



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 October 2025

by **L Reid BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/W/25/3370712

12 Braywood Road, Bexley, London SE9 2RH

- 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 K Achrafie against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
 - The application Ref is 25/00305/FUL.
 - The development proposed is change of use from dwelling house (Class C3) to House in Multiple Occupancy (Class C4) and part 1/part 2 storey side and rear extension to include cycle store & bin stores.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - The character of the area, and;
 - The living conditions of the occupants of the neighbouring properties, with regard to noise and disturbance.

Reasons

Character

3. The appeal concerns a two-storey semi-detached property, where it is proposed to extend and convert it into a six-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) with shared communal areas. Bin and bicycle storage is proposed within the front garden.
4. Whilst there is a block of flats nearby, the surrounding area predominantly consists of two-storey houses and bungalows set back from the road. Front gardens are typically used for parking and household bin storage; however, these frontages are not generally dominated by large numbers of bins or storage units for bins or bicycles. Notwithstanding that it has inevitably changed over time, the road largely reflects its small-scale domestic roots. The prevailing character of the surrounding area appears to be single-family housing. This is supported by the appellant's assertion that only a limited number of recent applications have been made for HMOs or flat conversions. There is no evidence that any of these were approved.
5. Although the HMO would be a residential use, by its very nature, the occupation of the property by six unrelated individuals introduces a materially different pattern of

use. Taking into account the number of occupants and the potential for each to have individual schedules, make separate trips and receive deliveries and visitors at different times, there would likely be a significant intensification of the use of the property and increased general activity at the site. The resulting level of activity would be of noticeably greater intensity than that associated with the surrounding houses and would be harmful to the residential character of the area.

6. The proposed drawings show two freestanding structures within the frontage, accommodating four 230-litre bins and six bicycles, with additional space needed for two 23-litre caddies. These elements would be prominently positioned, and it has not been shown that the proposed planting would offer any screening. As a result, the frontage would appear visually cluttered, drawing attention to the intensified use and making the property stand out from neighbouring single-family homes, thereby undermining the area's prevailing character.
7. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would cause harm to the character of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policies DP1, DP5, and DP11 of the Bexley Local Plan 2023 (the Local Plan) and Policy D3 of the London Plan 2021 (the London Plan). Whilst these policies do not differentiate between types of residential uses in suburban areas, collectively they require development to be appropriate for the area and to respond to the existing character of a place. This remains the case even if other development plan policies recognise that local character evolves and will need to change to accommodate housing need.
8. Whilst the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) does not refer to suburban settings as a presumption against HMO use, it does expect development to respond to local character. Given the harm I have identified above, the proposed development would conflict with the Framework.

Noise and disturbance

9. Daily activities associated with HMO use are generally compatible in residential areas, and such uses do not inherently generate more noise than single-family homes. However, as each occupant could have a separate routine, the intensity of internal and external activity, such as entering and exiting the property, use of shared facilities, and visits from friends and relatives, could occur throughout the day and late into the evening. This extended and varied pattern of activity would increase the potential for disruptive noise events such as slamming doors, voices and activity in communal areas, noise from music, televisions, telephones, and noise from delivery vehicles.
10. There is nothing before me to suggest that the HMO would be poorly managed or that the occupants would behave unreasonably. Nevertheless, the intensified use would result in a more frequent and varied pattern of activity. Even though the comings and goings would be from the frontage, given the close-knit arrangement of houses along the street, this heightened activity is likely to cause greater noise and disturbance to neighbouring occupiers.
11. Whilst Building Regulations may address internal noise, it would not eliminate external noise from comings and goings and other noise and activities when windows are open or when the rear garden is being used. Although it is suggested that HMO licensing could manage these impacts, licences are issued under a separate legislative framework and do not address the same considerations as planning. Furthermore, in planning terms, revoking an HMO licence would not

prevent the property from continuing to operate as an HMO if planning permission has been granted.

12. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would cause harm to the living conditions of the occupants of the neighbouring properties, with regard to noise and disturbance. It would therefore conflict with Policy DP11 of the Local Plan, Policy D14 of the London Plan and the provisions of the Framework. Collectively, these policies amongst other things, require development to not unacceptably affect existing neighbouring residents by means of noise or other disturbances.

Other Matters

13. There is an extant planning permission to extend the property (the extant permission)¹ creating four bedrooms, which could be occupied by a family of eight. There is no evidence before me to suggest that the extant permission would not be implemented if this appeal is unsuccessful. Therefore, the likelihood of this development occurring is greater than theoretically possible.
14. Under the extant permission, the property would remain a single dwelling, occupied by one household likely with shared routines and minimal duplication of activity. This would result in more predictable and contained noise, despite the number of bedrooms. In contrast, the appeal proposal involves multiple unrelated occupants likely to have independent lifestyles, leading to greater activity, noise and disruption. Furthermore, there is nothing before me to suggest that the extant permission includes bin and bicycle storage within the frontage. As such, the appeal proposal would result in greater harm to the character of the area and the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, even with fewer people than the extant permission. This therefore limits the weight I give to the extant permission as a fall-back position, and it would not outweigh the level of harm identified.
15. The proposed development would contribute to the supply and mix of housing in the area and provide an alternative type of residential accommodation. However, when set against the harm identified, given the scale of development, these benefits would be limited.
16. The proposed development would not result in an over-concentration of HMOs in the area. However, this is a neutral matter that neither weighs in favour nor against the appeal.

Conclusion

17. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

L Reid

INSPECTOR

¹ Council Ref: 22/02723/FUL