

Hector W. McNeill
128 Copnor Road, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO3 5AN
Telephone: 023 92 789 081

25th June, 2010

Dear Sir/Madam,

Reference: Letter 10/00512/REM of 1st June, 2010.
Concerning: Proposal - reserved matters in relation to 08/00801/FUL (10/00512/REM)

For the record

I would like to place on record, on behalf of the residents of Coniston Avenue and the East side of Copnor Road, the fact that we supplied a petition against the original planning application on this site raising the following concerns:

- Housing density - the proposed housing is not in keeping with the sizes and types of properties immediately adjacent (Coniston Avenue and Copnor Road on the East side adjacent to Coniston Avenue) and as a result will give the impression of over-development (cramming too many properties into a limited space)
- Amenity - Coniston Avenue will be changed from a scheduled road to which access is via the front gardens of houses to one which will become a mixture of front and back entrances. This has many implications including attendant issues of wheelie bins and waste sacks left out. Experience with this sort of development in Portsmouth creates a "back yard" appearance and depreciation in amenity
- Parking - the development will effectively remove 7 parking spaces and yet increase the demand for at least an additional 7 parking locations associated with the proposed houses. Since Coniston Avenue, at the moment, has enough parking space for residents the development will create a deficit of about 14 parking spaces affecting everyone in the Avenue
- Domestic economics & finance - the combined outcome of the above facts is that properties in Coniston Avenue will suffer a relative fall in value over and above those associated with the current credit and mortgage crisis

The Planning Committee rejected all of these concerns and expressed preferences by the residents without providing adequate justification (in spite of several follow up letters, all of which did not address the concerns expressed in a direct and transparent manner).

Our opinion is that was a regrettable decision and, indeed, we consider it to be a bad decision because our level of amenity will be destroyed and the already chaotic parking situation will become unbearable.

The appearance and landscaping issues are secondary to the essential issues in this case.

Follow up to the original decision by the Planning Committee

The following consists of pertinent observations which have not been reviewed by all of the original petitioners but have been reviewed by a more extended range of residents on the Eastern side of Copnor Road.

Because of the erosion in confidence in the City services, greatly encouraged by the attitude of the Planning Committee, it was concluded that an official complaint to be handled by your own colleagues would be a waste of time. The default outcome of any complaint is likely to uphold the decisions of your colleagues, be they civil servants or councillors, no matter how spurious the justifications. A good part of the problem with this incessant process of the Planning Committee continuing to approve high-density unit housing, is that they do not insist on adequate provision for parking. There has been far too little publicity given to the fact that the outcome of this ad hoc planning decision-making has contributed, and continues to exacerbate the traffic chaos in Portsmouth.

The regrettable conclusion to be drawn from this outcome of the planning process is that there is a high level of incompetence in strategic planning by the City.

Besides the impression given to local residents of the complete disregard for their preferences and concerns we have realised that there is a need for a more competent support of those who wish to oppose inappropriate planning applications.

It is more than evident that local councillors are ineffective in reflecting concerns through their default tactic of supporting likely decisions to be taken by their colleagues. The concept of independence of councillors not on the Planning Committee is not an operationally efficient principle, indeed, it would be more effective if Planning Committee members were required to liaise with concerned residents in order to appreciate their concerns through face to face encounters rather than relying on messages relayed by other councillors.

In order to resolve this democratic deficit, two developments are taking place:

1. To bring more transparency to these levels of inappropriate decision-making, the petition submitted and its inadequate follow up, have become a case study in "poor practice" in planning. This will be posted on the web for the Portsea Island community and as a reference work for university students in town planning, constitutional economics, demography, administration and participatory democracy. This case study is known as the CAP (Coniston Avenue Petition). Further details will be posted on the World Wide Web. When I know when this will occur I will inform the Committee of the relevant url.
2. A Planning Action Group is being formed to assist residents preparing written statements, voicing and giving publicity to their legitimate concerns. When I know what form this will take and how it will operate, I will inform the Committee including any relevant url if this exists.

Yours faithfully,

Hector McNeill

cc: as per distribution list