

Statement For Firehouse Redevelopment Plan 23/01158/FUL Site code 3194

It seems counter intuitive to me that a city that last year lost the bid to be city of Culture 2025 would be considering shutting down another cultural venue but here we are. The Firehouse is a staple of the rock and metal music community and is one of the only venues that consistently has live bands playing these genres in Southampton. The report suggesting that this city had enough alternative pubs and music venues is from 2018, a pre-pandemic world away that ignores all of the small business closures that have happened in the last five years. I understand that moving the pub to a smaller venue is being considered but this would still hamper the ability to play live music bands and make the festivals that the pub plays host to such as Abyssal and Abysmal unviable. So many music venues in cities across the country have to keep fighting to exist - we ask do not add any more to this number before we suffer significant societal loss.

Even if we are to lose the Firehouse, developing it into student housing would be a greedy cash grab by the developers. We have seen in recent years a huge amount of student accomodation getting built, increasing in luxury instead of the cheaper alternatives available when I was a student just ten years ago. As a housing development officer has previously pointed out as of May 2023 there were 7666 people in Southampton on the housing register who need affordable rented accomodation, which this bid does nothing to address. Considering cost of living crisis it would be irresponsible to proceed with this plan.

Thank you very much for taking this into consideration.

Clemency Hazel