

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: H6955/A/17/3188092 - CONVERSION OF EXISTING COMMERCIAL PROPERTY INTO 5 BEDROOM HMO
Date: 28 November 2017 17:01:24
Attachments: [Scan_0030.pdf](#)
[Scan_0029.pdf](#)
[Scan_0011.pdf](#)
[20171113_180116.jpg](#)
[20171113_180104.jpg](#)
[20171113_180057.jpg](#)
[20171113_180053.jpg](#)
[20171113_180045.jpg](#)
[IMG_1461.JPG](#)
[IMG_3076.JPG](#)
[IMG_1470.JPG](#)
[IMG_1469.JPG](#)

Ebenezer Properties
c/o The Regent
67, Regent Street
Wrexham,
LL11 1PF

November 28th, 2017

The Planning Inspectorate,
Crown Buildings,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Re: Appeal reference: APP/H6955/A/17/3188092 – 61, Regent Street, Wrexham, LL11 1PF

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am the owner of 67 Regent Street, known as The Regent- Offices & Business Centre, housing several businesses including a prominent national employment agency, Pertemps. I own the gated car park running the length of the rear of the row of properties that 61 Regent Street sits within (see attachments Scan0030 & Scan0029).

Regarding the original Design & Access Statement submitted by the Applicants, I would like to clear up misinformation the Applicant has supplied. The information is untrue and therefore the basis of the Planning Application is flawed from the very beginning. In the DAS/01 dated July 2017 (see attached scan0011) the Applicant states 'the property has been with two Agents and no purchaser has been found'.

Firstly, the businesses within the row and myself testify that the building is not vacant as claimed and have witnessed both regular use and some have taken deliveries for many occupants (including a marketing business that was working out of there for a while).

The truth is the building was put up for sale with Wingetts Estate Agents and I contacted Wingetts and expressed interest in buying and similarly redeveloping 61 Regent Street. However, I was told it was not really for sale, and was directed to speak to Ian Stockdale, the Vendor/ Vendors Rep. himself. It was explained by Mr Stockdale that HMRC were chasing him for unpaid tax and that the building had been transferred into a pension fund and therefore due to the time of the transfer he was unable to sell it. It was further stated by the Vendor that a developer (likely the Applicant) was interested in buying up 61, 63 & 65 (63 & 65 both currently belong to Hadlow Edwards Wealth Management and had no knowledge of this desire until I told them) and converting them to residential properties, even though it would have involved a change of use planning application. As you can imagine, I was not impressed and thought this rather dishonest, but nevertheless, since it was not for sale there was little I could do. After a period, the Agent changed to Beresford Adams, Chester and I again approached them. However, the sum being requested was well above its fair market value (considering the poor state the Vendor has allowed the property to get into), so I put in an offer and was told it had been rejected. To date I am still willing to purchase the property and turn it around into good quality commercial premises.

Commercially, I have little incentive for wanting to develop 61 Regent Street, being currently a landlord who has developed and maintained to a high standard several residential properties in several cities which yield higher returns for considerably less effort.

Nevertheless, 61 Regent Street is currently an unsightly blot on the entrance to Wrexham's business district or the town centre, and having the experience and God willing the finance to tackle it, I am willing to do so and believe I could make a success of it. A few months after the last communication with the Agent, I saw the Planning Application in question to convert 61 Regent Street to an HMO.

So, you see, the property wasn't really for sale and is not vacant, this has all been planned 'on the quiet'. Furthermore, even very recently, I have been in talks with the Estate Agent and the Vendor who from his own lips testified that he is still working out of the premises and will need to rent an office once this is sold. Indeed, the offices are rammed to the gunnels with all the previous and present Architectural practice papers and so forth. No efforts have been made to make the building presentable for prospective buyers, commercial or otherwise. I attach photographic evidence showing other businesses operating out of the premises too (photos taken whilst on a viewing of 61 Regent Street, 13th November 2017).

With reference to the Appeal Document, Section H, Grounds of Appeal, the Applicant states, "we also like to take this opportunity to encourage the local authority to police the use of the property under the terms of the HMO Licensing agreement. If our residents were to cause nuisance and anti-social behaviour, we would want to work with the council to resolve the issue. Our understanding is that the licensing arrangement is there for a reason." As we all know the Local Authority is stretched beyond reasonable means and it

appears the Applicant is throwing down the gauntlet to the LA. Is it not the case that the LA should be able to make decisions to limit/ minimise such occurrences? Therefore, we have Town Planners, to plan out problems, rather than plan in problems. I assert, it is the responsibility of property owners to think ahead and develop property and environments with suitable amenities to limit problems through design and location. To my mind, this developer has not. By allowing such an Appeal to proceed, WG would be throwing the gates open wide for similar developments within Conservation Areas to proceed, thus throwing the gates wide open to a multitude of unsuitable developments.

I understand more residential accommodation is needed within Wrexham Borough, and if the top floor of 61 Regent street was converted into a single flat, while maintaining a business below, this would still be tricky for amenities, parking and access. However, to squash four or more unrelated residents in this site would inevitably be abusive (with no garden, limited yard space, insufficient parking or turning, businesses operating next door at potentially unsociable hours and being in the middle of a busy roundabout, also next to a very rowdy Lager Club with their sprawling clientele). Not only that, every business on that stretch has bars on their rear windows and doors with bins secure behind bars and staff are wary of going out in the dark and for good reason (see attached photos). I am fortunate in that my property has a gated car park at the rear with an abundance of lighting, however the rear of 59 -65 is unlit and unsafe after dark. Furthermore, the rears of the properties are not jointly and severally owned, they have simply knocked down their dividing walls for convenience, but can easily wall up their curtilages again should they wish. Therefore, looking at the parking, any turning is impinging / trespassing on private property. Does the Inspectorate endorse Trespass? The only shared access is the traditional service lane under which the sewerage is run, which must be kept free. The proposal to turn 61 Regent Street into a HMO would badly damage the conservation area, a wealth of neighbouring businesses and not be healthy for occupants, which is why having carefully considered the application the planning committee unanimously rejected it. The Inspectorate need to be aware that the row has no wall or screening from the main road. There are simply steps running parallel to the cycle path and footpath leading to the front doors. This very open nature is useful for increasing footfall and displaying A boards, but not for residential inhabitation. There are no front gardens and no back gardens, everything is open. Because this is so, residents of 61 Regent Street could set-up benches, sit on deck chairs and have barbecues, or worse, setup rotary dryers with underwear blowing in the wind for all to see. Moreover, they could set up any fixture and thus cause an extreme negative visual impact for those coming along the main gateway into Wrexham and living in Caxton Place opposite. This could even cause accidents for pedestrians who often use the private frontage as a walkway to avoid cycles. This would serve to undermine a prominent Conservation Area. Furthermore, considering the open frontages, the amenity of any residents could be severely impacted by noise from heavy traffic, pedestrians & deliveries to all the commercial premises, which could ultimately undermine the mental health of occupants of 61 Regent Street.

Finally, with reference to a letter written by the applicant, Mr Mark Wilkins, and addressed to Wrexham Planning Department, dated 3/10/2017 (Document Number: 3646708, and

available on Wrexham Council Planning website), The applicant states that: “regular deliveries to the properties as suggested by Joanne Kinch is a complete fallacy”. My name is not Joanne Kinch, it is Joanna. To state that I have lied is a shock and I emphasise along with others that there are 8 active businesses operating along the terrace as well as a busy lager club adjacent which all receive and require regular deliveries via Union Road to manage their businesses. Many of the businesses operate outside of 9-5 Monday to Friday, indeed my tenants have 24-hour access and some by their nature work evenings, rather than in the day time. My tenants, along with other businesses have regular deliveries and collections of products and supplies. In addition to this, patients of the Dentists and clients of the Employment Agency come and go at regular intervals throughout the day, some evenings and occasional Saturdays & Sundays, as well as for emergency out of hours care for the Dentist. This will have a detrimental effect on the privacy of the resident occupying this room as well as general noise disturbance. The current rear detached car park belonging to the property cannot accommodate 4 vehicles unless 2 are blocked in. (The current parking arrangements only work because there is a good relationship between the established businesses. HMOs by their very nature have a transient population and therefore cooperation of this type between businesses and residents is far too much to ask.) In full use, which it generally is, the arrangements may cause problems for the residents who may wish to leave and enter at various times of the day. As well as being inconvenienced by business traffic during the day, the Lager club on Union Road is open late in the evening so residents will have little peace and quiet at night due to noise and disturbance from customers at the club, drinking or smoking outside.

As mentioned above, all the businesses along the terrace have metal bars to protect the buildings from theft (see attached photos). This is a necessity in the area. I noted that the applicant felt that if 61, Regent Street was occupied at night this may deter unwelcome characters. I feel that it is very unfair to expect residents to “police” an area of offices and businesses and it is highly likely that the owners would find it necessary to install similar deterrents to our own in the future. It seems totally unacceptable to expect residents to live in this way, behind barred windows like a Prison. The back doors of the properties have bars on for good reasons. How is the developer going to get around this? Everyone would need to be out at the same time and the doors locked at night from the outside, before pulling bars across and then going around the front to get inside. This arrangement would effectively leave the property without a Fire Escape even if there are no cars blocking the rear exit.

Regarding the safety, the car park to the rear of the property is not suitable for residents entering and exiting the property at night. It is a dangerous location after dark due to the direct access and dark recessed areas where people can hide or engage in anti-social behaviour. Several properties in the row have suffered from arson, even in the last 6 months.

There is also a concern about the layout of the premises. The common room can only be accessed via the kitchen. If a fire starts in the kitchen, there appears to be no other means of escape for residents in the common room.

This terrace of properties offers an ideal location for small businesses to operate within a prominent area of the approach into Wrexham city centre. The reduction of such available space for affordable offices could result in permanent loss of employment land in Wrexham city centre. There is, therefore, a strong economic reason why the conversion of this property to residential would be inappropriate and could result in an adverse economic impact for Wrexham.

As a point of note, the properties have not been in residential use for over 60 years, since this time the Townscape has changed considerably. I have personally lived in a busy city, being the only resident in a large ex-Caretakers flat attached to a city centre church. Whilst in some respects it was secluded and spacious, in others it was very disruptive to sleep, dangerous at night and noisy during the day, especially at weekends. This development is neither secluded nor spacious, it just has all the negative aspects afore mentioned.

I therefore assert that this proposed development, if permitted by the Inspectorate would have wide ranging negative effects on this important townscape group, as well as any resultant residential tenants. It would ultimately result in the developments inability to co-exist in a satisfactory fashion with already well established commercial properties on the main gateway into Wrexham and within the wider Grosvenor Road Conservation Area. It is for these reasons I ask the Inspectorate to reject this Appeal and uphold the decision of the LA, Wrexham Borough Council to Refuse Permission.

Yours sincerely, with kindest regards

Joanna

Joanna Kinch
Ebenezer Properties

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