



## **Highfield Residents' Association**

### **Transforming Cities Portswood Broadway**

I am attaching the latest version of the digest of comments sent to HRA since the start of the current consultation. It includes responses made since the consultation meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November.

HRA acknowledges the effort that the Council, and particularly Council Officers, have put into the various consultation meetings and events. There surely cannot be many people living and working in the area who are not now aware of the proposals. This is reflected in the huge volume of responses that the Council has received. That said, there is a lot of unhappiness that the consultation questionnaire appeared to be 'slanted' towards a positive approach to the scheme and that, in particular, there was no question about the central proposal to close the Broadway to all traffic other than buses and emergency vehicles. It also must be recorded that the restriction on any comments to 255 characters has caused much frustration.

Turning to the substance, some members have welcomed the scheme and some are sympathetic to the aims of the scheme. But the majority of people who responded to HRA, remain unpersuaded that the area as a whole will gain from what is proposed, and believe that the potential costs will outweigh the potential benefits. The lack of external data from local research, has resulted in strong scepticism that the scheme will achieve a significant reduction in overall traffic flows but rather believe that traffic will be pushed into bottlenecks elsewhere locally.

There is some questioning whether the anticipated improvements in bus timetables, over a small part of the route, will be sufficient to offset the potential inconvenience and loss of amenity to many local residents who do not consider trips to the supermarkets at either end of Portswood as being 'through traffic'.

As you know, the principal concern is about what will happen to traffic that chooses not to use Thomas Lewis Way if it cannot use the Broadway. The proposed options for the ATZ have elicited strong opposition including on environmental grounds which do not appear to have been considered anywhere in the proposals.

Another major concern is what will be the impact on the shops, cafés and restaurants in the Broadway and the risk that – especially at the southern end - this could become another retail dead zone like Bitterne and so many local centres elsewhere in the country. This indeed is one of a number of aspects of the scheme where additional information is needed before any decisions can be taken. There have been many comments about the paucity of data and data modelling covering the area as a whole.

The foregoing prompts two sets of thoughts for the Council to consider.

One is whether the aim of revitalising Portswood District Centre by improving the physical, commercial and residential environment could be realised in a less irreversible fashion, for example by reducing and enforcing the speed limit. This could ideally be achieved in association with the early introduction of 20mph limits already agreed in principle for the Highfield area, widening and extending the pavements, tweaking the bus stops, removing street clutter, better signage, etc. The other is whether the scheme could be implemented in stages, with an incremental approach of this kind preceding the more radical approach in the current proposals.

In any case, before the Council decides on the scheme there should be a detailed risk assessment in place that covers the issues raised in the consultation and indicates the remedial actions that will be taken if the potential detriments that have been highlighted in the consultation do come to pass.



Professor Roger Brown

Chair Highfield Residents' Association