



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 March 2025

by H Jones BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R3515/W/24/3353241

313 Colchester Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 4SF

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Alex Robertson against the decision of Ipswich Borough Council.
- The application Ref is IP/24/00507/FUL.
- The development proposed is change of use from C4 HMO (6 beds) to Sui Generis large HMO (9 beds).

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the parking provision proposed would be acceptable having regard to highway safety, the availability of sustainable transport modes and the accessibility of services.

Reasons

3. No 313 Colchester Road (No 313) is a semi-detached residential property situated within a suburban part of Ipswich. It is served by an access and a driveway. Colchester Road is heavily trafficked and on both sides of it are cycle lanes which restrict on-street parking from taking place, including adjacent to the appeal site. In areas, some of the neighbouring streets are served by yellow lines, but other parts of them are not the subject of parking restrictions. The presence of some bollards within verges to prevent parking upon them indicates to me that those unrestricted parts of neighbouring streets are likely to be the subject of high parking demand.
4. The Suffolk Guidance for Parking document (the Parking Guidance) provides technical guidance in respect of parking design and development proposals. Unlike is the case with either a Class C3 dwellinghouse, or a Class C4 HMO of between 3 – 6 occupants, the Parking Guidance does not explicitly set out the number of vehicle parking spaces which a larger HMO, such as that proposed, should be served by. In circumstances where an explicit quantum of spaces is not advocated by it, the Parking Guidance sets out that the proposed development should be considered on its own merits.
5. The Parking Guidance states that a minimum of 1 space per 2 bedrooms should be provided for a Class C4 HMO. It is a useful benchmarking exercise to apply this ratio to the proposal. Rounded up, this produces a parking space requirement of 5 for the proposed 9 bedroomed HMO. In comparison, the plans show the provision of only 4 spaces. Of these spaces, 3 would be laid out perpendicular to the front of

the house. The fourth space would be set behind them, and a car parked within it would block-in the cars in the 3 other spaces.

6. The driveways of the host property No 313 and the adjoining property No 311 are separated by a wall, and a further stretch of wall separates part of No 313's driveway from the footpath beside it. Neighbouring No 315's driveway abuts that of the host property and, during my visit, I noted that there were 2 cars parked on No 315's driveway in a tandem arrangement. The rear of those 2 cars overhung the footpath. A third car was parked on the grass verge outside of No 315.
7. Due to the presence of the boundary walls and the proximity of No 315's driveway, I find that manoeuvring a car into and out of the proposed fourth parking space would be very challenging. This is especially so given Colchester Road is heavily trafficked, likely not only by vehicles but also cyclists and pedestrians. Given this layout, and the difficult parking manoeuvres which it would induce, I consider it very likely that future occupants of the proposed development would be dissuaded from using the fourth parking space. Consequently, the proposal would only deliver 3 parking spaces which would be well-designed and which would be attractive propositions to use.
8. The Parking Guidance's requisite parking space dimensions for a standard parking bay are 5 metres x 2.5 metres. The appellant submits to me that if a past standard dimension of 4.8 metres x 2.4 metres was applied, the driveway would have more parking capacity. However, since occupants might not be able to get in or out of an average-sized family car, the Parking Guidance makes it clear that spaces smaller than its requisite dimensions shall not be considered usable spaces, and I have no reason to disagree. I also have no substantive evidence that prospective occupiers would be likely to own smaller cars, and I am unaware of any means by which this prospect could be effectively controlled.
9. Situated within a suburban part of Ipswich, sustainable transport options would be available to future occupiers. Regular bus services are available from the likes of Colchester Road itself and Woodbridge Road. Given the cycle lanes adjacent to the site, cyclists are also well catered for. A range of services, facilities and employment opportunities are also located nearby, including Ipswich's hospital. I also acknowledge that the proposed development would include comprehensive cycle parking and an EV car charging point and, thereby, it would include measures to promote sustainable transport options.
10. That said, the appeal site is not located within the centre of Ipswich, and it is located outside of the designated IP-One Area - a part of Ipswich served by particularly frequent and extensive public transport networks and an ease of access to services and facilities. Therefore, and in the round, I find the site's availability of sustainable transport modes and its access to services and facilities to be good, but not excellent.
11. In this context, and given that a large 9 bedroomed HMO would result from the development, I find it is likely that car ownership of the prospective occupants would surpass the 3 which the development's parking layout caters for effectively. As a result of this shortfall in well-designed in-plot parking provision, the surplus parking demand would be likely to result in occupiers parking elsewhere in the vicinity of the site. Potentially this would entail additional inappropriate parking on grass verges along Colchester Road, one of the effects of which would be to

restrict the visibility of drivers egressing drives. Alternatively, occupants may seek to park on some of the neighbouring streets which are only partly served by parking restrictions. This would add to parking pressures in these areas and create the conditions for forms of indiscriminate parking to take place. Such consequential effects of the proposal's parking demand not being catered for would be prejudicial to highway safety.

12. In coming to this view, I acknowledge that there are other residential properties in the area with front plots largely laid out as driveways. However, I have no substantive evidence before me of the occupancy levels of these houses nor of the occupiers' car ownership levels. Furthermore, my concerns in respect of manoeuvres at the appeal site are based upon the specifics of the site and its particular relationship with neighbouring properties. Therefore, I cannot conclude that the circumstances at other properties in the area are very comparable to the appeal proposals and, consequently, the arrangements at existing properties in the area is a matter of limited weight in my decision.
13. In addition, although it is suggested to me that a condition could be imposed to prevent prospective occupiers of the development obtaining parking permits, I have no substantive evidence before me of which controlled parking areas this would prevent parking within, if any. I have already set out that there are areas near to the site where parking controls are not in force. Therefore, seeking to restrict the allocation of parking permits would not provide an effective solution, and the suggestion is not a matter that weighs in the proposal's favour to any meaningful extent.
14. For the reasons I have given, having regard to the availability of sustainable transport modes and the site's accessibility to services, I find that the parking provision proposed to serve the development would be insufficient and unacceptable and that the consequential effects of this would be prejudicial to highway safety. Therefore, the proposal conflicts with Policies DM19, DM20 and DM22 of the Ipswich Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document Review (the LP). In summary, and amongst other matters, these Policies require that sufficient car parking is provided to serve development in accordance with relevant standards and that parking is integrated into the design of development so that such development would be safe.

Other Matters

15. Upon completion of the proposed development, the host property would contain generously-sized rooms. I have no reason to conclude that it would not be a well-appointed property and, consequently, it may be attractive to professionals. That said, good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, and it is fundamental to the planning process. As such, that the proposal would be well-designed in certain regards is a requirement and an expectation. Furthermore, I am unaware of any means by which the prospective occupiers of the property could be effectively controlled. Therefore, these matters are not a benefit of any significant weight in this case.
16. It may be, in respect of a range of other planning considerations, that the development would not result in harmful effects. This may include its effects upon flood risk, air quality, living conditions and the character and appearance of the

area. Even so, an absence of harm in respect of such matters is only a neutral factor in my decision rather than one which weighs in favour of the proposal.

17. If I were minded to allow the appeal, I would need to be satisfied that the proposal would have no adverse effects upon any of the European Sites concentrated along the Suffolk coastline. However, since I am dismissing the appeal, there is no requirement for me to undertake this assessment. Even if I were satisfied that such adverse effects would not take place, this would be a neutral factor in this appeal.
18. Finally, the Council accepts that they cannot demonstrate a deliverable 5-year supply of housing land as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). I discuss the implications of this further below.

Planning Balance

19. In my main issue, I have identified conflict with Policies DM19, DM20 and DM22 of the LP. I attribute significant weight to this policy conflict, not least because I have identified that the proposal would give rise to effects which would be prejudicial to highway safety which is a serious concern. Therefore, I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole.
20. As the Council cannot demonstrate a deliverable 5-year supply of housing land, paragraph 11 d) of the Framework applies. The application of paragraph 11 d) requires me to consider whether the adverse impacts of permitting the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework's policies as a whole.
21. The evidence I have before me indicates that the Council can demonstrate only 3.04 years' worth of housing supply. Therefore, the shortfall is significant. However, the host property is already a house and, as such, the proposal would not add in numerical terms to the quantum of the housing stock. Even so, the proposal would create a 9-bedroomed HMO. Therefore, it would provide more bedrooms for home-seekers in a particular housing market and 3 more bedrooms than the property's use as a 6-person HMO which the evidence before me indicates would be lawful. Consequently, because the proposal would make a contribution to increasing HMO accommodation, and the choice of it, a benefit would be derived which aligns with those policies within the Framework which seek to boost the supply of homes, including the variety of them, and which advocate the use of brownfield land within settlements. However, this contribution would only be modest and, furthermore, as a Class C3 dwellinghouse would no longer be available, the magnitude of the benefit that would arise would be tempered. Overall, I attribute a limited amount of weight to the benefit of the housing proposed.
22. In finding that the parking provision proposed to serve the development would be insufficient and unacceptable, with resultant prejudicial effects upon highway safety, the proposal would conflict with those policies of the Framework which seek to deliver well-designed places and parking areas, and which seek to avoid unacceptable impacts on highway safety. My objections to the proposed development on these grounds are substantial and, as a result, the adverse impacts of granting planning permission in this case would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The proposal does not therefore benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Conclusion

23. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole, and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Jones

INSPECTOR