



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 November 2025

by K Reeves BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J1725/W/25/3367351

32-38 Stoke Road, Gosport, Hampshire PO12 1JG

- 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 Binda Tatla of BT One Ltd against the decision of Gosport Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00107/FULL.
 - The development proposed is conversion of vacant ground and first floor offices into an 18 bedroom HMO.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties and the future occupiers of the development, with particular regard to car parking provision.

Reasons

3. The appeal proposal seeks the conversion of a vacant office building into an 18-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), with no formal car parking provision on site. Nearby side streets have significantly limited opportunity for on-street parking because of double yellow lines and Stoke Road offers only short-stay parking bays with time restrictions. There is very limited provision for unrestricted or overnight parking in the immediate vicinity.
4. Policy LP23 of the Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2029 (LP) requires, in part, that development proposals avoid unacceptable harm to amenity, including through inadequate parking provision. The Parking Supplementary Planning Document 2014 (SPD), while flexible in its application, emphasises the need to manage cumulative impacts and provide for visitor needs where appropriate.
5. Although the SPD does not set specific standards for HMOs, its broader objectives remain applicable. It emphasises the need to manage cumulative impacts and ensure that development does not undermine the functioning of surrounding streets or the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.
6. The site occupies a location with access to a range of services and facilities within walking and cycling distance and is served by public transport. These locational advantages support sustainable travel and reduce reliance on private vehicles. Moreover, the proposed cycle storage for 20 bicycles supports sustainable travel and the rear courtyard offers a limited degree of informal parking and drop-off

capacity. These elements contribute positively to the scheme's functionality and reflect efforts to mitigate the absence of dedicated parking.

7. However, the accessibility of services, facilities and public transport links does not remove the likelihood of car ownership or visitor arrivals by car, particularly for a scheme of this scale. Although the provision of cycle storage, the absence of formal on-site parking and the limited availability of nearby spaces may discourage car ownership among residents, it cannot be assumed that these factors would result in all occupiers forgoing a vehicle or that visitors would not arrive by car. Additionally, whilst I note the appellant's assertion that HMO residents are generally less likely to own a car, no substantive evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the future occupiers of this specific HMO would be without access to a vehicle, or that they would not receive visitors who travel by car.
8. This context is significant because it indicates that future occupiers and visitors arriving by car would have very limited realistic or lawful opportunities to park in the vicinity. The small amount of fallback or overspill capacity within nearby streets heightens the potential for congestion, unlawful parking and associated amenity conflicts. Although the rear courtyard may be capable of accommodating a small number of vehicles on an informal basis, it is neither formally designated nor adequate to meet the likely cumulative parking demand generated by an 18-bedroom HMO.
9. Without formal parking and with restricted on-street options, the scale of the proposal means that pressure on parking in the surrounding side streets would increase, leading to disruption for nearby residents and businesses. For future occupiers, the limited opportunity for lawful on-street parking and restricted informal provision would cause inconvenience, especially for those with vehicles, mobility needs, or visitors.
10. I acknowledge that the site's existing Class E office use would have generated some level of parking demand during business hours. However, an office use typically generates demand during working hours, and a residential use introduces a broader and more sustained pattern of parking demand, including evenings, weekends and overnight stays. The existing use of the building does not therefore justify the harm that the proposed development would cause.
11. I acknowledge that the Highway Authority did not object to the proposal. However, this is not determinative. The absence of objection reflects the fact that no new access or highway works are proposed and does not imply support for the scheme's parking arrangements or its impact on residential amenity.
12. The appellant's reference to previous approvals of car-free HMOs is noted. However, I have not been provided with substantive information about the scale and locational context of those proposals, and how the decision was made to permit such development. Furthermore, each proposal must be assessed on its own merits and in its specific context. As such, those other approved schemes do not alter my judgement on the appeal proposal before me.
13. For these reasons, I find that because of the scale of the proposal, the absence of sufficient parking provision on site would cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties and fail to provide suitable living conditions for future occupiers. Consequently, the proposal conflicts with Policy LP23 of the LP and with the guidance contained within the SPD, which seek

to manage cumulative impacts and safeguard amenity in constrained urban settings.

Other Matter

14. The appellant has raised concerns regarding the conduct of the Council during the determination of the application. Whilst I acknowledge these concerns, matters relating to procedural fairness or administrative handling fall outside the scope of this appeal. My decision is based solely on the planning merits of the proposal and the evidence before me.

Planning Balance

15. The proposal would contribute to housing choice and represents a new long-term use for a vacant building. The site is accessible by public transport and is within reach of local services and facilities by walking and cycling. These are benefits that align with the National Planning Policy Framework's (the Framework) objectives of boosting the supply of housing and promoting sustainable patterns of development. However, given the modest scale of the development and the absence of substantive evidence that it would address a specific identified housing need, I afford these benefits only limited weight.
16. Conversely, the absence of sufficient parking provision on site for a proposal of this scale would result in unacceptable harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties and fail to provide suitable living conditions for future occupiers. This conflicts with the development plan's aim to avoid unacceptable harm to amenity, including through inadequate parking provision, and with the Framework's objective of a high standard of amenity for existing and future residents. As such, significant weight is attributed to the harm, and the adverse impacts of the development outweigh the identified benefits of the scheme.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, the proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

K Reeves

INSPECTOR