

Application No: 25/3269/FUL
Application Type: Full Planning
Location: 523 West Street, Crewe, Cheshire East
Proposal: Conversion from two flats to one C4 6 person HMO
Applicant: Meera Ananadakumar, MPA Property Investments Ltd
Expiry Date: 22 October 2025

Summary

The proposed development is compliant with adopted planning policy and the HMO SPD. The scheme would not result in overconcentration of HMOs and offers acceptable living conditions for future occupiers. Issues around parking, waste, and environmental health can be addressed through appropriate conditions. The proposal contributes to housing choice and affordability in a sustainable location.

Summary recommendation

Approve subject to conditions.

1. Reason for Referral

- 1.1. This application is referred to Southern Planning Committee at the request of Cllr Pratt for the following reasons:

'As the ward councillor for St Barnabas, I object to this application, which was previously refused by the Southern Planning Committee.

It appears that nothing has fundamentally changed in the proposals to address the reasons for the previous refusal at the committee. My specific concerns remain:

The proposals still constitute overdevelopment of the site, demonstrating a lack of sustainability.

Internal amenity space is inadequate. In particular, the second-floor bedroom has such low head height that a tenant would be unable to stand upright in approximately half of the room.

There is insufficient external amenity space for potential residents.

The development would result in a loss of amenity for neighbouring properties, particularly due to likely noise and issues arising from on-street waste.

There is a continued lack of off-street parking, which will adversely impact existing residents and local traffic given the already limited on-street parking. No measures have been proposed to resolve this.

For these reasons, I strongly oppose the application'

2. Proposed Development

- 2.1. This application seeks full planning permission to convert the existing building from two self-contained flats into a single six-person House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), falling within Use Class C4. No increase in the building's footprint or height is proposed.
- 2.2. Revisions since the previous application (25/1642/FUL) include:
 - Submission of a sectional drawing confirming the ceiling height of the second-floor bedroom exceeds 2.13m across more than 50% of the usable floor space.
 - Addition of two roof lights to the attic room.
 - Reconfiguration of the rear yard to provide a covered, secure six-space cycle store, a screened bin storage area, and dedicated clothes drying space.

3. Site Description

- 3.1. The property is located within the settlement boundary of Crewe and lies near the Merrill's railway bridge. The area is predominantly residential, with some nearby commercial units.
- 3.2. West Street is a busy through-route with double yellow lines immediately outside the property, limiting on-street parking.
- 3.3. The site lies within an Ecological Network Restoration Area but is not subject to heritage or environmental constraints.
- 3.4. The site is located outside of the Article 4 Direction areas.

4. Relevant Planning History

- 4.1. 25/1642/FUL: Conversion from two flats to one C4 6-person HMO – Refused 30 July 2025 for the following reasons:
 1. *The proposed development in terms of the second-floor bedroom would not provide an adequate level of amenity for the future occupiers due to insufficient information in terms of ceiling heights, the irregular shape/layout of the room and the lack of a window to serve the bedroom. The proposal would be contrary to policies HOU12 and HOU4 of the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document 2022.*
 2. *The proposed development would not provide a sufficient level of private amenity space due to the requirements for off-street parking, bin storage, cycle storage and clothes drying. The proposal would not provide an adequate level of amenity for the future occupiers and would be contrary to policies HOU12 and HOU4 of the Site Allocation Development Policies Development 2022.*
- 4.2. 14/4937N: Change of use of B1 (Business) Office and ground floor to D1 childcare use - Approved

- 4.3. 14/2555N: Prior approval for change of use from B1 to children's day nursery to ground floor - Withdrawn
- 4.4. 09/1205N: Change of Use from Office Use to Revert Back to Domestic Use Only. Internal Decoration Works Only to be Undertaken - Approved

5. National Planning Policy

- 5.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published by the Government in March 2012 and has been through several revisions. It sets out the planning policies for England and how these should be applied in the determination of planning applications and the preparation of development plans. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF is a material consideration for the purposes of decision making.

5. Development Plan Policy

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires decisions on planning applications to be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (2010 – 2030) was adopted in July 2017. The Site Allocations and Development Policies Documents was adopted in December 2022. The policies of the Development Plan relevant to this application are set out below, including relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies where applicable to the application site.
- 5.2. Relevant policies of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) and Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Plan Policies Document (SADPD)

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS)

MP 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
PG 2: Settlement Hierarchy
SD 1: Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
SD 2: Sustainable Development Principles
SC 3: Health and Wellbeing
SC 4: Residential Mix
SE 1: Design
SE 2: Efficient Use of Land
SE 12: Pollution, Land Contamination and Land Instability
CO 1: Sustainable Travel and Transport

Appendix C: Parking Standards

Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD)

PG 9: Settlement Boundaries
GEN 1: Design Principles
ENV 1: Ecological Network
ENV 7: Climate Change
HOU 1: Housing Mix
HOU 4: Houses in Multiple Occupation
HOU 8: Space, Accessibility and Wheelchair Housing Standards
HOU 12: Amenity

5.3. Neighbourhood Plan

5.3.1. There is no Neighbourhood Plan in Crewe

6. Other Material Considerations

6.1. Cheshire East Design Guide SPD (2017)

6.2. HMO SPD (2021)

7. Consultation Responses

7.1. **Highways:** No objection. One off-street parking space and cycle provision acceptable in this sustainable location.

7.2. **Environmental Protection:** No objection. Recommend conditions re: ultra-low NOx boilers and construction hours.

7.3. **Housing Standards:** No objection in principle. Loft room ceiling height meet HMO standards.

8. Views of the Town or Parish Council

8.1. **Crewe Town Council:** Reiterated objection on grounds of overdevelopment, lack of internal and external amenity, loss of neighbour amenity (noise and waste), and inadequate off-street parking.

9. Representations

9.1. One representation in support made the following points in response to Cllr Pratt's objections:

- the HMO would not extend the building footprint or height.
- all bedrooms exceeded size standards, and the attic room met head height and daylight requirements.
- the rear yard had been redesigned to include cycle storage, bin storage and drying space.
- Queen's Park provided alternative outdoor space.
- The Highways Officer had raised no concerns with the level of parking or cycle provision.

9.2. One letter of objection has been received which raises the following points:

- Nothing has changed since the earlier application to overcome the parking issues.
- Cycle parking will not overcome parking issues
- Overdevelopment.

10. Officer Appraisal

Principle of Development

10.1. The site is located within the Crewe settlement boundary, identified as a Principal Town in the CELPS (Policy PG 2), where development to support a sustainable mix

of housing is acceptable in principle. Policy SD 1 of the Local Plan Strategy seeks to ensure that development is appropriately located and encourages the reuse of existing buildings, which this proposal achieves by converting an existing residential building.

- 10.2.** Policy HOU 4 of the SADPD sets out criteria for the assessment of Houses in Multiple Occupation. The proposal meets the threshold criteria in that fewer than 10% of residential properties within a 50m radius are currently in HMO use (0% based on Council records), and there is no "sandwiching" of non-HMO residential dwellings. As such, the proposed use would not result in an overconcentration of HMOs or create an adverse cumulative impact on the character of the area.
- 10.3.** The proposal also complies with the aims of Policy SC 4 (Residential Mix), which seeks to promote choice and affordable housing across Cheshire East, and is consistent with national objectives in the NPPF (para. 63) to create inclusive and mixed communities. While concerns regarding intensification and perceived harm to neighbourhood character have been raised in public and councillor representations, no policy conflict or quantifiable harm has been identified by consultees. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle, subject to an assessment of amenity, design, highways and infrastructure implications.

Internal Amenity

- 10.4.** Each of the six bedrooms exceeds the minimum room size standard as set out within the Nationally Described Space Standards (the proposed bedrooms range from 10.1 m² to 15.8m²). The communal kitchen/dining space measures 16.5m², which exceeds the 15m² standard for a six-person HMO.
- 10.5.** The second-floor bedroom, previously a reason for refusal, is now served by two rooflights and a sectional plan has been provided demonstrating that over 50% of the usable floor area exceeds 2.13m in ceiling height.
- 10.6.** The Councils Amenities and Facilities Standards in HMOs states that '*any part of the floor area where the floor to ceiling height measures less than 1.5m and any floor area associated with an ensuite bathroom will be disregarded from the gross internal room area*'. For the second-floor bedroom the room area above 1.5m is 10.1sqm and this meets the required standard for a single bedroom within the NDSS (7.5sqm).
- 10.7.** The guidance then goes on to state that '*a minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.13m (7ft) will be required over at least 50% of the measured floor area*' within all habitable rooms, bathrooms and kitchens. This proposal shows that over 50% of the second-floor bedroom would exceed this requirement.
- 10.8.** This proposal complies with guidance in the CEC HMO Standards and addresses the earlier reason for refusal. The proposal therefore accords with SADPD Policies HOU12 and HOU13.

External Amenity

- 10.9.** Although the rear yard is modest, it has been functionally reconfigured to provide all necessary facilities for six residents: a secure covered cycle store, screened bin storage, and clothes drying space. Based on this revised plan there is no objection to this layout for the external amenity space.

10.10. Furthermore, Queen's Park lies within a 5-minute walk, offering high-quality open space. In addition, the adjacent Hulme Street Allotments offer potential external space for residents to apply for a plot. In this context, the level of private outdoor amenity is considered acceptable, in line with Policy HOU12.

Neighbouring Amenity

10.11. No external work is proposed that would result in loss of light or privacy. The HMO will be licensed and subject to ongoing management. Environmental Protection has raised no objection in terms of noise or waste, and bin storage is contained within a dedicated screened area.

10.12. The proposed use is not considered to give rise to any material harm to neighbouring properties in terms of amenity.

Highways

10.13. The site provides one off-street parking space and a secure cycle store for six residents. Highways officers raised no objection, noting the sustainable location and fallback position (two flats).

10.14. The proposal is considered to comply with CELPS Policy CO1 and Appendix C.

Energy and Climate Considerations

10.15. The Environmental Health Officer has recommended the installation of an electric vehicle (EV) charging point in the parking area and ultra-low NOx boilers to mitigate the environmental impact of the development. EV Charging is now dealt with via Building Regulations, but the low emission boiler can be secured by planning condition and will support the Council's broader objectives for sustainable and low-emission development under Policies SE 12 (Pollution, Land Contamination and Land Instability) and INF 3 (Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure) of the development plan.

11. Planning Balance/Conclusion

11.1. The proposed development is compliant with adopted planning policy and the HMO SPD. The scheme would not result in overconcentration of HMOs and offers acceptable living conditions for future occupiers. Issues around parking, waste, and environmental health can be addressed through appropriate conditions. The proposal contributes to housing choice and affordability in a sustainable location.

12. Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

- 1. 3-year commencement**
- 2. Development in accordance with approved plans**
- 3. Maximum 6 persons (use class C4 only)**
- 4. Provision of secure 6-space cycle shelter before occupation**
- 5. Provision and retention of bin storage before occupation**
- 6. Installation of ultra-low NOx boilers (max 40mgNOx/kWh)**

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions / informatives / planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chair of the Southern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

