

CHANGE OF USE OF DWELLING TO HOUSE OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION CONTAINING 8 UNITS AND ONE SELF-CONTAINED UNIT TO INCLUDE PART CONVERSION OF GARAGE TO RESIDENTIAL AND ERECTION OF SINGLE STOREY EXTENSION TO REAR OF 80 ALMA STREET, TAUNTON

Grid Reference: 323195.124364

Full Planning Permission

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Recommended Decision: Conditional Approval

The proposed HMO is not considered an inappropriate use in this location and due to the close proximity to the town centre facilities, is acceptable as a car free development. Cycle storage will be provided to encourage sustainable transport methods. The proposal will not result in harm to the street scene or the appearance of the surrounding area and will not result in material detriment to the residential amenities of the occupiers of nearby properties. As such, the proposal is in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 (General Requirements), S2 (Design) and M4 (Residential Parking Provision).

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

(A2) Proposed ground floor plan
(A2) Proposed first floor plan
(A2) Proposed elevations
(A3) Block plan
(A4) Location Plan
(A2) Existing First Floor Plan
(A2) Existing Elevations
(A2) Existing Ground Floor Plan

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. Before the development hereby approved is occupied, the area allocated for the storage of refuse and cycles, as shown on the submitted site plan shall be made available for this purpose, and shall thereafter remain available and not be used for any purpose, other than for the storage of refuse and cycles in connection with the development hereby permitted. The cycle storage shall be fully lockable.

Reason: To ensure that adequate cycle and bin storage is provided, in order to promote sustainable travel and prevent harm to the street scene or neighbouring amenities, in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies M4 and S1 (b), (d) and (e).

Notes for compliance

1. Notes at request of Wessex Water:

- Although not shown on the public sewer record drawing, it is possible there may be a sewer crossing the site that, by virtue of its age, could be deemed a public sewer under the former Section 24 provision of the Public Health Act 1936. Wessex is currently reviewing available data on these sewers in order to update and revise its sewer records, thus indicating these as 'public' in appropriate cases. Public sewerage apparatus is covered by statutory easement and no new building or similar works will normally be allowed within a minimum of 3.0m of this apparatus.
- Surface water should not be discharged to the foul sewer.
- It will be necessary, if required, for the developer to agree points of connection with Wessex Water, for water supply and the satisfactory disposal of foul flows.
- The developer should be aware of the importance of checking with Wessex Water to ascertain whether there may be any uncharted sewers or water mains within (or very near to) the site. If any such apparatus exists, applicants should plot the exact position on the design site layout to assess the implications. Please note that the grant of planning permission does not, where apparatus will be affected, change Wessex Water's ability to seek agreement as to the carrying out of diversionary and/or conditioned protection works at the applicant's expense or, in default of such agreement, the right to prevent the carrying out of any such development proposals as may affect its apparatus.

PROPOSAL

80 Alma Street is a substantial end-terrace dwelling, separated from the pavement by a small front garden/yard area with a low brick wall to the front. The adjoining properties to the north-west and opposite comprise a uniform row of smaller terraced dwellings staggering in ridge heights, the majority of which have off road parking. There are parking restrictions along Alma Street, by means of double and single yellow lines. The surrounding properties are largely residential with some commercial businesses on Silver Street. There is one registered House of Multiple Occupation in Alma Street and seven in close proximity on Silver Street.

An application for planning permission for the change of use of the dwelling to a house of multiple occupation containing 11 units was received earlier this year. This application sought permission for the conversion of the dwelling to a house of multiple occupation (HMO) containing 11 units and included partial conversion of the garage to living accommodation and a single storey extension to the rear. Each of the 11 bedrooms had an en-suite shower room with two kitchenettes and a boiler room/laundrette downstairs and one kitchenette upstairs. A communal yard area remained to the rear, accessed solely through the property, there was no alternative access to the rear. All units were to be accessed through the front door, although to reach rooms no.5 and 7, it was necessary to go outside through the communal yard and then in through the kitchenette. The front element of the garage was allocated for refuse and cycle storage, whilst the front garden wall was proposed to be removed. The application was withdrawn following concerns raised by the case officer.

This application now seeks planning permission for the change of use of the dwelling to a HMO containing 8 units and 1 self-contained unit to include part conversion of garage to residential and erection of single storey extension. This would include 5 en-suite units at ground floor level (one also with a private kitchen) and a communal kitchen. There will now be a larger element of the garage available for cycle and refuse storage. At first floor level, there will be a further 4 en-suite units and a communal kitchen. One staircase now serves all rooms. The garden wall to the front is proposed to remain and no car parking spaces will be provided as part of the scheme. As such, a car-free development is proposed with adequate cycle storage.

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

Consultees

SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP - The proposal relates to the change of use of a dwelling to a HMO. The application site is located in close proximity to the town centre and provides good access to other modes of sustainable transport. I am therefore satisfied that car free development is acceptable in this location. It is noted from the Design and Access Statement that the applicant talks about the opportunity to park vehicles on the highway. It should be noted that Alma Street has both single and double yellow lines along its entire length. Therefore no vehicle should be parking on the highway in this location. In addition the Highway Authority would have concerns with any proposal which would see the generation of any on street car parking.

As part of the proposal sufficient bicycle storage should be provided for each unit. The ground floor plan indicates this bicycle storage area will be shared with the refuse bins and it should be ensured that there is sufficient room for both. The applicant should note that the cycle storage area should not be used in conjunction with any other use. In addition further details would be required in relation to how the bicycles will be stored.

Taking into account the above information I raise no objection to this proposal and if planning permission were to be granted I would require the following conditions to be attached.

WESSEX WATER - The development is located within a foul sewered area and there are water mains within the vicinity of the proposal. It will be necessary for the

developer to agree a point of connection onto the system, if required, for water supply and for the satisfactory disposal of foul flows generated. Developer should investigate alternative methods for the satisfactory disposal of surface water from the site (e.g. soakaways) and Council should be satisfied with arrangements for surface water disposal. Suggests note to applicant regarding uncharted sewers or water mains and easements for public sewers.

Representations

At the time of writing, 11 letters of objection have been received from local residents on the grounds of:

- Concerns regarding anti-social behaviour including noise, litter, disturbance associated with loud music and arriving home late, possible drug/alcohol abuse, violence and crime
- Concerns following crime/problems experienced from existing nearby HMOs
- Inadequate car parking resulting in unlawful parking
- Concerns as to where refuse bins will be stored
- Changing nature of this area of town, housing style and community in Alma Street has many families and long standing residents, sought after area will be lost if too many HMOs

Other matters raised including:

- The Alma Inn project has had limited demand
- No authorised bedsits in Alma Street (to objectors knowledge)
- Conditions in Silver Street are unsatisfactory and difficult, don't want this to spread into Alma Street.
- If the front wall was knocked down there would be enough car parking for four cars and this should be the maximum number of units allowed
- Taunton is being overrun with bedsits and many are built and still vacant
- Alma Street is a desirable street and no.80 is one of nicest properties, a good family home. Shame to spoil it by carving it up into bedsits.
- Extension proposed to rear by back gardens in urban areas no longer brownfield sites suitable for building on
- Bedsits are acceptable in areas of student accommodation but not in family residential areas
- Suggestion that 4 flats for families and 3 single units may be more acceptable.
- Possible decreases in police budgets, could result in increase in anti-social behaviour

PLANNING POLICIES

T1 - TDBCLP - Extent of Taunton,

STR2 - Towns,

STR4 - Development in Towns,

M2 - TDBCLP - Non-residential Car Parking Outside Taun & Well,

M4 - TDBCLP - Residential Parking Provision,

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The site lies in close proximity to the town centre, with easy access to adequate

services and facilities. It is therefore an appropriate location for a car free development and sufficient lockable cycle storage is provided. No parking is provided as part of the scheme, which the County Highways Authority are satisfied with and the front wall will be retained so as not to be available for car parking.

Due to the close proximity to the town centre, this is considered an ideal location for a HMO and there is evidence of other HMOs in the area, one already in Alma Street and seven in close proximity on Silver Street, as well as a significant number of flats. There is no specific policy within Taunton Deane Local Plan pertaining to HMOs and their concentration.

Whilst concerns are raised regarding nearby flats still being vacant, it is important to note that the former Alma Inn site is a different nature of development. The HMO proposed would provide young people the opportunity to have an element of independent living, that many cannot afford. There is therefore a demand for this type of development.

No changes are proposed to the front of the building, with the exception of the proposed replacement of the garage door with iron gates and therefore there will be no impact on the street scene or the surrounding area. As there will be no alterations to window openings, there will be no increased overlooking of neighbouring properties. There is already a high boundary wall on the west boundary at the rear of the property and the increased height of this wall to allow a single storey extension is not considered to result in material harm to the amenities of the occupiers of that property.

A large element of the existing garage will be available for refuse and cycle storage, enabling these items to be stored out of view, with no adverse impact on the appearance of the street scene.

The existing property is large with seven bedrooms and therefore already has the capability of being occupied by a large quantity of people. There is already an HMO present on Alma Street, of which no mention has been made by objectors. The use of the property as an HMO is not considered to result in material harm to neighbouring properties that would outweigh the need for accommodation for young people and it is important to note that there is other legislation that governs noise, anti-social behaviour and crime.

Further information is awaited regarding surface water disposal and this will be updated on the Committee Update Sheet

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1988.

CONTACT OFFICER: Miss K Purchase Tel: 01823 356468