

Report of the Chief Officer Planning and Regulatory – 10 January 2022

APPLICATION NO:
P/2021 /1075

LOCATION:
36 CHESTER ROAD WREXHAM
LL11 2SD

DATE RECEIVED:
25/10/2021

COMMUNITY:
Acton

DESCRIPTION:
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)

CASE OFFICER:
SJG

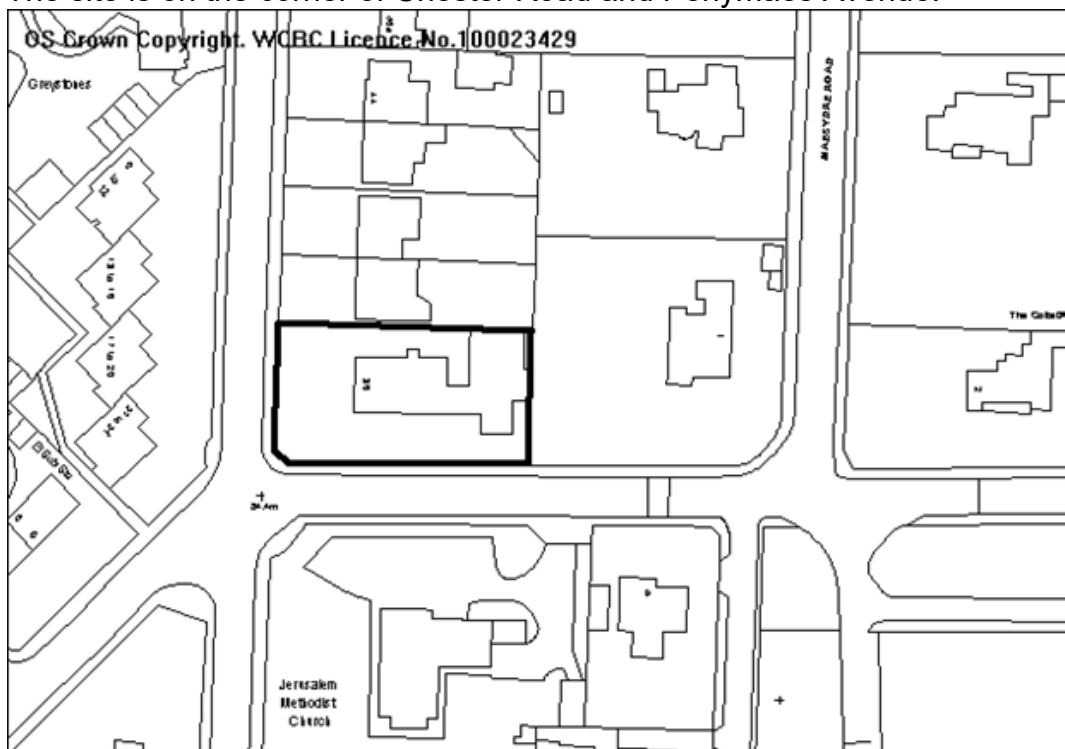
WARD:
Maesydre

AGENT NAME:
MR BARRY HELLEN

APPLICANT(S) NAME:
WREXHAM COUNTY BOROUGH
COUNCIL

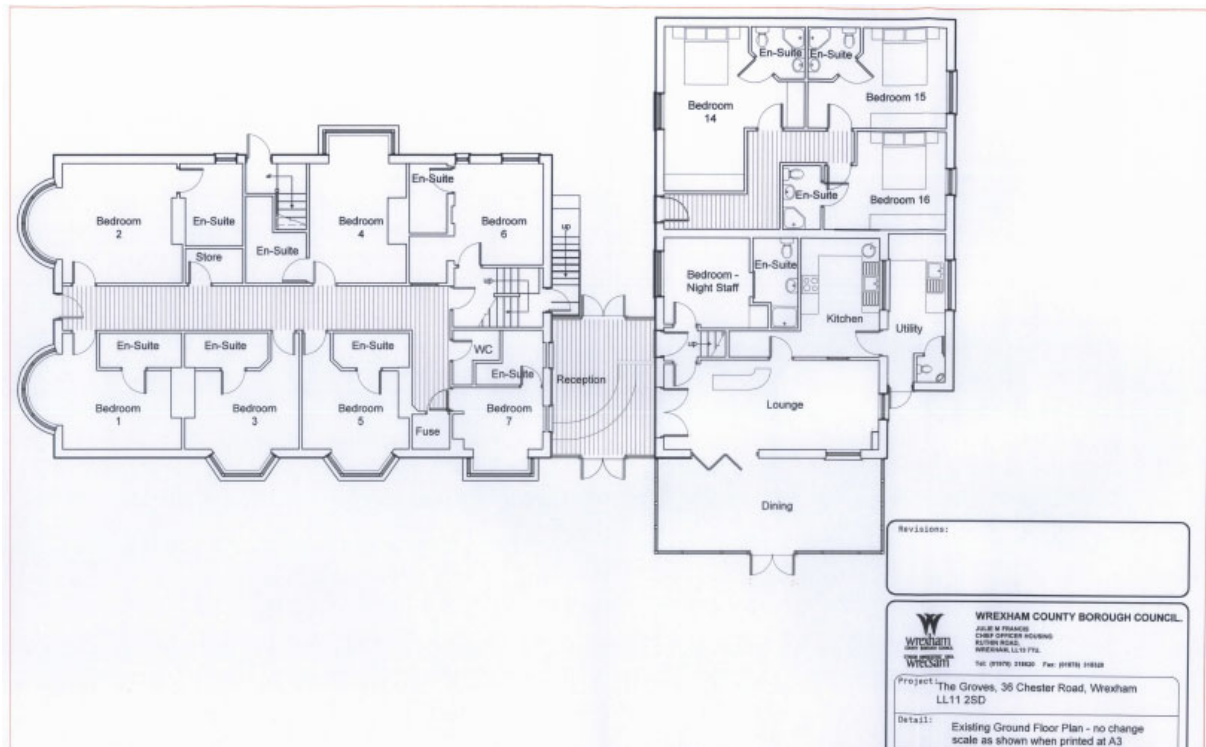
THE SITE

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

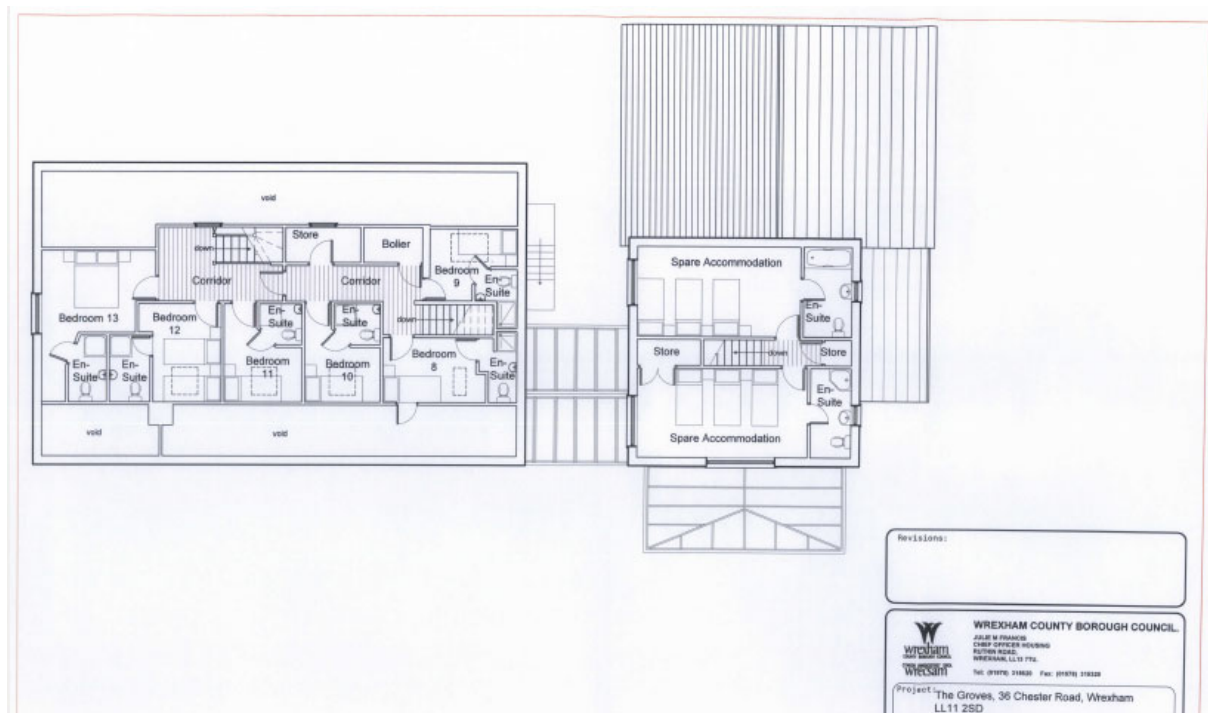


PROPOSAL
As above.

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Existing ground floor plan (no change)



Existing first floor plan (no change)

Supporting statement

The building is a former bed and breakfast establishment with en suite facilities and former dining room and communal areas.

The facility has been used for the purpose of provision for single, formerly homeless persons, which provides self-contained accommodation in 16 units.

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This facility has been used since January 2021. Grove House meets the current requirements of Welsh Government for temporary accommodation.

Residents are provided accommodation, with support on a temporary basis and are moved on to suitable accommodation to meet their permanent needs, once this can be found for them.

The facility and reception is staffed 24 hours a day. There is an 8pm curfew for residents and strict house rules by which they need to adhere. Residents receive support for their specific needs and this includes provision of meals in the evening, which are brought to the facility.

Planning permission is sought for continued use of the building for the purpose of continuing to provide supported temporary accommodation for homeless persons.

HISTORY

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

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Within settlement, policies GDP1 and T8 apply.

Welsh Government Planning Guidance for Homelessness and Housing Related Support Services 3/6/2020- we are now in phase 3
Providing long term settled accommodation will continue to be the overarching aim for all homelessness services in the long term, but we acknowledge that

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this will be a significant challenge given the numbers of people who have been supported into accommodation during the pandemic. It is therefore paramount that authorities improve the quality and variety of emergency and temporary accommodation currently being provided in the short and medium term.

Authorities are urged to look at expanding their stock of temporary accommodation to ensure that there are genuine, appropriate options for people with a variety of characteristics and support needs. This means, for example, provision specifically for women, provision accessible to disabled people, provision that allows pets and provision that caters for both those with an ongoing addiction and those wishing to reduce their exposure to others who are still using substances.

Clearly the best type of accommodation is self-contained in terms of both bathroom and cooking and eating facilities, but where this is not possible, consideration should be taken to congregate models of accommodation that allow for aligned services to be positioned in the same block (i.e. mental health and substance misuse in particular). This may be the purchasing or leasing of disused student accommodation, holiday accommodation or hotels, or it could be the re-modelling of existing provision or both.

Repurposing temporary accommodation: This could include authorities supporting temporary accommodation providers to convert existing services to more permanent, supportive and psychologically informed forms of accommodation. In addition, increasing provision for self-contained temporary accommodation with potential conversion of existing buildings, such as old care homes, decommissioned university blocks, hotels and B&B units into longer term forms of emergency accommodation should be explored. This would help ease the transition as well as acknowledge the increased demand. This should be single occupancy accommodation with en-suite facilities.

CONSULTATIONS

Community Council:	It was noted that the local Wrexham CBC Member for Maesydre Ward will be speaking against this application on behalf of local residents at the Planning Committee and the Community Council has no further observations it wishes to add.
Local member:	Consulted 12/11/2021
Rhosddu CC (adj)	Consulted 12/11/2021
Highways:	No objection
Public protection:	No comments
Natural Resources Wales:	No objection
North Wales Police:	The local officers and inspector do not have any concerns providing it is continually managed well, which it seems to be at present.

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Neighbours:

Notified 12/11/2021

24 Objections received

- The hostel was to be a temporary use while work was being done to Ty Nos.
- The proposed development imports serious public safety risks to an established residential area.
- Drug dealing, drug use, discarded drug paraphernalia, anti-social behaviours have become commonplace in the vicinity of the property since it was taken over by Wrexham CBC early in 2020 for use as a residential care home. This deeply affects local residents whose sense of wellbeing has been steadily eroded by these issues – further exacerbated by the regular attendance at the property of police and ambulance services.
- Offenders recently released from HMP Berwyn have been housed at the hostel including a registered sex offender.
- The Council has applied for planning permission to erect a primary school in very close proximity to the hostel. It appears to be something of a dichotomy to build a primary school in close proximity to a hostel housing offenders and drug addicts. This site will be on the walking route to the proposed school.
- There is a growing concern for the safety of children and elderly relatives who pass the property.
- Changing the use of this property to a homeless hostel will entrench these problems to the detriment of the quality of life of local residents.
- The property was a long established B&B guest house until January 2020 so I consider it quite cynical to now describe it as a residential care home, particularly as the public was led to believe in 2020 that its use as such was temporary.
- The adjoining property is overlooked by a number of rooms in both the original guest house and the 'extensions which invade' our personal privacy, especially in the back garden. The back entrance door to the hostel is only circa four metres away from a back door, and is used as a security entrance with an intercom that is connected to the front reception, which can be disruptive when people enter the hostel.

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- The bright security light to the rear of the building is also a nuisance at night
- A line of conifers along the boundary lines between the two properties, together with two copper-birches are restricting light to the front of the property, and will get worse as they mature. These trees are also killing the privet hedge that formed the original boundary line. We have previously asked the Management at the Hostel to reduce the conifers height but nothing as yet has been done.
- Inappropriate location remote from shops and services
- Inadequate publicity for the application

1 Comment in support subject to adequate parking

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Background: The property is situated in the town where there is a range of services and facilities that are easily accessible for the occupants of the development. Development in this location would be normally permitted unless there are significant material considerations that would indicate a decision to the contrary.

The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the amenity and character of the area, having regard to planning policies and the objectives of maintaining sustainable and balanced communities.

The application as initially submitted proposed a change of use from Class C2 use (Care Home) to a homeless hostel (sui generis use). Whilst it is noted that planning permission was granted in January 2020 to convert the building from a guest house (Class C1 use) to a care home, the planning permission was not in fact implemented. Accordingly the lawful use of the building remains Class C1. The description of development has therefore been corrected accordingly.

Policy: The UDP has no specific policy dealing with the conversion of hotels/guest houses to hostels and as such there is no policy objection in principle to the proposals. It is however necessary to consider whether the proposed development is acceptable in terms of its impact upon the character of the area, the amenity of nearby occupiers and whether there is adequate provision for access and parking.

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Character: The immediate locality is one of fairly low density buildings predominately used as single family dwellings. Paragraph 6.9 of the UDP states that *'Attractive tree-lined, and/or low density areas (e.g the Chester Road/Maes Y Dre Road/Penymaes Avenue/Park Avenue or the Wynnstay Lane/Stancliffe Avenue/Pistyll Hill/Hoseley Lane locality in Marford), must not be spoilt by insensitive developments which increase densities, result in the loss of private or public open space; or detract from the general character of the area'*.

Whilst a comparatively high occupancy use is proposed the site is already used for a comparatively high occupancy use. The existing guest house building provided 13 guest bedrooms plus the attached dwelling. The care home granted permission in 2020 proposed 19 bedrooms. The proposed development will provide 16 bedrooms. The use is therefore considered broadly comparable to the extant use and the use permitted by the 2020 planning permission in terms of occupancy levels.

No external alterations are proposed and the trees (one covered by a TPO) are to be retained.

On the basis of the above, the development will result in minimal changes to appearance of the site and will not harm the character of the area.

Amenity: Given that no external alterations or extensions are proposed the development will not result in any additional impact upon the privacy or visual amenity afforded to of nearby occupiers.

There is no objective evidence that this proposal in combination with existing HMOs in the area (the nearest HMO to the site is around 60 metres away) would lead to anti-social behaviour, noise disturbance and cause social imbalance. It is also considered that the impact of the proposed use, particularly in terms of noise and the frequency of people coming and going is unlikely to be materially different to the existing permitted use of the premises.

Concerns that residents could cause these problems could apply to other forms of residential occupation (such as a HMO), however behaviours of this type are factors related to the particular occupants of the property and not the use, which is the consideration in this application. Planning controls are concerned with the use of land rather than the identity of the user. There are also measures outside of planning controls available to tackle persistent nuisance and disruptive behaviour.

The property has adequate garden space (around 80 square metres) as well dedicated space for bin storage so will afford an adequate standard of amenity to future occupiers.

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

The parking area is already hard surfaced and used as a parking area by the guest house although individual parking spaces are not formally marked out.

The site is within walking distance of the town centre, is passed by regular public transport and will be provided with cycle storage.

Visibility at the site access onto Penymaes Avenue is currently substandard however the proposed use is likely to result in a reduction in vehicular movements and therefore be of benefit in terms of highway safety.

CONCLUSION:

I conclude that the proposal would not harm the amenity and character of the area, having regard to planning policies and the objectives of maintaining sustainable and balanced communities.

RECOMMENDATION: That permission be GRANTED

CONDITION(S)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiry of five years from the date of this permission.
2. The development shall only be carried out in strict accordance with the details shown on the approved drawings received 11 November 2021 and as contained within the application documentation.

REASON(S)

1. To comply with Section 91(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990.
2. To comply with section 71ZA (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

NOTE(S) TO APPLICANT

Your attention is drawn to Highway Supplementary Notes - Refer to Statement of Applicant's Rights and General Information on our planning web site at:-

[http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/english/planning_portal/publications/info_sheets.h
tm](http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/english/planning_portal/publications/info_sheets.htm)

The following activities should not be carried out under any circumstances:

- 1) No fires should be lit within 10 metres of the nearest point of the canopy of any retained tree.
- 2) No works, including earth works and the bringing onto site of machinery or materials shall proceed until the approved tree protection measures are put in place, with the exception of the approved tree works.

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- 3) No equipment, signage, fencing, tree protection barriers, materials, components, vehicles or structures shall be attached to or supported by a retained tree.
 - 4) No mixing of cement or use of other materials or substances shall take place within tree root protection areas or tree construction exclusion zones, or close enough to these that seepage or displacement of those materials or substances could cause them to enter tree root protection areas or tree construction exclusion zones.
 - 5) No alterations or variations to the approved works or tree protection schemes shall be carried out without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.
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