# Grandmother faces eviction after £30,000 garden makeover without planning permission in East Sussex council home



A grandmother is facing potential eviction from her council house in Moulsecoomb, East Sussex, after investing £30,000 in a garden renovation, which was undertaken without the necessary planning permission. Renata Mahmoud, 48, has resided in the property for nearly two decades, during which she has raised her three children. Motivated by safety concerns that arose after one of her children sustained an injury while playing in the overgrown garden, she sought to transform the space into a more usable and aesthetically pleasing area.

According to Mahmoud, the council’s response to her requests for assistance was unyielding; they stated that any property improvements are the responsibility of tenants. She remarked on her frustration, saying, “I made a lovely garden and they’ve ordered me to take it down. It’s very depressing as I don't know if I can afford to; we could sleep on the streets because of this.” Her sentiment echoes the feelings of many tenants struggling with housing stability while endeavouring to enhance their living conditions.

Mahmoud’s project included levelling a sloped area and laying down a three-tier patio, actions that her neighbour, Michael Bundock, praised as a significant improvement from the prior state of the garden, which he described as a “jungle” filled with brambles and debris. Bundock, who has lived next door for over twenty years, expressed disbelief over the council's strict stance on her renovations. He stated, “It seems a bit extreme, doesn’t it? She’s tried working with them… it doesn’t make sense; why be jealous of someone else’s kingdom?”

This case highlights a growing concern regarding the responsibilities and rights of council tenants. As outlined by Shelter England, there are defined regulations that must be adhered to in order for councils to pursue eviction. Grounds for eviction typically include non-payment of rent, antisocial behaviour, and breaches of tenancy agreements. However, councils must also provide clear evidence in court before proceeding with evictions, underscoring the importance of procedural compliance in such matters. Brighton and Hove City Council confirmed that the situation has been referred to the courts, but emphasised that eviction remains a last resort, indicating a willingness to seek resolution.

The complexity of tenant rights is further highlighted by the council's own resources, which include a Tenant Handbook that stipulates the requirement for tenants to maintain gardens tidy and obtain written permission before making substantial alterations. This handbook insists on the need for communication between tenants and the council, aiming to foster a collaborative approach rather than punitive measures. Yet, in Mahmoud’s case, it appears that communication may have faltered, leading to this distressing predicament.

As Mahmoud contemplates the possibility of returning her garden to its original state, which would involve significant financial hardship, she is supported by neighbours who empathise with her plight. Bundock noted that community members have witnessed Mahmoud’s efforts to improve her garden over the years, often at the behest of the council’s own complaints regarding garden maintenance.

The situation represents an intersection of tenant rights, council regulations, and the human stories underlying housing policy in urban environments. As local authorities navigate these complex instances, the need for empathetic governance and clear public communication becomes not merely a guideline, but a necessity to avert the risk of homelessness for residents like Mahmoud, who are striving for a better quality of life for themselves and their families.

In this challenging landscape, advocates stress the importance of a cooperative dialogue between tenants and their councils, cautioning against rigid interpretations of regulations that may overlook the genuine efforts of tenants to improve their homes.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14743273/Gran-48-faces-eviction-three-bed-council-house-spending-30k-garden-makeover-without-planning-permission.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14743273/Gran-48-faces-eviction-three-bed-council-house-spending-30k-garden-makeover-without-planning-permission.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/eviction/grounds_for_evicting_secure_council_tenants/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/eviction/grounds_for_evicting_secure_council_tenants/), [[5]](https://mta-sts.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/planning-enforcement)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/tenant-handbook), [[2]](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/eviction/grounds_for_evicting_secure_council_tenants/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14743273/Gran-48-faces-eviction-three-bed-council-house-spending-30k-garden-makeover-without-planning-permission.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/tenant-handbook)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/eviction/grounds_for_evicting_secure_council_tenants/), [[3]](https://mta-sts.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2013/council-takes-action-over-unauthorised-loft-conversion)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14743273/Gran-48-faces-eviction-three-bed-council-house-spending-30k-garden-makeover-without-planning-permission.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/eviction/grounds_for_evicting_secure_council_tenants/> - This page from Shelter England outlines the grounds for eviction from a council tenancy, including non-payment of rent, antisocial behaviour, and breaches of tenancy agreements. It emphasizes that councils must provide evidence in court to evict a tenant and must follow specific procedures to end a secure or flexible tenancy. The page also discusses the council's responsibilities to offer suitable housing to move into and the importance of adhering to tenancy agreements to avoid eviction.
3. <https://mta-sts.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2013/council-takes-action-over-unauthorised-loft-conversion> - In August 2013, Brighton & Hove City Council took enforcement action against a property owner who converted the top floor of a listed building into two flats without permission. The council served two enforcement notices, requiring the owner to revert the space back to a single flat. The article highlights the importance of obtaining planning permission before making alterations to listed buildings and the council's commitment to preserving the city's built heritage.
4. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/tenant-handbook> - The Tenant Handbook from Brighton & Hove City Council provides comprehensive information for council tenants, including responsibilities for maintaining gardens and balconies. Tenants are required to keep their gardens tidy and free of rubbish and must obtain written permission from the council before making significant changes, such as erecting structures or removing trees. The handbook also covers procedures for ending a tenancy, compensation for improvements, and guidelines for transferring to another council tenancy.
5. <https://mta-sts.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/planning-enforcement> - Brighton & Hove City Council's Planning Enforcement page explains how the council investigates unauthorized changes to land and buildings. It details the types of cases the enforcement team handles, including unapproved building works and changes to listed buildings. The page also outlines the process for reporting a planning enforcement issue and the council's approach to taking enforcement action, emphasizing the importance of adhering to planning regulations to maintain the city's built environment.
6. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2020/new-rules-private-tenancy-evictions> - In July 2020, new guidance was issued regarding private tenancy evictions in Brighton & Hove. The guidance aimed to avoid evictions by encouraging landlords and tenants to discuss difficulties and seek resolutions together. It introduced a six-month notice period for eviction notices served from 20 September 2020, allowing tenants more time to find alternative accommodation. The article emphasizes the importance of communication and mediation to prevent homelessness and the council's commitment to supporting tenants during challenging times.
7. <https://www.duncanlewis.co.uk/housing_news/Brighton_landlord_prosecuted_for_unlicensed_HMO_%287_August_2017%29.html> - In August 2017, a Brighton landlord was prosecuted for letting a property as a house in multiple occupation (HMO) without a license. The prosecution marked the first successful case by Brighton & Hove City Council regarding the unauthorized conversion of a house into a small HMO. The article highlights the importance of landlords obtaining the necessary licenses and adhering to housing regulations to ensure tenant safety and compliance with local laws.