# Residents accuse Walsall Council of favouring landlords amid surge in illegal developments



Residents of a quiet cul-de-sac in Walsall are increasingly distressed over a series of planning breaches that have transformed their once-peaceful street into a hub of disruptive development. Frustrations have escalated over the actions of local landlords who appear to be circumventing planning regulations with impunity. One landlord’s recent attempt to convert a garden into a gym has led to the unexpected occupation of a studio flat by a family, prompting concern about the adequacy of the local council's oversight.

Jay Hussain, an auditor and vocal advocate for his neighbours, has been at the forefront of efforts to address these issues. The transformation of Brookhouse Road has been particularly striking, as many of the three-storey Victorian terraces backing onto it have been converted into Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) or self-contained flats. This shift has exacerbated congestion in the area, making it increasingly difficult for bin lorries to navigate. Hussain expressed his dismay: “It is just getting ridiculous... At best it feels like the Council don't care, at worst they come across as corrupt.”

The troubles began when a landlord sought permission to erect a gym for personal use, which neighbours believe was a facade for more extensive renovations. Asadul Haque, another resident and manufacturer, noted the oddity of such a "gym" housing a family instead. Their concerns were compounded when the landlord, identified as Mr S Ali, submitted retrospective plans to repurpose an outbuilding, raising alarms among residents who felt misled by the initial applications.

Jenny Smith, an 81-year-old resident who has lived in the area since 1980, lamented the loss of tranquillity that characterised their community. She recounted a time when children could play freely on the street, a stark contrast to the current chaos with construction debris and the noise from workers starting as early as 8 am on weekends. The building work has altered the character of the neighbourhood dramatically, transforming garages into a development site that seems to disregard the needs of its residents.

Broader ramifications emerge when considering the regulatory landscape. Local authorities like Walsall Council have the power to enforce compliance with planning standards, with penalties under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 including fines up to £30,000 and serious breaches possibly leading to prosecution. Despite these measures, this case highlights the ongoing frustrations residents feel towards Walsall Council’s handling of enforcement actions. A spokesperson from the council acknowledged that investigations into residents’ complaints are ongoing, but emphasized the challenges they face in gathering sufficient evidence to pursue action against issues like parking and anti-social behaviour.

The residents have accused the council of bias in favour of property developers, suspecting that leniency in enforcing planning rules is eroding the fabric of their community. Such concerns are not isolated; Walsall Council has faced scrutiny over similar cases in the past, with instances where planned regulations were found lacking, leading to further discontent among local residents. Neighbours allege that the council’s lack of decisive action is fostering a culture where breaches become normalised.

The implications for community safety and cohesion are significant. As development pressures mount, residents worry that the steady influx of short-term tenants in HMOs will foster instability, eroding the strong sense of community that once prevailed. In a letter to the council, residents articulated their fears about the detrimental effects of unchecked development, voicing concerns about security, safety, and the overall wellbeing of their neighbourhood.

Residents like Hussain are calling for clearer accountability and enforcement from local authorities, urging that the council’s lack of action is driving a wedge between residents and their peace of mind. The council must address not only the complaints but also the growing crisis of housing standards and safety rights for tenants. The ongoing discourse surrounding these issues dramatically highlights the delicate balance between urban development and community integrity, a tension that is bound to require more than just reactive measures from local authorities to ensure the wellbeing of all residents in Walsall.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
2. Paragraphs 1, 7
3. Paragraph 6
4. Paragraph 6
5. Paragraph 6
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraph 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14714559/Locals-quiet-cul-sac-wits-end-neighbour-turns-garden-gym-home-moves-FAMILY-adds-extra-storey-garage.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/walsall/2024/10/30/council-accused-of-being-too-lenient-over-planning-enforcement-case/> - In October 2024, Walsall Council faced criticism for its handling of a planning enforcement case in Paddock. The council had approved plans for a five-bedroom dwelling on Brookhouse Road, stipulating that a 45-degree line of sight from neighboring windows be preserved. However, inaccuracies in the submitted plans led to partial obstruction of views for neighboring properties. Despite issuing a Breach of Condition Notice, the council withdrew it due to the applicant's inaccurate plans. An enforcement case was opened, but residents expressed frustration over the prolonged process and the council's perceived leniency.
3. <https://buckinghamfutures.com/penalties-for-landlords-breach-planning-rules/> - Landlords who breach planning regulations in the UK can face significant penalties. Under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, local authorities have the authority to issue Civil Penalty Notices, imposing fines up to £30,000 per offense. In severe cases, landlords may face prosecution, leading to criminal charges, fines, or imprisonment. Additionally, Planning Enforcement Orders can require landlords to rectify breaches, cease unauthorized use, or demolish illegal structures. Non-compliance can result in further legal action, including injunctions and additional fines. These measures aim to deter non-compliance and maintain housing standards.
4. <https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/complaints_about_private_landlords> - Tenants in England have rights to safe and well-maintained housing. If a landlord fails to meet their responsibilities, tenants can file complaints. The council's environmental health team can inspect properties for serious issues like damp, structural problems, or dangerous wiring. In cases of harassment or threats of illegal eviction, the council can intervene to prevent homelessness. Tenants are advised to document complaints in writing and can escalate unresolved issues to the Housing Ombudsman. Landlords are prohibited from retaliating against tenants for making complaints, ensuring tenants' rights are protected.
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Housing_(Regulation)_Act_2023> - The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 is UK legislation aimed at improving social housing standards and safety. Introduced in response to incidents like the Grenfell Tower fire and the death of Awaab Ishak, the act includes 'Awaab's Law,' which mandates social landlords to address housing hazards within strict timeframes. The act also amends the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, enhancing regulatory measures to ensure safer living conditions in social housing across England and Wales.
6. <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/housing/housing-safety-and-standards/enforcing-standards-rented-housing> - Walsall Council enforces housing standards to ensure tenant safety and well-being. The council investigates housing conditions through risk assessments and property inspections. If landlords fail to comply with improvement notices, the council can issue Civil Penalty Notices of up to £30,000 per offense or prosecute landlords, leading to unlimited fines and criminal convictions. The council also has the authority to issue Banning Orders, preventing landlords from letting properties, and maintains a national database of rogue landlords and agents to protect residents.
7. <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/walsall/2022/02/14/walsall-house-demolition-is-warning-to-those-who-think-they-can-build-what-they-want/> - In February 2022, Walsall Council demolished a house built without proper planning permission, serving as a warning to those who flout planning regulations. The property on Walstead Road had been under construction for five years, with residents reporting debris and materials scattered across the front. Despite initial approvals for a small extension, the building expanded beyond agreed plans. The council intervened, leading to the demolition of the unauthorized structure, emphasizing the importance of adhering to planning permissions.