

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252063
Site Address:	2 Steggles Close, Woodley, Wokingham, RG5 3AH
Expiry Date:	2 December 2025
Site Visit Date:	21 October 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use from residential (Use Class C3) to a children's care 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 CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB09 – Residential Accommodation for Vulnerable Groups TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS10 – Meeting our housing needs C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C3 – Active travel C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H2 – Presumption against residential losses FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage

	FD3 – River corridors and watercourses NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC1 – Promoting healthy communities HC5 – Environmental protection HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Woodley Design Statement

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no planning history for the site.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No comments received
WBC Highways – No objections
WBC Health and Wellbeing – No comments received
WBC CIL – No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council

Woodley Town Council:

“The Planning & Community Committee reviewed the revised plans but wished to repeat their original objections that 2 parking spaces would provide insufficient on-site / off-street parking in respect of the operation of a residential and supported living accommodation. Members also concurred with resident comments on the Wokingham Planning Portal regarding the inappropriateness of the location for such residential accommodation.”

Officer comment: With regards to the Town Council’s concerns regarding the appropriateness of the site’s location, it is important to note that the application site is located within settlement limits where the proposed development, and its location, is acceptable in principle. Notwithstanding this, any material impacts on the site’s surroundings/neighbouring landowners would be appropriately assessed, as is the case with all planning

	applications.
Ward Member(s)	Councillor Alison Swaddle: <i>"In the event that this application is recommended for approval I would like it reported to Planning Committee as I agree with the Woodley Town Council Planning Committee and neighbours objection that 2 parking spaces would provide insufficient on-site / on-street parking in respect of the operation of a residential and supported living accommodation in a small close."</i> Officer comment: Councillor Alison Swaddle has now withdrawn her listing request. Please see the 'Assessment' section below for further details.
Neighbours	10 representations received from residents raising the following concerns: - Noise impacts from occupants of the property. - No.2 Steggles does not own the grassland to the front of the property (Officer comment: The applicant is aware they do not own the land. The appropriate ownership certificate (certificate B) was signed, and notice given to the landowner. The proposal does not include any operational development, and the land's use will be unaffected.) - Insufficient parking provision - Applicant not local to the area, not helping with local issues (Officer comment: This is not a material planning consideration). - Disturbance to visitors. - Impact on ability for children to play outside. - Impact on the residential character of Steggles Close - Risk of anti-social behaviour - Loss of family housing - Over-intensification of property

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site consists of a detached, three bedroom property located at the end of a small cul-de-sac known as Steggles Close, accessed via Reading Road to the south. For the purposes of policy, the site is located within the Major Development Location of Woodley.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the proposed change of use of the property from a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a children's care home (Use Class C2).

Revised information was received on 4th November 2025, reducing the number of staff on site to a maximum of three staff members at one time (originally five). All

relevant consultees, including neighbours and elected members, were consulted on these revisions for 14 days from 5th November 2025.

The number of dependents occupying the property would be a maximum of 2. The facility is described as a small-scale residential children's home providing 24-hour care and support within a nurturing family-style environment. Shift workers will be on a 12-hour rota.

Assessment:

The revisions made to the staff numbers as of 5th November reduces the total maximum occupants of the property to five at any one time (including dependents). As a result of this, the LPA have carefully considered whether this change in context results in a material change of use.

It is noted that use of buildings for care home purposes can fall into use classes C3(b) or C2. However, in this case, the property would fall into a C2 use as children cannot be left unaccompanied or live as a single household unit without the presence of an adult. The requirement of C3(b) use class is "use as a dwelling house by not more than six residents living together as a single household, (including a household where care is provided for residents)." As such, the LPA are content that the use class referred to in this application (C2 use) is correct.

The clear starting point is that a care home facility would normally be classed as a C2 use in accordance with the description in the Use Class Order, and relevant case law. This is not a matter of debate in this instance, whereby the applicant has accepted the existing use being one that falls within C2. Also, the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO) does not allow a permitted change from a C3 to a C2 use class. However, 'development' is defined in section 55(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (1990 Act) as including 'the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land'. It therefore follows that if a change of use is not a 'material' change of use then it would not constitute 'development' and could be lawful due to the provisions set out in 191(2) of the 1990 Act.

The issue on which the application is decided is whether the change of use to the children's home, as described, can be regarded as materially different to the existing use as a dwellinghouse, which is based on a matter of fact and degree. For a material change of use to occur, there must be some definable change in the character of the use from what has gone on previously. If a material change of use would occur, all relevant material considerations (including highway safety and neighbouring amenities) would be assessed in full.

Case law surrounding further decisions and judgements provides greater clarity as to whether a material change of use has occurred.

An Inspector's decision (APP/K5600/X/16/3146855 and APP/K5600/W/16/3146856) sets out the application of principles regarding whether a material change of use had occurred, based on the judgment (R (oao) The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea v (1) SSCLG (2) David Reis (3) Gianna Tong [2016] EWHC 1785 (Admin)). The appeal decision stated that the following factors (inter alia) should also be considered when determining whether a material change would occur:

- The extent to which an existing use fulfils a proper planning purpose is relevant in deciding whether a change from that use would amount to a material change of use. Thus, the need for a land use, such as housing or a type of housing in a particular area is a planning purpose which relates to the character of the use of land;
- Whether the loss of an existing use would have a significant planning consequence(s), even where there would be no amenity or environmental impact, is relevant to an assessment of whether a change from that use would represent a material change of use;

In the case at hand, emphasis is placed on the relatively modest scale of the operation, in which only two children are living and cared for at the property, with three carers on site at any one time, on a rotational basis.

The care home service will fulfil corporate parenting responsibilities including personal care, companionship, and educational support, alongside behaviour management and therapeutic support. The programme emphasises community integration and engagement to help children develop positive relationships within the local area.

The care provision will be delivered through a structured staffing system designed to meet the specific needs of the young people. The facility will operate with a maximum staff complement of 3 staff members, comprising 1 manager and 2 care staff. The shift patterns will consist of 2 x 12-hour shifts providing continuous 24-hour coverage throughout the year.

From the evidence provided, the 12-hour shift change would mean the movements by carers are relatively infrequent. The staff movements would not be significantly different in scale or character to those that would have taken place by a single household. There are fewer than 6 people at the property at any one time. Furthermore, due to the accessible location, the limited parking requirements, and the modest number of vehicle movements associated with the proposed use, it is unlikely to result in any definable change in traffic, parking stress and inconvenience for neighbouring residents.

There would be two residents in occupation and three members of staff. As such, the number of persons occupying the property would be consistent with a typical family home. The care also seeks to replicate that of a typical household. Accordingly, based on the information provided, the way in which the property would be used would not result in any definable change in the character when compared to the previous use of the dwellinghouse by a family.

Consequently, as a matter of fact and degree, the proposed use as a children's home for two children, with three carers working on a shift basis would not result in a definable change in the character of the use from what has gone on previously. Accordingly, the applicant has demonstrated that the change of use is not material and, therefore, would not constitute 'development' having regard to section 55 of the 1990 Act.

Councillor Alison Swaddle was informed of this viewpoint on 21st November by the LPA. Councillor Swaddle replied the same day, outlining that as the proposals did not require planning permission, it was unnecessary to list the application for

consideration by the Planning Committee.

Furthermore, as the proposals would not constitute development, material considerations such as highway safety and neighbouring amenity impacts are not relevant.

With regards to objections on the loss of a residential dwelling, please note that as the works do not constitute a material change of use, the property could be reverted to a dwellinghouse should the children's care home use cease.

Conclusion:

Overall, the proposed use as a children's home for two children, with three carers working on a shift basis would not result in a definable change in the character of the use from what has gone on previously. Accordingly, the applicant has demonstrated that the change of use is not material and, therefore, would not constitute 'development' having regard to section 55 of the 1990 Act.

The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to a condition ensuring the property can host no more six occupants, with a maximum of three residential dependents (children) at any one time. This is to ensure parking provision for the site remains adequate and furthermore, an increase of more than three would likely trigger a material change of use, thus requiring planning permission.

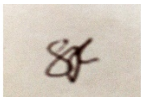
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

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 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
Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	26 November 2025
Earliest date for decision:	19 November 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	27.11.25