

- Not considered that the cumulative impact of sub-divisions has reached a 'tipping point', even in the localities where sub-divisions have been most heavily concentrated e.g. 8% of 124 properties have been converted in Millard Close but this is considered 'not significant' (indeed, there have been comments that adding some variety into the local housing mix can be seen as a positive benefit);
- 5.24 The inspectors have not been sympathetic to the concerns expressed by members of the Development Control Committee about perceived loss of 'local community identity'. Inspectors do not consider that the noise and activity associated with occupation of 2 (relatively small) flats would be any more than that of the family house which the flats would replace (which could, in theory, actually have more people living there).
- 5.25 Similarly the inspectors have not accepted that occupants of flats would necessarily be more transient than those of family housing. When these conclusions are added to the point made above about the level of concentration of sub-divisions referred to above, inspectors appear to have come to quite different conclusions from elected members. For example:

"...the Council identified the neighbourhood as being of family housing. This...is more a physical description than one of community identity."

"...I am unable to conclude that further conversions would have a significant detrimental impact in terms of vitality, social cohesion or infrastructure of the locality."

Policy responses from elsewhere

- 5.26 We reviewed policies from other local authorities which are intended to resist the loss of family dwellings (through sub-divisions or otherwise). Our search for experience from elsewhere was based on our general knowledge and a web search and so we would not claim that we have necessarily identified all examples of this type of policy approach. However, even with this caveat, we are aware that the number of such policies we could identify was relatively small.
- 5.27 The main examples we identified were, in summary:
- Oxford City (SPD)– which identifies specific '*neighbourhood areas*' where the Council does not want any net loss of family dwellings (reflecting overall concerns about lack of family housing in these neighbourhoods);
 - Slough – (Core strategy policy 2008) – "*There will be no net loss of family accommodation as a result of flat conversions, changes of use or redevelopment.*" (again the policy reflects a concern about lack of family housing to meet current needs)
 - London Borough Waltham Forest – Draft Interim Policy, June 2008 (and, we understand, not yet tested by an inspector),
 - No conversions allowed within 200 metres of each other;

Address	Date of Appeal Decision	Description of Development	Issues highlighted by Inspector	Decision
14 Freemantle Close, Oakridge	04/11/08	Change of use to house in multiple occupation	<p>Main issues = effect on character and appearance of area, highway safety through parking provision, availability of family dwelling houses. Concern also expressed about noise and anti-social behaviour and bin storage.</p> <p>Noise and anti-social behaviour not a material consideration.</p> <p>Bin storage guidance requires a total of eight bins, but occupants likely to share bins and total number required would be less than eight, which could be accommodated in the front garden with ease</p> <p>Confirmed that site there is a significant amount of parking available in the vicinity and that there is no doubt that the extra parking spaces required would not conflict with policy.</p> <p>No evidence around the loss of family housing</p>	Allowed
48 Pentland Close, Basingstoke	12/11/08	Conversion of existing 3 bedroom dwelling to form 2 no 1 bedroom flats	<p>Main issue = effect of the proposed external alterations on the character and appearance of the area (front porch, minor change to window, changes to rear fence and creation of parking in rear garden).</p> <p>Removal of the fence and creation of parking would harm appearance of the property and terrace, and would harm the private character of the garden and other gardens in the terrace. No other fences have been removed which would be harmful in this location, given the already negative effect that the large areas of open parking have on the appearance. Therefore contrary to D4 in terms of character. Noted by the Inspector that consent is not needed to remove the fence. Provision of one additional parking space (needed for 2 dwellings) would not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area.</p>	Dismiss