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Derry City and Strabane District Council

September 8th, 2026

To: Isobel Heaney

Senior Planning Officer

DCSDC

Subject: HMO Preferred Options Paper submission

From: The Gateway Community Group

% Maureen Moriarty, Secretary

[redacted]bercorn Terrace

BT48 6SE

Dear Ms. Heaney,

The Gateway Community Group Committee have considered your response to our HMO POP submission.

We do want all of our correspondence over the last three years since August 2023 to be submitted as it backs up what you refer to in paragraph three of your response...

'A key theme emerging from the recent Stakeholder engagement and the earlier correspondence...is the impact on the existing residents' amenity.'

All of our correspondence has been related to the usage of houses/premises in HMO fashion and yet you are asking for more detail from 'credible sources'.

We deem it to be an unnecessarily costly and time consuming to resubmit our correspondence from the past three years as all of our submissions have been in relation to the problems experienced in the area emanating from occupants of houses/premises operating in HMO style whether licensed or not.

You cite 'credible sources' such as PSNI, government depts., similar organisations, information from other authorities, such as Environmental Health. Your team has far easier and better access to the credible sources that can give you the details that you have stated you require for our area.

The Gateway Community Group has members in the Carlisle Road area up to and including Bishop Street, down to and including the Foyle Road and all the streets included within that circumference.

Gateway Community residents are as a credible of a source as any other, even more so, as we are the people living through these experiences.

We also feel the need to ask for whom it is, that is requiring further evidence? As one of our members stated this morning...'Anyone can see how this area is being destroyed'.

We now have had two further incidents.

5/9/26 Saturday night, [redacted] Abercorn Road, knives & drugs.. [redacted] arrested...88 previous convictions. PSNI attended.

7/9/26 a sudden death...Hawkin Street. PSNI/Ambulance service attended.

'Anyone can see how this area is being destroyed.'

We need 70% of housing for long-term families and single people to maintain a healthy community where occupants will invest in the maintenance of their homes and feel proud of their area. We do not want landlords with more properties than they can responsibily handle for the terraced housing stock in the Gateway Community area.

-The Gateway Community residents met with Mayor Patricia Logue in August 2023.

-The opening statement from that meeting was presented to Cllr. Aishling Hutton shortly thereafter. (Copy enclosed citing incidents from 2019-2023).

A petition with 790 signatures from local residents was presented as well.

-Group representatives have met with Naomi Long, Minister of Justice at the time, MLAs Colum Eastwood, Sinead Mclaughlin, Mark Durkan and Padraig Delargey, Cllrs. John Boyle, Shaun Harkin and Rachael Ferguson, the PSNI, Jim Roddy of CCI. Submissions were sent to the DOJ and Grainne Long (then the CEO of NIHE).

- A comprehensiver survey was submitted to the DCSDC members in the spring of 2024 representing the views of over 400 Gateway Community residents.

-The Planning Department has submissions objecting to HMOs in the area over the past three years.

All of the above people, statutory bodies and community resources are more easily contactable by your department.

Can you reassure us that all of our submissions have been kept on record?

We have found that some of the further details you say you require will only be obtained through a Freedom of Information request. Do you consider this to be in the job description for long-term residents?

Surely this is a responsibility for your team if you are working on behalf of the existing long-term residents.

At this stage, after three years of making our views known, after seeing very questionable HMO applications being approved, after watching the high turnover of temporary residents occuring, it is our view that we are not being taken into serious consideration by our elected representatives and statutory bodies.

The homes available for occupancy in this area could be made available for long-term rental to people on the housing waiting list of the NIHE that can take advantage of our schools, churches and community resources. We are being reasonable to demand that 70% of houses should be only for long-term residency and that no houses should be used for occupants that have serious ASB and criminal convictions and addictions.

We find in the 556 page DCSDC Local Development Plan, many statements about health and well-being, about providing opportuniies for all.

We can find no mention of practical plans to help people with serious addictions. How can this growing problem with the criminality it brings not be part of a Local Development Plan? We cannot Safeguard the Character of Established Residential Areas (PPS7) if there is not adequate provision for people who need long-term treatment, aftercare in supervised settings and employment opportunities.

If the LDP can be used for the development of greenways, havens for flora & fauna then why is not the treatment of long-term addictions not included?

We look forward to getting clarification from your team on the following:

-Have our past submissions been kept on record and if not, why not?

-Do you not think that it is your responsibility to gather the statistical evidence/data? If not, why not?

-How can it be justified to place people with serious criminal convictions and addiction problems into residential areas?

-Where are the plans for successful treatment centres?

If you feel that any of the above questions do not fall within your remit, then will you take it upon yourselves to obtain the answers from the appropriate bodies and relay them back to us?

P.S. Regarding your question of source on fire risks. The City of Doncaster Council is the source for evidence of the much higher risk of deaths and injuries due to fires in HMOs as compared to single homes. They introduced legislation to address this problem in 2018.

Kind regards,

The Gateway Community Group[

H. McAuley - Chair

N. Kelly - Vice Chair

M. Moriarty - Secretary

E. McCallion - Treasurer

Opening overview Statement read to Mayor Mrs Patricia Logue

Order of business: Meeting to express concerns of the existing crisis and the impact on the community (residents & businesses) as a result of temporary accommodation housing/B&B's (HMO's) and bail hostels within the vicinity.

Date: Friday 8 September 2023

Attendees: Residents and Business Owners in the vicinities of Carlisle Road, Hawkin Street, Abercorn Road and neighbouring streets within these locations, and representatives from Sinn Fein Cllr; Aisling Hutton and Sinn Fein MLA; Padraig Delargy.

In the opening statement Amanda Hill (member of The Community Neighbourhood Association) read:

Before providing a general overview of the crisis situation our community continues to experience, I would like to tell you what it was like for a lot of us in attendance this evening to live and grow up in our neighbourhood. Our sense of 'community' exists and was initially established through generations of long-standing families, some of whom have lived in the locality going back as far as nearly 100 years. These working-class people reared their families, paid their mortgage and taxes, contributed to society and supported their neighbours. As a 4rd generation of one of those families I can confidently say that 'community' is not just a word in our neighbourhood, it has meaning. Over the years our community has grown, welcoming new families and new businesses.... like minded citizens who wanted to lay down roots, and integrate into a well-established area.

Currently we have an increasing elderly population in the area, some of whom live alone and or have underlying disabilities/illnesses as well as young families... parents raising children and young professionals who are sandwiched between temporary accommodation housing/B&Bs,HMO's/bail hostels. We have 3 Primary Schools and 1 Grammar school in the locality, a Learning Disability Centre on Foyle Road, a Community Centre in Lower Bishop Street, Apex Housing in upper Bishop Street and a cross community Park at the bottom of Abercorn Road with small local businesses located in the Bishop Street area moving towards the City Centre up into Carlisle Road within our CBD. I think it is fair to say we have a lot of vulnerable cohorts within our area.

Since 2019 Abercorn Road has featured in online media platforms with news headlines such as **"Londonderry Coroner concerned over drug related deaths"** (bbc news-bbc.co.uk 15 January 2020). Coroner Mr Patrick McGurkan made the comment during an inquest into the death of a 32 year old lady who was found dead in a flat in Abercorn Road. The comment was made as this was his third drug related inquest in Derry within a two week period.

Another heading read **" Derry drug dealer named as court ban is lifted"** *(belfasttelegraph.co.uk April 2019)* This news article refers to a judge lifting an anonymity order in the case of a drug dealer who ran a network of suppliers in order to distribute cocaine, diazepam and cannabis. He committed his latest offences shortly after he was released from prison to an address in Abercorn Road, where he served a 32-month sentence for previous drug offence.

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In April 2023 Derrynow.com describes how a young 27 year old was apprehended by police in the Richmond Centre, who recovered an 8 Inch Knife that was discarded by the individual. His address was given as Abercorn Road.

Fast forward to June 2023 *(belfasttelegraph.co.uk)* **Pizza delivery driver left shaken as two arrested following Derry hijacking incident**. Referring to a pizza driver making a delivery at 9.40pm in Abercorn Road when his car was stolen.

On the 5th Nov 2020 the Derry news headline was **"Concern that an area on the edge of the city is becoming a 'no go' zone".** The article details how DUP Cllr Graham Warke and Sinn Fein Cllr Sandra Duffy explained the issues of those living in temporary B&B accommodation in the lower Carlisle Road area, Dacre Terrace and Abercorn Road, are causing concern amongst the local residents and businesses. He claimed a number of young people had been attacked by occupants of these properties and also accused some of those living in the accommodation provided by the Housing Executive, of taking drugs in public.

Cllr Sandra Duffy explained those housed did not have proper support packages in place. The issue was raised with the Chief Executive of the Housing Executive Clark Bailie at a Derry City and Strabane District Council meeting, and yet here we are 3 years later. What has been done? To us as a community absolutely nothing – if anything the situation has now got untenable, with increasing pressure placed upon our community which is entirely disproportionate. It appears to residents and business owners alike that we are expected to absorb the decimation currently happening to our community as a result of the influx of HMO's, bail hostels and temporary accommodations facilities.

As our elderly population in the area decline, and their properties become available, landlords are swooping in and purchasing these, in some cases buying multiple properties. They **DO NOT CARE** who resides at these premises, as long as they are getting their absorbent fees per head, and as a result of this our good community; residents and businesses alike, and our most vulnerable within it become expendable, sitting prey. I speak for all concerned, **THIS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.**

Streetcheck.co.uk provides statistical information for the **month of June 2023 for the 248 crimes reported within a half mile radius of Abercorn Road** under the headings as follows.

- Anti-social behaviour
- Bicycle theft
- Burglary
- Criminal damage/Arson
- Drugs
- Other theft
- Possession of weapons
- Public order
- Robbery
- Shoplifting
- Theft from the person
- Other crimes

The sleeping dogs have now awakened, our families, our neighbourhoods, our most vulnerable and our local business owners are here today to say **NO MORE,** we demand action to be taken to protect our community and we will not rest until this is resolved.

Our loved ones deserve to peacefully live in the homes that they have worked hard for, without fear that they will be robbed, hurt or assaulted within their own walls or when they step outside the door.

Our children deserve to play in their local community park free from the remanence of needles and other drug paraphernalia strewn across the entrances and pathways, free from the sight of drug addicts walking around in their streets or witnessing drug dealing openly in broad day light.

Our business owners, who pay their yearly rates to operate legally on the periphery and within the city centre deserve to not feel threatened/intimidated, loose custom or have their property damaged.

We all deserve to walk into our town centre and home again without being in fear of becoming a victim to the behaviours of occupants in these types of accommodation. These concerns intensify for us all as the dark evenings are upon us. I question, if you would allow your mother, father, sister, brother, child or loved one to currently live in our community or walk to/from the town? I think not.

Our front-line services can only do so much with the additional constraints place upon them of caring for individuals from other cities and towns. Our community understands the essence of support , therefore I hope you take the next statement as it's intended. We do not need to hear about how these individuals need help and support, this is clearly evident however, this should not be made the responsibility of our families, our neighbourhood and our business owners to deal with. The people in these temporary accommodations (HMO's),Bail Hostels are not even from our city in the majority of cases, and therefore they have no allegiance to our community, they do not bring or add any value, and demonstrate this by their behaviours day in day out. Our lived experience is that they are only interested in what they can get, by any means necessary.

Our community is being torn apart. We want to know who is responsible for allowing this to happen? Who is signing off on HMO/ landlord licences? Our concern is that the occupants of these temporary housing facilities do not appear to be suitably risk assessed, monitored etc before being placed into settled communities. What will it take for decision makers to acknowledge that this is a growing problem and is fast becoming an epidemic throughout our city, with no collaboration between services on the ground.

Services must address this collaboratively, with urgency, and you as public servants have a duty of care to your constituents to find better housing solution options.

We would like to see a multi-disciplinary action group established with immediate effect, to address these concerns and that there is transparency and communication between decision makers and the community going forward.

I put it to you all, **You know better, be better, do better.**