



Supporting Statement

340 Birkby Road

Birkby

HD2 2DB

Introduction

This statement has been produced by AKPlanning in support of a planning application for the change of use of a dwelling (Use Class C3) to a home for children with the provision of care (Use Class C2 residential institution).

The purpose of this document is to provide a clear explanation of the use and to identify and consider the relevant planning policies.

Background

The shortage of foster carers is a pressing issue, and it has significant implications for vulnerable children who rely on the foster care system. Despite efforts to increase the number of foster households and carers, the demand continues to outpace supply.

According to the latest government figures, a record 80,000 children are living in care in England alone. On top of that, there are around 388,500 children in need of some level of extra support. Following the cost-of-living crisis and a decade of cuts in funding these children's services are struggling under the weight of demand.

There are many different reasons why children and young people might enter care. It could be because the child's needs are such that parents are not able to meet them at home or if parents' needs prevent them from looking after a child. It can also be because the child is at risk of harm from someone at home or outside their family.

There are also many different options for providing that support, from early intervention at home within the family, to being removed from a situation and placed in foster care.

Children's care homes are now being provided across the country as there is a recognised lack of foster carers to provide the necessary number of placements. Typically, these will be a normal residential property used to house 2 or 3 children aged between 8 and 18. They will have support from 2 or 3 carers and be registered by Ofsted in accordance with the appropriate regulations.

Children's care homes are residential facilities where children and young people live together as a group, with professional staff to look after them. These homes aim to meet the needs of children who cannot live with their own families.

Professional staff work in these homes to ensure the well-being, safety, and development of the children. They provide emotional support, education, and guidance.

A children's home is a house where children and young people live together as a group, with professional staff to look after them.

Children's homes aim to make sure that they meet the needs of children who can't live with their own families. That means that as well as providing food, shelter, and space for play and leisure in a caring environment, they also act as a place where children can grow and develop.

The Proposal

340 Birkby Road consists of the main dwelling (6 bedrooms) and an annexe (4 bedrooms). The annexe is currently used as a separate rented unit.

It is proposed to use all of the property for up to 9 children.

The children's ages will be between 4 and 18.

All the young people will be cared for on a 24-hour shift basis.

This property has been chosen because it is a large detached property standing in extensive grounds with parking available. It also has a separate but attached annex which will be used to accommodate older children that require some independence. Like any typical late teenager a 16 year old foster child requires a some of their "own space".

Overnight two carers will be on site to provide cover and supervision .

During the day, sufficient carers will be on the site to cover the number of children that are at the dwelling on a one to one basis. This is a likely to mean that 9 carers will be present to any more time as children will be at school and, given the number of children, it is likely that some will be siblings who will only have one carer.

The carers will be responsible for all care and welfare and will support the young people in going about their daily routines. They essentially fulfil a parental role, and the site will, in practical terms, operate like a family home.

As with most family homes, there may be other occasional visitors, such as delivery persons and maintenance trades or gardeners. However, the young persons will not require professional visitors and family visits (where required) will take place off-site.

Ofsted will visit twice a year.

Vehicular access to the site is via a private side road, a pedestrian access is available off Birkby Rd.

There is a large parking area/space in front of the dwelling that can easily accommodate 10 cars.

Planning Policies

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states: -

*60. To support the government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, **that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed** and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. The overall aim should be to meet as much of an area's identified housing need as possible, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community.*

63. Within this context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing; families with children; older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes); students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers²⁸; people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes²⁹.

The NPPF supports residential development that provides for the needs and requirements of all members of the community. This includes providing housing for children that require care.

Other Material Considerations

Fear of Crime

Unfortunately, experience has shown us that an assumption is often made that children in care will act in an anti-social or even criminal manner. There is no evidence to support this supposition and indeed the level of care and supervision that is provided is over and above normal parenting with professional care staff on site all of the time.

Nevertheless, the fear of crime is a material factor in any planning application. However, the weight that can be attributed to it depends on whether or not the evidence shows that the potential risk of crime is shown or expected to be high and the consequences for the community and individuals are serious.

There is no evidence to show that a care home that has children living with carers would cause any anti-social behaviour or criminal activity.

The evidence therefore leads to a conclusion that the effect of the development on the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings regarding risk of crime would be low and insufficient to warrant a refusal of a planning application.

Car Parking

We have already explained that the property is a large detached dwelling within considerable grounds and is able to accommodate 10 (or more) car parking spaces.

Ministerial Statement

No not forming formal planning policy on the 23rd of May 2023 the minister of state for housing and planning made the following statement on “planning for accommodation for looked after children”:-

I, with the support of my Rt Hon colleague the Secretary of State for Education, wish to set out the Government’s commitment to support the development of accommodation for looked after children, and its delivery through the planning system.

The planning system should not be a barrier to providing homes for the most vulnerable children in society. When care is the best choice for a child, it is important that the care system provides stable, loving homes close to children’s communities...

Today we use this joint statement to remind Local Planning Authorities that, as set out in paragraph 62 of the National Planning Policy Framework, local planning authorities should assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community and reflect this in planning policies and decisions. Local planning authorities should consider whether it is appropriate to include

accommodation for children in need of social services care as part of that assessment.

Local planning authorities should give due weight to and be supportive of applications, where appropriate, for all types of accommodation for looked after children in their area that reflect local needs and all parties in the development process should work together closely to facilitate the timely delivery of such vital accommodation for children across the country...

This statement shows the support of central government and is a material consideration on this application.

Physical Changes to the Building

The proposal requires no external alterations to the building, there will be no changes in its appearance. There will be no major internal alterations.

Planning Conditions

It is accepted by the applicant that the Local Planning Authority are likely to want to restrict the use, via conditions, relating to the number of children and carers present at the property.

Management Plan

The LPA have asked for a management plan to illustrate how the home will operate on a day-to-day basis. The following information has been prepared by the applicant (the operator).

The home will operate with up to 9 children, 5 in the main house and 4 in the annexe. Impact risk assessments are carried out for all the children to ensure that this level of occupancy can be maintained without impacting on the development and behaviour of other children.

At full occupancy there will be 3 care staff on site along with a senior manager.

The care staff work a 24-hour shift followed by 2 days off. Shifts start at 7am each day. Children are never left alone on site.

Managers work an 8-hour day which will be during daylight hours (exact hours depend on the work patterns of the particular worker).

So during the day there will be 4 staff (3 carers and a manager); at other times there will be 3 carers.

The children will not have any needs outside mainstream children, the home will not have a focus on any particular complex needs.

There is a need for ofsted to visit (the home will be ofsted registered) as well as social workers. Staff meetings will take place once a month, these usually start at 10am and last for 2 hours. There will be no family visits on site.

There is no education or therapeutic provision on site. Case reviews will usually take place off site (usually at the child's school), this is due to the presence of other children on site.

Friend and family are not allowed on site except in agreed exceptional circumstances; this is so as not to impact on other children on site. Family and friend visits are normally facilitated off site by a member of staff.

The children will be allowed to leave the property in accordance with their age and behaviour. They will attend extra-curricular activities; these are facilitated by staff. All off site activities are recorded and staff know where each child is at any given time. All children have age-appropriate curfews and all children are expected to be back on site by 9-30. Protocols are in place if a child breaches a curfew.

Alarms on all doors and external CCTV would alert staff of anyone coming and going.

Initially we would invite neighbours to the home (before opening) to explain what is happening and to give contact details. We have standard practices and procedures in the event of a complaint.

Conclusions

The proposed use is to provide a stable family home environment for children as their main and sole residence.

There is no evidence to support supposition that the proposal will cause anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Car parking is available and more than adequate, and the access is safe.

There is planning policy and central government support for the provision of children's homes within residential areas.

It is our opinion that there are no material considerations to refuse this planning application.

*AKPlanning
147 Lane Top
Linthwaite
Huddersfield HD7 5SG*

*Contact: Andrew Keeling
E-mail: andrew@akplanning.co.uk
Mobile: 07500965645*



RTPI

Chartered Town Planner