Most of the students residing here are international students from all around the world including both EU and non-EU students coming from countries with a very low crime rate. The dream of every student coming to study in Sweden comes from the delightful experience they are expecting to have in one of the first world countries. To experience its rich culture and traditions, Dalarna is certainly a place for this. It is with this view that students enrol at Dalarna University. Is the University successful in fulfilling this dream of every student? The reality is NO! The first impression of every student both national and international is "Oh! Where are we? Is this Sweden?" As students try to adjust living in a neighbourhood with unexpected culture, they are facing multiple issues, either personally, physically, or mentally.

Listed bellow are just a few incidents reported from Locus and Kornstigen 23, there are many more cases like these:

- Several cases of burglaries one being inside an apartment shared by two girls. Thieves entered the apartment, stole a WI-FI router while one of the girls still was left inside the room. The burglary could have taken a turn for the worse if the thieves had encountered her directly. She was so disturbed by the incident that she had to move to a different room and later moved to the Netherlands for a month and is still petrified to live alone in her room.
- Another case was a male student who was robbed when he was asleep, the thieves climbed the wall, broke open the window in another room, and stole a phone, cash, and other valuables from the apartment around 7:00 in the morning. The apartment was situated on the second floor at Kornstigen 23.

- Multiple thefts: students being robbed when they are asleep or when not at home, thieves breaking into apartments, stealing food items and bikes are being stolen. This has led to several police cases registered in just a few months.
- The TV and sofa from the study room in Locus were stolen and was not replaced ever since.
- A female student woke up in shock seeing a thief next to her bed inside her room. Her room was located on the second floor as well.
- A Student was beaten up to bleed with a knife attack, for not giving access to unknown people outside Locus. Tunabyggen's only response to this was to clean up the blood shred on the floor.
- Several female students have reported that they are being followed, eve teased by unknown men in public, making it unsafe for them to walk outdoors.
- Multiple gunshots have been reported right outside Locus. One being just recently a case of an exchange of shooting between police and criminals. Moreover, the school was set on fire in the locality. Students are disturbed with the thought that they are experiencing the glimpse of war countries at their accommodation, which has led to widespread depression.
- Recent attempt to murder. Two people stabbed outside of Locus.
- Reports of several students who came to start a new course this autumn, prematurely either ended or moved back and chose to study digitally due to the situation.
- Several Erasmus students want to go back home and continue due to widespread depression and disappointment with the student accommodation.
- The general opinion within students is that they do not feel like they are living in Sweden, they do not hear the language or get to experience the culture and traditions having them feel like they are living in a segregated neighbourhood.
- Very high unemployment rate, poverty, illiteracy, and extremely low average educational level and human capital within the neighbourhood compared to other neighbourhoods in Borlänge. Students are affected by this mentally by decreased motivation for their studies and are shocked not expecting this to be the Sweden they thought of before coming.

This issue has previously been addressed by the former Vice-Chairman of Dalarna University Ms. Marita Hilliges but unfortunately backed down after being pressured by media and lobby organisations. With the present Vice-chairman Mr. Martin Norsell, having a background in the army, we believe in a strong leadership that could stand up for the voice of the students. Back in 2016, a girl was even raped, and another girl was attacked but survived, she went in depression after the incident and could not go out freely. Certain actions should have already been taken at that point of time, but sadly we are here in 2020 in a critical situation with rising problems and it is so consistent that students feel "enough is enough".

What are we looking for?

It is very clear that students deserve a better place to live. Students must be placed in a neighbourhood with surrounding companies, high employment rate and low poverty. A locality filled with motivation, driving students to work on innovative ideas and making them focus on their goals. Students should get to live closer to opportunities and feel like they live in a company hub. Dalarna University dreams of becoming one of the best University in

Sweden and one of the best ways to achieve that is by student satisfaction which is quite low with their accommodation troubles. Furthermore, international students coming to Sweden should be given the opportunity to live in a neighbourhood that gives exposure to the Swedish language, culture, and traditions. Students also demand a safe neighbourhood.

We also call for an open discussion for further solutions. Following are the suggested solutions as discussed with students, alumni and board members of Dalarnas Studentkår Peter Mattias Pawel Huld and Mufassireen Ahmed from Borlänge.

Long Term Solutions

- University should move the student accommodation away from Tjärna Ängar as quickly as possible and solve this internally to prevent and act before any student protests and bad media coverage. The accommodation situation in Borlänge is greatly affecting the University's reputation in a very negative way.
- Since this has been going on for years without action, we can no longer risk the reputation of the university. We need a new Locus close to Centrum where the new campus will be located.

Immediate Solutions

- Students need to be offered some immediate student flats in Centrum or close to University in a safe and good neighbourhood. This could be done by Borlänge Kommun or Tunabyggen providing flats like 23 or rooms like Locus. If there is nothing available, Borlänge kommun could buy flats and rent it out to students.
- Surveillance cameras must be immediately installed inside Locus and Kornstigen 23, for example, in the kitchens, corridors, common area, entrances, outside and the path towards University.
- Just like in the campus, security guards must monitor Locus and the surrounding areas during both day and night times every day of the week, especially night times, since many times when Securitas was called, there was no response.
- Be honest about Tjärna Ängar, tell that if you are an Erasmus student and want to experience Swedish culture, Tjärna Ängar is not the right place. This would reduce the initial disappointment within students.

It is ultimately You, The University Governing Board, that has the power to make student accommodation in Borlänge safe and welcoming. The situation is now so critical that it is affecting the universities reputation very badly. Let us, therefore, use that power, let us all unite to do away with the current problems, let's create an accommodation student feel proud of living in. We believe this is possible, do you also believe?

Yours Sincerely,

Mufassireen Ahmed,
Dalarnas Studentkår,
Board Member for Internationals

Peter Mattias Pawel Huld,
Dalarnas Studentkår,
Board Member for
Sportsmästeriet, Borlänge