

BOLTON METRO

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

PLANNING CONTROL POLICY NOTE 11

Conversion of Dwellings into Self-Contained Flats and Bedsits

Introduction

1. This Note deals with the main guidelines which a prospective applicant should take into account when considering the conversion of an existing residential dwelling into flats or bedsits. The Council recognises that the sub-division of suitable houses into smaller units can contribute towards meeting the demand for flats and bedsits in the Borough especially amongst small and single person households.
2. A flat, for the purposes of this Note, will be classified as being self-contained and having the majority of its internal rooms behind its own lockable front door. Bedsits may be distinguished from flats by possessing shared facilities.
3. The advice in this Note seeks to ensure that flat and bedsit conversions will not intrude on the privacy and amenity of neighbouring residents, and that a minimum standard of accommodation is provided. The main aspects covered in the note are:
 - (a) the need for planning permission;
 - (b) relationship to adjoining property;
 - (c) provision of private open space and servicing requirements;
 - (d) car parking and access;
 - (e) character.

Policy

4. Policy H3 of the Council's Unitary Development Plan states:

The Council will require new housing development to create a good environment in terms of design, layout and density.

5. The reasoned justification for Policy H3 states:

The Council wishes to ensure that all new residential development is designed to high standards, and contributes positively to the quality of the environment.

6. Policy H3/1 states:

The Council will normally expect housing developments to take into account the following:

- (a) car parking;**
- (b) space about dwellings;**
- (c) open space and children's play areas; (see also Policy R3/1)**
- (d) safe and convenient access for vehicles and pedestrians;**
- (e) design, layout and building materials;**
- (f) landscaping and screening;**
- (g) planning against crime;**
- (h) flat and bedsit conversions (where applicable).**

7. The reasoned justification for Policy H3/1 states:

The Council wishes to influence the environmental quality of new residential development and will make use of Planning Control Policy Notes and other technical guidance to meet this objective. Design should take into account the need to reduce the risk of crime.

8. Policy CE7 states:

Development which is likely to give rise to air, water, land or noise pollution, will be assessed against national guidelines and other national considerations and if unacceptable will not be permitted.

9. The reasoned justification for Policy CE7 states:

Dust, smell, noise and other pollution can cause serious environmental problems, particularly where processes or activities are close to housing. Consideration will be given to the effects of pollution created by development both on the environment generally and on other land uses

in the vicinity. Measures will be taken to reduce existing levels of pollution.

Advice

10. Planning permission is required for the conversion of an existing dwelling into flats or bedsits. Permission is also required for the conversion of flats to bedsits. Advice about Building Regulation requirements may be obtained from the Building Control Section of the Environment Department.
11. For further advice applicants are advised to read the Planning Control Policy Note on Noise Control (No. 5) and guidelines concerning sound insulation and noise control from the Pollution Control Unit of Environmental Health Services. Applicants are also advised to seek specialist advice on sound insulation.

Relationship to adjoining property

12. Proposals for flat conversions will be expected to reflect and respect the general character of the area and existing external features such as walls, gateposts, hedges and trees should be retained. The proposal should not have a detrimental effect on the character of the area or the amenities of the neighbouring properties.
13. Where conversions are acceptable in principle, they should respect the need to ensure a reasonable standard of amenity for both occupants and neighbouring properties. The following design considerations should be taken into account when submitting a proposal for a flat conversion.
 - (a) external entrances to flats should normally be located on the main road frontage
 - (b) access to yards and gardens should be provided for all units without resorting to external staircases. However, where these external staircases are required by building regulations, they must form part of the planning application and will be judged on their merits
 - (c) any new window serving living rooms, kitchens or bedrooms should not overlook neighbouring or adjoining properties
 - (d) vertical partitions should not cut across windows and ceiling height reductions should not be visible externally.
14. Applicants should minimise the intrusion upon the privacy of adjoining residents, both in the same building and in adjoining properties: for example, by providing adequate screening to private open space areas,

and by ensuring that living room windows of neighbouring residents are not directly overlooked.

15. Potential noise disturbance is a valid consideration when determining a planning application for flat conversions. The Building Regulations 1985 require all new dwellings to meet sound insulation standards against airborne and impact noise. The Council will apply the same standards in granting planning permission for conversions in order to protect neighbouring residents against noise disturbance. Residents in converted properties should also be protected from noise.
16. It is the applicant's responsibility to supply adequate information on sound insulation in relation to neighbouring residents. In the case of party walls between flats, developers must submit constructional details to ensure compliance with standards required by the Building Regulations. Planning conditions may be attached to a grant of planning permission if the proposed use will be affected by an existing noise source or is likely to increase noise levels in the area. Where planning conditions are not sufficient to overcome the problem, permission will be refused.
17. The Council will not normally permit a kitchen, living room or bedsit to share a party wall or floor with a neighbouring bedroom. This is to ensure that dwelling conversions are not carried out at the expense of amenities enjoyed by neighbours, who should be protected from undue noise.
18. Where it is not possible to separate living rooms of bedsits from neighbouring bedrooms, the applicant will be expected to provide details of sound insulation proposals.

Conversions and change of use of existing buildings

19. Older dwellings are often too large for modern families and may lend themselves to conversion into flats and bedsits. Semi-detached and terraced properties can be suitable for such conversions provided sound insulation and other building requirements are satisfied. Adequate sound insulation is essential in order to ensure a reasonable standard of amenity for the occupants of the new and neighbouring properties.

Provision of private open space and servicing requirements

20. Applicants wishing to convert properties into flats and bedsits should provide an area of screened private open space for the use of residents. This should include adequate storage areas for and easy access to dustbins and clothes drying areas. Any existing private open space should be retained.

21. Conversions which create two or more flats or bedsits in one block may be serviced on a communal basis. Applicants will be required to satisfy building regulations in relation to the use of open space adjacent to the windows of habitable rooms.
22. **The following amenity space standards will apply for flat or bedsit developments. Private sitting out areas should take the form of either:**
 - (a) a minimum balcony area of 5 square metres for each flat or bedsit; or
 - (b) an adequately screened communal area with a minimum provision of 18 square metres per flat or bedsit.
23. **Flats for larger households may be required to provide additional areas of private open space. The Council recommends that a minimum private open space area of 40 square metres per dwelling unit be provided in such circumstances.**

Car parking and access

24. Provision should be made within the site for off-street car parking in accordance with the Council's Planning Control Policy Note on Car Parking (No. 1).
25. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that there will be safe pedestrian and vehicular access to the development. Schemes which are likely to lead to a traffic hazard or impede traffic flow in the area will normally be refused. Where a scheme is not situated on a busy or dangerous road the availability of street parking may be taken into consideration.
26. Ground floor flats may provide satisfactory accommodation for disabled persons and applicants are invited to contact the Council's Access Officer who can provide advice on the needs and requirements of disabled persons. The Senior Fairness Officer (Disability) may be contacted via the Fairness Team of the Chief Executive's Department.

Character

27. The Council will not normally approve proposals which would result in significant losses to the visual character of an area. Where an external alteration to a property is proposed, applicants should take care to ensure that any new features complement the existing character of the building. For example, where a fire escape is required care should be taken to site it unobtrusively. Car parking areas in front gardens may be

damaging to the character and appearance of buildings, and therefore unacceptable.

Draft approved for Consultation/Interim Use
June 1991

Consultation Period:
July 1991 - September 1991

This version approved for
Planing Control purposes:
April 1992

11convdw.doc updated: 16/05/2005