

Abbeyhill residents concerned over plans for Abbey Lane development

by Noa Hoffman Local Democracy Reporter

Residents in the Abbeyhill area of Edinburgh have expressed concerns over plans for a new residential and student housing development at Abbey Lane.

Property groups Unite Students and Artisan Real Estate have plans to demolish existing buildings on the 0.51-hectare Abbeyhill Industrial Estate and erect three new buildings arranged around a central landscaped courtyard in their place.

The proposed buildings would be five storeys in height, with a part sixth storey to “reduce the perceived mass of the building from street level” and create access to a south facing roof terrace on the southern residential block.

The development would include 66 residential flats and 298 student bedrooms.

Of the residential flats, 12 would be one-bedroom, 40 two-bedroom and 14 three-bedroom.

A total of 17 flats would be affordable housing.

Within the student accommodation, 277 beds would be arranged in a ‘cluster flat’ format, while 21 would be studio flats.

In the student building there would be internal amenity space for a common room and study areas, and an 86 square metre ground floor unit would be a potential leisure site, retail

store, café/restaurant or professional services space.

A total of 22 car parking spaces would be available on site, along with 300 student cycle parking spaces, 12 guest cycle parking spaces and 155 residential cycle parking spaces.

The proposed Abbey Lane development has attracted 44 comments on Edinburgh City Council's planning portal, only one of which is supportive.

The 43 objections range from concerns around increased traffic, to disturbance at the proposed height of the buildings and the growing number of student accommodation blocks in the Abbeyhill area.

Local resident Neil Kidd said: "I'm concerned over the amount of parking in the area that's already tight. If there's another block of flats going up then they will bring more cars into the area."

Another Abbeyhill resident, who requested to remain anonymous, commented: "Student buildings keep on popping up nearby. It's not clear that there is any strategy attached to this – the area isn't a particular hub for universities and colleges.

"I have also not heard anything from the council about changes or improvements to services to reflect all these additional students living nearby. It feels like Abbeyhill is a cheap area, relatively near the city centre, and student housing companies are filling their boots taking advantage of that.

"I don't believe anyone has checked whether so much student space in Abbeyhill is necessary – the council are approving new student buildings before the last ones have even been built yet, let alone occupied."

A decision by the council to approve or block the proposed development is expected around November-December this year, and construction would then start early next year.

A spokesperson for Unite Students and Artisan Real Estate said: "Unite and Artisan have engaged extensively with the local community during three public consultation events since October 2019, as well as The City of Edinburgh Council and we

have adapted our proposals on the back of that feedback.

“This development will provide much needed market and 25 per cent affordable housing as well as student accommodation in line with council policy.

“Unite and Artisan actively support the council’s position on controlled parking zones.”

Noa Hoffman is The Local Democracy Reporter covering Edinburgh. The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency : funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector, and used by qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.