
Penderfyniad ar yr Apêl

Ymweliad â safle a wnaed ar 20/12/16

**gan Paul Selby BEng (Hons) MSc
MRTPI**

Arolygydd a benodir gan Weinidogion Cymru

Dyddiad: 12.01.2017

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20/12/16

by Paul Selby BEng (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Date: 12.01.2017

Appeal Ref: APP/H6955/A/16/3160172

Site address: 62 Alexandra Road, Wrexham LL13 7SH

The Welsh Ministers have transferred the authority to decide this appeal to me as the appointed Inspector.

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Arran Pritchard against the decision of Wrexham County Borough Council.
 - The application Ref P/2016/0754, dated 3 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 3 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is Conversion of dwelling (use class C3) to house in multiple occupation (HMO – use class C4).
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for Conversion of dwelling (use class C3) to house in multiple occupation (HMO – use class C4) at 62 Alexandra Road, Wrexham LL13 7SH in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref P/2016/0754, dated 3 August 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development shall begin not later than five years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents: Site Plan (1:1250 scale); Proposed 6 bed HMO Ground and First Floor Plans; Bin Store and Cycle Store Plan.

Procedural Matter

2. Notwithstanding the description of development given on the planning application form, I have used that contained on the Council's Decision Notice, which more accurately describes the proposal. I have determined the appeal on the basis of this description.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed change of use would support a mixed and balanced community, having particular regard to the number of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in the locality.
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Reasons

4. The appeal relates to a semi-detached dwelling situated on Alexandra Road, a street of established residential character leading off Wrexham Cemetery. Dwellings on the street feature modest front gardens, many of which are planted or landscaped, and large ground floor bay windows. A public footpath lies to the rear of the appeal property, beyond which is the Bersham Road campus of Coleg Cambria.
5. Policy H4 of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) states that the sub-division of existing dwellings will only be permitted where the proposal would not result in the over-concentration of HMOs to the detriment of crime levels, the social fabric of the area, and the amenity of existing residents. The Council's *Local Planning Guidance Note No 5: Conversion of dwellings to houses in multiple occupation* (LPG5) adds little to the criteria in this UDP policy. The Council, however, contends that a local increase in HMOs over a relatively short period of time has altered the nature of the area and risks the integrity of the local community. In this regard, information has been submitted which indicates that the proposal would increase the proportion of HMOs on Alexandra Road to around 15%. Including other nearby streets, the proportion would amount to around 11%. Given that I saw no obvious signs on my site visit that the housing nearby was intensively occupied, I see no reason to disagree with these figures.
6. The appellant has submitted information relating to other supplementary planning guidance and documents from elsewhere in Wales and from England. Whilst these determine HMO thresholds and concentrations differently, all appear to suggest that a proportion of between 10% and 20% of HMOs may represent a 'tipping point' by which the character of a residential area may be materially altered. The specific circumstances of a site or an area will, however, be a fundamental consideration in evaluating the effect of a proposal. Furthermore, these other documents do not apply in Wrexham.
7. The appeal proposal would convert most existing rooms within the current dwelling to bedrooms, leaving only a modest kitchen as communal living space on the ground floor. The conversion of the ground floor front room would alter the exterior appearance of the property, with curtains likely to be drawn for longer periods of the day. Nevertheless, the proposal would be relatively isolated from other HMOs, with the nearest being No 48, a detached property set back from the street around 40 metres north of the appeal site. Given the absence of an apparent concentration of HMOs in this section of Alexandra Road, the proposed conversion would not have a significant or detrimental visual effect on the street.
8. Residents and Local Councillors are concerned that the lifestyle of future occupants and the greater intensity of occupation would lead to increased crime, antisocial behaviour and litter, detrimentally affecting the social fabric and amenity of the area. However, the UDP policy indicates that such issues tend to be exacerbated where there is an over-concentration of HMOs, which would not be the case here. Moreover, although the housing in the street appears to be generally in good or very good condition, some of the cited amenity or privacy issues would not arise exclusively from an HMO use.
9. Whilst I understand the concerns of local residents, there is a need to ensure that communities are balanced and that lower cost and flexible housing needs are met. Given the site's sustainable location, the increased population density would be acceptable, and the proposed use would provide accommodation suitable for people

studying or working nearby. The proposal would not lead to an over-concentration of HMOs, and would therefore not seriously harm the amenity of residents in Alexandra Road or undermine the creation and maintenance of a mixed and balanced community locally. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would accord with the objectives of UDP policy H4 and with the general thrust of the Council's LPG5.

Other Matters

10. Representations have been submitted indicating that there is parking stress within the street and that the HMO use would generate significant traffic. I acknowledge that the level of car ownership associated with 6 separate occupiers has the potential to be higher than a 3 bedroom property in C3 use, and that any parking would need to be accommodated on-street. At the time of my site visit there was, however, sufficient on-street availability, and I note that the Highways Authority has not objected to the proposal. Given the proximity of the site to bus routes and the easy walking distance to shops and facilities, it seems to me unlikely that the HMO would lead to a significant increase in parking demand. In addition, side access would be available to a proposed rear cycle store. I consider the proposal to be acceptable in this regard.
11. Allegations have been made regarding other properties managed by the appellant, who has responded by submitting information regarding changes to management practices. However, as planning permissions run with the land I afford these matters little weight. The potential effect of the proposal on house prices is not a material planning consideration. I have proceeded to determine the appeal based on the specific planning merits of the case.
12. I have considered the duty to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, under section 3 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the WBFG Act). In reaching my decision, I have taken into account the ways of working set out at section 5 of the WBFG Act and I consider that this decision is in accordance with the sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives set out in section 8 of the WBFG Act.

Conditions

13. In the interests of proper planning, I have imposed the standard time limit and plans conditions. No other conditions have been suggested and I do not consider any others to be necessary.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Paul Selby

INSPECTOR