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DC/19/62842

Fears bedsit will ruin 'family-friendly' area of Smethwick

By [Megan Archer](#) | [Smethwick](#) | [News](#) | Published: Aug 8, 2019

Families in Smethwick have launched a petition protesting against plans for an eight-bedroom bedsit in a 'peaceful' neighbourhood.



Gibson Drive. Photo: Google

Nearly 30 families have signed the petition calling on Sandwell Council to halt the planning application, which if approved will see a five to six bedroom family home in Gibson Drive turned into a HMO (house of multiple occupancy) for eight people.

The home is on the public piazza in Brindley Village, and residents are concerned a HMO with so many bedrooms will not fit in with the "family-friendly" area.

There are fears that the house could be used for rowdy students or ex-offenders.

Local resident Muhammad Waqas, who lives in nearby Berry Drive, said: "I moved from Oxford about a year ago and the reason I chose this particular neighbourhood in Smethwick is mainly due to its community and a very good family-friendly environment.

"Having a safe and family-friendly environment is very important to us as a family. An HMO in this area will be detrimental to the family-friendly environment of this community, it will bring issues like parking disputes, drug use and various other antisocial behaviours

"Parents will not feel safe with their kids playing in the park outside or hanging around on the street."

Claire Gibbs, who also lives in Berry Drive, added: "I have lived here for over 18 years and my children have grown up here. We have enjoyed the peaceful location and sense of community however this has somewhat declined over recent years as more of the houses become short term lets. Parking issues have increased considerably and the introduction of an HMO can only add to these problems."

And Krishna Kharel, who lives Gibson Drive said: "I've been living in this area over the last seven years. We bought our house in this area because of the nice, peaceful and family environment. This area is always appreciated for peacefulness. We don't want to live under stress, arguing with others due to parking, worried about drug dealers, worried about break-ins and anti-social behaviour."

Advertising

Manjeet Sidhu, who has been spearheading the campaign and lives on Gibson Drive, will be speaking at next week's council meeting in a bid to sway councillors against the plans.

She said: "Galton Valley Primary School is within walking distance of where we live and many of the children on the estate go there. The police has already raised concerns about crime and safety in relation to this proposal - we really don't understand why they have been ignored. One good thing to come out of this madness is that 'The Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board' at Sandwell Council is now going to look into Houses in Multiple Occupation across the region.

"This may be too late for our little community but could be instrumental in helping others save dwellings that have been designed for families and save family-friendly neighbourhoods."

The application, by Anjum Mehmood of Anjum Design Ltd, has already been to the planning committee once before but councillors were concerned about lack of parking.

Sandwell Council's planning committee will be discussing the application on Wednesday (Aug 14) at their next meeting.

Fao: Alison Bishop

Date: 5th August 2019

Subject: Manjeet Sidhu response to 3rd revised parking plans at 12 Gibson Drive and additional comments

Hi Alison,

Please see my objections to the 3rd parking proposals for the 8-bedroom 8-person bedsit on 12 Gibson Drive. Please could you kindly attach these comments below to our original petition letter and share both pdf with the planning committee along with your report, as I believe it is important for the committee to get a visual understanding of the tight space we are discussing?



Figure 1 3rd parking proposal

1. Impact to traffic and existing parking for residents. These plans will add to existing problems with double parking and access that is already a concern for residents at 10, 8, 6, 4 and 2 Gibson Drive. The council should already be aware of this as can be seen by comparing the following Google map images from 2008 and 2012:



Figure 2 original cul-de-sac layout

Google Maps Street view 2008

Google Maps Street view
2012

Bollards added by the council to stop people parking over the drains as maintenance teams were unable to access this area when they visited.

Lampost removed on the public footpath following car collisions – the lamppost was starting to lean to one side as a result of ongoing car crashes leading to safety concerns for the public using the footpath and for occupants at 4 Gibson Drive.

**Please note maintenance vehicles are still forced to park in the space between the bollards and the public footpath due to overparking and may struggle with this if cars are double parked in this space when they visit. Sewerage has always been a problem on the estate with frequent visits needed to fix ongoing drainage issues.*



Figure 3 bollards added and lamppost removed due to parking pressures

2. Safety of pedestrians. There is not enough room for three vehicles to safely reverse in and out of the proposed parking space. The plans also compromise the safety of young children and vulnerable adults using the access footpath leading to 14 and 16 Gibson Drive.



Figure 4 original cul-de-sac layout

Google Maps Street view 2008

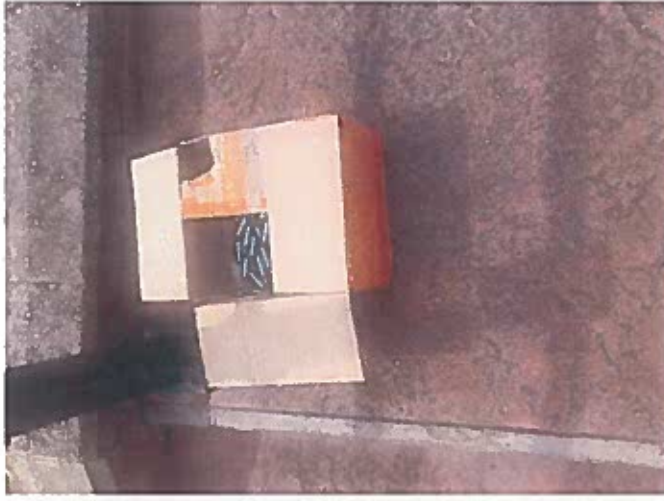
The original parking arrangements allowed occupants at 12 Gibson Drive to safely move on and off their designating parking space without having to reverse. Since the council blocked their path to provide maintenance access, families at 12, 18, 8 and 6 Gibson Drive have struggled with getting in and out of their drives throughout the day.

This is being managed through good-will and because the number of cars linked to 12 Gibson Drive has always been limited to 2, with space for a third vehicle in the garage.

The parking proposal is for 4 vehicles minus a garage and without measures to 'police' the actual number of cars that may result from an 8-person bedsit and any regular visitors to the site i.e. parole officers, community mental health nurses etc

4. Increase in crime

Please find below images to show drug use from visitors to the Piazza over the weekend, and an image of a security camera added by Michael J Gallagher Contractors Limited to the side of 12 Gibson drive (next to drain pipe) following a break in at the property in the last 3 years.



As mentioned in our petition letter, we are already experiencing low level anti-social behaviour which we are managing as community. This includes open drug dealing on the site and ongoing problems with a vulnerable adult linked to 16 Gibson Drive. Footage from the security camera added as a deterrent to thieves will show cars visiting the Piazza to do drug deals late at night as well as an incident involving the vulnerable adult on 30th July outside 12 Gibson Drive. This was not reported to the police but the family was called to manage the situation instead. We are worried both problems will be exacerbated if the bedsit is used a 'safehouse', a 'rehabilitation facility', student accommodation, ex-offender accommodation, and as short-term lets with a potential high turnover of tenants.

5. Need for Family accommodation vs Single accommodation

We understand there is a proposal to convert The Hawthorns into 105 flats. We support this proposal as it includes adequate parking space. There is no need to convert a family home on our estate into single unit rooms.



Figure 3 child playing behind a bin on the other end of the cul-de-sac, hidden from view behind the bin but protected by bollards

Google Maps Street view 2015

The child captured behind the bin in this image is safe from cars reversing in and out of 13, 11, 9 and 7 Gibson Drive and from cars attempting to double park in this space thanks to bollards protecting the public and access footpath to the side.

This is not the case on the other side of the cul-de-sac where the current parking pressures are already a concern for children/ pedestrian safety.

Adding 4 new cars to cul-de-sac as per the latest plans is an accident waiting to happen - young children play on the cul-de-sac throughout the day.

3. Adverse to the Environment

We downloaded the deeds to the property last week after the company's Agent Anjem Design failed to respond to our requests for further information and understand Michael J Gallagher Contractors Limited has been the owner of the property since March 2016.

As you can see Michael J Gallagher Contractors Limited is listing the Midlands Metropolitan Hospital as a recent project with Carillion on its website: <https://www.michaeljgallagher.co.uk/current-past-projects/>

This ties in with our experience of various builders/engineers living at the property prior to the collapse of Carillion but doesn't explain why this company was allowed to put them up on our estate in a three storey family home without an a HMO licence at the time or why they have left the property vacant for so long without tending to the front or back garden, which has become overgrown and unsightly since they took over and no longer fits the character of houses in the neighbourhood.

We understand from the planning office the applicant originally approached the council with a proposal for an even greater number of single rooms but the council rejected this. We understand the police have raised concerns about this company's experience with regards to managing a bedsit.

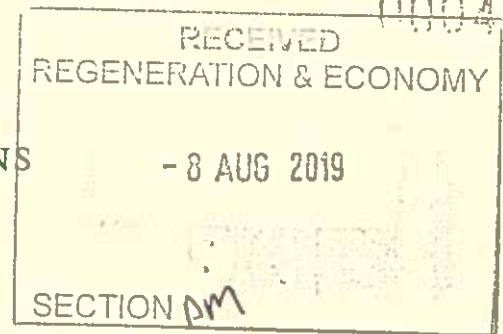
We are concerned that Michael J Gallagher Contractors Limited will continue to demonstrate the same lack of concern to any future concerns we may raise about an increase in rubbish and noise disturbance from tenants or building works they themselves carry out on the site. A number of residents work from home or work shifts and need to understand the length and time the renovations will take in order to accommodate this.

We are also concerned ordinary families will be left to foot the bill for cleaning up any fly tipping and additional rubbish collections needed to accommodate a high churn transient tenants, as some of us are already struggling with the increase to our council tax bills.

(iii) De 19/62842.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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JFS/LC

7th August 2019

Ms Alison Bishop,
Head of Planning & Development,
Sandwell Metro Borough Council,
Sandwell Council House,
Oldbury,
West Midlands B69 3DE.

Dear Alison Bishop,

Residents in Brindley Village came to me with the enclosed petition which I think has also been forwarded to yourself.

In addition to the points they outline it appears that this may have probably been operated without a licence as a HMO by the owners who are putting in the application, but I have no verification as to that.

I would re-enforce my previous points regarding the change of the character of this overwhelming family residential area, but also re-enforce the parking issues.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon John F Spellar MP,
Warley.

Enc:

