

## **Portswood Centre**

**Application no. 25/00687/FUL Portswood Centre,**

**128-150 Portswood Road, SO17 2NH**



Highfield Residents Association welcomes the redevelopment of Portswood District Centre as an opportunity to revitalise a declining part of Portswood High Street. However we are convinced that the design, scale and concept of the proposed Purpose Built Student Accommodation block in Planning Application **25/00687/FUL** would result in more harm than good in its current form. In a pre-planning consultation meeting between Fusion and HRA, initial proposals showed the blocks set further back with planting and seating at the front on Portswood Road. The buildings were not so aggressive. The proposal comes at a time when there is no forward Local Plan, no accompanying audit of expected growth in student numbers or any consideration of the impact of this. The buildings are of an occupancy and transitory capacity that could unbalance the permanent local community.

HRA has the following specific concerns:

- The mass and scale of the buildings surrounding residential and commercial buildings would create an imposing structure at the end of Brookvale Road, too dominant in the street view
- Loss of (sun)light especially in the mornings in winter months for Addis Square, Tennyson Road, Brookvale Road and Portswood Road itself due to the height and scale of the proposed building at 5 and 6 storeys
- Overdevelopment of the site – too much building in too little space
- Reduction to 461 sqm (GIA) from 2630sqm (GIA) of current commercial space and the loss of well-established local independent retail and services (ref: 4.3.p.10 Planning Statement). With no Local Plan the LA is not in a position to influence the type of retail and more fast food outlets could further unbalance the high-street and further detract from its diversity and value to local residents.

- Unsatisfactory outdoor amenity space for students is planned. Both Courtyards are small and would be surrounded on 3 sides by 5 or 6 storey buildings. They would be especially gloomy and dank in winter months. 278 sqm external amenity space is only equivalent 0.5 sqm per student.
- The transformation of the rear of the site (ref: 4.15.p.11. Planning Statement) with boundary planting to screen and maintain residential amenity for the residents of Tennyson Road could never be achieved with 5/6 storey blocks towering at the back of their properties removing light from the south-west/west.
- Whilst HRA is supportive of a car-free accommodation block in principle, the loss of the existing car park for 98 car parking spaces, including 7 for disabled, would adversely and seriously damage the viability of the District Centre. Loss of public car parking and no on-site car parking would add to parking in nearby residential roads. This is already problematic.
- Additionally, it is stated (ref: 3.12. p.9. Planning Statement) that drop offs and pick-ups of students will be arranged/organised at the beginning/end of term in a managed system. With over 500 students and no on-site supervision / management this would be a massive undertaking. Will this be adequate to avoid disruption in the local area?
- Fire Services access (ref:4.16-4.18.pp.29-30.Transport Statement). Access to the rear of the blocks is via a two way (narrow) lane which reduces to single access on the curve of the building. The back of the blocks is an extremely tight space which could easily become congested especially in an emergency situation. Is this adequate and safe not just for the back of the building but also the back of the houses in Tennyson Road? Has a Risk Assessment been carried out and the Fire Brigade consulted? What about access for other emergency vehicles? Would the gate access off Portswood Road be locked thus slowing down emergency entry?
- Servicing and refuse collection (ref:4.16.p.11. Planning Statement) are ambitious in regard of manoeuvring space in forward gear and would only be achievable if there was one vehicle on site at a time. How would this be controlled with no on-site management?

- The access lane down the side of the building is narrow. It is the proposed vehicle access for deliveries, services, refuse collection and Fire access for both buildings. The access road is initially 2 way, becoming single. Is it adequate for a development of this size?
- What mitigation factors have been developed to cover breakdowns or illegal parking behind the block?
- Unloading / loading for the retail units is planned to be to be, 'on Portswood Road'. The new dedicated cycle lane is welcomed but it is not clear how cyclists travelling south down Portswood Road would turn right onto Brookvale Road at the traffic lights as they would not be able to use the cycle-lane.
- Provision for cycle storage cycle parking may be in line with the quantum suggested by SCC during the pre-application process (Ref: 6.3.p.44.Transport Statement). However the design of double rack storage is not accessible to all. An opportunity has been missed by not providing more cycle storage than the minimum, of equal access to all
- Proposal does little to improve Portswood shopping area, desperate need for 'green' and tree planting
- Are solar panels to be installed?
- Is water capture to be utilised?
- What are the recycling arrangements both internally and externally?

For all of these reasons HRA urges the Panel to reject the application in its current form.

Highfield Residents Association

22/07/25