

PLANNING AND HOUSING MINISTER

The Highfield Residents Association comprises over 600 households and represents over 2,000 local residents in this area of Southampton.

Large numbers of residents from the local community could be affected by this proposal which has therefore attracted intense interest. The issues at stake are not restricted to the immediate impact of unregulated extensions upon ones neighbours, but include the wider implication of a persistent erosion of the character of the area by the relentless expansion in particular of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs - C4 or sui generis Use) to serve the local student demand.

This erosion would also be greatly exacerbated by selfish, inconsiderate or aggressive neighbours who would be able to create extensions of the equivalent size of two bedrooms, without any thought of the consequences upon their fellow residents such as loss of light, overlooking, character and amenity and would in all probability encourage over-intensive developments. It would also presumably allow the 'shoeing in' of caravans or Portacabins of an equivalent size, wholly inappropriate and unsightly for most residential areas..

Social and environmental problems which this would facilitate, are felt very keenly by the local community and this proposal would have the potential to create an untold number. The problem of overdevelopment, is regularly raised by objectors to planning applications, which include Local Ward Councillors and Local Residents Groups in their attempt to maintain a balanced and sustainable community, which this proposal only serves to undermine.

Bullet point 1 - This proposal is also directly contrary to the Govts Localism agenda and would have exactly the opposite effect of allowing communities and LAs to decide on how their areas should be developed.

Bullet point 2 - We can not see that this would have any effect on existing Permitted Development rights as proposals that exceed PDRs are normally swiftly dealt with under existing Planning rules, including delegated authority.

Lastly, it seems to me that if the Govt wishes to stimulate development or growth in this sector of the economy, a more immediate and well received proposal would be to cancel or reduce VAT on building extensions but still leave them subject to Planning approval where they might exceed PDRs dimensions..