

19 Far View Crescent
Almondbury
Huddersfield
HD5 8ER

Charlotte Hancock
Kirklees Planning Service
Civic Centre 3
PO BOX B93
Huddersfield
HD1 2JR

Application 2025/CLD/90229/W - Certificate of lawfulness for proposed change of use from dwelling (use class C3) to residential care home (use class C2)

Dear Charlotte

With reference to the above planning application (change of use) for 17 Far View Crescent, HD5 8ER we are writing to you as residents of one of the adjacent properties, namely 19 Far View Crescent, to share our concerns over this proposed change of use.

Our concerns fall under the following key areas:

- Impact on highway safety and traffic
- Suitability of Far View Crescent as a location for a care home
- Effect on the character of Far View Crescent
- Potential for noise, disturbance and conflict
- Increased potential for crime and antisocial behaviour
- Suitability of Lighthouse Care Residential to operate this property as a children's care home
- Effect on neighbouring properties
- Design and layout of proposed property

Impact on highway safety and traffic

Far View Crescent is a quiet cul-de-sac accessed only from Far View Bank which in turn has a single entry and exit from Bank End Lane. Far View Crescent is 4.5 metres wide kerb-to-kerb which is a little wider than 2 standard car widths. Existing traffic levels are very low and we are concerned that the establishment of a residential children's care home would cause a marked increase in traffic levels to service a care establishment. As well as staffing changeovers increasing the volume of traffic, with their associated parking needs and noise (engines running, car doors closing etc.) there would also be the additional disturbance from other services needed to support the operation such as food & laundry deliveries, transport to/from school, visitors, Ofsted inspections etc., further adding to the potential for disruption.

Far View Crescent is not well-equipped to handle the increase in traffic flow that would result from the introduction of a children's care home. This was particularly evident during the recent winter bad weather with access into the estate extremely challenging as the street is not gritted or cleared by the local authority, which could lead to difficulties supporting the facility if deliveries cannot be made or children are unable to access facilities such as schooling, doctors etc.

An increase in the volume of traffic with additional parked cars on the road restricting views from driveways could potentially result in more accidents if the children that are housed

within the home are unfamiliar with the neighbourhood. No information has been included in the application/proposal about the age range of the children to be housed at the property or how the children will travel to school, however it seems likely that this could further exacerbate the additional traffic flows, for example taxis on a daily basis to enable them to attend school(s).

Suitability of Far View Crescent as a location for a children's care home

There are a number of factors that in our view make Far View Crescent a sub-optimal location for a residential children's care home. The nearest senior school (King James') is over a mile from the property and furthermore there are no shops or children's play areas nearby. The proposed location is not on or near to a bus route and in the absence of nearby open spaces would probably necessitate play activities taking place on the street although this may be difficult due to the additional traffic outlined in the previous section.

2021 census data indicates that 85% of the residents of Far View Crescent/Far View Bank are over the age of 20 with 49% being over the age of 50. OFSTED guidelines state that the home should be located in an area that supports children's personal development, however the demographic in the proposed location would not appear to offer many opportunities to interact with other children which could lead to the children feeling isolated with limited opportunities to enhance their social development skills. The older demographic of the neighbourhood alongside the relatively transient nature of the residents (usually staying for 2-3 years) makes it less likely that the children will feel part of the community which may make it difficult for them to adequately settle and to flourish during their time at Far View Crescent. Instead they would be predominantly reliant on the other children and staff within the home which could engender feelings of social isolation and social anxiety.

Effect on the character of Far View Crescent

Far View Crescent is a small neighbourhood made up of 24 detached properties, with low levels of traffic (no through traffic) and low-levels of crime. Whilst the demographic of the residents is varied it does tend toward a higher proportion of elderly residents, many of whom have lived in the neighbourhood for many years, and who value the quiet peaceful nature of the area. Not only would the additional traffic and disturbance connected to the activities of running a residential care home adversely affect the existing residents we feel that the addition of a number of young persons to the neighbourhood could make some of the more vulnerable residents feel uneasy and reluctant to leave their homes particularly during the hours of darkness. Such isolation could be very damaging to their sense of well-being and be detrimental to their mental health.

Furthermore, Far View Crescent is no stranger to ambulance call-outs for elderly residents and if there is an increase in traffic levels and associated parking we would have concerns about the ability for ambulances to be able to access properties without hindrance. One resident of the neighbourhood is totally reliant on a wheelchair for their mobility and an increase in the volume of cars parked on Far View Crescent could lead to access difficulties and affecting their independence.

We also believe that approving the change of use for this property will not only detract from the peace and quiet sought by the current community would almost certainly lead to increased home and vehicle insurance costs as well as have a detrimental effect on the property values which would be likely to result in appeals for a lower Council Tax banding for affected properties.

Potential for noise, disturbance and conflict

Although this has been highlighted already it cannot be overstated that Far View Crescent is only wide enough for 2 vehicles and as such manoeuvring into your property's driveway can be very challenging if a vehicle is parked opposite. There are a number of dropped kerbs

leading to driveways and as a result additional vehicles parked on Far View Crescent could make accessing one's driveway very difficult and could therefore lead to potential conflict between the vehicle owners.

The application states that staff will work on a rota-basis which would result in multiple changeovers each day in addition to deliveries, school transport and so on. Even though the application indicates that there is space for 4-5 vehicles we would question the practicality of accommodating this number of vehicles on the limited driveway space as each staffing changeover would result in multiple car movements. These changeovers, particularly those occurring in the evening or early in the morning when the street is particularly quiet are likely to be hugely disruptive with car doors closing and engines starting/running affecting residents sleep and the consequences this may have on peoples' health and wellbeing.

Increased potential for crime and antisocial behaviour

Whilst it would be unfair to make preconceptions about the children to be cared for in this facility, research suggests that "children living in children's homes are almost six times as likely to be criminalised as looked after children in other placements – and almost 20 times more likely to be criminalised than a non-looked after children¹". A 2016 Howard League report highlighted that there have been 23,000 police call outs to residential children's homes across the country, resulting in some homes calling the police more than 200 times. If the application is approved there is a strong possibility that neighbourhood could experience an increase in petty crime, vandalism, graffiti, drug activity and other forms of anti-social behaviour hitherto not seen on Far View Crescent and Far View Bank. Any such activities would have a tremendously detrimental impact on all members of the community but especially the more senior residents who will find such activities particularly distressing and hugely damaging to their wellbeing and sense of living in a safe and quiet neighbourhood.

Suitability of Lighthouse Care Residential to operate this property as a children's care home

The property was acquired in November 2023 and offered as an investment opportunity via Sourced Capital (<https://sourcedcapital.co/far-view-crescent-huddersfield/>) to fund a "refurbishment programme of 4 months will transform the property into a modern 6-bed residential dwelling ready for sale on the open market". There was no suggestion at this stage that the property may be offered as anything other than a dwelling house and it was only after a number of unsuccessful attempts to market the property that the change of use into a care home was proposed. This would make us question the true motives of operating the property as a residential care home as providing children's care does not appear to have been the primary motivation for acquiring the property and simply appears to be an alternative vehicle to provide a return for the property's investors.

Furthermore, company information for to LIGHTHOUSE CARE RESIDENTIAL LTD (Company number 15717317) indicates that they were incorporated as recently as May 13th 2024 and that the registered office address belongs to an accountancy firm, namely Sheards Accountancy Ltd, Vernon House, 40 New North Road, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England, HD1 5LS. This indicates that the company wishing to provide care to vulnerable children does not have an established track record in this field, giving rise to concerns not only for the safety and security of the neighbourhood but also of the quality of care that would be provided to the children under their protection. Information provided by police forces told the [Howard League] charity that "private contractors running children's homes had used police cells as respite to cover staff shortages and because staff were not trained and competent to deal with children's behaviour¹". This exacerbates our unease as to whether the applicant possesses the necessary experience and expertise to provide the level of care and support needed by vulnerable children. Indeed, the planning application

document provides scant detail about the operational structure supporting the home and how any challenges might be managed and mitigated.

Effect on neighbouring properties

It is our firm belief that the proposed change of use will have a severely detrimental effect on our living conditions primarily due to the open balcony at the rear of 17 Far View Crescent. The recent refurbishment of the first-floor balcony accessed via full-height patio doors, along with the removal of a number of substantial conifers bordering the adjacent property and the addition of a new full height window at the southern end of the balcony provides a completely unobstructed view of the entirety of the rear garden of 19 Far View Crescent. These privacy concerns were initially raised with Kirklees Planning on July 23rd 2024 when the building works were completed on 17 Far View Crescent and although it has recently been determined that no breach of planning regulations is considered to have occurred, our local Councillor, Cllr Alison Munro, has since passed the matter onto Kirklees Building Control, for further investigation.

It must be also added that privacy is a two-way issue and that the large areas of glass in the first floor living areas at 17 Far View Crescent appear to offer little privacy. The large glazed area affords a largely unobstructed view into the property's first floor from the neighbouring garden and also potentially over the rear fence from the publicly accessible wooded area to the rear of the property, and this seems wholly inappropriate for a home caring for children.

Design and layout of proposed property

Department of Health guidelines for the minimum standards for Children's Homes in England stipulate that the "location and design of car access and parking areas at the home minimise risk to children from vehicle movements³". The proposed change of use application states that "there is parking on site for at least 4-5 cars", however (and we would question the numbers of cars that could practically be accommodated) to achieve this at least 3 of the vehicles would need to be parked on the driveway across the front of the property and thereby in front of the main building entrance presenting a possible risk to children and staff.

Because the property was renovated for the stated purpose of selling it as a residential dwelling on the open market it will not been fitted out to meet the needs of a residential care home. To the best of our knowledge the property does not possess emergency lighting, fire doors, fire alarms or fire-fighting equipment which again is required for this type of facility. Additionally there is no means of escape from the first floor in the event of a ground floor fire unless perhaps the residents are meant to avail themselves of the open balcony and jump down to patio/lawn below.

The current design of the balcony does not seem appropriate for a property intended for use for housing children, especially potentially vulnerable children and presents a potential risk of harm to those residing in the property. The simple wire rope construction has no safeguards to prevent the balustrades from being climbed and as such presents a high level of risk of persons falling onto the patio area below. In addition, the gaps between the wire ropes appear to exceed the minimum recommended gap of 100mm² which could potentially allow residents to climb through the wire ropes, a risk which is even greater if younger children are to be housed at the property; once again a high level of risk exist for residents to fall onto the patio area below.

In conclusion

It is our understanding that the Kirklees district already has adequate stock of residential children's homes and therefore if the application were to be approved this could potentially lead to an oversupply of this type of facility. If the application for a change of use from dwelling (use class C3) to residential care home (use class C2) were approved but subsequently it was found that there was insufficient demand to make the home

commercially viable as a children's residence we are greatly concerned that the change to class C2 could enable the property to be converted into a house of multiple occupation or other care facility for older citizens, which would still have a hugely detrimental impact of the whole of the Far View Crescent/Far View Bank neighbourhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns about the proposal as part of the planning consideration process.

Yours sincerely

¹ Criminal Care: Children's homes are criminalising children, Howard League (2016)

² The British Standard Institution who produces technical standards in the UK states in code of practice BS6180:2011. *"that on any balcony a 100mm sphere should not be able to pass through the balustrade and should not easily be climbed"*.

³ Department of Health National Minimum Standards Document (2001).
https://www.proceduresonline.com/resources/chi_homes/health.html