# Havering approves 34 homes on underused Hornchurch car park despite resident concerns



Havering Council's recent approval to construct 34 new homes in Hornchurch has sparked considerable debate among residents, reflecting the persistent tension between urban development and community concerns. The plans focus on transforming the Dorrington Gardens car park, identified as one of several underused spaces, into a mix of one- and two-bedroom flats, alongside three-bedroom family homes. This project contributes to a broader initiative within the borough to address a pressing housing shortage, characterised by increasing demand which, as highlighted in a 2024 council report, has begun to "quickly outpace" supply.

The plans, as proposed by Mercury Land Holdings—a wholly owned subsidiary of Havering Council—assert that the existing car park, with just 17 of its 196 spaces occupied daily, is underutilised. This argument for repurposing is underscored by a borough-wide reassessment of land use in the face of a growing housing crisis. However, the scheme has been met with considerable local dissent, receiving over 40 objections from residents who fear that the new development could overwhelm local infrastructure. Concerns regarding parking availability, local business viability, and potential traffic issues were frequently raised during consultations, as residents expressed worries about "unsafe" parking spilling into adjacent side streets.

Labour councillor Jane Keane acknowledged these concerns but emphasised the accessibility of Hornchurch via public transport. Speaking during the planning meeting, she remarked, “Hornchurch town centre is well-served by buses… and we are also within walking distance of a reasonably good train service.” Despite her support for the project, she argued a missed opportunity in limiting the height of the buildings to two storeys, suggesting that more could be done with the available land.

Interestingly, the approved development does not include any units deemed 'affordable', a point the council’s planning officers noted as "regrettable" yet acceptable given the circumstances. This absence of affordable housing is particularly contentious, considering ongoing discussions in the wider community about the pressing need for housing solutions that cater to low-to-moderate income households. Previous developments in the area, such as six new homes approved in Keswick Avenue, also faced scrutiny, highlighting a pattern of resistance to significant changes in the local landscape.

In addition to the specificities of the Hornchurch site, Havering Council's broader strategy to convert underused car parks into housing has been met with mixed reactions, illustrating a shift toward maximising land usage while grappling with infrastructural realities. The council’s decision to transfer multiple sites to Mercury Land Holdings for development has raised questions. Critics have pointed out the lack of a cohesive business plan and the potential repercussions for community cohesion, suggesting that local communities might not adequately absorb the additional population density.

As the consultation process continues, the local community remains divided. On one hand, the urgent need for new homes is clear; on the other, the implications for the existing neighbourhood infrastructure and character are equally significant. As Havering addresses its housing crisis, the outcome of this particular development at Dorrington Gardens might set a precedent for future projects across the borough.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park), [[2]](https://www.romfordrecorder.co.uk/news/24720984.dorrington-gardens-car-park-hornchurch-plans-34-homes/)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park), [[4]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/gardner-stewart-car-park-homes-plan-in-havering-facing-overpopulation-claims)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park), [[5]](https://thehaveringdaily.co.uk/2024/05/17/despite-objections-plans-to-convert-car-parks-into-housing-go-through/)
4. Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park), [[6]](https://www.havering.gov.uk/news/article/1302/council_launches_consultation_on_plans_to_transform_underused_car_parks)
5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.yellowad.co.uk/plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/havering-council-office-homeless-move-b1206752.html)

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## Bibliography

* <https://www.yellowad.co.uk/plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=plans-spproved-for-34-homes-on-underused-hornchurch-car-park> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.romfordrecorder.co.uk/news/24720984.dorrington-gardens-car-park-hornchurch-plans-34-homes/> - Havering Council has proposed transforming Dorrington Gardens car park in Hornchurch into a 34-home development, featuring a mix of one- and two-bedroom apartments and three-bedroom family homes. The plan includes two three-storey apartment blocks and 12 semi-detached family homes. Despite the council's assertion that the car park is underused, with an average of 17 of 196 spaces occupied daily, residents have expressed concerns about potential overpopulation and the impact on local infrastructure. A decision on the planning application is expected by January 31, 2025.
* <https://dorringtongardens.communityuk.site/> - A public consultation has been launched for the proposed redevelopment of Dorrington Gardens car park in Hornchurch into 39 new homes, comprising 10 houses and 29 apartments. The development aims to integrate sensitively into the surrounding area, with plans for landscaping and play areas. The project team has conducted a significant design process and invites community engagement through consultation events and online resources.
* <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/gardner-stewart-car-park-homes-plan-in-havering-facing-overpopulation-claims> - Plans for 34 homes on Dorrington Gardens car park in Havering have faced opposition from residents concerned about overpopulation and pressure on local infrastructure. The development, proposed by Gardner Stewart Architects on behalf of Mercury Land Holdings, includes a mix of family homes and apartments. Despite the council's assertion that the site is underused, with an average of 17 of 196 spaces occupied daily, residents have raised concerns about the impact on local services and the character of the area.
* <https://thehaveringdaily.co.uk/2024/05/17/despite-objections-plans-to-convert-car-parks-into-housing-go-through/> - Havering Council has approved plans to convert several underused car parks into housing developments, including Dorrington Gardens in Hornchurch. Despite objections from councillors and residents, the council aims to generate capital receipts and address the housing crisis. The scheme involves transferring six sites to Mercury Land Holdings Ltd, the council's wholly owned company, for development into new homes. The decision has been met with criticism over the lack of a comprehensive business plan and concerns about the impact on local communities.
* <https://www.havering.gov.uk/news/article/1302/council_launches_consultation_on_plans_to_transform_underused_car_parks> - Havering Council has launched a consultation on plans to redevelop several underused car parks, including Dorrington Gardens, into housing developments. The proposals aim to deliver nearly 300 homes, including affordable housing and commercial space for local businesses. The council intends to submit planning applications in Spring 2024, with decisions expected around Autumn 2024. The consultation seeks feedback from residents and stakeholders on the proposed developments.
* <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/havering-council-office-homeless-move-b1206752.html> - Havering Council is facing financial challenges and has approved plans to house homeless families in converted office buildings to save costs. The council has entered a 10-year lease for Eastgate House in Basildon, which will provide 34 homes by February 2026, subject to planning consent. This move aims to reduce reliance on costly hotel accommodations and address the housing crisis in the borough.