

6 DCCW2007/2684/F - CHANGE OF USE TO HOUSE OF MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY AT 131 WHITECROSS ROAD, HEREFORD, HR4 0LS**For: Ms. L. Watkins, 131 Whitecross Road, Hereford, HR4 0LS****Date Received: 22nd August, 2007****Ward: St. Nicholas****Grid Ref: 49840, 40356****Expiry Date: 17th October, 2007**

Local Members: Councillors DJ Benjamin and JD Woodward

Introduction

This application was deferred at the meeting of the Central Area Planning Sub-Committee on the 24th October, 2007.

As a result of comments made by Hereford City Council and Sub-Committee Members the applicant has amended the proposal to reduce the bedroom numbers from 8 to 7 this providing a communal lounge in the basement. The remaining three floors are unchanged so the accommodation will consist of the following:-

Basement:	Communal lounge
Ground floor:	2 bedrooms, 2 kitchens – 1 with dining area, utility room
First floor:	3 bedrooms, 2 communal shower rooms, 1 communal w.c.
Second floor:	2 bedrooms (1 en suite), 1 communal shower room

In addition, the applicant has requested that further representations are taken into consideration. These have been included in section 5.2 of this report.

By way of clarification the Head of Strategic Housing has confirmed that the three other properties (nos. 129, 133 and 135) in the same group of four are registered houses in multiple occupation.

Having regard to the amended details, policies and material considerations contained in the original report, it is considered that the proposed use is appropriate for the building and its location and complies with relevant development plan policies.

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site is a three storey dwelling within a group of four attractive and distinctive Victorian properties fronting the southern side of Whitecross Road opposite Holy Trinity Church, a Grade II listed building.
- 1.2 The other properties in the group are in multiple occupation. Nearby, to the west, is the Buckingham Public House and to the east, a bed and breakfast establishment. The area is characterised by a variety of mixed uses ranging from residential through to a wide range of commercial uses.

1.3 The proposal is for a change of use from a dwelling house to a house of multiple occupancy.

1.4 The property currently has:

5 bedrooms:	2 on the 2nd floor (en suite), 3 on the 1st floor
2 kitchen areas:	ground floor
2 bathrooms:	1 on the end floor, 1 on the 1st floor
1 toilet:	1st floor
2 reception rooms:	ground floor
1 basement room:	basement

1.5 It is proposed to use the property as follows:

8 separate bedrooms:	2 on the 2nd floor, 3 on the 1st floor, 2 on the ground floor and 1 in the basement
2 kitchens:	ground floor, one to contain a dining area
1 utility room:	ground floor
1 en-suite bathroom:	2nd floor
3 communal bathrooms:	1 on the 2nd floor, 2 on the 1st floor
1 separate toilet:	1st floor

2. Policies

2.1 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007:

H16	-	Car Parking
H17	-	Subdivision of Existing Houses

3. Planning History

- 3.1 DCCW2000/1605/F Change of use from care home to 3 residential units (No. 131 Whitecross Road). Approved 7th August, 2000.
- 3.2 DCCW2003/3760/F Insertion of drop kerb and creation of hard standing to provide parking to front of house. Refused 28th January, 2004.
- 3.3 DCCW2004/3403/F Proposed drop kerb and creation of hard standing. Refused 15th December, 2004.
- 3.4 DCCW2005/2933F Change of use to house of multiple occupancy (No. 135 Whitecross Road). Approved 11th October, 2005.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 None.

Internal Council Advice

4.2 Traffic Manager: "Although the proposal does not include any off street car parking provision, the location is served by a regular bus service and is close to employment areas and the city centre. Cycle parking is also proposed to be provided. As our

parking standards are maxima, and in view of the above, I do not consider this to be unacceptable. Condition H29 (secure cycle parking provision) should apply."

- 4.3 Head of Strategic Housing Services: "I am able to confirm that I have met the applicant on site and outlined the requirements we require for such a property which have been included in the scheme."

5. Representations

- 5.1 Hereford City Council: "Requests that this planning application be determined strictly in accordance with the approved development plan applicable to the area of the parish of the City of Hereford. The City Council also makes the following additional representations: that the application be refused as this is an over intensive use for this single building and recommends a reduction in the number of units."

- 5.2 The applicant has requested that the following points are taken into consideration:-

- This property has a history of use other than that of just as a simple dwelling. Together with 133 and 135 Whitecross Road it formed The Haven's Rest Nursing Home which closed more than 7 years ago. As a result, all 3 properties would have had a high occupancy level notwithstanding the additional comings and goings of associated staff and visitors.
- It is an ideal location. Being within easy walking distance to town and served by a regular bus service there is no requirement for residents to have a car which is likely to be a plus factor for many prospective tenants.
- The immediate area is already established as one of shared housing and other mixed use. Sandwiched between a public house and bed and breakfast, opposite a church and nursery school, it will not affect the privacy of neighbouring dwellings or the general character of the area. Please remember that this is not an exclusive cul-de-sac with a close community spirit, this property is situated on a main thoroughfare into town.
- As it stands this is a very spacious 5 bedroom family house currently just housing me and my daughter, and more recently a lodger. I would suggest that this is not the best use of this generous sized property. As identified in Section 5.6.13 of Herefordshire's Unitary Development Plan, sub-dividing larger dwellings into HMO's can represent "a more efficient use of the existing housing stock."
- This property could lawfully house 6 people without the need for planning consent as under The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, a dwelling house can be a property occupied by up to 6 residents living together as a single household. Effectively I am asking permission to allow just one above this number.
- I am well ware of the stigma of shared housing and preconceptions people often have about HMO's but I am probably in a better position than most to judge having been surrounded by them for the last 4 years. There does not necessarily need to be an increase in noise pollution. I am pleased to say that the 2 houses that neighbour me produce no more noise than I would expect of a single occupancy dwelling.

- Not everyone who requires this type of accommodation is bad, wicked or likely to lower the standard of an area. With the housing market as it is, and the steep rise in house prices that we have seen over recent years, there are plenty of working, single people who may earn a reasonable salary of up to £20K but who still cannot afford to buy or even rent the cheapest accommodation as a single occupier. What they require is good quality shared accommodation.
- I currently have a lodger who is a single 33 year old professional woman. She falls into this very category. Should this application be successful it is to this kind of tenant that I intend to let.
- There are additional factors that are likely to affect the need for this type of housing:
 - The fall in the social housing stock since the 1980's.
 - The sharp increase in the number of migrant workers in Herefordshire is putting a considerable strain on housing availability and as a result it is now difficult for both British and foreign people to find good quality accommodation in the county.
 - The huge national divorce rate increases the need for additional housing, as what were only single households split into two.
 - There are also recent reports predicting home repossessions increasing by 50% in 2008. This again will only increase the need for affordable housing.
- I would invite anyone to come and view the standard of my house and the accommodation offered. The amenities and facilities proposed are more than adequate for the level of occupancy without the need to dramatically change the interior and rip the guts out of what is essentially a beautiful period property.
- Externally there will be no way of telling its change of use and there are no modifications required.
- As already mentioned my intention is to let this property to professional individuals. I have already made enquiries with a local letting agent with a view to them managing the property on my behalf. They had previously refused to deal with shared accommodation but having seen the standard offered and my intentions for the property they are more than happy to take it on. They have a very strict vetting policy.
- To research what similar accommodation is currently available in Hereford, I have viewed some shared houses for myself. Obviously there is a difference in the standard offered, some being of excellent standard, others not so good. It is my intention that this property should hit the higher end of the market.
- The property has already been vetted by Herefordshire Council's Private Sector Housing Department who have confirmed its suitability and that it more than meets the required standard. Some modifications will of course have to be made to meet the required fire precaution standards, namely the installation of a fire alarm system and fire rated doors. I also recently attended the Private Landlords Forum hosted by Herefordshire Council on 31st October 2007, in order to gain any further

information I may require to ensure this venture is run legally, safely and efficiently.

- This application conforms to the guidance laid down in Herefordshire's Unitary Development Plan and meets the 3 points identified in Policy H17.
 - Point 1, referencing parking facilities, has already been addressed by your own Traffic Manager and I have confirmed my intention to include secure cycle parking facilities.
 - I consider that Points 2 and 3 have been addressed by some of the aforementioned points.
- Lastly I should just like to say that I am not some hot property developer scouring the county for large cheap properties to which I can do the minimum amount of work and cram the house full of as many people as possible, having no or little respect for the surrounding area and neighbours. It is definitely not my intention to upset local residents and I am very mindful of the responsibility I have to manage this property so it has no impact on existing neighbours. I am simply a working single mother who has recognised the opportunity for a small venture in the hope that it may help my daughter and I live in a property that better suits our needs whilst giving us added security for our future.

The full text of this letter can be inspected at Central Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 Having regard to the nature of the proposal, relevant development plan policies and representations received, it is considered that the key issues for consideration are as follows:

1. Car Parking
2. Standard of Accommodation
3. Impact on the character of the property and its curtilage, the amenity and privacy of neighbouring dwellings, and the amenity and general character of the area

Car Parking

6.2 There is no off street car parking provision within the curtilage of the site. However the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007 states that there are no minimum standards of provision. The car parking requirement can, on an individual site basis, be subject to reductions to reflect such factors as the availability of public transport, proximity to town centres and the type of housing to be provided.

6.3 As commented by the Traffic Manager, the application site is in close proximity to the town centre, served by a regular bus service and close to employment areas. Taking account of the nature of the proposed housing accommodation, it is considered that the lack of off street parking in this instance is acceptable subject to the provision of cycle parking as recommended.

Standard of Accommodation

- 6.4 Having regard to the proposed layout, including the recommendations of the Head of Strategic Housing for this type of housing provision, it is considered that the standard of accommodation proposed is good and is of a type which would make a useful contribution to the supply of low cost affordable housing, particularly for single person households.

Impact Issues

- 6.5 The conversion works would not involve external alterations to the property. Internally many of the existing facilities would be retained and new works would be carried out without radically altering the internal layout.
- 6.6 The neighbouring properties are in multiple occupation. No. 135 Whitecross Road in the same group of four was granted planning permission for a similar use on 11th October, 2005 and is currently occupied as such. Accordingly it is not considered that the conversion and use will have undue impact on the character of the property and its curtilage or the amenity and general mixed use character of the area. Moreover, having regard to the locational characteristics of the site, it is not considered that the amenity and privacy of neighbouring dwellings would be compromised.
- 6.7 It is considered that the applicant has responded to the concerns raised by the Hereford City Council and Committee Members and as such the revised proposal for 7 occupants is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1. A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission)).**

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2. A11 (Change of use only details required of any alterations).**

Reason: To define the terms under which permission for change of use is granted.

- 3. F39 (Scheme of refuse storage).**

Reason: Reason: In the interests of amenity.

- 4. H29 (Secure covered cycle parking provision).**

Reason: To ensure that there is adequate provision for secure covered cycle accommodation within the application site, encouraging alternative modes of transport in accordance with both local and national planning policy.

Informatives:

- 1. N01 - Access for all.**

2. **N08 – Advertisements.**
3. **N19 - Avoidance of doubt (as amended by details and drawings received on 6th November 2007).**
4. **N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC.**

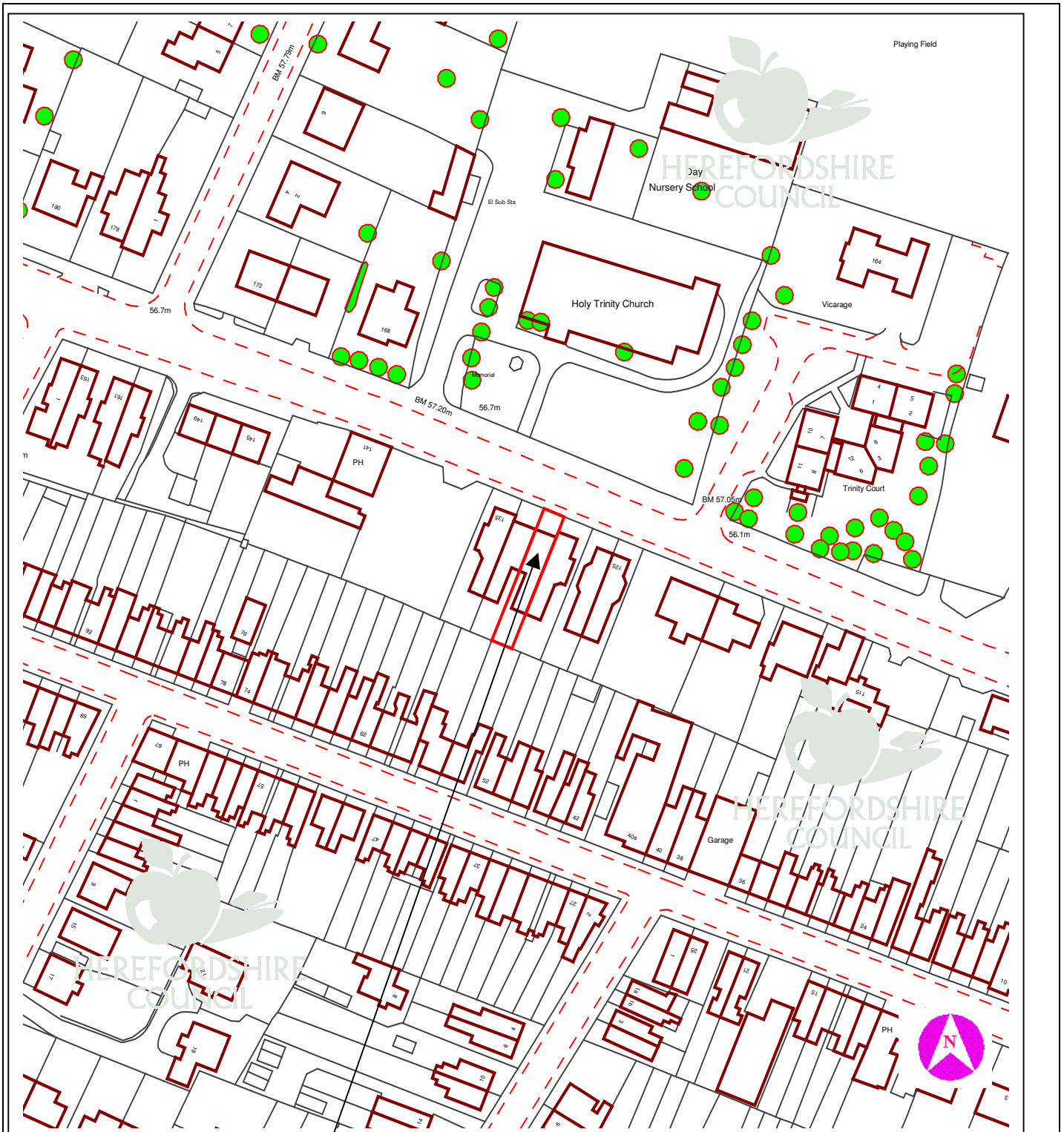
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCCW2007/2684/F

SCALE : 1 : 1250

SITE ADDRESS : 131 Whitecross Road, Hereford, HR4 0LS

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