# Brighton council investigates tenant rewards for positive planning comments



Brighton and Hove City Council has conducted an investigation into claims that a property company offered rewards to tenants in exchange for positive comments regarding a planning application. The application in question involves the conversion of a family home at 47 Eastbrook Road, Portslade, into a house in multiple occupation (HMO).

The company behind the application, WSE Property Services Ltd, is owned by John Wright, 49, and Holly Wright, 49. A report submitted to the council’s planning committee confirmed that the company had indeed incentivised tenants with rewards to secure favourable remarks. “Copies of the communication sent to their tenants have been reviewed and the applicant has confirmed that this happened,” the report stated. It added that supportive comments mostly appeared after the company’s intervention in the public consultation process. Consequently, the council assigned only limited weight to these comments but acknowledged that they could not be entirely disregarded as it was impossible to prove all positive feedback resulted from the incentives.

Among the concerns raised was the council’s practice of redacting names and addresses of commenters on planning applications, a policy that has been criticised for reducing transparency and potentially undermining public confidence. In this case, some comments openly revealed that the writers were tenants of WSE Property Services and had been offered takeaway vouchers in return for support.

Labour councillor Liz Loughran, chairwoman of the council’s planning committee, emphasised the council’s expectation that responses would be made in good faith. Speaking to The Argus, Cllr Loughran said, “It is important to remember that planning is not a referendum. Comments received as part of the application process, both for and against, are used as part of the wider comprehensive decision-making process.”

The application has garnered significant public reaction, with 43 objections posted on the council’s website. Objectors expressed concerns about overdevelopment, the potential loss of a family home, and increased parking pressures. One resident, whose details were redacted, commented on the parking difficulties in the area, noting the free parking on the street and the high demand created by nearby amenities, including a community centre, a dentist, and Portslade centre. The resident added that overcrowding often leaves local residents unable to find parking spaces.

On the other hand, nine supporting comments highlighted the need for accommodation for students attending a nearby college and for young working professionals seeking shared housing. One supporter, also anonymised by the council, said, “Student accommodation is desperately needed in the area with Performers College less than ten minutes’ walk from Eastbrook Road. The vast majority of the students at the college are female... they are in desperate need of this accommodation.”

The planning committee is scheduled to convene at 2pm on Wednesday, 7 May at Hove Town Hall to decide on the application. The meeting is expected to be webcast, allowing public observation of the proceedings.

WSE Property Services has been approached for comment regarding the situation.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2025/03/17/council-investigates-claims-about-planning-bribes-after-mp-steps-in/> - This article reports on Brighton and Hove City Council's investigation into claims that WSE Property Services Ltd offered rewards to tenants for positive comments on a planning application, confirming the council's awareness and ongoing inquiry into the matter.
2. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2020/03/11/brighton-and-hove-councils-redaction-policy-leaves-planning-process-open-to-abuse/> - This piece discusses the council's practice of redacting names and addresses of commenters on planning applications, highlighting concerns about transparency and potential misuse of the process.
3. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/planning-applications/who-consulted-planning-application> - This official council page outlines the consultation process for planning applications, detailing how the council engages with the public and other stakeholders, including the publication of comments on the Planning Register.
4. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/planning-local-enforcement-plan> - This document outlines the council's approach to investigating and resolving planning breaches, including procedures for handling complaints and conducting site visits, relevant to the investigation of alleged planning irregularities.
5. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/planning-applications/find-and-comment-planning-applications> - This page provides information on how the public can find and comment on planning applications, including details on the Planning Register and the process for submitting comments.
6. <https://www.hastings.gov.uk/planning/commenting/> - This page from Hastings Borough Council outlines their criteria for redacting personal information in planning application comments, offering insight into how similar councils handle data protection and transparency in the planning process.
7. <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/25123507.brighton-developer-admits-offering-vouchers-postive-comments/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data