McLOUGHLIN PLANNING

De La Bere House
Bayshill Road
Cheltenham
GL50 3AW

[redacted]

MP Ref: NM/1129

[redacted]

24/10/2025

Manchester City Council
Planning Department
VIA EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sir/Madam,

54 FINCHLEY ROAD, MANCHESTER, M14 6FH | CERTIFICATE OF LAWFUL DEVELOPMENT
USE OF PROPERTY AS A HOUSE IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION WITH COMMUNAL FACILITIES AS A SUI GENERIS HMO (7 BEDROOMS)

McLoughlin Planning has been appointed by Tokoro Capital ('The Applicant') to prepare and submit an application for a Certificate of Lawfulness for an Existing Use or Development ("CLEUD") at 54 Finchley Road ("The Site"). The Site comprises one 7-bedroom property, which is currently in use as a Sui Generis HMO.

The CLEUD has been submitted to regularise the use of the property as a Sui Generis HMO. This is on the grounds that the use of the property as a Sui Generis HMO is lawful and benefits from being immune from enforcement action pursuant to Section 171B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, often referred to as the "10-year rule".

The supporting evidence set out in this letter and accompanying documents provides compelling evidence that, on the balance of probability, the property has been continuously used, for the last ten years, as a Sui Generis HMO.

Site Descriptions and Designations

The Site is currently a 7-bedroom semi-detached property in Fallowfield, Manchester. The Site's current use is a student let; this has been continuous for over 10 years.

The Site is not subject to any ecological or heritage designations. After a thorough search of the Council's online Local Plan Map, the Site is not subject to any planning policy designations.

After conducting a thorough search on the Local Planning Authority's planning system, there is no planning history attached to the Site.

Legislative Context and Relevant Guidance

The application is made under Section 171B(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 "TCPA" (as amended). The application seeks to the lawful use of the building as a Sui Generis HMO property, to provide 7 rooms for students. It is acknowledged that Manchester City Council imposed an Article 4 direction in October 2011.

Section 171B(1) states:

> *"Where there has been a breach of planning control consisting in the carrying out without planning permission of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, no enforcement action may be taken after the end of the period of 10 years beginning with the date on which the operations were substantially completed."*

In considering the evidence, the Courts have decided that the relevant test to be applied is whether "on the balance of probability" the use of the property has been consistent with an Sui Generis HMO. A good example of Case Law is:

F W Gabbitas V SSE and Newnham LBC (1985):

> *"the applicant's own evidence does not need to be corroborated by 'independent' evidence in order to be accepted. If the LPA has no evidence of its own, or 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."*

The fact applications under Section 171B(1) are determined on the balance of probability, which is a less stringent test than the criminal burden of proof, "beyond reasonable doubt", means that a degree of pragmatism from the decision-maker is required.

In terms of other sources of guidance, the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) reiterates the above-mentioned legislative provisions, stating:

> *"where local planning authorities are satisfied that the appropriate legal tests have been met, it will grant a Lawful Development Certificate."*

Paragraph 005 of the PPG makes it clear that applications:

> *"must be accompanied by sufficient factual information/evidence for a local planning authority to decide the application" and "without sufficient or precise information, a local planning authority may be justified in refusing a certificate."*

The burden of proof to demonstrate the lawfulness of the use therefore, rests firmly on the Applicant. However, paragraph 006 also makes it clear that:

> *"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."*

Evidence to Support the Application

Section 39 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order (England) 2015 sets out that Certificates of Lawfulness are required to be accompanied by such evidence necessary to verify the information included in the application.

To support the application, continuous annual tenancy agreements dating back to 2015/2016 have been provided. Whilst it is acknowledged that the building has been in consistent use, there have been short void periods (one to two months) where there have been no tenants renting out the property. This is typical of rental properties, as repairs or

refurbishment may be required, especially student lets where the residents have yet to move in or have moved away from the area over a summer break.

Rental / Tenancy Agreements

Supporting this application for a Certificate of Lawfulness are tenancy agreements, dating back to These clearly show that 7 or more unrelated tenants have been sharing this property, as per the definition of Sui Generis HMO. The property is currently, and has historically, been used a student let.

Evidence has been provided, through these agreements, to demonstrate that the property has been in continuous use as a Sui Generis HMO for over 10 years, which is well in excess of the time frame for a material change of use, as stated by Section 171B(3) of the TCPA.

Conclusion

This letter has set out the reasons for granting a CLEUD for the continued use of the property as a Sui Generis HMO at 54 Finchley Road, Manchester.

The Applicant is not aware of any evidence that contradicts its version of events and the timeline of the site's use, as set out in this letter. The balance of probability test requires a degree of pragmatism and reasonableness from the decision maker when weighing all the evidence in the overall balance. Therefore, in line with the above, there is no good reason to refuse the application, provided the Applicant's evidence alone is sufficiently precise and unambiguous to justify the granting of a certificate on the balance of probability.

Therefore, the CLEUD should be granted without delay.

Yours faithfully,

Nathan McLoughlin BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI
Managing Director

Index of Documents

Document Reference	Document	Date
Administration Documents		
A.1	Title Plan: LA371072	n/a
Rental Agreements		
B.1	54 Finchley Road AST 2015-2016	November 2014
B.2	54 Finchley Road AST 2016-2017	February 2016
B.3	54 Finchley Road AST 2017-2018	April 2017
B.4	54 Finchley Road AST 2018-2019	February 2018
B.5	54 Finchley Road AST 2019-2020	May 2019
B.6	54 Finchley Road AST 2020-2021	February 2020
B.7	54 Finchley Road AST 2021-2022	December 2020
B.8	54 Finchley Road AST 2022-2023	June 2022
B.9	54 Finchley Road AST 2023-2024	November 2022
B.10	54 Finchley Road AST 2024-2025	February 2024
B.11	54 Finchley Road AST 2025-2026	February 2025