

**Part two storey, part first floor front extension and single storey rear extension and conversion from 6 Person House of Multiple Occupation (Use Class C4) to Sui Generis 7 person House of Multiple Occupation**

**8 Albert Road, Stevenage, SG2 8TN**

This application follows a previously successful application to extend the property. The physical external works now proposed remain the same as those previously approved. Earlier in 2023 a Certificate of Lawfulness confirmed that the property was being lawfully used as a House of Multiple Occupation C4, which permits up to 6 persons to occupy the property. This application seeks to adapt the previously approved layout to facilitate occupation for 7 persons.

The application site is located to the south of Albert Road in Stevenage approximately 30m east of the junction with Church Lane. The application dwelling is 1 of 6 terraced two storey properties in this section of Albert Street. Parking is located to the front of the dwelling in the form of a private driveway. The property backs onto a Council own car park. The property's design is consistent with other properties in the road; it is brick built with tile pitch roof.



Location of Application Site



Front Elevation of Application Site

### Principle

The application site is within the built-up area of Stevenage outside of any designated area. In accordance with Local Plan Policies the principle of an extension to this dwelling is acceptable subject to compliance with design considerations.

As previously highlighted the physical external works now proposed remain identical to those approved under reference 23/00604/FPH.

The creation of a Sui Generis HMO requires planning permission, but this is coming from a baseline of the house already being a lawful 6 person HMO. The creation of 1 extra bedroom within the property does not represent a material change. While the Council's Article 4 Direction is noted, it is not considered relevant to this application as the property is already a lawful HMO – there will be no loss of family unit accommodation in this instance.

### Layout and Design

Policy requires that extensions are sympathetic to the existing house in height, form, proportions, roof type, window details, materials, and the orientation of the main dwelling.

The proposed extension is entirely in keeping with the existing mass, bulk, and scale of the property. The proposal does not increase the width or height of the existing dwelling. The extension is almost identical to the extension at No. 12, the end of terrace property within the same row of dwellings. It is important to weigh up the fact that externally the layout and design is identical to that already granted permission. It would therefore be entirely unreasonable for the Council to now raise concerns about

the external appearance of the extensions hereby proposed.

Internally the first floor remains identical to that previously approved planning permission. On the ground floor the only change is the use of a small element of the previously approved rear extension, it will be subdivided to create a 7<sup>th</sup> bedroom. A large communal kitchen dining and living space will remain at the rear of the house. All residents will continue to enjoy access to the rear garden through the communal space.



Extension at No.12 Albert Street

Viewed from the street, the front of the dwelling will not be materially different to that at No.12. The new porch is lightweight and will be constructed from materials found throughout the dwelling to ensure a continuation of design. The garage had previously been converted by the previous owners several years ago, but the front doors were retained.

The main change visible from the public domain will be the introduction of a new first floor element, but this would remove the tired and somewhat dated flat roof garage projection which is currently in situ. The design change will materially improve the appearance of the dwelling. The roof is to be constructed of tiles to match the existing dwelling and is of a form more in keeping with the existing dwelling.

To the rear, the new single storey garden room/kitchen will complement the overall dwelling and is of a design that is in keeping with the overall property. Its rearward location would not play a significant role in public vistas.

#### Orientation and Light

The additions will have no impact upon light regarding neighbouring buildings. All rooms will satisfy Good Practice Guidelines for Sunlight and Daylight.

## Amenity Space

The submitted plans demonstrate internal layouts and the location of windows. The extension continues to ensure that the building meets the floor space standards set out in Technical Housing Standards.

The amenity space provided within the plot remains highly usable and of a high quality. The garden size remains typical of other properties within the local area. The garden exceeds local plan expectations.

## Access and Parking

This application proposes the creation of 3 parking spaces at the front of the dwelling. Previously plans show 2 parking spaces. To the front of the property is a wide dropped kerb that is proposed to be used. The creation of a larger area of hard standing does not in itself require planning permission.

Albert Street and the surrounding roads offer uncontrolled parking, parking is low level with little in the way of parking stress. To the rear of the site is a formal car park which is publicly accessible accessed off Church Lane.



Stevenage parking standards require 0.5 spaces per bedroom. With 6 bedrooms and 2 parking spaces the lawful use of the property would have a parking shortfall of 1 space.

However, the property is within Zone 2 as set out in the Local Plan meaning that there is only the requirement of 50-75% of usual required standards. Meaning that the current proposal offering 3 parking spaces meets the 75% requirement, the upper end of parking requirement, therefore we are fully compliant with policy.

It is a material fact that car ownership among occupants of HMO is very low. Many

people reliant on HMO style accommodation do not have cash reserves to run a motor vehicle, instead occupants are reliant on alternative modes of transport which are significantly cheaper to use. Across the applicant's portfolio there are seldom more than 2 cars per property, it is not envisaged that there will ever be a time where 3 cars are required for this property, but for reasons of policy, 3 are provided.

This site is within walking distance to one of Stevenage's main employment areas, hospital, town centre, leisure centres, train station and large supermarket. Owning a car is certainly not essential for day-to-day living in this property and the property will prove popular for those who are not private car owners.

Access to the parking spaces will be by way of the existing drop kerb to the front of the property.

The issue of parking is often raised as an area of concern; however, it is seldom supported at appeal. Recent appeal decisions that AJM Planning have acted for have defended car free HMO's. Within one such appeal, in granting the scheme planning permission the appeal inspector's comments are particularly relevant to this current appeal. He stated:

*"Having regard to the likely low level of car ownership, together with the sustainable location of the site, I consider that the proposed HMO use would not result in an unacceptable increased competition for on street car parking or the increased risk of illegal parking in the evening and weekends."*

Within the rear garden there is to be a secure cycle store created, this would provide safe, dry lockable areas for residents to use. Details can be submitted pursuant to planning conditions.

#### Impact on Neighbouring Properties

The layout of the plot and the design of extension ensures no significant additional built form is to be constructed adjacent to sensitive boundaries. The extensions will in no way appear dominant or impose upon neighbours.

New windows are located to ensure that there is no risk of overlooking neighbouring properties. The proposed design solution ensures no undue impacts upon neighbouring properties through its subservient design and low overall height in combination with its central plot location away from sensitive boundaries.

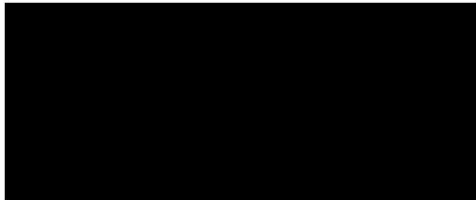
The relationship of a 7 person HMO is not materially different to the existing Lawful 6 person HMO on site. Neighbours will not experience any more noise or disturbance compared to the existing use, the applicant is not aware of any complaints having been

made, the property is well run, and occupants must obey the rules of occupation, or they risk eviction. Should a management plan be required to provide comfort, the applicant would be happy to provide this pursuant to condition.

#### Refuse and Recycling

Refuse collection and servicing will continue to take place as it does already, no change in service is required. There is no need to alter the existing provision on site, should additional bins be required, there is already a designated space to the side of the property down a side alleyway. This could again be utilised, or a new area could be provided pursuant to a planning condition. Bins will continue to be serviced from the street as normal.

Yours Sincerely



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