

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, May 5, 2024 10:42 AM
To: Section 62A Applications Non Major <section62anonmajor@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: S62A/2024/0039 - Objection to change of use

From: C Shea, [REDACTED].

Application Reference S62A/2024/0039
396 Hotwell Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 4NU

I wish to object to the application to permit 396 Hotwell Road (a house in the stretch known as "St Vincent's Terrace") to be turned from a dwelling house into an HMO.

Inability to sell

I understand that investment properties can attract a premium price on the open market if permitted to be let as an HMO. Filling every available room with students is a very lucrative business. However, there is no entitlement to this premium price.

Other family homes in St Vincent's Terrace and St Vincent's Parade have sold. However, this house is on the market for £575K. Yet the next door property, essentially identical, sold for £440K in May 2022. Also, by way of comparison, two 4 bedroom houses in Hotwells (which is what this property essentially is) - slightly smaller but away from the main road and with fewer parking issues - are currently being offered for £475K.

Suitability of the property as a family house

The complaint about the busyness of the road, and concerns about 'loading', are shortly to be mitigated thanks to the recent Council decision (Bristol City Council Cabinet Meeting 5 March 2024) to reduce the speed limit along the Hotwell Road to 30mph and set aside loading areas outside this property. This also allows easier passenger pick-up on cars. See attached plans for details. The incoming Green Party administration in Bristol, if good to their word, may well reduce the road speed further, to 20mph.

Furthermore, public transport links are excellent with direct busses to the City centre (the "Centre" being just a mile away) and to Temple Meads station. Hotwells Primary School is moments away, and the Cathedral school, for secondary education, is 20 minutes' walk away.

As admitted, on-street parking is available, albeit not immediately outside the property.

Planning Policy

The applicant admits that this application goes against policy, due to the concentration of HMOs in St Vincent's Terrace and the sandwiching effect. There are simply no compelling reasons to depart from this policy in this instance. The policy serves a real purpose, to ensure a diversity of properties and tenures in an area. Hotwells, including St Vincent's Terrace and St Vincent's Parade, has attracted an increasing transitory population over the last few years, as properties has been turned into not only HMOs, but also one-year flat lets and AirBnBs as well as unregistered HMOs and flatshares. The concentration of this transitory population is to the detriment of the permanent population.

It is family housing, attracting permanent rather than transitory residents, that Hotwells needs more of, and removing one of the few family houses from the available stock would be very damaging to the social mix and character of the area, and in particular to the St Vincent's Terrace and St Vincent's Parade neighbourhood.

Because the general indifference of the transitory population to the long term interests of the local area, I suspect you will not be receiving many objections to this application. That, plus the planning notice on the gate of this property was easy to miss.

Refuse

There is a particular issue with refuse from the HMOs in St Vincent's Terrace. The gardens and front doors are accessible only up a set of steps. It is simply too heavy to lift a wheelie-bin or carry a traditional dustbin up the steps, and a consequence wheelie-bins are simply left on the street. Bicycles are likewise left attached to the railings rather than carried up the steps. As well as looking unpleasant, the pedestrian footpath is significantly narrowed, and very occasionally blocked if a stack of refuse falls over.

HMOs are a particular problem because residents have no long term stake for the overall appearance of their property, and will often not take responsibility for how other residents in a house put out their refuse. Black bags and other refuse are therefore often left out on the street all the time, attracting vermin such as foxes, rats and seagulls. The attached photo of a neighbouring property shows the issue.

A single family generates less waste, and has sole responsibility for how, when and where refuse is put out for collection.

If this property is to be turned into an HMO, a failproof refuse storage solution needs to be put in place that does not involve moving wheelie bins or dustbins. A ramp would also be likely necessary to access any bicycle storage.