

Planning Statement

Change of Use from dwellinghouse (C3) to children's care home (C2)

2 Old Road East, Gravesend, DA12 1NG

Executive Summary

This application is for a change of use from a dwellinghouse (C3) to a children's care home (C2).

The property is currently a 6 bedroom end terraced house. It was most recently used as semi-independent supported living for up to 5 young people under Use Class C3(b).

At this property the applicant proposes a small residential care home for children between the ages of 8-17. The maximum number of children housed at any one time will be 4. They will be long term placements for the children who will reside there until they turn eighteen.

A Management Statement is provided with the application which sets out how the home will be operated.

There will be no changes to the appearance of the building other than minor works in the garden area and no changes to the internal layout. As such there will be no impact on the visual amenity of the area.

The residents will receive 24 hour care and support with a maximum of 2 carers and 1 home manager during the day and 2 carers at night working on a shift basis.

The property is a large 6 bedroom house located in a highly accessible location near Gravesend town centre. Due to its size it is not a property suitable for a single family and change of use would not conflict with policies designed to prevent loss of family dwellings.

It is very well located for public transport, shops and services. Staff are therefore highly likely to use walking/cycling or public transport to get to work. However in the event that staff and visitors do need to park the applicant has secured a parking agreement with the Prince of Orange Pub for use of 10 parking spaces.

The internal layout will remain similar to a dwellinghouse with bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen, dining room and lounge. One of the existing bedrooms on the 2nd floor will be dedicated as a staff bedroom and another on the ground floor as a dining room.

This is a large residential property which could house up to 6 adults under Use Class C3(b) small care home or C3(c) other household. The level of comings and goings generated by the care home is not considered to be significantly different to that of the existing or permitted uses. As such it will not have an adverse impact on neighbouring residential amenity.

Overall the proposed scheme will provide a much needed care facility which is not significantly different in nature to its former and potential current use as a dwellinghouse.

It will comply with the relevant policies of the Local Plan and national planning policy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared to support the following proposal.
- Change of use from dwellinghouse (C3) to children's care home (C2)
- 1.1.2 TMP Planning Ltd act as planning consultants for the applicant.

2. Site Context

- 2.1.1 The application site is a three storey end of terrace house on the southern side of Old Road East and at the junction with Devonshire Road and Singlewell Road which is about 1km south of Gravesend town centre.
- 2.1.2 Surrounding uses are mainly residential. There is a public house on the opposite side of Old Road East.
- 2.1.3 There are bus stops close by on Old Road East, Singlewell Road and Windmill St and Gravesend station and town centre is 0.6 miles (1.0km) to the north (approx. 15 mins walk) so the property has a good level of access to public transport.
- 2.1.4 The site is not in a Conservation Area or close to any Listed Buildings. It is not within any other wildlife or landscape designation. It is within Flood Zone 1 (low risk).

2.2. Site History

- 2.2.1 The Council's online planning records show the following planning history relating to the property.
- Application for Lawful Development Certificate for proposed change of use of C3 dwelling house to C2 residential institution for the provision of a children's home for a maximum of 4 resident children aged 8-17 years, with non-resident care staff for support. 2 Old Road East Gravesend Kent DA12 1NG
Ref. No: 20210964 | Received: Fri 30 Jul 2021 | Validated: Fri 30 Jul 2021 | Status: Certificate Refused
 - Retention of garden shed
Ref. No: 1980/00003/REF | Status: Appeal Dismissed
- 2.2.2 The Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) referred to above was submitted by the applicant. Following on from this decision the applicant is now submitting a change of use application to convert the property from a C3 dwelling house to a C2 care home. The proposal is identical to that submitted under the LDC application.

2.3. Existing Use

- 2.3.1 The property has been vacant since March 2021 and its authorised use is a C3 dwellinghouse.

- 2.3.2 The most recent use was as supported living accommodation for up to 5 young people, aged 16-18 living as a single household.
- 2.3.3 They shared communal facilities in the house and received 24 hour support to help them transition from full time care to independent living.
- 2.3.4 There was one non-resident support staff on the premises 24 hours a day working a shift from 09:00 to 09:30 the following day. There was also a manager on site 9.00 – 17.00 Monday to Friday.
- 2.3.5 The level of support allowed them to function as a household, with help provided towards organising their daily activities on the step towards independent living. However the level of care is lower than would be necessary in a children's home.
- 2.3.6 The residents were treated as young adults, shared communal facilities in the house were and able to live in the property until they are 19.
- 2.3.7 It is considered that this was a C3(b) use class which provides for not more than 6 residents living together as single household where care is provided. This was accepted when the previous LDC was considered.
- 2.3.8 A C3 dwellinghouse is defined in the Use Classes Order as follows:
- Class C3. Dwellinghouses**
- Use as a dwellinghouse (whether or not as a sole or main residence) by—*
- (a) a single person or by people to be regarded as forming a single household;*
- (b) not more than six residents living together as a single household where care is provided for residents;*
- or*
- (c) not more than six residents living together as a single household where no care is provided to residents (other than a use within Class C4).*
- 2.3.9 The property is now vacant, however it has an authorised C3 use and could therefore be used for a C3(a), C3(b) or C3(c) use without the further need for planning permission as any change within C3 would not constitute development. The property is large enough that it could accommodate up to 6 adults residents under the C3(b)(small care home) or C3(c) other 6 person household definition.

3. Proposal

Background to My Life Semi-Independent Project

- 3.1.1 My Life Semi-Independent Project are specialist providers of services to young people for Kent County Council and other local authorities.
- 3.1.2 The company has contracts with Kent County Council to provide accommodation and support services for the councils looked after children. My Life has a number of accommodation provisions and staffed homes that the council uses to place some of their most vulnerable looked after children and young people. The company is well

respected in the sector as a quality provider producing good outcomes for young people.

Proposal

- 3.1.3 The proposal is to operate a small residential care home for children between the ages of 8-17. The maximum number of children housed at any one time will be 4. They will be long term placements for the children who will reside there until they turn eighteen.
- 3.1.4 There would be 2 care staff and a Home Manager. The care staff would be non-resident working on a shift basis starting at 09:00 finishing at 09:30 the next day. This is similar to the previous arrangement when operating as semi-independent supported living. The Home Manager would work 9.00 – 17.00 Monday to Friday.
- 3.1.5 The internal layout will remain similar to a dwellinghouse with bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen, dining room and lounge. One of the existing bedrooms on the 2nd floor will be dedicated as a staff bedroom and another on the ground floor as a dining room. There are no external alterations to the building proposed and there will be no external signage so there will no changes to the appearance of the property to indicate that it is different to a dwellinghouse.
- 3.1.6 The children will attend school either locally or at other locations where appropriate and depending on their needs. There will be monthly visits from social workers and also 6 monthly Looked After reviews. The children will not receive family visits at the property as these will take place at other premises.
- 3.1.7 In terms of the Care Standards Act 2000, residential children's homes (and the Registered Home managers who run the homes) are required to register with OFSTED as a social care provider before they can operate and it is an offence not to do so. This registration is essential in order that OFSTED can:
- protect children and young people
 - ensure that the establishment meets the requirements of the relevant legislation
 - ensure that providers and managers deliver good services
 - provide information about the quality of an establishment to a range of stakeholders including: children/young people, parents, carers and commissioners.
- 3.1.8 This entails an initial very in-depth application process supported by a significant amount of information pertaining to the home e.g. Statement of Purpose, Location Assessment, Policies & Procedures, the Children's guide etc.
- 3.1.9 The Applicant will submit their OFSTED registration once the Lawful Development Certificate has been determined.

4. Planning Policy Framework

4.1. National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the main national planning policy guidance and was updated in July 2021. It is supported by the Government's Planning Practice Guidance.
- 4.1.2 Paragraph 93 of the NPPF states that 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;*

4.2. The Development Plan

- 4.2.1 Planning applications should be decided in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant Development Plan comprises:
- Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)
 - Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (November 1994):
- 4.2.2 Relevant Policies include:
- Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):
- CS01 – Sustainable Development
 - CS14 – Housing Type and Size
 - CS19 - Development & Design Principles
- Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (November 1994):
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
 - H5 – Increasing Housing Stock by Conversion of existing Buildings
 - H6 – Provision to Meet Special Housing Needs

4.3. Emerging Development Plan

- 4.3.1 It is understood that a partial review of the Local Plan Core Strategy and preparation Site Allocations and Development Management Policies is underway. As this is at a relatively early stage of preparation it carries only very limited weight.

4.4. Other Material Considerations

Supplementary Planning Guidance

SPG2 - Residential Layout Guidelines (2020)

SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006)

Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard (March 2015)

5. Planning Policy Assessment

5.1. Principle of Development

- 5.1.1 The proposal would provide a care home for 4 children in a residential setting.
- 5.1.2 Policy CS01 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) sets out that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach reflecting the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and in the Core Strategy. In terms of the hierarchy for development Gravesend urban area is identified in Paragraph 4.2.4 as a First Tier Settlement.
- 5.1.3 In terms of being an appropriate location, the property is in a very accessible and sustainable location. There are three local bus stops within 100m on Old Road East, Singlewell Road and Windmill Street and local shops on Singlewell Road (approx.260m). In terms of primary schools, there is Wrotham Road (0.4 miles), Holy Trinity (0.6 miles), Whitehill (0.6 miles). Local secondary schools include St. George's (0.6 miles) and Thamesview (1.8 miles). The site is 0.6 miles south of Gravesend Town Centre (15 mins walk) which provides a range of shops and services and Community Hospital. Windmill Hill park is 0.3 miles and Woodlands Park is 0.5 miles away.
- 5.1.4 The proximity of the site to the town centre, local amenities and public transport links is such that its sustainable location is acceptable in principle as per Policy CS01 (LPCS).
- 5.1.5 The application site lies within a housing area. Policy CS14 of the Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) requires that the Council protects the mix of housing in the existing housing stock. The policy does not specifically cover this type of use, although it does support sheltered housing and extra care in areas with access to a range of services for the residents.
- 5.1.6 The proposal is for a change of use from C3 dwelling house to C2 residential supported living. However saved policy H5 (LPFR) applies and requires consideration should be given to whether conversions of existing properties to potentially more intensive uses
- 5.1.7 Policy H5 is set out below with a commentary on each of the criteria:

In considering proposals for the conversion of existing properties to provide flats, maisonettes, bedsitters, hostels, homes and other forms of multiple occupancy, the Borough Council will have regard to the following criteria:-

(i) The building shall be in an appropriate area for conversion to flats, maisonettes, bedsitters and multiple occupancy. Unless there are special or overriding circumstances, conversions will not normally be permitted in an area comprised for the most part of single family dwellings. Conversely, conversions will not normally be permitted in areas which are environmentally unsuitable for young families and which already demonstrate a predominance of multiple occupation.

5.1.8 The property is a large 6 bedroom dwelling that was most recently used for semi-independent supported living for young adults, under Use Class C3(b), rather than as a single family dwelling. Given the size of the property it is not well suited to single family occupancy. Indeed the supporting text (3.19) sets out that homes of no more than 2 storeys or more than 6 habitable rooms are considered suitable for a family. This property is larger than this with 3 storeys with 9 habitable rooms, so it is not suitable for a single family.

5.1.9 Whilst there would be a change of use to C2 the property would remain as a single planning unit and would not be subdivided. In the case of children's care homes the aim is always to make such properties as similar to a standard home as possible. There will be no external alterations and internal changes will be kept to a minimum.

5.1.10 The level of occupancy would not be significantly different to its previous use under C3(b) where there were 5 young adults receiving care from non-resident carers.

5.1.11 The character of the area is mainly residential and therefore the proposal will not affect the character of the area.

5.1.12 *(ii) The building shall be of such a size and arrangement as to be generally unsuitable for single family occupation.*

As discussed above this a large property with 6 bedrooms. It is not well suited to single family occupation

5.1.13 *(iii) The proposal shall have regard to the Borough Council's Residential Layout Guidelines, as set out in supplementary planning guidance.*

5.1.14 This is discussed further below in section 5.3.

5.1.15 *(iv) The adopted Vehicle Parking Standards must be achieved wherever feasible.*

5.1.16 This is discussed further below in section 5.4.

5.1.17 Saved Policy H6 (LPFR) with regard to the provision to meet special housing needs states that the Borough Council will in principle support proposals in appropriate locations by Housing Associations, the private sector and other organisation which incorporate:-

(iii) With regard to proposals for residential hostels and homes, whether by new build or by conversion, the Borough Council will take particular care to ensure that these do not cluster together and harm the overall character of the area.

5.1.18 We are not aware that there are any other similar children's care homes in the immediate area and as such there is no cluster of such uses which would harm the character of the area.

- 5.1.19 The use of the premises for a C2 care home is therefore acceptable in principle subject to meeting other relevant policies of the local plan and other material planning considerations.

5.2. Design and impact on the surrounding area

- 5.2.1 CS19 (Development and Design Principles) (LPCS) sets out the design principles which will be taken into account when considering proposed redevelopment proposals.
- 5.2.2 There are no proposed alterations to either the front or rear elevations and the property will continue to appear as a residential dwelling. The proposal therefore complies with this policy and the NPPF.

5.3. Residential Amenity

- 5.3.1 Paragraph 130 of the revised NPPF (2021) seeks to ensure decisions “*create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future user*”.
- 5.3.2 Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) (LPCS) seeks to ensure new development is located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties and land. New development should meet the requirements of the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards in terms of the size of the accommodation being provided based on the level of occupancy, bedroom size and building height and the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines in terms of the appropriate levels of private amenity space for future residents.
- 5.3.3 The standards referred to in CS19 are applicable to new dwellings. However 2 Old Road East is an existing dwelling and the application is for change of use to a C2 children’s care home, a different class of residential use.

Future Occupiers

- 5.3.4 The National Space Standards are intended to apply to new residential dwellings. However, the proposed bedrooms all meet the minimum space standard for a single room which must be 7.5sq.m and at least 2.15m wide. There is a shared bathroom and separate shower room. There is significant communal space with a dining room and lounge in addition to the kitchen as well as sufficient space for supporting care staff.
- 5.3.5 There is amenity space to the side/rear of the property of approximately 37 sqm. As discussed above we do not consider that the external amenity standard in the Residential Layout Guidelines (100 sq.m) is applicable in the case of a property which is an existing dwelling.
- 5.3.6 There is therefore sufficient internal and external living space complying with Policy CS19 and the NPPF.

Neighbouring Amenity

- 5.3.7 The existing property is a 6 bedroom dwelling. It was most recently used for semi-independent supported living under C3(b) for young adults with non-resident care

staff operating on a shift basis. This was used for up to 5 young adults with 1 non-resident carer and 1 home manager.

- 5.3.8 The current proposal is very similar in level of occupancy to this previous use. There will be 4 children residing in the property supported by 2 care staff and a home manager. This will result in comings and goings very similar to its previous use under C3(b) or that could be allowed under C3(c) for up to 6 people.
- 5.3.9 The Officers Report on the LDC application (202110964) makes the assertion that normal C3 residential use of this property would generate 1-2no. trips in the morning (work and school run). It was argued that this was an appropriate baseline to compare the change of use against. We do not agree with this assertion. This might be true for a small family dwelling under C3(a) with 1-2 adults and 1-2 children. However this is a large 6 bedroom property which could easily be occupied by up to 6 adults under C3(b) or C3(c) or a larger extended family group with a number of adults/children under C3(a). This would generate more than 1-2 comings and goings from the property with perhaps several adults/young people going to work/college, care staff attending if in C3(b) use and/or children going to school. Indeed its former use as semi-independent supported living would have generated greater levels of coming and goings than a small family home.
- 5.3.10 A more appropriate comparison is, therefore, with its previous and potential use under C3 taking account of the size of the property. There would not be a significant increase in the level of coming and goings for the proposed children's home as compared with a C3 use.
- 5.3.11 The children would be managed with staff on site 24/7. Therefore, it is not considered that there would be a rise in anti-social behaviour. In terms of overlooking and loss of privacy, there are no elevational changes proposed.
- 5.3.12 A Management Statement has been provided with this application which sets how the applicant proposes to manage the facility to minimise the impact on neighbours.

5.4. Highway Safety

- 5.4.1 Policy CS11 requires development to mitigate impacts on the highway and public transport networks and to provide adequate parking. Saved policy P3 of the LPFR requires compliance with the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards which are contained within the relevant SPG document SPG4.
- 5.4.2 The standards set out in SPG4 do not cover a children's care home use as they relate to where there are resident care staff which is not the case here.
- 5.4.3 Given the age of the residents they will travel to and from the property by foot/cycle or public transport or if necessary in carers vehicles. There will be two non-resident care staff employed on a shift basis with a changeover at 9.00/9.30 each day and a Home Manager present 09.00-17.00 Mon-Fri. There will be social worker visits to the property every month, however family contacts will not take place at the property.
- 5.4.4 As set out in the accompanying Management Statement the applicant anticipates that most of the staff will not drive to and from work, based on experience of running

other similar sites. Staff will commute either by public transport given the close proximity of bus stops, or by foot or train with Gravesend station a short walk away.

- 5.4.5 In cases where staff or visitors do need to drive, the applicants do have a Parking Agreement with the Prince of Orange pub opposite, which will allow them to park up to 10 cars each day. This is submitted with this application.
- 5.4.6 In the unlikely event that all staff drive to and from work, then there could be a maximum parking demand at shift changeover of 5 vehicles (3 arriving and 2 leaving). The Parking Agreement would allow sufficient parking, albeit this is a very unlikely scenario.
- 5.4.7 There is a bike rack to the side of the house where staff will be able to store their bikes.
- 5.4.8 In respect of parking and highways the proposal is considered compliant with Policy CS11 (LPCS) and saved Policy P3 (LPFR).

5.5. Waste and Recycling

- 5.5.1 The type and amount of waste will be similar to that of any like sized residential property. Waste/recycling bins will be provided for on-site to ensure all waste requirements are adequately catered for as per existing arrangements .

6. Conclusion

- 6.1.1 The proposal is for the change of use of the existing dwelling house to a children's care home. There are no external changes apart from minor works in the garden and the internal layout remains the same providing a care home for up to 4 a children aged 8-17. Residents will received 24 hour care and support from non-resident carers (3 during the day and 2 at night).
- 6.1.2 A Management Statement has been provided with the application which sets out how the home will operate.
- 6.1.3 The proposal is located within the urban area in an accessible location and is therefore compliant with Policy CS01 of the Local Plan.
- 6.1.4 The property is a large dwellinghouse with 6 bedrooms which is not well suited to a single family and does not conflict with policies to protect existing family homes. Its most recent use was under C3(b) as semi-independent supported living.
- 6.1.5 The proposed care home is a relatively modest development in relation to its former and potential use as a large residential dwelling, including potential use under C3(b) for six people receiving care or under C3(c) for 6 people.
- 6.1.6 The home will provide high quality carefully managed care for its residents and as such it will not have an adverse impact on the neighbourhood or on parking and highways.
- 6.1.7 It is therefore compliant with relevant Development Plan policies and permission should be granted for the development.