



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2026

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/W/25/3374887

86 Doggett Road, Lewisham, London SE6 4QA

- 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 A Schlesinger, Gable Blue Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref is DC/25/140779.
 - The development proposed is change of use of the existing dwellinghouse (Use Class C3b) into a 5-bed HMO (House of Multiple Occupation) (Use Class C4), together with the provision of cycle and bin storage in the front and rear garden.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the change of use of the existing dwellinghouse (Use Class C3b) into a 5-bed HMO (House of Multiple Occupation) (Use Class C4), together with the provision of cycle and bin storage in the front and rear garden at 86 Doggett Road, Lewisham, London SE6 4QA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref DC/25/140779, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos Y2526-2025-A01 – Site Plan and Location Plan, Y2526-2025-A20 – Proposed Drawings, Y2526-2025-A21 – Proposed Drawings.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until details of the refuse and recycling facilities have been submitted to, and approved in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. The approved facilities shall be installed prior to the first occupation of the development and permanently retained and maintained.
 - 4) Notwithstanding the cycle storage shown on drawing no Y2526-2025-A20 – Proposed Drawings, prior to their installation, details of secure cycle parking facilities shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved facilities shall be installed and made available for use before the development is first occupied and shall thereafter be retained and kept free from obstructions.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Gable Blue Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character of the area, with particular regard to the concentration of HMOs.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a two-storey mid-terrace house, located in a predominantly residential area. It is proposed to convert the house into a 5-bedroom HMO, with bin storage in the front garden and cycle storage in the rear garden.
5. Policy HO8 of the Lewisham Local Plan 2025 (the Local Plan) relates to HMOs. Part B of the policy sets out the criteria which development proposals for small HMOs must satisfy to be permitted. One such requirement is to contribute to inclusive and mixed neighbourhoods and to not result in a harmful overconcentration of HMOs. Whether a particular number or percentage of HMOs in a given area comprises an overconcentration is not defined within the policy.
6. The Council rely upon the Lewisham HMO Review and Evidence Paper 2022 (the evidence paper), which was written in response to concerns from various parties about the impact of HMOs. However, this evidence paper does not appear to be part of the statutory local plan or adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. It is also not clear whether it has been subject to any consultation or any form of independent scrutiny. I therefore attach limited weight to its contents, but it is a material consideration.
7. The Council has confirmed that the location of the appeal site is in fact within a local area that has a predicted HMO concentration of 5-7.5%. The evidence paper sets out that 10% concentration is the tipping at which HMOs may give rise to harmful effects and where neighbourhoods go from balanced to unbalanced communities. On this basis, the appeal site is not within an area overconcentrated with HMOs.
8. Doggett Road is a long street and, although there are some existing HMOs, the number identified by the Council in their evidence represents only a small proportion of the total properties on the road. While it is noted that nearby Nelgarde Road is in the 10–20% concentration area, the appeal site is not located on this road. Furthermore, the Council has provided no compelling evidence to show that the impacts associated with HMOs in Nelgarde Road extend into Doggett Road in terms of noise, parking pressure, visual amenity, or anti-social behaviour.
9. While Rushey Green ward is identified as having a high overall number of HMOs, ward-level data is inherently broad. The complaint data cited relates primarily to poor property conditions and inadequate management, which are matters addressed through licensing and enforcement regimes. There is no evidence to suggest that the proposed development would be poorly managed or contribute to such issues, and I have not been advised that the application site or the surrounding roads are directly associated with the complaint figures referenced.
10. The assumption that HMO growth could reasonably be assumed to have continued based on previous figures is speculative and not supported by up-to-date evidence. In the particular circumstances of this case, there is insufficient basis to find that any materially harmful effects would arise from the cumulative contribution that the proposal would make to HMOs within the area, nor would it lead to the creation of an unbalanced community.

11. The Council did not raise any objections to the proposal in terms of its compliance with sections c. and d. of part A of Policy HO8 and section a. of part B of the policy. Based on the evidence with the appeal, I have no reason to reach a contrary view.
12. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would not cause harm to the character of the area through the overconcentration of HMOs. Accordingly, the proposal complies with Policy HO8 of the Local Plan, the purpose of which has been set out above.
13. The reason for refusal also cites conflict with Policies GG1, GG2 and H9 of the London Plan 2021. However, the Council has not clarified how the proposal would conflict with these policies. The proposal would comply with the strategic aims of these policies, which amongst other things, set out that Boroughs should take account of the role of HMOs in meeting local and strategic housing needs, seek development that delivers inclusive communities and enables the development of brownfield land.

Other Matters

14. In the Officer Report, the Council raises concerns regarding the proposed location of the cycle store within the rear garden, noting that this would require bicycles to be wheeled through the property. It is stated that, had the application been considered acceptable, the Council would have sought to secure a front-located cycle store instead by planning condition. I am satisfied that this can be made acceptable by planning condition.

Conditions

15. The Council has supplied a list of suggested conditions. I have considered these in light of the tests in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance. Where appropriate, I have adjusted the wording of the conditions to improve relevance, precision and enforceability.
16. I have imposed the statutory implementation condition [1], along with a condition listing the approved plans to provide certainty [2]. In the interests of the appearance of the area and the living conditions of neighbouring occupants, it is necessary for details of the refuse and recycling facilities to be submitted to and approved by the Council [3]. I have also imposed a condition relating to cycle storage details as it is necessary for the location of the cycle store to be agreed with the Council to ensure the provision of accessible cycle parking facilities [4].

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

L Reid

INSPECTOR