

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER ECONOMY AND PLANNING – 8 JANUARY 2024

APPLICATION NO:
P/2023 /0806

LOCATION:
36 CHESTER ROAD WREXHAM
LL11 2SD

DATE RECEIVED:
16/11/2023

COMMUNITY:
Acton

DESCRIPTION:
TYNNU AMOD 1 P/2022/0944 I
GANIATÁU I'R ADEILAD GAEL EI
DDEFNYDDIO FEL LLOCHES I'R
DIGARTREF YN BARHAUS /
REMOVAL OF CONDITION 1 OF
P/2022/0944 TO ALLOW THE
CONTINUED USE OF THE BUILDING
AS HOMELESS SHELTER

CASE OFFICER:
MP

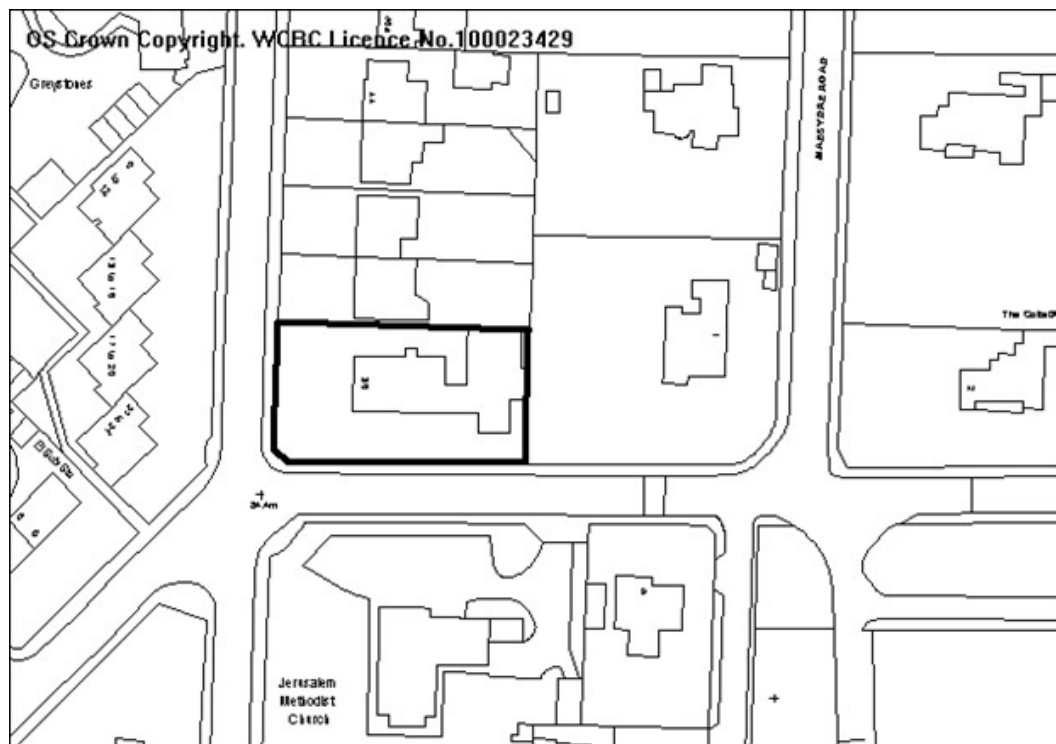
WARD:
Acton and Maesydre

AGENT NAME:
MR BARRY HELLEN

APPLICANT(S) NAME:
WREXHAM COUNTY BOROUGH
COUNCIL

THE SITE

The site is on the corner of Chester Road and Penymaes Avenue



PROPOSAL

As above.

HISTORY

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P/2004/0324 Reduce lightly and thin by 10 - 15% 1 No. beech tree, remove deadwood and stubs, and crown raise over road (T5) (TPO No. WMBC 21). Granted 19.4.2004

P/2005/0053 Extensions and internal alterations. Construction of new glass link. Refused 16.3.2005

P/2005/0499 Extensions to existing guest house and construction of new glass link. Granted 3.10.2005

P/2009/0439 Erection of sign. Advertisement consent granted 30.6.2009.

P/2012/0285 Change of use to tea room (A3). Granted 2.7.2012

P/2013/0362 Change of use of guest house to house in multiple occupation (HMO). Granted 29.7.2013

P/2013/0363 Alterations and change of use of guest house accommodation and dining area to residential dwelling. Granted 18.7.2013

P/2019/0855 Change of use from guest house to residential care home
Granted 2/1/2020

P/2021/1075 NEWID DEFNYDD O GWESTY GWELY A BRECWAST (DOSBARTH C1) I HOSTEL I BOBL DDIGARTREF (SUI GENERIS) / CHANGE OF USE FROM HOTEL/BED AND BREAKFAST (CLASS C1) TO A HOMELESS HOSTEL (SUI GENERIS). Granted 10.1.22

P/2022/0944 AMRYWIO AMOD 1 CAIS P/2021/1075 I GANIATAU I BARHAU I DDEFNYDDIO'R ADEILAD FEL LLOCHES I'R DIGARTREF / VARIATION OF CONDITION 1 OF P/2021/1075 TO ALLOW THE CONTINUED USE OF THE BUILDING AS HOMELESS SHELTER. Granted 5.12.2022

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Local Development Plan

Within a defined settlement limit. Policy DM1 applies.

CONSULTATIONS

Community Council

Consulted 24.11.2023

Local Members

Councillor Corin Jarvis raises no objections and comments that she considered the management of the home have done everything they can to mitigate the impact on surrounding residents. Advises that she had attended

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most of the meetings held for surrounding residents and have found the issues over the past year to be minimal and dealt with effectively and quickly. Considers that the all measures remain in place regarding residents' meetings and staffing levels.

Councillor Becca Marin comments that whilst there were some issues in the beginning, the work that the team in Grove House have been and are currently doing needs to be recognised. The wraparound care and support offered to residents is incredible. Considers that this is a model that should be rolled out across the County Also considers that existing temporary accommodation across Wrecsam should look to implement similar models.

Comments that there are still concerns from neighbouring residents regarding who is placed in Grove House and a resurrection of anti-social behaviour. Comments that the Housing Team have worked to implement measures to avoid this and that residents would wish to see these continued.

Adjoining Community Council
Consulted 28.11.2023

Adjoining Local Member
Notified 28.11.2023

Highways Officer
Consulted 24.11.2023

Public Protection Officer
Has no comments.

Natural Resources Wales
Raises no objection and comments that the proposal is unlikely to increase the amount of phosphorous entering the River Dee and Bala Lake catchment.

Welsh Water
Raises no objection.

North Wales Police
Consulted 24.11.2024

Site Notice
Expired 20.12.2023

Neighbours
The owners/occupiers of 17 nearby properties notified 28.11.2023

7 representations received objecting to the application and expressing the following concerns:

- It is ok to have a temporary approval but no permanent;
- Worked hard to live in a nice, not to live next to a homeless shelter;
- Building is not suitable to house homeless people;

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- The building has very small rooms and there are no facilities for cooking a meal in them;
- There is no inside room for residents to sit together or suitable outside space;
- The long term effect on the local community should be considered;
- Students from Coleg Cambria parking in the area and dismount from buses. Concerned about their safety if permanent planning permission for the homeless shelter is given as it will bring strangers into the community; and
- Still do not know if the Groves School will be developed into an educational facility, so it would not be appropriate to the homeless shelter a permanent planning permission;
- Increased number of homeless people walking up and down the street;
- Littering has increased;
- Smell of cannabis when walking past the homeless shelter;
- Do the people have criminal records?;
- Are there any sex offenders resident there?;
- Is the shelter still needed when alternative accommodation is available locally;
- Increased incidences of people in the area looking into cars and gardens;
- Incidences of people fighting, foul language and used needles discarded;
- Frightened to walk alone;
- Being pestered for money;
- Impact of value of properties;
- Crime levels have increased;
- No longer feel safe in our own homes;
- Have had to invest in CCTV;
- Hostel is poorly kept and untidy;
- Other hostels within close proximity;
- Loss of privacy;
- Noise;
- Use of side door fitted with lights and audible sound system;
- Increased use of car park; and
- Prisoners on parole being housed at the hostel.

1 representation received in support making the following comments:

- Due to a cost of living crisis and homelessness crisis there is a need for more places for the homeless; and
- Measures can be put in place to address previous concerns.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Supporting Information: The property has been in use since January 2021 to provide temporary accommodation for homeless people. The use benefitted from temporary permitted development rights introduced the Welsh

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Government in response to Covid-19 pandemic to allow certain changes of use to take place for a time limited period.

Due to the time limited nature of the permitted development rights, planning permission to permanently change the use of building to a homeless shelter has been sought on two previous occasions, most recently in November 2022. On both occasions, Members imposed a condition limiting the permission to a 12 month period in order to enable the impact of the use on the amenities of nearby properties and in respect of crime and anti-social behaviour in the vicinity to be monitored.

The Council has a statutory duty under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 to provide accommodation for homeless people and therefore the Housing Department have applied to vary condition 1 of the extant planning permission to enable the facility to be used on a permanent basis to continue to provide accommodation for people who present to the Council as homeless.

To note, people do not necessarily need to be living on the streets to be classed as homeless. Someone may be legally classed as homeless if they are sleeping on a friend's sofa, staying in a hostel or living in overcrowded accommodation.

There are many causes of homelessness, such as a lack of affordable housing, poverty, unemployment, life events that push people into homelessness (losing a job, mental or physical health breakdown), as well as the need to escape a violent or abusive relationship.

In order to end homelessness in the County Borough, premises such as 36 Chester Road are required, indeed more accommodation for homeless people is needed. In the year ending 31 March 2023, the number of households in temporary accommodation in Wales was 5,481, 23% more than the previous year. This is also the highest figure since 2014 Act was introduced. Bed and Breakfast accommodation accounted for the highest proportion (40%) of temporary accommodation for homeless people compared to 38% the previous year.

36 Chester Road provides 16 single occupancy en-suite rooms and communal lounge, dining room and cooking facilities. Offices for support staff are also provided in the building. Unlike Bed and Breakfast accommodation, the premises is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide support and guidance to individuals and ultimately assist them into permanent accommodation.

Principle of Development: The property is situated close to the city centre where there is a range of services and facilities that are easily accessible for occupants. Development in this location would be normally permitted unless it generated significant adverse impacts that would indicate a decision to the contrary.

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The LDP does not have any specific policy dealing with the conversion of hotels/guest houses to hostels and as such the principle of development is acceptable.

Character: The immediate locality is one of fairly low density buildings predominately used as single family dwellings. Whilst a homeless shelter is a high occupancy use, this is also true of the previous guest house use. The guest house building provided 13 guest bedrooms plus attached dwelling. Planning permission was also granted in 2020 (P/2019/0855) to convert the property to a care home with 19 bedrooms. The current use provides 16 bedrooms and is therefore considered broadly comparable to both uses in terms of levels of occupancy and level of activity associated with them.

No external alterations have been carried out and none are proposed by this application. The trees within the site (one covered by a TPO) are to be retained.

On the basis of the above, permitting the use of a permanent basis would not harm the character or appearance of the area and therefore accords with LDP policy DM1.

Amenity, crime and anti-social behaviour: No external alterations or extensions have been undertaken and none are proposed by this application. As a result, the development does not result in any additional impact upon the privacy or visual amenity afforded to nearby occupiers.

The property has outdoor space (around 80 square metres) as well dedicated space for bin storage. This affords adequate standards of amenity for occupiers of the facility.

It is noted that concerns have been raised about crime anti-social behaviour and noise disturbance.

Regular meetings have taken place between the Housing Team, Local Members and local residents over the last 12 month period. The evidence advanced by the Housing Team indicates that anti-social behaviour has not been an issue. The use is unlikely to generate any greater levels of noise than the previous guest house use. No objective evidence has been advanced to demonstrate that the development has resulted in increased levels of crime in the locality. Furthermore, separate legislation is in place to deal with each of these matters.

As a result, it is considered that the permeant use of the premises as a homeless hostel would not give rise to undue safety or amenity concerns and therefore accords with LDP policy DM1.

Parking: The property has parking for 8 parking spaces which is considered adequate for staff use.

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The site is within walking distance of the town centre, is located on bus route with a regular service and is provided with cycle storage.

Visibility at the site access onto Penymaes Avenue is currently substandard. Nevertheless, the use has resulted in a reduction in vehicular movements compared to the previous use as a guest house.

The Council's Highway Officer has not previously raised objections to the use of the premises as a homeless hostel. There have been no material changes to highway conditions in the past 12 months. Accordingly the proposals accord with policy LDP policy DM1.

CONCLUSION

It is considered that the permanent use of the site as a homeless facility would not give rise to undue adverse impacts in respect of the character or appearance of the local area, residential amenity, highway safety or public safety. As such the proposal accords with LDP policy DM1.

RECOMMENDATION: That permission be GRANTED

CONDITION(S)

1. The development shall only be carried out in strict accordance with the details shown on the drawings received 11 November 2021 and as contained within the application documentation.

REASON(S)

1. To comply with section 71ZA (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
