

Agenda HRA Committee Meeting Tuesday 7 January 2025

Highfield Church Halls 19:00h



- Annex. i. HRA Submission Residences Development Avenue Campus 16/12/24
- Annex. ii. Information regarding increased fees at Jubilee Sports Centre for Community Members
- Annex. iii. HRA Crime information sharing WhatsApp Group Report
- Annex. iv. Digital Communications Report

Prof. Roger Brown will chair the meeting

1. Welcome Prof. Roger Brown
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of interest
4. Minutes 10 December 2024 – these will be available at the February Committee Meeting
5. Matters Arising, not covered elsewhere
 - a. Portswood Broadway: HRA Chair - Council Leader communication
 - b. Portswood Shopping Centre Development
 - c. U1 bus route reinstatement: HonSec - Council Leader communication
6. Portswood Broadway Bus-gate Trial - update and proposed HRA monitoring of the scheme
7. Avenue Campus Residence Development – a. Exchange of information following HRA and partner association submissions (HRA Letter Annex. i.). b. Planning Application for tree removal
8. Information from Councillors
9. University Liaison
 - a. University information
 - b. Report back on increase in admission fees for community members at the New Jubilee Sports Centre (Annex. i.)
10. City / Local Plan – Advance notice: committee discussion at the February meeting
11. HRA Crime WhatsApp group for Highfield and PACT Report (NJ) (Annex. ii.)
12. Planning
 - a. 24/01451/FUL - 116 Highfield Lane Southampton SO17 1NP
 - b. NORA (National Association of Residents Associations new website (please take a look): <https://www.nora-uk.com/>
13. Reports
 - a. Finance (MB) – income/expenditure for the last period
 - b. Membership (NM) - renewals; new members; not renewed
 - c. Digital Communications (NJ) Report (Annex. iii.)
14. A.O.B.
 - a. SCC HMO Licensing Survey Ref: [SCC HMO Licensing Scheme Consultation HMO Consultation Link](#)

Next Committee Meeting Tuesday 11 February 7pm, Highfield Church Hall

Annex. i.

HRA Submission to the University regarding the initial plans for Residence Development Avenue Campus

Roger Brown

9 Blenheim Avenue • Southampton • Hampshire • SO17 1DW
Telephone: (023) 80679247 07775 741702

Jon Walsh
University of Southampton

16th December 2024

RESIDENCES DEVELOPMENT – AVENUE CAMPUS

Thank you for your presentation to the HRA Committee on 10th December. I promised to let you have a note of the main issues raised in the subsequent discussion (including in the Committee-only part of the meeting). As you will see, they are largely matters for clarification; HRA has yet to adopt a formal position.

There are two preliminary points.

First, there was concern about the shortness of time (to 20th December) in which local residents' views were being sought, especially given the time of year. It is of course appreciated that this is only the first stage in what is likely to be a prolonged process. Nevertheless, it would be helpful if there could be some flexibility in the University's timetable, bearing in mind the fact that even if all goes smoothly, there are unlikely to be any students actually in residence before September 2027.

Second, a number of critical comments were made about the information in the leaflet (and website) on which the consultation is being conducted, with some queries as to whether the information there is correct and even misleading. For instance, the leaflet (and website) indicates that the new building will sit below and behind a screen of existing trees. However photos taken by a Committee member show that this is completely wrong. These photos were taken from the location of the windows of the proposed building looking south. It is clear from these that the building windows will actually be well above the treeline and will look down directly (and from quite close range) into the gardens, windows and rooms of many properties in the Oakmount Triangle. Another similar photo shows that there is no meaningful screening at all.

At the same time, the leaflet does not contain such information as the timescale for construction and completion, the actual height of the buildings, the height of the trees, the number of bed spaces (given on the website) or the breakdown in student numbers (UK or International, under- or postgraduate, etc, which is relevant to such things as car use). The leaflet does contain a comparison with existing buildings but it seems that the height of the existing buildings has been exaggerated so as to make the proposed new ones appear lower. This suggests that it might be worth someone again checking the range and veracity of the information being presented for consultation.

Next Committee Meeting Tuesday 11 February 7pm, Highfield Church Hall

Turning to the substance, the Committee is aware of the original Development Guidelines for when the Avenue Campus was installed in the Tauntons Playing Fields. A copy of these was given to you at the meeting. In effect, they specify the conditions on which the installation was approved, conditions that are still relevant some thirty years on. For present purposes, the most pertinent are:

- ii. substantial landscaping including landscape buffers (15m wide) along the southern and eastern boundaries;*
- iii. preservation of overall parkland setting of the site;*
- v. a traffic impact study to assess the need for highway improvements...*
- vi. limitations on the height of new development to 2 and 3 storeys;*
- vii. new development should complement the main building.*

Underlying these conditions is the recognition of, and emphasis upon, the ‘domestic scale’ of the surroundings, the maximum building height to be of 2 to 3 storeys, any new buildings to be close to the original buildings and to be placed in a parkland setting. Moreover, the purposes of the campus were to be the core academic ones of teaching and research, not student accommodation.

Against this background, the central question raised was whether what is now being put forward is not only not consistent with these conditions and the ‘vision’ that underlies them but fundamentally changes the character of the neighbourhood, and indeed the University site, and to the detriment of both. Indeed, rather than starting from an assessment of the character and constraints of the site, the proposals appear to be simply a reflection of a need to find 400-500 additional bed spaces for the University’s expansion by inserting conventional, generic accommodation blocks that could be located anywhere - and increasingly are, across the city - rather than in this rather special space.

Specific issues raised included the following.

1 The scale of the blocks both in relation to the rest of the campus and in relation to the surrounding properties, including Highfield Hall. The proposed buildings are very close to existing houses. As mentioned above, the occupants will be able to look directly into the houses and gardens of the surrounding houses. There is also the very significant issue of the additional noise likely to be associated with the new buildings and their occupants.

2 The two current Planning Applications for significant mature tree felling would result in the remaining screening being even less effective. Narrow belts of perimeter planting cannot hide 5-storey buildings.

3 The over-density of the development given that the campus is surrounded by (a) the Common and (b) 2-storey dwellings with pitched roofs, these together giving the campus a pleasant and distinctive ‘green’ setting. The green space acts as an appropriate buffer zone between the University and nearby residential roads.

4 The proximity of the development not only to the City’s largest and most valuable green space but also to the Oakmount Triangle Conservation Area, the Uplands Estate, Crofton Close and Heatherdene Road residential areas.

Next Committee Meeting Tuesday 11 February 7pm, Highfield Church Hall

5 The likely additional pressures on Highfield Road and adjacent streets and walkways, including Lover's Walk. Highfield Road is already close to being unusable during study periods from the numbers of people using it. Lover's Walk is heavily used not only by pedestrians but also by cyclists, e-scooters, etc. Both Highfield Road and Lover's Walk are at times unsafe and almost impassable for people with children and people with disabilities. It is not clear how much consideration has been given to this aspect of the proposals.

6 There is also concern about the possibility of increased staff and student parking in the Oakmount Triangle at and near the junction of Oakmount Avenue and Westbourne Crescent.

7 The fact that the accommodation will not be catered will increase the number of student journeys to fast-food and other outlets at various times of the day and evening including to and from the main University site. There is almost certain to be a substantial increase in the level of incoming and outgoing food delivery traffic, both morning and evening, with bikes, electric bikes, electric scooters and motorbikes all being used. These will all increase the risk of traffic and pedestrian safety issues, noise at anti-social periods of the day and night into and out of the site, as well as confusion on and off the site caused by 'lost' delivery drivers.

8 Community cohesion. It is not clear what proportion of the students who will be accommodated in the blocks will also be studying at the campus. But there will definitely be a change to the community 'mix'. Highfield Hall, Wolfe House and shared houses mean that there are already both undergraduates and postgraduates living in the local community, but nothing like the numbers/proportion now envisaged.

9 The loss of the green space in front of the campus next to the car park which is particularly valued as a space to sit and relax.

10 The old Tauntons School building is attractive. The proposed buildings seem to have little architectural merit. Questions were also raised whether the building design encompasses solar and wind energy, given that the building should minimise non-renewable energy as well as use environmentally preferable products.

I hope this is helpful. Needless to say, we shall be very happy to discuss this further. In the meantime, copies go to our Ward Councillors and relevant Council officials as well as to other local residents' groups. A copy is also being placed on the HRA website.

RB

Professor Roger Brown
HRA Chair

Annex. ii.

Information regarding increased fees at Jubilee Sports Centre for Community Members

On swimming the offer is buy 8 sessions get 2 free, but as you mentioned the price has increased in line with the overall membership increase. The membership increases have been applied across all rates. The most recent increase was implemented after careful consideration of the costs associated with the new facility, and following an external benchmarking exercise.

Currently, Southampton Sport are conducting a new benchmarking exercise, which will inform potential adjustments to membership and PAYG pricing on 1st August 2025. This process will involve reviewing our current rates.

On boxing day, the gym will be offering a 6-month membership for £174. Essentially the offer gives you a month free and works out to be less than £30 a month. This offer will be available to all members of the community. The materials to advertise this are not yet finalised, but the team have confirmed you can share this with HRA members ahead of time.

I asked specifically about a further discount for local residents and the Head of Sport and Community said he will raise this with his team for discussion and will ask that it forms part of the next benchmarking discovery exercise.

Kate Faye

Annex. iii.

HRA Crime information sharing WhatsApp Group Report

9.1. Reported incidents since the last HRA Committee Meeting of 10 December: 1

There has only been one reported incident since the last HRA Committee Meeting on 10 December 2024 (see below), compared with 21 reported during the previous period. However, it is important to note that Christmas and New Year celebrations were in between!

Anti-social behaviour incident in Portswood Broadway:

- A street drinker with the group of street drinkers in the Victory Gospel Church/Atlantic Cleaners area of Portswood was bleeding from the head. One of our WhatsApp Group representatives called for an ambulance and gave sufficient information in order that the police could investigate if they wished.

All crime and anti-social behaviour incidents are listed here: <https://www.highfieldresidents.org.uk/crime-incidents/>

9.2. Future dates and venues for Portswood PACT meetings

Monday 24 March, 6.30-8pm 2025 (Hall, Highfield Church Centre)

Monday 16 June, 6.30-8pm 2025 (Hall, Highfield Church Centre)

Monday 8 September, 6.30-8pm 2025 (Lounge, Highfield Church Centre).

9.3. Current state of play on CCTV cameras in Portswood - standing item until all CCTV are in place!

One of the two CCTV cameras at Sainsbury's has been fixed and has been up and running for over 3 months. Thank you to Cllr Finn for all her efforts in this and to the City Council team. By way of background, the Section 106 Agreement wording did not secure ongoing maintenance/operation of the Sainsbury's CCTV cameras by Sainsbury's, only that they were provided prior to occupation.

There is currently one CCTV camera in use outside Coffee#1. This turns both ways.

Chris Brown, Head of Community Safety, confirmed to Cllr Finn that there is a temporary solar camera installed as a stop gap measure opposite Poundland, pending *"two permanent cameras on order that will be installed outside the Library on the west side of the Broadway and outside Roebridge Farm Shop (greengrocer), opposite Westridge Road. These have already been identified as locations by the Portswood Corridor scheme after research and consultation. The orders for works with Balfour Beatty are being scoped, but funding is secure."*

In an email dated 4/12/24, Chris Brown confirmed that these two permanent CCTV cameras and also the temporary CCTV camera were part of Operation Sentinel and a ballpark figure of £15k had been allocated.

Nadine Johnson
Digital Communications

Next Committee Meeting Tuesday 11 February 7pm, Highfield Church Hall

Annex. iv.

Digital Communications

Facebook/Website

There are now 1143 followers on the HRA Facebook page, an increase of 3 since HRA Committee Meeting of 10 December 2024.

Thank you to Ken, Barbara and to two other HRA members for their photos.

E-news

A December issue was emailed to members on 12 December and a special edition was emailed on 19 December 2024.

Local news

Roebridge Farm Shop (greengrocers) / Portswood Hardware

Roebridge Farm Shop finally closed on 21 December. On that day, I interviewed the Manager about the history of the shop in Portswood, his reaction to the closure and what would happen to him and the other staff. I also took photographs.

Portswood Hardware do not yet have a closure date.

Nadine Johnson

Digital Communications

Next Committee Meeting Tuesday 11 February 7pm, Highfield Church Hall