

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Ref No.:	181585
Site Address:	9 Mays Close, Earley, RG6 1JY
Expiry Date:	1 November 2018
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use from existing dwelling to House of Multiple Occupants including change in the number of occupants from 6 to 8.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Major Development Location

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy	CP1 – Sustainable development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing travel demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and location of development proposals
MDD Local Plan	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC07 – Parking TB21 – Landscape Character
Other	Borough Design Guide SPD

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision
Householder application for the proposed conversion of existing garage to additional habitable accommodation – Approved 152790		

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WBC Trees and Landscape	No comments.
WBC Ecology	No comments.
WBC Drainage	No comments.
WBC Environmental Health	No comments.
WBC Highways	It is unlikely that the level of driveway parking will be sufficient to accommodate the number of occupants and therefore the availability of safe on-street parking needs to be considered

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	Objection comment, insufficient number of parking for the proposed development.
Ward Member(s)	No comments
Neighbour comments	No neighbour comments received.
Other	Acer have objected to the application (in summary): • Properties in the area were built as family homes and do not have parking provision for HMO. • Provision for 4 cars at 9 Mays Close, as such 8 would have to park on the public road. • Each tenant, including couple would require a car. • Landscape must be maintained. • Impact on the local sewer. • Adverse effect on existing parking. Earley Town Councillor Luck objected to the application (in summary): • Inadequate parking as a sui generis HMO. • Overcrowding. • Impact on neighbouring amenity. • High car ownership • Tandem parking impact on the road. • Impact on highway safety

APPRAISAL
Principle of Development: The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy requires that development maintain and enhance the high quality of the environment, with retention of water quality, adequate drainage, protection of agricultural land, provision of public transport and zero carbon developments. Policy CP9 states that the scale of development must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities, services and accessibility at or in the location. The proposed development is located in the settlement and is seeking to increase the number of occupants in the existing dwelling from a small HMO of 6 occupants (C4) to 8 occupants (Sui Generis). As such the principle of development in this major development location is considered to be acceptable subject to other material considerations.

Character of the Area:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

The application site is within a mature residential suburb of semi-detached houses. Dwellings have been altered and extended within the street scene however; generally what can be seen along the street is that most extensions have included two storey side or first floor side extensions which have maintained a degree of uniformity within the local area. Roads in the locality are lined with grassy verges, some of which are landscaped, this contributes to a sense of place. Given the proximity to the M4 motorway, Reading Town and other main roads in and around the Borough, the area is particularly popular for commuters. As a result, car ownership is high and there is a high level of on-street parking throughout Mays Close and the nearby roads.

As such it can be concluded that buildings are generally used as C3 dwelling houses occupied typically by families. House conversions can provide an important source of new housing; however, the problems associated with HMOs have been recognised nationally, by residents and organisations, the press and by the Government. The study 'Evidence Gathering – Housing in Multiple Occupation and Possible Planning Responses' carried out by Ecotec for the Government in 2008 summarised the impacts including:-

Noise and anti-social behaviour

- Imbalanced and unsustainable communities
- Negative impact on the physical environment
- Pressures upon parking provision
- Growth in private rented sector at the expense of owner-occupation
- Increased crime
- Pressure upon local community facilities, and;
- Restructuring of retail commercial services and recreational facilities to suit the lifestyles of the predominant population

It is clear that a point can be reached where maintaining a sustainable community attractive to permanent residents would be difficult and the conversion to such uses in this area would harm the Borough's housing objectives, including the creation of balanced communities.

The conversion to HMO's would contribute towards an imbalance in housing stock in the area, resulting in the loss of a large family unit of accommodation, which would change the character and make the area a less attractive place to live for permanent residents.

It is acknowledged that no external changes to the property are proposed as a result of changing from a residential dwelling to a house of multiple occupation. Therefore, there would not be any physical impact on the character of the area from the change of use itself. Notwithstanding this, the introduction of an HMO in this area is likely to lead to harmful impacts. In particular, there would be a greater intensity in the use of the building with more pedestrian and vehicle movements. Compared to the current proposal and given the room sizes, this could allow up to more people than the stated 8 to occupy the site at any one time (it would be difficult to enforce a planning restriction to ensure single person occupancy, and accordingly some rooms could be let to couples, further increasing the number of occupants) and would not restrict visitors to the property who may stay over. Furthermore, greater levels of visitors to the building would be expected as would greater

levels of noise, including potential anti-social behaviour, and rubbish. Cumulatively, the impact of this would be greater than expected of the current dwelling and it is considered this would have a negative impact on the character of the area, eroding the sense of community. Therefore, the scale of activity associated with the proposal would have a detrimental impact and this is considered to conflict with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Whilst there is argument that business model for the proposed HMO would single room occupancy only. No such business model has been submitted with the current application to support the statement or justify the proposal. It is considered inappropriate for the local planning authority to impose a condition requiring single occupancy on site as the condition would be unenforceable, even if the proposed development was considered to be appropriate.

Whilst the introduction of an HMO does not mean every occupant would require a car, there is the potential for this to happen, particularly given the location and quality of accommodation proposed. There is also the likelihood that visitors to the site would arrive using cars, and it would be unreasonable for the Council to restrict the type of occupier or visitors in order to limit the number of cars associated with the proposed use. As such, it is considered additional cars beyond the level provided would lead to an increase of on-street parking. It is considered the increased parking levels could have a detrimental impact on the character of the area and ultimately harming the ambience and appearance, would have a harmful impact as the landscaping for the development is important in contributing to the character of the area.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity:

The proposed development would not result in the installation of any additional fenestration at first floor level as no extensions are proposed. The proposal would convert the existing garage into a habitable bedroom; however this is not considered to result in any harm in respect of overlooking, loss of light and over bearing. Due to the limited amount of physical development proposed the application is considered not to result in harm to the residential amenities of neighbours in respect of overlooking, loss of light and overbearing.

The level activity resulting from a group of unconnected people would likely result in more movements in and out of the property, increased waste generation and increased levels of disturbance which would be considered harmful to existing residents. Comments from neighbours have identified these issues as key concerns for the proposed development.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy seeks to manage travel demand with sustainable travel modes, appropriate vehicle parking and minimisation of traffic impacts. MDD policy CC07 states Planning permission will only be granted where the proposal demonstrates the following:

- a) How the proposed parking provision meets the standards set out in Appendix 2 of the MDD DPD,
- b) That the new scheme retains an appropriate overall level of off-street parking.

Appendix 2 states

0.1) The parking standards are based on the use class of a development. It is likely that some developments may not fit within these categories.

0.2) It will be the responsibility of the developer to prove that parking provision has been adequately catered for on a proposed site. The developer must prove that parking will not have a detrimental effect on traffic safety or on the character of an area due to an increase

in parking on the public highway. This should be set out in the Transport Statement or Transport Assessment as part of the planning application.

0.3) The parking standards should be regarded only as a starting point in any discussions with the Borough Council as it should be recognised that each development site will need to be assessed on its own merits, within the wider context of the area in which the development sits. This is likely to be more important under the coalition Government's "Localism" agenda for planning.

0.4) For Residential parking the developer will need to show that spaces identified to serve each dwelling are within an acceptable distance from that dwelling (normally 25m for allocated parking). On larger schemes a plan showing plot numbers and parking layout allocation / unallocated and visitor spaces will be required.

Considering Appendix 2 part 0.1, HMOs vary in size. From reviewing the Land Uses C3 a,b,c, C4 and Sui Generis it is determined that the current proposed application falls within the Sui Generis category as it would be classified as a 'larger houses in multiple occupancy'.

The Council's parking standards do not include provision for Sui Generis land use which would accommodate 'larger houses in multiple occupancy'. This is made clear at the start of Appendix 2 (MDD) where it advises that some developments may not fit within the land uses which the parking standards have considered. As such, there is a responsibility on the developer to provide sufficient information within their application (onsite parking, offsite parking surveys) to demonstrate that the scheme will have no detrimental effect on traffic safety or on the character of an area in association with parking.

The Council's Highways Officer has stated that there is an existing driveway and the submitted drawing indicates that this is suitable for 6 vehicles. However this is not possible without blocking in other vehicles. Blocking in is not acceptable for HMO use as parking spaces need to be independently accessed. It is unlikely that the level of driveway parking will be sufficient to accommodate the number of occupants and therefore the availability of safe on-street parking needs to be considered. The site is in close proximity to a junction and therefore indiscriminate parking could impact on highway safety. A parking survey is required to demonstrate the number of safe on-street parking spaces available during the course of a day.

The parking survey shall be accompanied by a scaled plan (in the form of a dimensioned sketch) annotated to indicate private accesses, on-street parking bays, unmarked roadside parking, waiting restrictions (single yellow lines), provision of suitable barriers to prevent parking on pavements or green verges and public car parks up to 100 metres distance from the development. The plan should also indicate areas unsuitable for parking within this distance.

The information submitted with the parking survey will also need to include:

A) The likely levels of car ownership amongst occupants;

B) An assessment of parking activity in an identified vicinity of the application site. The Parking activity would need to be recorded at an agreed frequency between the hours of 6am and 11pm, covering week days (including a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) and a weekend day for up to one week. The survey is to be undertaken by an independent assessor;

C) The results of the survey would be required to provide mapped records of the parked vehicle locations at each regular count interval and vehicle identities and would need to be at a time unaffected by seasonal variation (not in school holidays, or leading up to

Christmas, for example); and
D) Proximity and access to public transport.

As the scheme has been submitted with limited information in respect of parking demand associated with the proposed scheme, it is recommended that the scheme should be refused on the basis that any detrimental effect on traffic safety has not been satisfied in respect of parking for the scheme.

Conclusion:

The introduction of a HMO would increase the intensity of use of the building with additional people visiting, increased pedestrian and vehicle movements, increased noise and additional waste generation. This would detrimentally impact on the character of the area. The proposal would likely exacerbate the issues identified by residents in terms of the strain on on-street parking together with the potential harms associated with HMO's. The proposed development is considered to result in an unacceptable harm to the amenities of neighbours and harm the visual character of the local area. The proposal fails to demonstrate that the proposal would not result in harm in respect of highways safety and parking. As such it is considered that the proposal should be recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION	
Recommendation:	Refuse
Case Officer:	Omar Sharif
Date:	19 October 2018

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	JT
Date:	19/10/18