# Brighton council approves contentious HMO conversion despite bribery claims and public outcry



Brighton and Hove City Council has officially approved the conversion of a modest terraced house at 47 Eastbrook Road in Portslade into a five-bedroom house in multiple occupancy (HMO), despite considerable public dissent. This decision has ignited a wave of discontent among local residents, who have raised various concerns related to the impact of such developments on their community.

The applicant, John Wright of WSE Property Services Ltd, faced scrutiny after reports emerged that he solicited supportive comments from tenants in his other properties by offering food vouchers. This tactic has drawn ire from many residents, branding the attempt as manipulative and indicative of a deeper disregard for community sentiment. One objector expressed outrage at this strategy, labelling it as a "sneaky" effort to mislead both the council and the neighbourhood about the true level of support for the proposal. Such sentiments resonate with earlier complaints regarding another conversion by Wright at 71 Eastbrook Road, which was similarly contentious and approved last year despite facing opposition.

With this latest conversion, the council anticipates housing up to six individuals. The application argued that the change would result in only a minor increase in activity; however, residents have articulated fears surrounding the implications of such densification, encompassing issues like noise, pressure on local services, and the potential for increased anti-social behaviour. These concerns echo those brought forth during previous applications for HMOs in the area. Many residents feel that the integrity of their community is at stake, adhering to a belief that conversions like this one erode the fabric of family neighbourhoods.

In total, 43 objections were submitted in relation to the Eastbrook Road property, highlighting a mix of worries including overdevelopment, limited parking availability, and the risk of heightened traffic, all of which could detract from the area's residential character. Critics have voiced particularly strong feelings about the shift from family homes to shared accommodations, often framing it as a result of "greedy landlords" prioritising profit over the needs of the community.

During the planning process, the council received nine letters of support, but these were largely deemed to lack credibility due to their timing, as they were submitted after Mr Wright's intervention. Despite acknowledging the controversial tactics employed in securing these comments, the council ultimately justified its decision on the grounds that the proposed layout would meet a suitable standard of accommodation and would not significantly harm neighbouring properties.

The matter surrounding the alleged bribery has prompted further investigation, particularly following media coverage and the intervention of local Labour MP Chris Ward. The council is now examining these claims rigorously to uphold the integrity of the planning process, reflecting growing scrutiny on how developments are approved in the face of community objection.

As the situation evolves, residents remain vigilant, expressing a determination to safeguard their neighbourhoods against what they perceive as a trend of overdevelopment and loss of family homes. The outcome at 47 Eastbrook Road may signal a broader struggle within Portslade and similar communities across Brighton and Hove as they navigate the complex landscape of housing demand, local character, and landlord interests.

### Reference Map

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

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/25163774.plans-portslade-hmo-approved-despite-anger/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2024/04/02/dozens-object-to-plans-to-turn-family-homes-into-shared-houses/> - In April 2024, Brighton and Hove News reported that numerous residents objected to plans to convert two family homes on Eastbrook Road in Portslade into houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). The objections highlighted concerns about overdevelopment, increased noise, pressure on local services, and potential anti-social behavior. Residents emphasized the negative impact on the community's character and the adequacy of local infrastructure to support the proposed changes.
3. <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/politics/council/neighbours-shocked-as-plans-for-a-shared-house-in-quiet-portslade-street-approved-despite-objections-4601021> - In April 2024, Sussex Express reported that Brighton and Hove City Council approved plans to convert 71 Eastbrook Road, Portslade, into a five-bedroom HMO, despite receiving 21 objections, including one from a local councillor. The approval was granted by the council's planning department, with the council stating that only four objections were received within the consultation period, allowing the decision to be delegated.
4. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2025/03/17/council-investigates-claims-about-planning-bribes-after-mp-steps-in/> - In March 2025, Brighton and Hove News reported that Brighton and Hove City Council was investigating claims that WSE Property Services Ltd offered takeaway vouchers to tenants in exchange for positive comments on a planning application for 47 Eastbrook Road, Portslade. The allegations were brought to light by Labour MP Chris Ward, prompting the council to look into the matter to maintain the integrity of the planning process.
5. <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/politics/council/brighton-and-hove-city-council-looks-into-planning-application-bribery-claims-5040507> - In March 2025, Sussex Express reported that Brighton and Hove City Council was investigating claims that WSE Property Services Ltd offered takeaway vouchers to tenants in exchange for positive comments on a planning application for 47 Eastbrook Road, Portslade. The allegations were brought to light by Labour MP Chris Ward, prompting the council to look into the matter to maintain the integrity of the planning process.
6. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2024/04/22/objectors-too-late-to-halt-shared-house-plan/> - In April 2024, Brighton and Hove News reported that despite receiving 21 objections, including one from a local councillor, Brighton and Hove City Council approved plans to convert 71 Eastbrook Road, Portslade, into a five-bedroom HMO. The council stated that only four objections were received within the consultation period, allowing the decision to be delegated.
7. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2024/04/02/dozens-object-to-plans-to-turn-family-homes-into-shared-houses/> - In April 2024, Brighton and Hove News reported that numerous residents objected to plans to convert two family homes on Eastbrook Road in Portslade into houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). The objections highlighted concerns about overdevelopment, increased noise, pressure on local services, and potential anti-social behavior. Residents emphasized the negative impact on the community's character and the adequacy of local infrastructure to support the proposed changes.