

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET
LDF CORE STRATEGY AND
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

**Examination in Public – London Borough of Barnet’s Final Statement
on Conversions to Family Houses**

The Council has been asked to review the approach set out in DM01h on the conversion of houses into flats in light of the context set out in PPS3: Housing and the principle of ensuring the efficient use of land.

The Council’s approach to conversions in DM01h sets out that the “conversion of dwellings into flats in roads characterised by houses will not normally be appropriate”. In line with policy CS5: Protecting and Enhancing Barnet’s character DM01 is designed to protect Barnet’s suburban character, a fundamental aim of the CS.

The approach is strongly supported locally as it aims to protect against the slow erosion of character that conversions can have in a street. The impacts identified at the hearings included front garden hard surfacing, extra bin storage, parking pressures and noise. The wider possible impacts on social cohesion were also raised with an area dominated by flat conversions considered to contain a more transient population that does not potentially forge the links which a family might do with their neighbours.

As identified by the Inspector some of these concerns can be mitigated through good design so that outwardly a converted dwelling does not look any different than its unconverted neighbour. Noise issues can be mitigated through Building Control or through traditional complaints procedures with Environmental health.

Cumulative Impacts

Whilst some of the impacts of conversions can be addressed we consider that over time good design cannot mitigate two important cumulative impacts:

- Parking stress
- Reduction in family housing

The impact of parking stress is not highlighted by the policy. Large parts of Barnet are not covered by Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) therefore it is not possible to restrict resident’s access to parking on street.

Conversion of a dwelling to flats intensifies use through the creation of more units potentially creating more parking demand for cars. Policy can ensure sufficient parking is provided on site, usually in the front garden although this of course impacts the character and may not necessarily reduce parking stress as residents still have the choice of owning more than one car. We would like to note that any change to the Council’s car

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parking standards has the potential to exacerbate this problem as less parking would be required making conversions more viable.

DM08: Ensuring a variety of new homes aims to meet need, sets out the dwelling size priorities in the borough. Across all sectors including market housing this is for family sized accommodation of three or more bedrooms. The conversion of single family dwellings into smaller units will reduce this supply of second hand family units. Encouraging conversions in more accessible locations will reduce this supply. Our dwelling size priorities may contribute to restricting some of this development so that we retain family sized accommodation but it will still have the effect of reducing the overall sizes of units.

We consider that with minor amendments our approach to conversions will contain suitable flexibility. We would like to emphasise that the approach is not a blanket ban and that further guidance on identifying accessible locations will be set out in the Residential Design SPD where we will go into more detail on how conversions can make an efficient use of land. We would like to add that a holistic view of the impact that the LDF can have needs to be considered. Changing one aspect of the intended policy approach at this stage can have unintended consequences elsewhere which haven’t been considered thoroughly.

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