

HMO007 response Merton Council Article 4 HMO consultation – 20 January 2023

From:

Sent: 20 January 2023 08:43

To: Future Merton

Subject: Article 4 Direction Representation

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to make this representation regarding the article 4 direction which the council has bought in, I'm extremely disappointed with the immediate action the council has taken without any prior notification.

We purchased our property back in late 2021 with full intention of converting the existing 3 bedroom terraced house into a high standard 6 bedroom all en-suites to a high level finish, after purchasing the property it took us four months to organise funding from various lenders. After having organised the funds we applied for a loft conversion and a rear extension in order to accommodate for the necessary room sizes required by the council.

We started work on our property back in August 2022 at this stage we had NO indication from the council of any sorts of change in regulations, our build meant we had to take the house completely back to brick and start over. We came across a newsletter in December 2022 that article 4 direction has been brought into immediate effect.

Trying to speak to someone at the planning department has been nothing but an absolute nightmare due to lack of staff. We've tried speaking to the planning department numerous times about why there was no prior notification given to people regarding this immediate change but they won't give us any answers.

With regards to moving forward there are still no guide lines for us to know what the council requires for planning permission. We are stuck in the middle of a very expensive project with monthly ongoing mortgage expenses building up.

We would like to know what the councils stand point is with regards to compensation to the people who have been put into this position, at this stage i can say we have purchased the property for £535k and spent just over £246k on the build and knowing the current market the value of the property isn't as much as we purchased it for. So we have to take a loss of the depreciation of the property, the loss of the build cost and ALSO the cost converting it back to a regular family home.

We as developers are in strong favour of having such a scheme as article 4 in place this prevents rogue landlords from doing what they do. After having heard why the council is implementing this it is clear that the issues are more to do with the environment health department. We completed a 6 Bedroom HMO project in this article 4 zone over a year ago and the council advised that we should have double the number of bins we had at the time, we applied to the environment department for more bins as they promised they would, but till today we haven't received any and instead we went and purchased our own bins to keep the environment clean. (Evidence can be provided for this if required)

We would strongly advise any of the council's committee members to come and view one of our completed HMO projects just to understand what levels we go to to ensure high standards are met. We were astonished to hear in the zoom meeting on 18/01/2023 regarding article 4 that the average spend on a hmo conversion was between £20k-£30k, that gives us an understanding that the issues also lie within the licensing department. They should perhaps be visiting more frequently or perhaps increase the levels of standard they have currently.

We would humbly request the council to re-think about the people who have made huge investments with no prior knowledge of these changes, an extension of a year would be reasonable as we believe.

Regards,