

A bridge too far

TAURIQ HASSEN

Nestled under the Nelson Mandela Boulevard in Woodstock is a small camp that is becoming a hot spot for crime and anti-social activities.

Lining the Chapel Street pavement and surrounding the traffic circle, are a number a makeshift shelters housing homeless people. But resident Ashraf Cornelius says criminals are also using the area as a hideout.

“The police are regularly here doing raids and they almost always end up making an arrest for an outstanding warrant, drugs or stolen property. At night, there is fire that gets made in the middle of the circle and everybody gathers around it. It can get raucous at times.”

He said he had complained many times to the authorities but the shelters had remained and instead more homeless people had taken up residence on the opposite side of Chapel Street.

And he said the homeless were

happy to stay because of the generosity of locals giving them hand-outs.

“One does not wish to be too harsh as you understand the people wanting to do good, but people must realise that this encourages these people to rather stay on the street.

“Why should they seek help when help finds them? They will remain here, creating problems for the community for as long as people feed or clothe them.”

Another resident, who did not want to give her name, fearing reprisals, said the camp was becoming more formal by the day.

Some of the shelters had mattresses and fold-up cupboards and one had a small used water dispenser.

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