

## EXAMPLES OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR CONVERSION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS INTO RESIDENTIAL/STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN LITTLE WOODHOUSE

### 1) SUBMISSION FOLLOWING PRE-APP AND THEN PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR THREE CONVERSIONS TO STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN LITTLE WOODHOUSE AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2018.

These three applications were received prior to the introduction of the Core Strategy Selective Review September 2019 which introduced H9 Minimum standards, but there were discussions around H9 minimum space standards as part of the public consultation prior to their introduction. This is the (edited) response of Little Woodhouse Neighbourhood Plan Forum (LWNPF) to a Pre-App submission by the developer.

‘Thank you for including LWNPF in your initial consultations on these proposals. Clearly there is limited information available on these proposals at the moment, especially around any new build on the sites, but this information will be provided presumably when the Planning Application is submitted, and we can comment on that at the time. However, there is sufficient information for some generic feedback.

Your comment that *‘By converting the premises to student accommodation, this would divert demand and enable traditional housing formerly let to students to return to families and other non-student occupation. This will enhance the quality, quantity and variety of local housing stock’* – is contentious. The recent study on Student Housing by Huw Jones has demonstrated that students ARE moving out of Far Headingley and Headingley, into the Little Woodhouse and City Centre areas, but this is prompted more by the construction of large Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA’s) rather than the smaller scale conversion you are proposing. It is also a moot point as to whether families are moving back into these areas - there would appear to be anecdotal evidence that this is happening in Far Headingley, but in Headingley houses are NOT being converted back into family dwellings, but are retained as HMOs – but not student houses. You will also be aware of the 37 storey PBSA planned near the Leeds Arena, a 20 storey PBSA in the same area, and the plans for a 10 storey PBSA to replace Maxies restaurant. Why is this important ? Leeds City Council is introducing New Minimum Space Standards (Policy H9 Core Standard), but Student Housing is not covered by these standards. If you convert these houses into student flats without adhering to Policy H9, these dwellings can only ever be let to Students (without extensive refurbishment), whereas if you make them multi-use (ie focussed on the Student market but the units large enough for the open market), this will prevent built-in obsolescence when the number of students inevitably declines or moves in to the more attractive PBSAs..

#### Site specific comments

18/05316/FU. 19 Springfield Mount is the only one of the three properties that is currently empty – and although the building is looking OK, the grounds are already overgrown. This is a Grade II listed building with a small new build area in the rear of the property. Given that the student population in this area already accounts for 92% of the total population, conversion to anything other than student accommodation would be difficult to object to (although note my generic comment above). It is to be hoped that the new build will be sympathetic to the Grade II listed building.

18/05307/FU. 25-27 Hyde Park Terrace (Malham House). This is NOT listed. It is clearly the largest of the three developments and includes considerable building on the existing car park. This area is NOT currently predominantly student (only 46% of the population are students) and for this development in particular I would urge adherence to the proposed H9 Core Standard as this could

be attractive to a demographic that is not 100% student. Although not a listed building, this is still a significant building and I trust the new build will be in keeping. Malham House is currently free standing on one side, the planned development on the car park appears to connect this to the adjacent terrace, and this could have a significant impact on sight-lines, making the area look more built up and congested than it needs to be. I would suggest any development needs to retain a space between 25 and 23 Hyde Terrace and the current proposal represents overdevelopment.

18/05192/FU. 40 Clarendon Road (Southfield). This is not only Grade II listed, but is one of the most attractive houses on Clarendon Road with a turret and Dutch gable end. It provides a significant view from Victoria Street. I am more than relieved that your proposals for this property do not include any new build (other than cycle storage) and retains the existing landscaping. YPP would accrue credit with LWNPF for sensitively converting this important landscape feature building. This building is on a bend of Clarendon Road and joins with Victoria Street at this point, so consideration might be needed on parking restrictions on the road to prevent taxis/private car hire gathering outside and creating a traffic hazard. The current student penetration of this area is about 71%, so clearly student accommodation (with H9 Minimum space standards) makes sense'.

All three Planning Applications were successful and these three large Victorian buildings are now occupied by students.

## **2) Three Planning Applications on Hyde Terrace – Student Conversions May 2020**

This generic objection was submitted by LWNPF to three Planning Applications in the same street to convert residences into student accommodation and was an attempt to demonstrate the cumulative harm that could accrue if applications continued to be considered in isolation.

'The introduction of Policy H9 'Minimum space standards' (September 2019) was a big improvement and is welcomed by almost everybody. However, these space standards do not include student accommodation, and this oversight is being exploited by developers. This risks reducing the level of residential accommodation in some areas of Leeds, EXCLUDING anyone but students from living in these areas.

Nos 34, 36 and 38 Hyde Terrace were all built as family residence and more recently have all been converted into self-contained flats. In February 2020 a Planning Application was received for 34 Hyde Terrace (20/00867/LI), for an extension and conversion into student flats, in April 2020 a Planning Application for a similar development was submitted for No 38 Hyde Terrace (20/01510/FU), and now, an identical Planning Application has been received for No 36 Hyde Terrace (20/02642/FU). On my site visit to No 36 I spoke with one of the occupants of the existing four flats, and he confirmed that all four flats are currently occupied by students. That in itself is not an issue, that is Landlord choice, and he/she could equally rent them out to non-students. However, if all three Planning Applications go ahead, as all three PA's ignore Policy H9 on minimum size standards, if the landlords cannot find student tenants, then the properties will have to be left vacant as they are too small to be let to other groups. I find it difficult to believe that developers are continuing to plan for student accommodation when recent trends suggest that due to Coronavirus, student numbers are likely to fall off a cliff in September 2020.

I raise these three PA's in particular as they are a nice grouping helping to emphasize the issue, but this has been a growing trend since the H9 Policy was introduced. The Article 4 Directive was introduced to try and reduce the loss of residential accommodation to HMOs, and on the whole it has been successful (and LCC Planning Dept continue to cite this in refusing HMO applications) but

the 'loophole' in H9 policy is now proving equally damaging in terms of the loss of residential properties.

#### **Specific to No 36 Hyde Terrace 20/02642/FU**

The plans make it difficult to identify the layout of the four existing flats, but given this is a large house, they will be roomy. Not so the proposed 14 apartments. There will be one 2 bed apartment (78.5 sq metres), one 1-bed flat (39 sq metres) and twelve studio flats varying from 29.3 sq m to 17.3 sq m. Of these FOUR are below the minimum 20 sq m size - although student accommodation doesn't have to meet H9 space standards, there is a LCC Planning guideline which suggests a MINIMUM of 20 sq metres for a student studio flat. Looking at recent planning applications, this is one of the worst in terms of size of accommodation, with most developers at least trying to make the scheme look attractive. The introduction of the H9 'Minimum size' standards Policy is to be welcomed, but we are seeing here the law of unintended consequences. Student accommodation is not covered by the H9 Policy. Currently this residence contains four flats which are rented out to students, but they could equally be rented out to non-students (key workers, young professions, graduates for example). Assuming this application goes ahead, if the landlord cannot find students as tenants, the flats will have to be left empty as it would be illegal to rent them out to non-students as they don't fulfil the H9 accommodation size standards. Student accommodation is also, typically, only occupied during term time (ie about 30 weeks per year). These houses were built as family accommodation, yet are, in effect, being turned into 'second homes' as most students will return home at the end of term and the house is no longer available for occupation by local residents (other than students) ie this represents a LOSS of residential accommodation. This particular area (Hyde Terrace) is currently only 46% student, so it is not a lost cause and it is to be hoped that Housing Policy H6 B (ii) 'To avoid the loss of existing houses suitable for family occupation' and H6 B (iii) 'To avoid excessive concentration of student accommodation which would undermine the balance and well being of communities' would come into play here, but previous development do not hold out much hope. I'm aware that developers/landlords are inevitably focussed on making a return on their capital, and if they've backed the wrong horse (ie by concentrating too much on a student market which then disappears) that is really their problem, but it could become OUR problem as well if that means empty houses in a prime residential location just outside the city

All three Planning Applications were successful and these three large Victorian 'villa' buildings are now occupied by students.

#### **3) Arthington House 20/01846/FU April 2020**

This application is included as it is one of the very few applications between 2000 and 2020 that was designed for local long term residents and families. LWNPF supported this application.

'We are SUPPORTIVE of this application and welcome the proposal to adapt Arthington House to provide residential accommodation in this area. The Little Woodhouse area has seen a lot of development in the past decades, but this is one of the very few developments (since Leeds Fed built Arthington House and the accommodation on Belle Vue Road in 2000) that will be designed as residential accommodation rather than student flats.

We recognise that the site has constraints and the architect has to work within these. There is very little green space on the site, so we welcome the decision to keep the bushes and shrubbery facing onto Westfield Road and the idea of incorporating a rear patio for the ground floor flats. We note that some of the bushes/shrubbery have become very well established and trust that the construction of the new garden wall will not damage these shrubs unduly. Although space is limited could the greenery include some small trees to add variety ? We note that this accommodation will be Housing

Association so will meet Leeds City Council's Policy H5 on Affordable Housing. The design and access statement indicates there will be a mixture of one and two bed apartments, with one ground floor apartment being fully accessible. LCC's Housing Mix Policy H4 proposes a target of 30% of three bed apartments and 10% of four bed apartments (with a MINIMUM of 20% three-bed apartments) in developments. We believe consideration should be given to including a number of three and perhaps even four, bed-apartments in this design as this would be more welcoming for families with children. The development is immediately adjacent to a Primary school. The Transport Assessment is well-argued, pointing out that the location (well served by bus routes and within walking distance of shops etc) means off-street car parking for all residents is perhaps not a necessity. However, surveys indicate that 50% of current residents appear to use the existing car park, so 16 car parking spaces for 38 apartments (the existing 16 plus 22 new flats) might be on the low side. It is difficult to identify where additional car parking might be located, but given the ground floor flats open up onto hard-standing at the rear of Arthington House, would it be possible to convert some of this into car-parking spaces (in particular the hard-standing to the rear of Flat No 10) ? We also note that there will be on-site secure storage for bicycles.

This application was successful and conversion work has commenced.

#### **4) 20/02712/FU - Century House 29 Clarendon Road June 2020**

This example is included as it demonstrates that some developers very quickly picked up on the fact that Student Accommodation did not have to adhere to H9 Minimum standards. The original application for this building specified nine residential apartments, this revised application was for twenty five apartments for students. The LWNPF objection focussed on this aspect of the application.

'This objection is submitted on behalf of Little Woodhouse Community Association (LWCA) and Little Woodhouse Neighbourhood Planning Forum (LWNPF).

A very disappointing Planning Application submitted for 29 Clarendon Road.

A previous Planning Application for this site (19/02279 FU) was submitted in 2019 for 9 residential apartments (6 X 2 beds and 3 X 3 beds) and was, remarkably NOT aimed at the student market. LWCA didn't object to this application, submitting a positive response with some improvement suggestions. Planning permission was granted on 14th October 2019.

This planning application is a hybrid affair comprising both a Planning Application and a Permitted Development Submission (20/02171 DPD). The Planning application is for four additional one bed roomed apartments (adhering to H9 Minimum size standards), but the DPD, submitted on 9th April 2020 proposes to change the nine apartments agreed in Planning Application 19/02279, into 16 studios (some of them below 20 mtrs square) and 5 one bed flats. The plans for the development of the Coach House are not unattractive, the ground floor will become apartments instead of being 'hollowed out' to provide covered car parking, but we are not convinced that ground floor windows leading directly out onto Kendal Lane will be practical

The inclusion of a DPD submission in effect changes what could have been seen as a not unattractive development into a clear over-development of this building, with some apartments less than 20 metre square. We urge the developer to rethink this proposal and return to the original plan as per 19/02279.'

This application was also successful.