

Planning, Design & Access Statement.

2 Normans Close, Gravesend.

Change of use from Class C3 to C3B.

Lawful Development Application.

Introduction

The application property is a detached bungalow in a good sized plot having an enclosed rear garden and a garage at the rear of the garden with a drive to the side of the bungalow up to the garage. There is also a parking space on the right side of the front garden.



The bungalow is on a corner position at the junction of Normans Close and St James's Avenue.



Garage



View from the garage towards the rear of the bungalow.

The bungalow has three bedrooms with two of the bedrooms being en-suite rooms, lounge kitchen-diner and a bathroom.

A wall topped with metal railings and gate over the drive together with close boarded fences to the side boundaries to the rear garden and the garage across the rear of the garden provide a private, secure rear garden. Long drive with parking for numerous cars.

The proposed will not require any internal or external alterations to the bungalow. It is proposed to segregate a small area in the garage to form a staff office.

The proposed use.

It is proposed that the property be used to provide a home for three young people who are to be under the care by qualified staff working for Hazelmont Kent Ltd.

This company aim to provide each of the young people in their care with a nurturing and therapeutic environment as close as possible to a family home. Some young people who come into the care are unable to live with their natural parents (or Carers) for a wide variety of reasons. Consequently, they have to be placed into the care of Local Authority Social Services. Individual staff members within Hazelmont business have built up a past history in excess of 25 years in the childcare industry.

The company ethos is that all children should have fun, be cared for and loved by people who understand their individual needs so that the children have positive experience in a calm and loving family setting to build genuine, safe and trusting relationships.

Hazlemont Kent Ltd believe in nurturing the hearts and minds of children and young people that come into care and putting them at the heart of everything they do. They are committed to each child being regarded as an individual, treated equally, with respect, and to receive person centred and solution focused care that is unique to the child. All of Hazelmont's children and young people in care are empowered to have the opportunity to think independently and make their own choices with the company ensuring that children in their care will be provided with the same fundamental rights as those not living in a children's home.

The application property is located approximately 550 metres from the mainline railway station and from the bus station in Garrick Street which is a short distance for the staff who will travel by public transport to work. There are also bus stops along Overcliffe, about 190 metres away. The town centre is about 650 metres away where a wide range of shops and services are provided.

The bungalow is on the corner with Normans Close, a cul-de-sac of similar sized bungalows occupied by families within this fairly dense residential area just west of the town centre.

The bungalow has been extended previously with a single storey side extension. a further single storey side extension and a rear extension having been approved in the years 1975, 2013 and 2021.

This application

The application seeks planning permission for a change within Class C3 from C3 Dwelling House to Class C3B Residential Care Home for up to and a maximum of three young people. A lawful development application is submitted. As this is a change of use within the same use class it doesn't constitute development and therefore doesn't require planning permission. However, the applicant wishes to have the assurance of the Lawful Development Certificate in the company name. A previous LDC certificate was granted in the name of Hazelmont Social Care Ltd so this application is in order that the LDC is granted in the name of Hazelmont Kent Ltd.

The previous approval was by way of Decision Notice 20230666, dated 25th December 2023.

The three young people residing at the property would be between the ages of 8-18. As referred to previously within this statement, the children would have been taken into Care for a variety of reasons. Once they turn 18 it is envisaged that the majority of young people would be able to go on to live independent adult lives, potentially within the local community.

No more than three adult carers will be working at the premises at any one time (plus an offsite manager visiting typically once a day). Assuming all the care staff drive to work, there would typically be a maximum of three cars parked on-site each day, other than when the off-site manager visits the property, when the maximum would then be increased to four.

However, as this property is located close to public transport links it is anticipated some staff will come by public transport and others will live locally and walk to work.

Staff change overs would occur at around 7:00am each morning and 10:30pm in the evening. After 10.30pm one of the three staff would depart from the premises for the night with two members of staff taking over the night duties until 7.00am the following morning at which time members of day staff would return for their shift.

As this application is for the same use as previously approved, we consider that this application should also be approved.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Within the National Planning Policy Framework there exists a need for Care Facilities for children. Young Persons homes are made up of three types: Ordinary Children's Homes; Residential Special Schools & Secure Children's Homes.

Paragraph 93 of Chapter 8 of the NPPF 2021, Promoting healthy and safe communities says:

93. To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

(a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;

(b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;

(e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services

Children's Homes cater for a variety of children and young people with a variety of difficulties, disabilities and disorders. These can result in emotional or behavioural difficulties, mental health problems, sensory impairment and learning difficulties.

Class C3B Children's Homes themselves are not classified under Residential Special School or Secure Children's Home's.

Some 95% of Children's Homes throughout the UK have 10 or fewer places. More than 50% of these have fewer than 5 places (Ofstead Annual Report 2021).

Ofsted figures for England from 2021 show that at any one time there are over 400,000 children in the England registered in the Social Care System. Of this number some 80,000 in England are children in care. Since 2020 there has been a 10% increase in children's homes of all types.

One of the System's chief aims is to offer help and protection to Children who come from vulnerable or traumatic backgrounds.

A Children's Home, irrespective of size, is an establishment that needs to provide care and accommodation wholly for children and young adults. Such Homes vary in nature and size, but all should fulfil a range of purposes to meet the different needs of its residents.

Children in Residential Care may be worried about being stigmatised or bullied by their peers for being different, because of where they live. The Home's environment and level of care should be designed to take account of this, with staff supporting the Children (helping them address any concerns that they may have).

Children should be supported to express themselves as individuals, by giving them an appropriate degree of freedom and choice in relation to day-to-day arrangements for their care (dependant on their individual needs and the setting in which they are being cared for).

Homes should be in an area that supports children's safety, wellbeing and personal development. Thus, the design of the Home (including adaptations to meet the needs of children with specific health needs) should, and does, reflect this. This in turn enables children to develop independence skills within a supported home environment (for example by learning to cook/budget). The proposed development would not have any negative impact on the amenity of adjoining residential uses. As previously stated, the Residential Care Home would aim to provide an environment as close as possible to that of a family home. It would therefore possess a similar character to a normal residential dwelling, and therefore the existing use of the site.

The level of care in the Home would be supervisory in nature, not that of a Secure Unit. The young persons would be long term residents with the application site being their home. They would develop social attachments to each other, the staff, and others within the local community. Upon maturity the young persons would be expected to go on and lead independent adult lives.

The occupants of neighbouring dwellings would be unlikely to notice any significant change in the use of the property. Whilst there would be activity at the premises due to shift working of staff, and visiting Manager, this would be low key and would not have a discernible impact upon neighbouring properties as the level of activity generated from the three young people in residence (who are in supervised care), would be little different, and potentially more contained, than that of a normal family. It would therefore be unlikely that there would be any significant change in the level of noise from activities such as young people playing in the garden from that which could typically occur if the property remained as a Class C3 use.

Vehicle movements associated with staff handovers, and routine visits to the premises by the Manager, would not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of neighbours. The number of vehicles accessing the site is likely to be at a level that could occur with a Class C3 dwelling house and this property has a long drive and also a further parking space to the front. As most of the children in care move on at the age of 18 it's not likely that the children themselves will have their own cars before moving on to other accommodation.

Whilst there would be increased vehicle movements at staff handover times, these would only be for a short period each day. With the Manager only being in attendance at the property for a limited period each day therefore this would not be to the detriment of occupiers of the surrounding properties and no more detrimental than a house with an elderly person who might have regular visits from a doctor, other medical staff or for home haircuts etc.

The property has a garden and offers sufficient facilities and amenity required for the young people's day to day living.

Gravesham's Local Plan First Review is a dated document largely superseded by the Local Plan Core Strategy adopted 2014.

Relevant policies include:

Policy CS14: Housing Type and Size

5.10.8 The Council will protect the mix of housing in the existing housing stock and will

resist the conversion of family sized residential units to smaller properties.

5.10.9 The Council will expect new housing development to provide a range of dwelling

types and sizes taking into account the existing character of the area and evidence of local need to create sustainable and balanced communities.

5.10.10 Sheltered housing and extra care housing for people with special needs will be supported on suitable sites in areas with access to a range of services that provide for the needs of future occupants.

The Core Strategy text relating to this policy says that “The Council supports the provision of housing to meet the requirements of people in special need of help or supervision, where conventional housing may not be suitable. However, it is important that the concentration of residential institutional accommodation is controlled.

This will ensure that the properties themselves are suitable and that the intensification of use in residential areas will not change the character of the area, nor involve a loss of amenity to residents because of the potential noise and disturbance it could create (including the impacts from service traffic) outside normal working hours. The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD will include policies relating to residential institutional accommodation”

As set out in the statement above, the proposed use as a family home for 3 children living as a family as their sole residence and receiving care falls under the description of Class C3B.

Design

There are no external or internal alterations proposed other than to internal divide of a small area within the existing external walls of the garage to create a small office, which has approval under decision notice

Access

As described above, the property is located within easy reach of public transport facilities, walking distance of local schools and the town centre amenities. The bungalow is laid out with wide corridors and doorways which enable easy access between rooms and it's also on one floor. There is a single step up at both the front and rear entrance doors into the bungalow. No adaptations such as a ramped access are necessary.

We therefore trust that this Lawful Development Certificate for the proposed use falling under Class C3 can be supported by Gravesham Borough Council.

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