

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260150
Site Address:	69 Eastcourt Avenue, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 1HH
Expiry Date:	2 April 2026
Site Visit Date:	22/07/2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use of the property to a childrens home (Use Class C2).	

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk TB09 – Residential Accommodation for Vulnerable Groups
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS10 – Meeting our housing needs C3 – Active travel H2 – Presumption against residential losses DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC8 – Noise pollution
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
F/1999/70799	Proposed Single Storey Side Extension To Dwelling And Conversion Of Garage To Granny Annexe Plus Rear conservatory	C/A, 21/01/2000
R/414/70	Alterations to garage	C/A, 01/10/1970
97/53	Detached house	Approved, 10/03/1953
243011	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed use of the existing dwelling for supported accommodation.	Refused, 27/02/2025
251306	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed use of the existing dwelling for supported accommodation.	Refused, 28/07/2026

CONSULTATION RESPONSES
Internal
WBC Environmental Health – No comments received. WBC Highways – Further information requested. WBC CIL – No comments received WBC Waste Services – No comments received
External
None consulted.

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council - Raises no objection to this application subject to WBC imposing the following condition that it is noted that the drawings show two separate entrances from the public side of the building and as a result there shall not be any subsequent sub-division of the dwelling into two or more separate dwellings without the prior approval of WBC, in writing, to ensure adequate parking is provided at all times, and to protect the amenity of neighbouring properties, as defined by Policies CP3 and CC07.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	71 Eastcourt Avenue - The neighbour objects to the proposal, raising concerns that the property has been misrepresented in terms of its size and that it has previously operated in a similar institutional manner without clear planning approval. Based on past experience, the neighbour highlights ongoing issues including increased parking demand, unsafe vehicle manoeuvring due to constrained on-

	site parking, and highway safety risks, particularly given the narrow road, restricted visibility, and its use as a key walking route to nearby schools. Concerns are also raised regarding additional visitor traffic, including late-night activity, incidents of antisocial behaviour, and associated littering. Furthermore, the neighbour notes seasonal noise disturbance from outdoor activity within a limited garden space. While acknowledging the need for such facilities, the neighbour considers the site inappropriate for this use due to its constrained layout and the cumulative impact on residential amenity and highway conditions.
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APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site comprises a two-storey 6-bedroom 1950s detached dwellinghouse which benefits from previous alterations and additions. The dwelling is located within the major development location of Earley within a predominantly residential area where neighbouring properties are of a mixed scale, design and material palette.

Proposal:

Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the property from a C3 dwellinghouse to a children's care home (Use Class C2). The proposed care home would accommodate up to five children between the ages of 16 and 18. The children would be supervised by two members of staff on site at any one time, operating on 8-hour shifts, with one member of staff sleeping overnight. The staffing rota includes day and night shifts with short overlap and 15-minute handover periods, ensuring continuous on-site staff presence between shifts.

This application follows two similar proposals for the same change of use, previously submitted as Certificate of Lawfulness applications, which were refused under references 243011 and 251306 in February 2025 and July 2025 respectively.

The most recent application was refused for the following reason:

The proposed use of the existing dwelling for supported accommodation for up to 5 children constitutes development requiring planning permission as it would result in a material change of use from Use Class C3 to C2. The description provided in the Planning Statement falls squarely within a C2 Use Class. The use as described would not form a single household and therefore would be a C2 Use Class. This conclusion is supported by case law. The proposed use would result in a material change to the character of the use of the site. C2 and C3 uses draw upon different planning policies; strategic assessments and can attract different material weight: they are materially different uses with different material planning consequences. This certificate is therefore recommended for refusal.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Principle of C2 use

With regard to the proposed C2 use, paragraph 96 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, are safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles. Paragraph 63 of the NPPF makes reference for authorities to establish the housing need for different groups; one group is looked after children.

Policy CP9 sets out that development proposals located within development limits will be acceptable in principle, having regard to the service provisions associated with the major, modest and limited categories. The site is located within a major development location, and the proposed C2 use would accommodate up to five children with two staff members on site at any one time. No increase in the number of habitable rooms is proposed, and the scale of occupation would be commensurate with that of a large family dwelling. As such, the scale of the development would respond to the existing level of facilities as set out in policy CP9, therefore the proposal would be acceptable in principle.

Policy CP2 states that to ensure that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs, planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of:

- b) Children, young people and families, including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs;

Policy TB09 of the MDD Local Plan supports the need for proposals which provide accommodation for people's needs over a lifetime. It states that *"Applications for small group homes for vulnerable adults, children and young adults leaving care will be considered on a site-by site basis. The Council will have regard to the specific requirements of these groups, including the location of the development including vulnerable adults, children and young adults leaving care"*.

The proposed development would make a positive contribution towards meeting the identified need for accommodation for looked-after children and young people, as recognised by the National Planning Policy Framework and supported by Policies CP2, CP9 and TB09 of the Development Plan.

Loss of family housing (C3(a) use)

The proposed change of use to Class C2 would result in the loss of a single residential dwelling, thus conflicting with part i) of the CP3 of the Core Strategy which states that planning permission will be granted on schemes that *'do not lead to a net loss in dwellings and other residential accommodation or land'*. In light of the boroughs 5YHLS position (as of March 2025) at 2.5 years, the loss of the property as family housing is regrettable. The NPPF, in section 5, also places great focus on boosting the supply of homes (including family homes).

However, the proposed scheme provides great social benefit and an essential community facility for supporting vulnerable children with specialist needs within the Borough instead of children being placed in care far from home, thus helping ensure essential care is delivered. Furthermore, the original dwelling would not be physically altered in a way which would prevent its conversion back into a single dwelling at a point in the future when the intended C2 uses is no longer required. In any case, the primary nature of the proposed use would be quasi-residential and as such it is considered appropriate due to the existing residential form in the directly local area.

Overall, both national and local policy support the provision of accommodation for vulnerable individuals, including children, as well as family housing. On balance, the principle of the proposed change of use is considered acceptable and outweighs the loss of a single residential dwelling. In any case, the proposal would remain a form of residential accommodation and would not involve alterations that would prevent the property from being returned to C3 use in the future.

Character of the Area:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission should be granted if development is 'of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area.

The proposed change of use would not involve any external alterations to the appearance of the building, therefore there would be very little if any visual changes to the site. The existing property would remain unchanged and part of the street scene.

There would be a slight change in the way the property is used, however as described above, the proposal would continue to be used for residential purposes, and both internal and external areas would be used in the same way as a family dwelling. The proposal would therefore accord with the NPPF, policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and the principles contained within the Borough Design Guide.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The proposed change of use would not involve any changes to the external appearance of the existing property. As such, no overlooking, loss of light or overbearing concerns would arise.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed this application and notes the following:

Staff Arrangement

Section 4.6 of the Planning Statement outlines the proposed staffing arrangements, indicating that a maximum of two staff members would be present on site at any one time. A 15-minute handover period is proposed between shifts, occurring between night staff and day staff 1, and between day staff 2 and night staff. While the Highways Officer recommends that staff changeovers take place outside peak network hours, this arrangement is considered acceptable given the limited scale of the proposal.

Parking

In accordance with WBC Parking Standards, a C2 (Residential Care Home) use requires one parking space per full-time equivalent staff member on site, plus one visitor space per three residents, equating to a requirement of three spaces. The Planning Statement confirms the need for a house vehicle, and three parking spaces are proposed, as shown on the Site and Location Plan.

While the initial parking layout raised concerns, as a vehicle parked in space 3 would have obstructed access for vehicles in spaces 1 and 2, an amended parking plan submitted on 03/03/2026 demonstrates that all three spaces can be accessed independently. On this basis, the parking arrangement is considered acceptable and no objections are raised on highways grounds.

Waste Provision:

Policy CC04 of the MDD states that all development, including conversions, alterations and extensions shall incorporate suitable waste management facilities, including on-site recycling.

As the proposal would not be dissimilar in terms of intensity to a family dwelling, no additional waste facilities or provision above the existing are considered to be required. Waste provision would remain located at the front of the property.

Other matters:

The neighbour at 71 Eastcourt Avenue objects to the proposal citing concerns about inadequate parking, narrow roads, and potential highway safety risks, particularly during school times. They also raise worries about noise, anti-social behaviour, and the suitability of the property for teenagers due to limited outdoor space.

The proposal will accommodate a maximum of five residents with no more than two staff on site during the day and one overnight. The limited occupancy and structured staffing ensure minimal vehicle movements, and existing on-site parking is sufficient for the scale of the use. The Highways Officer has raised no objections to the proposal, and no changes to access or parking arrangements are proposed. The intensity of the use is not materially different from a family-sized C3 dwelling and

would not necessitate additional highway provision, such as widened pavements or altered access, to safely accommodate the development.

Regarding concerns about anti-social behaviour, the property will operate as a regulated children's home under the supervision of Ofsted, which ensures that appropriate care, behaviour management, and safeguarding measures are in place. Residents are supervised at all times by trained staff, and any incidents would be managed in line with statutory care requirements.

In terms of noise and disturbance, the level of occupation would be comparable to the existing C3(a) use, and the external amenity areas would continue to be used in the same manner. In the event that noise and disturbance did arise from individuals living in the care, or if they had any behavioural or emotional needs, this would be the responsibility of staff/ the company to control long with other appropriate bodies. Professional carers, trained in managing emotional and behavioural needs, will provide 24-hour care and support. As discussed, in planning terms, there is no evidence to conclude that the level of noise and disturbance would be greater than what could occur as a result of general residential use.

Earley Town Council have raised concerns that the presence of two front doors could indicate potential subdivision of the building. However, there is no evidence to suggest this, as the property is functionally linked via the hallway. Notwithstanding this, the creation of a separate building would be unacceptable. Accordingly, if the application is recommended for approval, a condition would be imposed to ensure the annexe remains ancillary to the main dwellinghouse and is not used, sold, or let as an independent residential unit.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
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Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	24 March 2026
Earliest date for decision:	26 February 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	25.03.2026