

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 142668/LE/2025
Date registered valid: 10 April 2025
Proposal: Use of property as a house of multiple occupancy (Use Class C4)
Address: 29 Lombard Grove, Manchester, M14 6AN
Ward(s): Old Moat Ward

Applicant: Mr Stuart Wall SBW Properties
Agent (if any): Mr Mark Hobson MRH Planning Services
Case officer: Robert Tyrer
Tel: 0161 234 4068
Email: robert.tyrer@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Grant
Date of recommendation: 30 May 2025

Application details

Type of application: Certificate Lawful Development Existing

Development type: Certificates of lawfulness

Date of site visit: Not Required

Standard consultations:

No consultations have been printed and sent.

Neighbour notifications

No neighbour notifications have been printed and sent.

Site notice

No site notice has been produced

Press advert

No press advert had been published

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

Description of development

The applicant is seeking a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use (CLEU) for the use of property as Small House in Multiple Occupation (Use Class C4)

Consultations & Notification Responses

Publicity – Notification letters were sent to nearby residential properties (see appendix 1 for the list of properties).

Local residents/public opinion – No objections, comments or representations in support of the application have been received.

Legislative Issues

Sections 191 and 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provide for anyone (not just a person with a legal interest in the land) to apply to the local planning authority (LPA) for a lawful development certificate (LDC). A certificate is a statutory document certifying:

1. in the case of an application under section 191, the lawfulness, for planning purposes, of existing operations on, or use of land, or some activity being carried out in breach of a planning condition; or
2. in the case of an application under section 192, the lawfulness of proposed operations on, or use of land.

The onus of proof in regard to (1) is firmly on the applicant and the issue of a certificate will depend on the on factual evidence provided about the history and planning status of the building or other land and the interpretation of any relevant planning law or judicial authority. The relevant test of the evidence in this matter is “the balance of probability” and the applicants own evidence does not need to be corroborated by independent evidence. If the LPA have no evidence to contradict the applicant’s version of events or make them less then probable, there is no good reason to refuse the issue of a certificate.

In regard to (2), this provides that, if the LPA are supplied with information satisfying them that the use or operations described in the application would be lawful, if instituted or begun at the time of the application, they shall issue a certificate to that effect; and, in any other case, they shall refuse the application.

In short, the purpose section 192 is to enable any person who wishes to find out whether any proposed use or operations would be lawful to apply to the LPA for that purpose.

The application needs to describe the proposal with sufficient clarity and precision to enable the LPA to understand (from a written description and plans) exactly what is involved in the proposal; and to submit whatever supporting information or legal submission that are to be relied upon in order to satisfy the LPA that a certificate should be granted for the proposal.

In making their decision on an application under section 192, the LPA ask themselves the hypothetical question - "If this proposed change of use had already occurred, or if this proposed operation had commenced, on the application date, would it have been lawful for planning purposes?" In doing so, the LPA will not only consider whether the proposal would involve "development" requiring an application for planning permission, but whether it would involve a breach of any existing condition or limitation imposed on a grant of planning permission which has been acted upon, and which therefore constrains what can be done on the land. The LPA will not make a proposal fit a scenario; the only question is whether the proposal made by the applicant is lawful at the time of submission.

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The Application

This application is pursued under subsection (1) of section 191 which provides for an application to determine whether a specified existing use, operation, or failure to comply with a planning condition or limitation, which has already been carried out on land is lawful for planning purposes.

In a case of this type, the onus is on the applicant to substantiate his or her case, on the balance of probability. The applicant needs to demonstrate that the use of property as a small House in Multiple Occupation (Use Class C4) commenced more than ten years prior to the date of the application (i.e. by **10th April 2015**) and continued without a significant break for ten years.

Class C4 is defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, as amended, as “Use of a dwellinghouse by not more than six residents as a “house in multiple occupation”.” This latter term is as defined in S.254 of the Housing Act 2004.

The application form states that from the **1st July 1994** the property became an HMO use.

The Planning Practice Guidance points to the need for evidence to be sufficiently precise and unambiguous to justify the grant of a certificate on the balance of probability.

The relevant test, established by the court in *Thrasivoulou v SSE* [1984], is the balance of probabilities – whether something is more likely than not.

Assessment of Evidence

Planning history

Planning history for the site shows that there has been one previous planning applications at this address.

Application Reference: 111008/FO/2016/S1

Proposal: Part retrospective application for erection of single-storey side extension to existing Class C4 HMO

Decision: Refused 30.03.2016

Applicants Evidence

The evidence provided by the applicant to demonstrate at least four years includes the following: Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement (ASTA) provided with the application reveal the following:

1. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 29.01.2015 to 30.06.2015
Number of Tenants: 6
2. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 01.07.2015 to 30.06.2016
Number of Tenants: 6
3. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 01.07.2016 to 30.06.2017
Number of Tenants: 6
4. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 01.07.2017 to 30.06.2018
Number of Tenants: 6
5. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 01.12.2018 to 30.06.2019
Number of Tenants: 6
6. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 01.07.2019 to 30.06.2020
Number of Tenants: 6
7. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 01.07.2020 to 30.06.2021
Number of Tenants: 6
8. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 01.07.2021 to 30.06.2022
Number of Tenants: 6
9. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 01.07.2022 to 30.06.2023
Number of Tenants: 6
10. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 01.09.2023 to 30.06.2024
Number of Tenants: 6
11. **Term Dates of Occupancy:** 01.07.2024 to 30.06.2025
Number of Tenants: 6

The ASTAs shows a pattern of continuous tenancy across 10 years with six tenants each year, which would support the applicant's claim of at least 10 years of occupation.

In addition to the ASTAs the applicant has provided a variety of documentation this includes the following:

- **Personal Written Statements** – One from the building owner and landlord and the second from the Manager at Philip James Letting (managing agents).
- **Land Registry Title Document and Plan** – Confirms current owner
- **Companies House Records for Opal Houses Limited** – Previous owners of the HMO.
- **Floor Plan** - A floor plan has been provided, illustrating the layout of the property. The ground floor comprises an entrance hall, Bedroom 1, a living room, shower room, w.c and a kitchen. The first floor includes a bathroom, a shower room, four bedrooms and second floor shows a further bedroom (6 in total).

In this regard, the Planning Practice Guidance advises that:

“In the case of applications for existing use, if a local planning authority has no evidence itself, nor any from others, to contradict or otherwise make the applicant’s version of events less than probable, there is no good reason to refuse the application, provided the applicant’s evidence alone is sufficiently precise and unambiguous to justify the grant of a certificate on the balance of probability.” Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 17c-006-20140306

The applicant does not have to demonstrate beyond all reasonable doubt, as that is the standard of proof required for criminal cases and would be the wrong test to apply.

Therefore, on the balance of probability and without any evidence to the contrary, the property has been in use as a house in multiple occupation, and the certificate should be granted.

Other Legislative Requirements Equality Act 2010

Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and; Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations

This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person’s home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Recommendation: Grant

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval OR Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1) From the evidence available, and with reference to the relevant planning legislation, Manchester City Council is satisfied that the use is lawful by reason of the said use having been in existence for a period of 10 years up to the date of this application.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4

Regulation 7 Direction (Control Advert) - Control Of To Let Boards (Wilmslow Road/Wellington Road)

Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -

Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -

Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -

Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -

Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Middle) -

Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Middle) -

Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Middle) -

Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Middle) -

Area Team Boundary - Name: SOUTH AREA