# Residents of Westwood Heath voice health concerns over rapid student housing developments in Coventry



Residents of Westwood Heath in Coventry have voiced growing frustration over the rapid development of student accommodation in their neighbourhood, asserting they are "getting choked" by the increasing construction activity. Currently, a 544-room complex is underway at the site of the former Progress House office building on Westwood Way. The council initially rejected plans for the project, but a successful appeal allowed the developers to commence work, which has now progressed to the demolition phase, inciting further concern among residents.

Locals, such as Ian Stevenson, chair of the Westwood Heath Residents Association, report that dust and debris from the demolition have caused significant pollution issues. Stevenson remarked, "We are getting choked by the development, quite literally because of the dust from the demolition." He shared that the situation forced him to wear a mask while walking in nearby woods, an activity he has enjoyed for 14 years. Although he noted a slight improvement following complaints, he emphasised that the initial lack of adherence to regulations was troubling.

The situation is compounded by the recent opening of another student accommodation complex on the same road, dubbed The Oaks, along with plans for additional developments nearby. Residents are questioning the true demand for such facilities, especially given the considerable number of vacant student accommodations in the city centre. Stevenson expressed scepticism: "They say in the planning there is demand for it, but how can this be when there is so much empty student accommodation in the city centre? We feel let down by the council."

Concerns about student accommodation are not limited to Westwood Heath. Areas like Charterhouse have also seen residents express unease regarding the rise of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The Charterhouse Residents Association has called for changes in planning laws to address these issues, which they believe contribute to community breakdown and the isolation of elderly residents. Currently, Coventry City Council lacks a targeted policy on HMOs, although any conversion requires planning permission, highlighting the need for clearer regulations in a rapidly changing housing market.

Further down the line, proposals for similar developments, including an 800-bed student accommodation block in Cannon Park, face staunch opposition from local residents concerned about the disproportionate scale of such projects relative to the surrounding communities. Critics argue that these large developments dominate the skyline and potentially disrupt the character of residential areas, as evidenced by a recent vote where councillors rejected the 544-bed development amid worries of noise, anti-social behaviour, and its overall impact on local life.

The prevailing sentiment among residents is one of anxiety regarding future developments and their implications for community cohesion. As conditions for students living in Bristol and Leamington Spa come under scrutiny due to allegations of neglect and exploitation, the need for increased oversight and accountability in the student housing market in Coventry becomes all the more pressing.

As local officials grapple with these challenges, the outcry from residents is a reminder of the critical balance that must be struck between meeting housing demands and preserving community integrity. Whether Coventry City Council will heed the calls for stricter regulations and greater community involvement in planning remains to be seen.

In the face of mounting pressure from constituents, local councillors, such as Marcus Lapsa, have acknowledged the residents' health concerns caused by ongoing developments, promising to bring these issues forward in planning discussions. The question that looms large is how to develop responsibly while addressing the urgent needs of students in a city where the accommodation landscape is shifting rapidly.

### Reference Map

1. Lead article
2. Summary (2)
3. Summary (3)
4. Summary (4)
5. Summary (5)
6. Summary (6)
7. Summary (7)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/residents-say-theyre-getting-choked-31688814> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-19410055> - Residents in Coventry's Charterhouse area have expressed concerns over the proliferation of student accommodation, particularly Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The Charterhouse Residents Association has called for changes in planning laws to prevent properties from being converted into HMOs, citing issues like community breakdown and isolation of elderly residents. Coventry City Council currently lacks a specific policy on HMOs, stating that any conversion requires planning permission.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-66273997> - Plans to build a 544-bed student accommodation block in Coventry were rejected by councillors following opposition from local residents. The development, proposed for Westwood Way, faced criticism for its size and potential impact on the area. Despite initial support from council officers, the scheme was deemed an 'eyesore' by residents, leading to a 5-2 vote against approval.
4. <https://sturents.com/student-accommodation-news/en/2023/07/24/544-bed-coventry-pbsa-rejected-by-councillors/3106> - A proposed 544-bed student accommodation in Coventry was rejected by councillors due to residents' concerns over noise, anti-social behaviour, and the impact on the residential area. Despite initial indications that the development would be approved, councillors voted 5-2 against the scheme after residents described it as an 'eyesore' that would 'dominate the skyline'.
5. <https://coventryobserver.co.uk/news/residents-slam-plans-for-800-bed-student-block-at-cannon-park-in-coventry/> - Residents in Coventry's Cannon Park area have strongly opposed plans for an 800-bed student accommodation block. The development, proposed by ES Coventry, would be situated on a car park near the Cannon Park Shopping Centre. Local residents and ward councillors argue that the size and scale of the development are disproportionate to the surrounding area, with concerns about overshadowing and community impact.
6. <https://theboar.org/2025/02/im-the-f-cking-landlord-lawbreaking-and-neglect-rife-in-mouldy-and-dangerous-student-housing/> - An investigation by The Boar has revealed widespread issues in Coventry and Leamington Spa's student housing market, including neglect, lawbreaking, and exploitation. Students reported living in substandard conditions, such as untreated mould and broken fire alarms, with landlords often unresponsive to repair requests. The investigation highlights a culture of blatant violations of tenants' rights in the student housing sector.
7. <https://sturents.com/student-accommodation-news/en/2021/12/13/local-petition-filed-against-development-in-coventry/2789> - Residents in Coventry's Collingwood Road area have filed a petition against a proposed development to convert an existing warehouse into high-quality student accommodation. The plan includes 110 single-occupancy rooms with en-suites, spread over two to five storeys. Concerns raised include over-intensification of use, reduced parking spaces, increased traffic, and potential noise and litter pollution in the residential area.