

PLANNING STATEMENT

Change of Use from Dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a Residential Children's Home (Use Class C2)

**2 Shepherds House Lane
Earley, Reading, RG6 1AD**

Prepared by Anjum Design Ltd
Avon House, 435 Stratford Road, Shirley, Solihull, B90 4AA
07984 560 650 | info@anjumdesign.co.uk | anjumdesign.co.uk

Submitted to Wokingham Borough Council
August 2026

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This Planning Statement has been prepared by Anjum Design Ltd in support of a full planning application for the change of use of the existing dwellinghouse at 2 Shepherds House Lane, Earley, Reading, RG6 1AD from a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a small residential children's home (Use Class C2). The application is submitted to Wokingham Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.2** The proposal is for a home for a maximum of two children, cared for by two care staff working on a co-ordinated shift pattern to provide 24-hour supervision, together with a Registered Manager who will be present at the home Monday to Friday between 09:00 and 17:00. No external alterations to the building are proposed, and no extensions are required. The application seeks approval for the change of use only.
- 1.3** This Statement should be read alongside the following drawings prepared by Anjum Design Ltd: PL01 (Location Plan), PL02 (Site Plan), PL03 (Existing Floor Plans) and PL04 (Proposed Floor Plans), all dated August 2026.
- 1.4** It is important to note that the grant of planning permission does not of itself permit the property to operate as a children's home. The operator must first be registered with Ofsted, which will separately and rigorously assess the suitability of the premises, the provider and the Registered Manager under the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 before any child may be placed at the property.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1** The application site comprises a two-storey semi-detached dwellinghouse located on the southern side of Shepherds House Lane at its junction with London Road, within the established residential area of Earley. The property benefits from an approved single storey side extension (Wokingham Borough Council ref. 221991), granted on 18 August 2022 following the demolition of the existing garage and former side extension, and now provides a lounge, reception room, dining room and kitchen at ground floor, with two bedrooms, a staff office and a staff sleepover room proposed at first floor as shown on drawing PL04, alongside a bathroom and shower room.
- 2.2** The site extends to approximately 389 sq.m, of which approximately 191 sq.m comprises private rear garden, as shown on drawing PL02. The property benefits from a block-paved frontage providing off-street parking for two vehicles.
- 2.3** The surrounding area is residential in character, comprising a mix of semi-detached and terraced family dwellings along Shepherds House Lane and the wider Earley area. The site is well served by local amenities, with an Aldi supermarket and further convenience retail a short distance away on London Road, and a bus stop located immediately outside the site on London Road providing regular services into central Reading and the wider borough. The nearest primary school is Alfred Sutton Primary School, approximately 0.7 miles away, with The Bulmershe School, the nearest secondary school, at a similar distance. Earley railway station, providing services on the Reading to London Waterloo line, is approximately 1.3 miles from the site.
- 2.4** The Council's own delegated officer report for application 221991 confirms that the dwelling is not a Listed Building, is not within a Conservation Area, is not within the Green Belt, and is not outside of a settlement boundary. There are no planning constraints that would prevent the proposed change of use in principle.

3.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1** Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the dwelling from Use Class C3 to Use Class C2 to operate as a small residential children's home for a maximum of two children aged between 5 and 17 years. The home will provide medium-to-long-term placements in a stable, family-style household environment, enabling the children to integrate properly into the local community, build stable relationships with their carers, and access local education and services.
- 3.2** As shown on drawing PL04, the first floor accommodation is reconfigured to provide two children's bedrooms, a staff office and a staff sleepover room, together with a bathroom and shower room. The lounge, reception room, dining room and kitchen at ground floor will remain as generous shared family living space. There are no external alterations whatsoever, and the property could revert to a single family dwellinghouse at any time without any physical works.

Children to be Accommodated

- 3.3** The home will accommodate a maximum of two children at any one time, aged between 5 and 17 years on admission. The home will be registered with Ofsted and will care for children requiring general residential support, including those with mild to moderate emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (EBD), learning needs and/or sensory impairment, in accordance with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015. Suitability assessments will be undertaken before any placement is made to ensure that each child can thrive within the local environment and access nearby mainstream schools and services.
- 3.4** Children will be cared for on a medium-to-long-term basis. All children will attend full-time mainstream education (or a specialist education placement where required) during the day and will not be home-schooled; where short-term home-based educational support is needed, this will be limited to 1:1 tutoring in a quiet study area and will not resemble a formal classroom setting. Children will be accompanied by at least one member of care staff at all times outside school hours, in accordance with their individual care plans and risk assessments.
- 3.5** Low-level emotional and behavioural support will be provided on-site by trained care staff as part of day-to-day care. Specialist therapeutic sessions, such as counselling, will generally take place off-site or be conducted privately within the home by visiting professionals. No structural alterations are required to accommodate any therapy provision.

Staffing and Management

- 3.6** The home will be staffed by two care staff working on a rolling rota to ensure that the children are supervised and cared for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, covering both day and night shifts. Day and night shifts will hand over with a short overlap to ensure continuity of care, and one member of staff will sleep in overnight in the dedicated staff sleepover room.
- 3.7** In addition, a Registered Manager will be present at the home Monday to Friday between 09:00 and 17:00. The Registered Manager holds overall responsibility for the running of the home and is directly accountable to Ofsted.
- 3.8** The home is intended to operate, for all practical purposes, as a family household: the children will attend local schools, take meals together with their carers, participate in clubs and activities in the local community, and follow a structured weekly routine. The carers act in loco parentis, serving as substitute parents on behalf of the placing authority. Family contact visits will generally be arranged off-site, and professional visits (for example a social worker, typically once every six weeks) will be by appointment only.

- 3.9** The level of occupancy — two children and, at most, two adults at any one time plus the Registered Manager on weekdays — is materially below the level of occupation that the existing dwelling could lawfully accommodate as a family home in its current C3 use.

Management Plan

- 3.10** A Management Plan can be provided to accompany this application, setting out the day-to-day operation of the home in further detail, including staffing ratios and shift patterns, supervision arrangements, the management of professional and family visits (all of which will be by appointment only and kept to a minimum), curfew and missing-from-home protocols agreed with Thames Valley Police, security provisions, and a dedicated neighbour liaison contact with a complaints procedure. The applicant is content for compliance with the Management Plan to be secured by planning condition.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY AND RELEVANT DECISIONS

- 4.1** The application site has an established planning history. Householder permission ref. 221991 was granted by Wokingham Borough Council on 18 August 2022 for the erection of a single storey side extension following demolition of the existing garage and side extension. In granting that permission, the Council's Highways Officer raised no objection subject to conditions, having reviewed the parking plan and concluded that two on-site parking spaces were sufficient to meet the parking demand of the property, notwithstanding the loss of the garage. This is a directly relevant precedent for the present application, which likewise relies on the two existing on-site parking spaces.
- 4.2** Of particular relevance is Wokingham Borough Council's own Certificate of Lawful Existing Use or Development, ref. 243147, granted on 20 December 2024 in respect of 3 Salmond Road, Shinfield, Wokingham. That certificate — issued by the Council in its capacity as Local Planning Authority in respect of a property it owns and applied for in its own name — certifies that the building had been used for a C2 use (children's care home) for a consecutive period of ten years and that this use would have been lawful. This confirms that the Council itself recognises C2 children's residential care home use as an established and unobjectionable form of development within its own residential areas.
- 4.3** Wokingham Borough Council has also demonstrated a consistent recent record of granting planning permission for materially similar C3 to C2 children's home conversions elsewhere in the Borough. At Woodwaye, Woodley (ref. 250114), permission was granted in March 2025 for the conversion of a three-bedroom dwelling into a home for up to two children aged between 9 and 18, supported by up to four social care staff, notwithstanding objections from Woodley Town Council and neighbours regarding parking and character. The Council's planning officer concluded that the four on-site parking spaces were sufficient, noting that visits from professionals such as social workers would be occasional and limited, comparable to elderly or social care visits, and that it was very unlikely that the children themselves would be car owners.
- 4.4** Most recently, and directly comparable in both location and staffing model, permission was granted on 8 May 2025 (ref. 250246) for the conversion of a dwelling in Elm Road, Earley — within the same town as the application site — into a home for up to three looked-after children cared for by staff working on a rota basis. The Council's Highways Officer was satisfied that the level of use would be comparable to a standard dwelling with no significant impact on the highway network, and found that the three on-site parking spaces were acceptable for day-to-day staff parking together with additional parking for shift changeovers and any visitor parking. The Council also noted the property's proximity to public transport links and the availability of secure cycle storage.

- 4.5** These decisions demonstrate that Wokingham Borough Council has a clear and consistent, and very recent, record of approving small-scale C2 children's home conversions in similar suburban residential settings across the Borough, including within Earley itself. Each application falls to be determined on its own merits, but the present proposal — for two children only, with two off-street parking spaces — sits comfortably within, and in several respects below, the scale of provision that the Council has already found acceptable.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan

- 5.2** The development plan for Wokingham Borough comprises the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (adopted 29 January 2010) and the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted 21 February 2014). The emerging Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 is at an advanced stage of examination but has not yet been adopted, and is accordingly afforded limited weight at this time. The following policies of the adopted development plan are relevant:

- Core Strategy Policy CP1 — Sustainable Development;
- Core Strategy Policy CP2 — Inclusive Communities;
- Core Strategy Policy CP3 — General Principles for Development;
- Core Strategy Policy CP4 — Infrastructure Requirements;
- Core Strategy Policy CP5 — Housing Mix, Density and Affordability;
- Core Strategy Policy CP6 — Managing Travel Demand;
- Core Strategy Policy CP9 — Scale and Location of Development Proposals;
- MDD Policy CC01 — Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development;
- MDD Policy CC02 — Development Limits;
- MDD Policy CC03 — Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping;
- MDD Policy CC06 — Noise;
- MDD Policy CC07 — Parking.

- 5.3** The Wokingham Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document is a further material consideration.

National Policy and Legislation

- 5.4** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) is a significant material consideration. Paragraph 63 highlights the importance of meeting the housing needs of different groups within the community, expressly including looked after children. Paragraph 96 seeks planning decisions that achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places, and paragraph 98 requires decisions to support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community. Paragraph 135(f) seeks places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being.

- 5.5** Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 places a statutory 'sufficiency duty' on every local authority to take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children within its own area. Wokingham Borough Council publishes its own Sufficiency Statement in recognition of this duty. The Written Ministerial Statement of May 2023 ('Support for

children in care') further underlines the Government's commitment to increasing the supply of small, high-quality children's homes in ordinary residential settings, and confirms that the planning system should support rather than frustrate that objective.

- 5.6** The Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for persons with protected characteristics, including age and disability. Looked after children are amongst the most disadvantaged groups in society, and the provision of a stable local home directly advances that duty.

6.0 EVIDENCE OF NEED

- 6.1** There is a well-documented national shortage of children's home placements. Ofsted research confirms that the great majority of local authorities struggle to find homes for children with complex needs, and that children are too often placed far from their families, friends and schools because of a lack of suitable places near to where they live.
- 6.2** The need is also evident at the local level. Wokingham Borough Council is subject to the statutory sufficiency duty under section 22G of the Children Act 1989 and maintains its own published Sufficiency Statement in response. Data obtained from the Council under the Freedom of Information Act has previously shown a significant number of Wokingham's looked after children placed each year in independent or semi-independent living settings that fall outside the regulated children's homes framework, underlining the ongoing need for additional small, high-quality, Ofsted-regulated placements of the kind proposed here, within established residential communities in the Borough.
- 6.3** The proposal responds directly to that identified need by providing a small, high-quality, Ofsted-regulated home for two children within an established residential community in Earley, close to schools, healthcare and public transport. It is precisely the form of provision that national policy and the Council's own sufficiency duty seek to deliver, and mirrors the pattern of provision the Council has itself approved at Elm Road, Earley and elsewhere in the Borough over the past eighteen months.

7.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development and Loss of a Family Dwelling

- 7.1** Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP2 seek to ensure sustainable, inclusive development that meets the diverse needs of the local community. It is material that no physical changes are proposed to the building: the property could revert to a C3 family dwellinghouse at any time without structural work. Moreover, the home will in substance remain a family home — it will be the children's permanent address, a residential household in which the adults are carers rather than parents. The change of use therefore continues to meet a recognised housing need within the local community, consistent with NPPF paragraph 63 and the Council's own approach to comparable applications at Woodwaye, Woodley and Elm Road, Earley.
- 7.2** Core Strategy Policy CP9 requires that the scale and location of development proposals be appropriate to their surroundings. A small children's home for two children, occupying an existing dwelling with no external changes, is entirely appropriate to this established residential location and generates a level of activity no greater than — and in practice below — that of a family occupying the same dwelling.

Character, Appearance and Design

- 7.3** No external alterations, extensions or signage are proposed. The property will remain entirely unchanged in appearance and residential in character, and there will accordingly be no impact on the street scene or the character of Shepherds House Lane. The proposal complies with Core Strategy Policy CP1 and the design principles of the Borough Design Guide SPD.

Residential Amenity

- 7.4** The home will operate as a single household. Two children, supported by their carers, will generate domestic comings and goings — the school run, meals, homework, clubs and appointments — indistinguishable from, and in practice quieter than, those of a family with children that could lawfully occupy this dwelling today. Shift changeovers will take place with a short overlap and are no different in character from adult members of a household leaving for and returning from work.
- 7.5** In its approval of comparable applications at Woodwaye, Woodley and Elm Road, Earley, the Council concluded that professional visits would be occasional and limited in nature, comparable to elderly or social care visits, and that the level of use generated would be comparable to a standard dwelling. With only two children and staffing proportionate to that number, the present proposal sits well within the envelope of activity already found acceptable by the Council on directly comparable sites. The proposal accordingly complies with MDD Policy CC06 (Noise).
- 7.6** As regards community safety, all staff will be subject to rigorous vetting, the children will be supervised around the clock, and the operator will maintain a Location Risk Assessment reviewed in liaison with Thames Valley Police and the local authority.

Highways, Parking and Accessibility

- 7.7** The property benefits from off-street parking for two vehicles on the existing frontage, as shown on drawing PL02 and as accepted by the Council's Highways Officer in respect of the same driveway under application 221991. With two care staff on a co-ordinated rota, day-to-day staff parking demand will not exceed the two available spaces other than during brief shift changeover overlaps, mirroring the pattern the Council has already accepted at Woodwaye, Woodley (four spaces for up to four staff) and Elm Road, Earley (three spaces for a rota-based staffing model).
- 7.8** Neither of the children will drive. Professional visits, such as from a social worker, will typically occur once every six weeks by prior appointment and are properly regarded, as the Council itself has found on comparable applications, as occasional and limited in nature and not a matter of day-to-day routine, comparable to elderly or social care visits. A bus stop is located immediately outside the site on London Road, and staff will be encouraged to travel by public transport, on foot or by bicycle where practicable, with secure cycle storage available within the site.
- 7.9** Trip generation associated with the proposal will be comparable to, and in all likelihood lower than, that of a fully occupied family dwelling. There is no basis on which the proposal could approach the NPPF paragraph 116 threshold of an unacceptable impact on highway safety or a severe residual cumulative impact on the road network. The proposal complies with Core Strategy Policy CP6 and MDD Policy CC07.

Amenity Space

- 7.10** The approximately 191 sq.m private rear garden provides ample secure outdoor amenity space for two children and their carers, consistent with the level of amenity space expected for a dwelling of this size.

Equalities

- 7.11** The proposal delivers clear benefits under the Public Sector Equality Duty: it provides disadvantaged children — many of whom will have protected characteristics — with a stable home and the opportunity for family life within their own community, close to their schools and support networks. This weighs positively in the planning balance.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1** The proposal seeks permission for the change of use of 2 Shepherds House Lane, Earley from a dwellinghouse (C3) to a small residential children's home (C2) for a maximum of two children aged between 5 and 17 years, with two care staff on a rota providing 24-hour care across day and night shifts, and a Registered Manager present on weekdays between 09:00 and 17:00. The home will care for children requiring general residential support, including those with mild to moderate emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, learning needs and/or sensory impairment.
- 8.2** The proposal involves no external alterations; it will preserve the character and appearance of the property and the street scene; it will operate as a family household with a level of activity below that of the existing lawful use; and it retains the two existing off-street parking spaces already found acceptable by the Council for this property under application 221991.
- 8.3** The proposal responds directly to an evidenced national and local need for children's home placements and to the Council's statutory sufficiency duty under section 22G of the Children Act 1989. It is consistent with the development plan read as a whole and with the NPPF, and it aligns squarely with the Council's own very recent decisions to approve materially identical conversions at Woodwaye, Woodley and, within Earley itself, at Elm Road — as well as the Council's own recognition of established C2 children's home use at 3 Salmond Road, Shinfield.
- 8.4** For all of these reasons, it is respectfully contended that planning permission for the change of use from Dwellinghouse (Class C3) to a Residential Children's Home (Class C2) should be granted.