



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 June 2025

by Nicola Davies BA DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/W/25/3358604

15C Palace Grove, Bromley, LONDON BR1 3HA

- 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 Mrs Revivit Walker against the decision of The London Borough of Bromley.
 - The application Ref is DC/24/02475/FULL2.
 - The development proposed is change of use to a small HMO with 4 sharers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The planning application form indicates that the development has already taken place and I was able to see the use taking place at the time of my visit.
3. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been published since the planning application was determined by the Council. I have had regard to the revised Framework in reaching my decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues raised by this appeal are whether the proposal would provide an acceptable standard of accommodation for its occupiers and the effect of the proposed development on the character of the area.

Reasons

Accommodation standard

5. The London Borough of Bromley has adopted Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). This guidance assists in determining whether a property is suitable for the number of occupiers it would host to prevent overcrowding and to satisfy the requirements set out within "The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006".
6. The Local Planning Authority indicates that this guidance should be considered in conjunction with Policy 9 of the Bromley Local Plan ("Residential Conversions") which states that a proposal for the conversion of a single dwelling into two or more self-contained residential units or non-self-contained accommodation will be permitted provided that, amongst other matters, the resulting accommodation will provide a high quality living environment for the intended occupiers.

7. The Council has calculated the first floor accommodation to have an approximate useable floor area of 9.7sqm and the second floor accommodation to have an approximate floor area of 10.5sqm. The minimum useable floor space of this type of 2-person HMO is 11sqm, as set out within the Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation. Whilst this HMO licensing standard is a separate entity to planning, the licencing regime seeks to ensure that a HMO is safe and has basic facilities. The accommodation would not meet the basic required space standard for HMOs as set out by the HMO Standards.
8. Accommodation that would not meet the required floor space standard for HMOs would be cramped. As such, the proposal would not provide a high quality living environment for the intended occupiers. Further to this, the accommodation does not provide a communal lounge area. I do not consider that the communal kitchen area would provide appropriate space for relaxation. One of the second floor bedroom spaces would be lit solely by a roof light with no main outlook. This would not provide for a reasonable view of the immediate surroundings for the occupier of this room. The occupier should be able to observe some of the surrounding environment as part of their outlook for their personal wellbeing. Consequently, the proposal would not provide a high quality living environment for the occupiers when taking into consideration development plan policy requirement to secure high quality living environment for the intended occupiers.
9. The appellant contends that the standards and room sizes set out in Policy 6, Table 3.1 of the London Plan relate specifically to self-contained flats/houses, rather than HMO accommodation. However, Policy 9 relates to residential conversions of non-self-contained accommodation, to which I have had regard.
10. There is some contention as to the Council's Environmental Health Officer's use of the term 'bedsits' within the consultation respond at planning application stage. Nonetheless, within the response it is stated that *"the proposal is to create an HMO with 4 bedsits, 1 shared kitchen, 1 private ensuite bath/shower rooms and 2 shared bath/shower rooms (bath/shower, wash hand basin and toilet)"*. The Standards discuss the different types of HMO accommodation setting out that bedsit accommodation to be *"where the tenants rent a room or rooms for their exclusive use whilst sharing one or more amenities with the other tenants"*. That is what is proposed here. The accommodation is split over two levels. It is clear to me that the Local Planning Authority has considered the standard of accommodation pertaining to each level within the context of development plan policies.
11. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not provide an acceptable standard of accommodation for its occupiers. The proposal would, therefore conflict with Policies D3 and D6 of the London Plan and Policies 9 and 37 of the Bromley Local Plan. These policies seek, amongst other matters, all new residential development to ensure a good standard of amenity for future occupiers.

Character of the area

12. The HMO has replaced a three-bedroom apartment. The HMO provides occupancy for four persons. Although the plans provided illustrate double beds within the accommodation and this could allow for the doubling of the occupancy, the proposal has been put forward as a HMO for four sharers. That is what is before me.

13. The accommodation, when it was an apartment was large enough to be occupied by a family of potentially more residents than the four individual sharers. However, a single family occupying the three-bedroom apartment would be more likely to carry out day to day activities together as a household. The level of activity related to four occupants having independent lifestyles would be different from that of a single family. Activity generated by four unrelated individuals with separate routines and movements would lead to a markedly more intensive use of the accommodation. Each occupant would host their own visitors. Both the occupiers and visitors would increase vehicle movements. This would represent an intensification in the residential use of this former single dwelling.
14. The properties in the area are predominantly either single dwellinghouses or flatted development, whether purpose built or conversions of dwellings. The accommodation would generate an intensification of comings and goings by the occupants and visitors giving rise to increased levels of noise and general disturbance within the locality. Furthermore, there would be increased refuse requirements, deliveries, vehicle and cycle parking requirements. The intensity of the use of the site would be uncharacteristic and excessive in the context of the property itself and would be out of character with the site's residential surroundings. Four unrelated individuals living independently of one another with their activities and living requirements would be perceivable as a non-family dwelling. As such this change in housing type would harmfully erode both the character and appearance of the area even if no alterations to the appearance of the building are proposed.
15. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the character of the area. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with Policies 9 and 37 of the Bromley Local Plan. These policies seek, amongst other matters, to protect existing residential occupiers from inappropriate development.

Other Matters

16. The proposal would deliver HMO accommodation that would contribute to the supply of this type of housing within the Borough and at a sustainable edge of town location. Whilst adding to the housing tenure type within the Borough could be considered to be a benefit of the proposal, it does not outweigh my above concerns relating to living standards and the harm to the character of the area or justify the proposed development.

Conclusion

17. Having regard to the above findings, the appeal should be dismissed.

Nicola Davies

INSPECTOR