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Bury Council
The Planning Service
3 Knowsley Place
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18 January 2024

Via Email: D.Clapworthy@bury.gov.uk

Dear Dean,

RE: **70343** | Change of use from residential care home (Class C2) to 13 no. bedroom (single occupancy) house in multiple occupation (HMO) (Sui Generis) with associated works | 147-155 Walshaw Road, Bury, BL8 1NH

The Applicant understands that the Council has received a number of consultation responses to the above planning application, which we are seeking to address them in this letter.

Introduction

CHURCH LAKE LIMITED had been operating Elizabeth House, 147-155 Walshaw Road, Bury, BL8 1NH as a 14-bed residential care home and Moorfields Care Home, 388 Walshaw Road, Bury, BL8 1TU as an 18-bed residential care home since 2017. However, the company went into administration in November 2022 and the appointed administrators continued to operate the care homes, but as suitable buyers could not be found, it was decided to permanently close both care homes and sell the buildings in December 2023 when they were acquired by the current owners. Church Lake Limited operated a large group of care homes and it was shown that Moorfield and Elizabeth House were making significant financial losses from 2020 and it was not financially viable to continue operate as a small care home.

- The UDP Housing Objectives 1 and 2 are related to meeting of the boroughs housing demand, and the development of housing stock in the urban area. The proposed conversion of a former care-home to a 13 bed HMO addresses both of these two objectives and will make a positive contribution to Bury's annual housing targets. This proposed HMO will provide the much-needed accommodation in this part of the borough and will attract interest from young professionals, tradesmen, and keyworkers. The development will also make a positive contribution towards meeting local demand for housing and providing variety to the house types in this township in line with Housing Objective 3 of the UDP.
- The proposals will have a positive impact on sustainability credentials as the redevelopment of an existing building is environmentally better than a new build.
- UDP Policy H2/4 states that applications for the conversion of a building into a HMO will be considered against the following factors.

a) The effect on the amenity of neighbouring property through noise, visual intrusion, the position of entrances, impact of parking areas, extensions, and fire escapes.

This proposal residential accommodation will not result in greater noise or visual intrusion as is set within its own grounds and well screened from neighbouring properties. The entrance from Walshaw Rd will remain as is with the car park access at the rear.

b) The general character of the area

The building is set within a residential area. The proposed HMO will use the existing entrance from Walshaw Road and maintain the overall character of the area.

c) The amenity of occupants.

The HMO will offer high standard of living accommodation, natural lighting, access to communal areas and outdoor garden space

d) The effect on the street scene of any changes to the external appearance of the building

There are no external alterations planned and the proposed HMO will maintain all of the existing appearance of the building.

e) Car parking and servicing requirements

The proposal shows 9 car parking will be provided on site including one suitable for disabled person. There is a slight modification to the timber fencing to support a better layout of the car parking. SPD 13 supports such location as this proposal for a HMO which is on a relatively busy highway, well served by public transport, cycle routes on Kirklees trail and close to local supermarkets and walking distance to the town centre. On this basis, the site is well suited for use as an HMO.

Public Consultation Responses

The key matters raised by the general public are summarised as follows:

Location:

- The Elizabeth House is located on Walshaw Road, which is an established residential area and well connected by public transport links and local shops & supermarkets which are a short walking distance. The site is considered acceptable for change of use from a care home which was no longer financially viable. The layout of the internal bedrooms' accommodation, the kitchen, living rooms, external front & rear gardens as well as the parking facilities lend themselves well for change of use to an HMO and provide much needed accommodation for the people of Bury.

Types of tenants

- HMOs are increasingly used as a home of choice for many people including young professionals, key workers, tradesmen, semi-retired, young and old single households saving up for a deposit or splitting up from a long-term relationship. The key element of an HMO is that it offers the residents flexibility and affordability without worrying about the costs of bills etc. The buildings also benefit from a lift and all the access points are friendly for residents with limited mobility or wheelchair. This is a major point as there are not many options for persons with limited mobility to find rooms in HMO which are wheelchair friendly.
- The client has a small portfolio of HMOs in Bury since 2019 and currently operate with total of 35 rooms in modern, well maintained, and higher value properties located in the affluent areas of Bury. The properties offer generous shared living areas with high spec kitchens and predominately double sized bedrooms with most of them ensuite facilities for a single occupancy. The tenants are single male or female professionals aged between 30 and 60 years old that are seeking minimum of a 12 month stay rather than having residents of a transient nature such as student, rehab, asylum, or emergency accommodation. The client has developed an incentive and monthly reward scheme that encourages the residents for a clean living and managing/recycling of waste correctly. The applicant has successfully converted a former care home (Laburnam House 1-3 Wells Street, Bury) which was a formerly a 12-bed residential care home into a 11 bed HMO in 2019 and this has been operating as a HMO since.

Development and Maintenance of the building

- The Applicant proposes a 13-bed HMO that will be subject to HMO Licensing Regulation, each with spacious high-quality rooms with private en-suite toilet facilities, shared showers, with 2 kitchens and a large communal area and access to generous garden space. There are no proposed external works to alter the character of the property and only minor adjustment is proposed to update the necessary parking facilities to ensure the movement of vehicles within the car park is adequate, add the cycle and bin stores as shown on the plan.
- Internally the layout of the existing building is ideal to be adapted to an HMO which includes generous en-suite toilet rooms with double beds and a large shared communal area for kitchen / dining / living room/Conservatory. The proposed accommodation meets and exceeds the required HMO licensing standards and provides a large external open space for

the enjoyment of future residents. Internally the property will be modernised with full scheme of decoration. The property will be well maintained to reflect the value of such building in an affluent area of Bury.

- The Applicant owns and manages a small portfolio of Co-Living HMOs within Bury and images of other HMO properties are enclosed in Appendix 1 which show the proposed quality of accommodation. The stable tenants are carefully selected through a referencing procedure for the existing HMO properties to ensure that the tenants will fit in with the existing residents and look after the property as well as respect the privacy of other residents and neighbours. All the existing tenants are in full time employment and made up of office workers, care workers, tradesmen, drivers and working professionals contributing to the local community.
- The applicant employs a handyman, gardener and a cleaner that attend the existing properties on weekly basis to undertake the necessary works. Additionally established relationship with a local building firm, plumber, electrician, and roofers are used as required.

Crime and antisocial behaviour

- The HMOs have a reputation for anti-social behaviour; however, the applicant has successfully developed a small portfolio of 5 HMOs in Bury since 2019. The tenants are carefully selected and must be in full time employment, which is backed up by employer references, formal identification and taking rent payments by bank transfer. The preferred age of the tenants is between 30-65 years. Thus far, there have not been any written warnings to tenants or had police attend the existing HMOs of the applicant for any antisocial behaviour.
- All buildings have 24hr CCTV externally and internal corridors. Smoking is not permitted within the building, drinking is not permitted in communal areas, visitors are not allowed after 10pm and overnight stay is strictly prohibited.
- The applicant or a member of staff visit each of the HMOs 2-3 times per week to check for any issues or assess maintenance.

Transport and Car parking

There is no specific car parking standards for HMO's in SPD11 Parking Standards in Bury, but SPD 13 'The Conversion of Buildings to Houses in Multiple Occupation' gives some general advice and states that parking and road safety issues will be important considerations when assessing a planning application and any proposal that is considered to have a detrimental impact on highway safety or harm to amenity will not be permitted.

- Elizabeth House is ideally located and well served by public transport. Kirklees trail is also nearby which will encourage walking and is easily accessible to travel by bike to Bury town centre.
- There are 9 proposed parking spaces with one bay suitable for disabled parking. There is also ample cycle spaces for the number of residents and there will not be any impact on the surrounding houses. From the existing HMOs of the applicant, only 20% of the tenants own a car and vast majority prefer to travel by bike or by public transport.
- It is noted that the care homes had 5-7 full time members of the care staff, part time maintenance and clerical staff as well as goods deliveries and visitors for the residents. On this basis, it is reasonable to expect that the number of trips to the site would be less than compared to care homes.
- The parking layout shows the easy movement of vehicles within the car park.

Appendix 1. Shows the pictures from some of the exiting HMOs of the applicant.



8 Haslam Brow Bury, 6 Bed HMO



Laburnam House, Bury – 11 Bed HMO



