# Basingstoke couple’s driveway gym sparks renewed debate over parking and planning rules



A couple from Basingstoke have found themselves entangled in a planning dispute over a home gym they constructed on their driveway. Paul Willis, 42, and Emma Woodley, 43, had the gym built in one of the two parking spaces that were part of their property, presumably to support Mr Willis's personal training business. However, their neighbours argued that the addition of the gym would lead to parking issues on the street, as it would mean one of the couple's cars would have to be parked outside their property. This has raised broader concerns regarding parking and planning regulations within the area.

The couple, who bought their £440,000 home last year, were reportedly under the impression that their gym was permissible without planning permission. They stated they had conducted thorough research into local planning regulations before commencing the construction. Yet, despite their understanding, the local council received objections from their neighbours after construction began. Ms Woodley highlighted the existing parking challenges in the area, noting that street parking often led to dangerous blind spots for pedestrians, as well as obstructing traffic flow. Local resident Olivia Lucas remarked in a letter that the gym’s impact was visible, causing cars to park on the road and creating hazardous conditions for both motorists and pedestrians.

This incident is not an isolated case. In Basingstoke, residents have previously expressed concerns about stringent parking fines enforced by Barratt Homes at the Chapel Gate development, which have been described as "draconian." Complaints included financial penalties levied on residents for trivial infractions while they attempted to access their homes, reflecting a deep dissatisfaction with parking regulations in new developments. Such frustration seems to echo across various communities in Hampshire, with numerous residents protesting planning decisions that they feel neglect their needs.

The planning committee’s decision to reject the couple's retrospective application was primarily rooted in concerns that it could set a precedent for other homeowners seeking similar alterations. Councillors voiced apprehension that if others followed suit, the estate could rapidly lose available parking, exacerbating existing problems. Councillor Paul Miller underlined this idea, stating, “Another car unable to park at a property is another car that's going to be somewhere else.”

Despite the couple's assertions that the gym had a minimal overall impact on parking availability—given they often utilised unallocated spaces nearby—councillors remained sceptical. They viewed the matter through the lens of broader urban planning and community safety. Ms Woodley expressed her disappointment, characterising the council's decision as "ludicrous," and she and Mr Willis were left contemplating the potential financial repercussions of dismantling their gym, which the couple claimed significantly contributed to Mr Willis's income.

In the wake of this decision, suggestions have emerged regarding alternative uses for their garden space, yet Ms Woodley lamented the prospect of compromising their garden by converting it into a storage area. This situation raises questions about how planning regulations are interpreted and enforced in residential areas, particularly when balancing individual property rights against community expectations.

The actions taken by the planning committee resonate with recent decisions across Hampshire, where local councils have increasingly scrutinised development proposals. In Eastleigh, for instance, a plan to build multiple residential units was rejected due to concerns about parking and privacy, while residents in Haslemere protested against a proposed development that promised insufficient parking in an area already beleaguered by traffic challenges.

These planning disputes reflect a growing tension between modern living requirements and community planning strategies aimed at controlling urban expansion and safety. As cities continue to evolve, the need for a coherent, fair, and flexible approach to planning is becoming increasingly apparent, leaving many residents and prospective developers alike navigating an increasingly complex landscape.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14756451/Couple-gym-neighbours-moaned-cars-parked-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-51137799)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14756451/Couple-gym-neighbours-moaned-cars-parked-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-hampshire-66936022), [[4]](https://www.altonherald.com/news/haslemere-residents-voice-serious-concerns-over-planning-developments-663626)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14756451/Couple-gym-neighbours-moaned-cars-parked-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-51137799), [[5]](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2021/06/04/appeals-round-500sqm-home-gym-would-not-be-incidental-house-precautionary-approach)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://basp.basingstoke.gov.uk/strategic-approach-to-parking)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14756451/Couple-gym-neighbours-moaned-cars-parked-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://www.hampshirechronicle.co.uk/news/23845653.romsey-planning-appeal-lodged-refused-gym-plans/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14756451/Couple-gym-neighbours-moaned-cars-parked-street.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-51137799> - Residents in Basingstoke's Chapel Gate development have criticised the 'draconian' parking fines imposed by Barratt Homes. Fines up to £100 were introduced for parking violations, leading to complaints from residents, including a pregnant woman who was fined despite urgent need to use her home. Barratt Homes acknowledged the issues and stated they would appoint a new enforcement company to address the concerns.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-hampshire-66936022> - In Eastleigh, Hampshire, residents were 'stunned' when a planning committee rejected a proposal to build nine flats and three houses on the site of the former Samson's Gym. Concerns included the development's impact on privacy and parking, with residents feeling the plan was out of character for the area. Despite council planners recommending approval, the committee voted against the application.
4. <https://www.altonherald.com/news/haslemere-residents-voice-serious-concerns-over-planning-developments-663626> - Residents in Haslemere have expressed serious concerns over recent planning developments, particularly a proposal for 20 dwellings with seven parking spaces on Wey Hill. Objectors argue that the lack of parking would exacerbate existing traffic issues. Another development, Phase Two of the Scotland Park project, is under appeal after being rejected due to potential harm to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
5. <https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2021/06/04/appeals-round-500sqm-home-gym-would-not-be-incidental-house-precautionary-approach> - An inspector refused to grant a certificate of lawful use for a 500sqm back garden gym featuring a running track and boxing ring, ruling it was not 'incidental' to the main house and therefore not permitted development. The decision highlights the importance of ensuring that outbuildings are genuinely ancillary to the primary residence to comply with planning regulations.
6. <https://basp.basingstoke.gov.uk/strategic-approach-to-parking> - Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has adopted a revised Strategic Approach to Parking, aiming to support the town centre's vitality and economic viability. The strategy includes assessing current and future parking demand, maintaining allocated Blue Badge spaces, ensuring access to key facilities, and considering proximity to other parking options and sustainable transport modes.
7. <https://www.hampshirechronicle.co.uk/news/23845653.romsey-planning-appeal-lodged-refused-gym-plans/> - In Romsey, Hampshire, a business is challenging the refusal of its planning application to convert a car salesroom into a gym. The Test Valley Borough Council's decision was based on the site's location within a strategic employment area and the need to demonstrate that the site was no longer required for employment use. An appeal has been lodged against the refusal.