

Planning Statement

Change of use of Copperfields, 42 Villa Road, Higham,
Rochester, Kent, ME3 7BX from a Class C2 residential care home
for the elderly to a Class C2 residential care home for up to
5 young people.

for The Bay Tree House Group (Ltd)

Planning Statement
Copperfields, 42 Villa Road, Higham, Rochester, Kent, ME3 7BX
11/10/2021

Site Address : Copperfields, 42 Villa Road,
Higham, Rochester,
Kent, ME3 7BX

Company : The Bay Tree House Group (Ltd)

Date : 11/10/2021

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This planning statement supports an application by The Bay Tree House Group for the change of use of Copperfields, 42 Villa Road, Higham, Rochester, Kent, ME3 7BX from a Class C2 residential care home for the elderly to a Class C2 residential care home for up to 5 young people.
- 1.2. This planning statement demonstrates that the proposed development would comply with the relevant local planning policy and should therefore be granted planning permission.
- 1.3. In particular, the proposed development would comply with all relevant policies in the development plan on matters such as the provision of specialist housing, highway impact and amenity.

2. Context

The applicant

- 2.1. The Bay Tree House Group currently operates one small care home located in Gravesend, registered for the provision of residential care for up to 3 young people. Young people within the care of The Bay Tree House Group are unable to live with their natural parents for a wide range of reasons, and consequently are brought into the care of local authorities' social services.
- 2.2. All residential children's homes are rigorously monitored and inspected by Ofsted. Bay Tree House Gravesend Ltd is currently judged to be "Good" and the same ethos will be carried over in establishing the new home under the management of The Bay Tree House Group's new subsidiary Bay Tree House Higham Ltd to ensure the same positive results.
- 2.3. Bay Tree House takes pride in its home in Gravesend, making sure that it is well maintained and presented with the feel of a normal family home within the community, something that will be carried forward with Bay Tree House Higham.
- 2.4. Almost all the young people cared for by the Bay Tree House Group have suffered traumatic experiences such as abuse or neglect in their earlier lives, and, as a result many have emotional difficulties and can exhibit challenging behaviours as a result.

Therefore, a provision like that offered by The Bay Tree House Group is needed to give these children the safety, security and therapeutic support within a familial environment that allows them to fulfil their potential.

- 2.5. The Bay Tree House Group operates a highly diligent and rigorous referral matching process ensuring that the young people placed with us are suited to our therapeutic environment and the young people already in our care. This ensures a cohesive environment in the home where every young person receives the tailored therapeutic support that they need.
- 2.6. The Bay Tree House Group feel that the more rural location in Higham will work well in conjunction with the nearby home in Gravesend, having less of the distractions of the urban Gravesend area whilst not being too remote. Its proximity to our home in Gravesend will be positive for the young people in both homes, being part of a larger family to share and enjoy activities with, and, for the young people in Gravesend, being able to benefit from the wider range of therapeutic activities that will be able to be provided within the larger premises of the home in Higham.

Site location and description

- 2.7. The location of the site is shown on the location plan submitted with this application.
- 2.8. It is located within the North-Eastern part of the Borough of Gravesham, in the centre of Higham.
- 2.9. Higham provides a small number of facilities and services, including local shops, a primary school, and a community centre. Shorne Woods Country Park is approximately 1.3 miles from the site. Higham is served by regular public transport, with bus services stopping at Forge Lane shops, approximately 0.2 miles from the site, operating to destinations including Gravesend, Meopham, Rochester, Hoo and London. Additionally, there is Higham train station giving access to the South Eastern railway line in directions terminating in Luton or Rainham (Kent).
- 2.10. The site is located towards the Western end of Villa Road, with a mix of detached and semi-detached houses comprising the surrounding neighbourhood.
- 2.11. The application site comprises a detached 4 storey, 20-bedroom dwelling with 2 storey and single storey extensions to the side and rear. To the front is parking for several vehicles and an enclosed garden with patio area with further garden area to the rear.

2.12. A sales brochure of the site is attached at Appendix.

Relevant planning history

2.13. A search of Gravesend Borough Council's online record of planning applications has identified the following historic planning applications relating to the site:

Part 3: Planning Charges (b) Other planning charges			
Description of charge (including reference to appropriate statutory provision)	Originating Authority	Place where relevant documents may be inspected	Date of Registration
Copperfields, 42 Villa Road, Higham Reference: GR/19880647 Description: Application for the variation of condition (ii) of planning permission on ref no GR/87/750 to increase the number of persons of pensionable age accommodated at the premises from 19 to 20 Date of Decision: 01/08/1988 designated by virtue of In pursuance of Section 30 the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 as amended TLC Ref: GP622162	Gravesend Borough Council	Planning Department, Gravesend Borough Council, Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend DA12 1AU	01/08/1988
42 Villa Road, Higham Reference: GR/19870750 Description: Change of use of dwelling into residential home for the elderly with erection of two storey extensions on both side elevations erection of part single and part two storey extension at the rear and formation of car park in the front garden Date of Decision: 14/12/1987 designated by virtue of In pursuance of Section 30 the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 as amended TLC Ref: GP622165	Gravesend Borough Council	Planning Department, Gravesend Borough Council, Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend DA12 1AU	14/12/1987
Copperfields, 42 Villa Road, Higham Reference: GR/19870236 Description: Change of use from dwelling to a doctors surgery incorporating extension on the Chilton Drive side alterations to vehicular access on to a classified road and laying out of car parking at the front and rear with alterations to access from Villa Road Date of Decision: 26/06/1987 designated by virtue of In pursuance of Section 30 the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 as amended TLC Ref: GP622164	Gravesend Borough Council	Planning Department, Gravesend Borough Council, Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend DA12 1AU	26/06/1987

3. The application

- 3.1. As in the case of the premises operated by Bay Tree House Gravesend Ltd, the proposed use of the dwelling as a residential care home for up to 5 young people would be a Class C2 use. This is because the property would not be occupied by a "single household" as there would not be any resident adults.
- 3.2. Given that the premises currently has C2 classification for the care of the elderly, this application seeks planning permission for the change of use, within Class C2, of 42 Villa Road to permit the residential care of up to 5 young people. The home would provide long term care for each young person and, whilst they are residing at the home, it would be their permanent home.
- 3.3. A team of approximately 16 therapeutic care workers would provide full time care for the young people who live at the home. Care staff would not reside at the home. They would work on shifts to provide 24/7 cover.

3.4. The staff rota would comprise of:

- AM Shift: 7am - 2:15pm
- PM Shift: 1:45pm - 9pm
- Sleep in shift: 8:45pm - 7:30am
- Weekend Shift: 7am - 9pm

3.5. At Bay Tree House it is believed that the best outcomes are achieved with 1-to-1 therapeutic support and, for this to be possible, during waking hours when the young people are in the care of our staff, 1 member of staff is always on shift for each young person.

3.6. In addition to our therapeutic care workers, there would be short and infrequent visits from social workers and other support professionals. Day to day living activities such as shopping, school runs and social outings for the young people would be undertaken by the staff (or by professional drivers sourced by the local authority in the case of school runs).

3.7. As with Bay Tree House Gravesend, the home would aim to provide the young people with an environment as close as possible to a traditional family home, avoiding the institutional atmosphere of some provisions.

3.8. Staff and young people would take meals together and the young people would help with daily chores. Each young person has their own bedroom. Bedrooms would also be provided for staff sleeping in during a night shift. All other day-to-day living facilities in the home would be shared.

3.9. The property, once renovated to our required specification, will have the layout, facilities, services, and character of a traditional dwellinghouse.

3.10. The young people would, upon maturity, leave the home to independent or semi-independent living placements, dependent on the advice of the home and the decisions of their respective social worker.

3.11. The application site has sufficient off-road car parking and outdoor amenity space for the proposed use.

4. Policy context

4.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the relevant development plan:

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

- 4.2. For the purposes of this planning application the relevant development plan comprises the following:
- The saved policies of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review; and
 - The Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies Map.
- 4.3. As a significant material consideration, regard should also be had to the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (the "Framework") which sets out the Government's national planning policy.
- 4.4. The policies in the above documents and other material considerations relevant to this application are listed below. Consideration to their requirements is made in the "Planning considerations" section of this statement.

Development plan

Saved Policies of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (Local Plan Review)

- 4.5. The following saved policies in the Local Plan Review are considered relevant:
- Policy H6: Provision to meet special housing needs
 - Policy T1: Transport impact
 - Policy T4: Traffic generation outside of the built-up area

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies Map (Core Strategy)

- 4.6. The following saved policies in the Core Strategy are considered relevant:
- Policy CS01: Sustainable development
 - Policy CS02: Scale and distribution of development

Material considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.7. The following section of the Framework is considered relevant and is referred to in this statement:

- Section 9: Promoting sustainable transport

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 4.8. The PPG provides guidance on the application of the policies in the Framework.
- 4.9. Within the section determining a planning application, paragraph ref 21b-028-20140306, states that local authorities need to consider whether children's best interests are relevant to any planning issue under consideration.
- 4.10. The section on health and wellbeing states at paragraph 53-005-20140306, that a healthy community is a good place to grow up and grow old in. It is one which supports healthy behaviours and supports reductions in health inequalities. It should enhance the physical and mental health of the community. It should encourage the creation of healthy living environments for people of all ages which supports social interaction. It meets the needs of children and young people to grow and develop.

5. Planning Considerations

Principle of development

Support for specialist housing

- 5.1. Part (iii) of Policy H6 of the Local Plan Review has been saved by a Direction from the Secretary of State and has not been replaced by policies in the Core Strategy.
- 5.2. It provides support for the development of residential hostels and homes to meet specialist housing needs, including through conversion / change of use of existing buildings. It states that the Council will seek to ensure that clusters of such uses do not form and harm the character of an area.
- 5.3. The policy does not give a definition of "specialist housing", however paragraph 3.21 of the Local Plan Review refers to "housing which is accessible to those on low incomes or who have specialist requirements or for whom other provision is not readily accessible". It is considered that the proposed use of the application site as a specialist care home for young people would fall within the type of accommodation covered by Policy H6.

- 5.4. The proposed development would not result in a cluster of specialist housing. Whilst not remote from other housing, the application site is a detached property set a distance from neighbouring properties. The use of the property is described in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.11 of this statement. The character of the proposed use would not be materially different to the existing use of the application site as a care home for the elderly and would not therefore alter the character of the area.
- 5.5. The proposed development would therefore comply with, and be supported by, Policy H6.

Access to services / facilities

- 5.6. As referred to in paragraphs 2.11, there are a small number of services within the surrounding village. The majority of these, including public transport infrastructure (bus and rail) are located approximately 300 metres from the application site. The Manual for Streets recommends a walking distance of 800 metres to services and facilities. The application site is within that distance and therefore the residents of the proposed care home would be within walking distance of local services and facilities, as well as public transport links.

Highway / traffic impact

- 5.7. Saved Policies T1 and T4 of the local Plan Review state that the impact of new development on the transport system and on the environment will be considered when assessing planning applications.
- 5.8. The proposed development would not give rise to significant vehicular or pedestrian movements. Such movements are unlikely to be materially different to what could take place if the application site remained as a 20-bedroom Class C2 care home for the elderly. In that scenario, there could potentially be 3-4 members of staff plus a management team on site during the daytime in addition to members of the 20 families of residents visiting, all of whom travelling to and from the site by car.
- 5.9. As referred to above, with the proposed use none of the young people would have access to private cars. Whilst there would be vehicular movements associated with staff, such movements would mainly take place during the shift changes referred to above. During the day, young people would be taken to and from school in either the "house car" or by transportation provided by the local authority. It is unlikely that there would be a significant number of visitors to the site. The number of

- 5.18. The application seeks permission for a change of use only, with no new built development proposed. The proposed development would not therefore result in the construction of new built form that might increase flood risk elsewhere.

Sustainable development

- 5.19. The presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 11 of the Framework states that development that accords with an up-to-date plan should be approved without delay. This is repeated in Policy CS01 of the Core Strategy.
- 5.20. This statement has shown that the proposed development would comply with the relevant policies in the development plan. In particular, it would comply with, and be supported by, Local Plan Review policies on the specialist housing provision. It would also comply with highways / traffic policies in the Local Plan Review.
- 5.21. In addition, the proposed development would comply with the relevant policies in the Framework.
- 5.22. The proposed development should therefore be granted planning permission without delay, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

6. Summary and conclusions

- 6.1. This statement supports an application for the change of use of change of use of Copperfields, 42 Villa Road, Higham, Rochester, Kent, ME3 7BX from a Class C2 residential care home for the elderly to a Class C2 residential care home for up to 5 young people.
- 6.2. The statement has demonstrated that the proposed development would comply with the relevant policies in the development plan.
- 6.3. Therefore, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 11 of the Framework and Policy CS01 of the Core Strategy, we respectfully request that planning permission is granted without delay.

vehicular trips is therefore likely to be a reduction of that if the application property was continued to be used as a care home for the elderly.

- 5.10. There is sufficient car parking within the site for the proposed use.
- 5.11. The transport / highways impacts of the proposed development are therefore unlikely to be materially different than if the application site remained as a Class C2 care home for the elderly. The proposed development would not therefore give rise to unacceptable highway impacts and would comply with Local Plan Review Policies T1 and T4.
- 5.12. Paragraph 109 of the Framework states that development should only be refused on highway grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 5.13. The proposed development would not give rise to any highway safety issue and the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would not be severe. The proposed development should not therefore be refused on highways grounds, in accordance with paragraph 109 of the Framework.

Amenity

- 5.14. As referred to previously, the proposed care home would not be materially different to a Class C2 care home for the elderly. The aim of the care home is to provide an environment as close as possible to a traditional family home. The proposed development would therefore give rise to significantly fewer amenity issues than a Class C2 care home for the elderly registered for up to 20 residents.
- 5.15. There would not be any noise, overlooking or privacy issues that would impact on the amenity of the nearest dwelling, or other dwellings in the vicinity over and above those posed by the application site continued use as a Class C2 care home for the elderly.
- 5.16. In addition, the application property and its grounds would provide sufficient amenity space for residents of the proposed care home.

Flood risk

- 5.17. The application site is located within the Environment Agency defined Flood Zone 1. This is the lowest flood risk zone. The proposed development would not therefore be at risk from flooding.