

CONVERSION OF DWELLING (USE CLASS C3) TO HOUSE IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) (USE CLASS C4) 8 ALBERT STREET WREXHAM. REF:P/2017/0611

As a homeowner who has lived at No 7 Albert St for eight years, I strongly object to the conversion of No 8 Albert Street, Wrexham for several reasons.

There are 25 houses on the street and only 12, less than half, are occupied by homeowners with the majority being either rental properties or HMOs. The concentration of homes has already impacted our community with many tenants only living in the properties for a short period of time. A further HMO property on the street will exacerbate this loss of community including diluting the Welsh culture even further.

Unfortunately, our experience of short term tenants has not been a good one here in Albert Street. The properties and surrounding areas tend not to be well cared for and with a build-up of refuse, we now have a serious vermin problem. In addition, the noise level from short term tenants who have no vested interest in forming relationships with neighbours tends to be unacceptably high.

The biggest issue we face, however, is parking. A further six tenants in a HMO property could easily see a further six cars vying for the few parking spaces available. Several businesses including the post office, hairdressers and a takeaway are located at the top of the street with space for just four customer vehicles. Inevitably, customers park in our street which exacerbates the parking issue. As a result, residents in Albert Street struggle to park and for those of us with any health-related issues, it makes our lives even more difficult as we are forced to park away from our homes. In addition, we are aware we are creating parking problems for other residents in nearby streets as we have no option but to park outside their homes.

The statement on the highways report 'proposed development is unlikely to result in an increase in parking demand compared with its current residential use' is unrealistic. Most residents in Albert Street have at least one car per household, to suggest that of the six residents in the proposed HMO property would not have vehicles or would not have visitors who arrive by car is absolutely ludicrous. Such a statement is simply pie in the sky thinking and has no basis in reality. Most households have more than one car and the inability to park is already a flashpoint and gives rise to tensions in an area already under pressure from community dilution due to the number of short term rentals already in existence.

The parking and traffic problem in Albert Street has already seen measures put in place which has had little impact. It was changed to a one-way street to ease congestion and reduce the likelihood of collisions. This measure has not had a huge impact on the problems so any additional traffic and parked vehicles because of developing yet another HMO would be extensive and unacceptable.

Residents health and safety is another issue as emergency vehicles are unable to get down the street due to traffic congestion. Residents with long term illness have been dropped off by ambulances on a nearby street as they cannot access Albert St. The residents are then expected to 'hobble' home. This is very worrying if there were an emergency at one of the residents homes.

Air pollution is already a major issue in towns and cities across the UK and is linked with 40,000 premature deaths every year (source: BBC) and additional traffic from residents at the proposed HMO property and their visitors will undoubtedly affect the air quality in the surrounding area.

As a homeowner, I have just started upgrading my property including a new kitchen with a new bathroom and landscaped garden next on the agenda, but I have put this on hold due to the uncertainty surrounding the future use of the adjacent property.

I suffer with chronic illnesses, anxiety and panic attacks and living next door to six strangers who are likely to be short term tenants with no sense of community or connection to the area and the ensuing social issues will only worsen my condition. As such, I feel I am being forced out of my own home as I will have no choice but to sell.

The proposed landlord Mr Pritchard is already known to local agencies and was recently prosecuted for licence breaches so I find it inconceivable that the local council is considering another application from this landlord.

I refer you to LPGN 16 and requirements when considering an application:-

LPGN 16 states 'where reduced reliance/car free developments are proposed, the Council will need to be satisfied that they will not cause or exacerbate parking problems', as illustrated there will be further parking issues should the HMO conversion be given the go-ahead.

The highways officer's conclusion is questionable as the accepted standards of LPGN 16, which were recently applied to a recent new development, have not been applied here as it was claimed the property is in a 'sustainable location'. This street most certainly cannot sustain further traffic or vehicle parking without impacting the lives of current residents detrimentally.

The officer states the 'normal' requirement is for three parking spaces even though LPGN 16 states four. The HMO property will not have any off-road parking spaces. In fact, the officer highlights the issue of the absence of any off-street parking in this area, reporting 'this results in a number of vehicles being parked in the vicinity of the development site and along adjoining roads', thereby recognising the very problem I and other Albert Street residents are also highlighting.

To suggest that an increase of four cars is 'unlikely to result in an increase in parking demand compared with its present residential use' is misleading at best and complete untruths at worst.

The officer refers to six bed spaces and therefore six additional residents, but this is far from certain. Each room could easily house two people which means the street adds 12 people to its already over populated street and will clearly have a major impact on traffic and parking capacity.

I would urge the council to consider the quality of life of current residents, the dilution of the community when there is an imbalance caused by a high number of short-term HMO properties and the disappearance of the Welsh language which is gradually being eroded from streets like ours and the extensive traffic and parking problems which would arise.

Kind regards