

Planning Statement

5 Elm Lane, Lower Earley,
Reading, RG6 5UE

Prepared For
Kennet Investments Limited

4396
November 2025



bell cornwell

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

Bell Cornwell LLP, Unit 2, Meridian Office Park, Osborn Way,
Hook, Hampshire RG27 9HY

01256 766673 | info@bell-cornwell.co.uk | bell-cornwell.co.uk



CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	SITE AND PLANNING HISTORY	3
	SITE AND SURROUNDING	3
	PLANNING HISTORY	3
	PROPOSAL	3
	PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS	6
3	PLANNING POLICY AND CONSIDERATIONS	7
	NEED	7
	PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT	8
	DESIGN	8
	AMENITY	9
	TRAFFIC GENERATION AND PARKING	9
4	CONCLUSION	12



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission is sought for:

Change of use of the existing residential dwelling (Use Class C3) to a children's residential care home (Use Class C2) and side extension to rear outbuilding at 5 Elm Lane, Lower Earley, Reading, RG6 5UE.

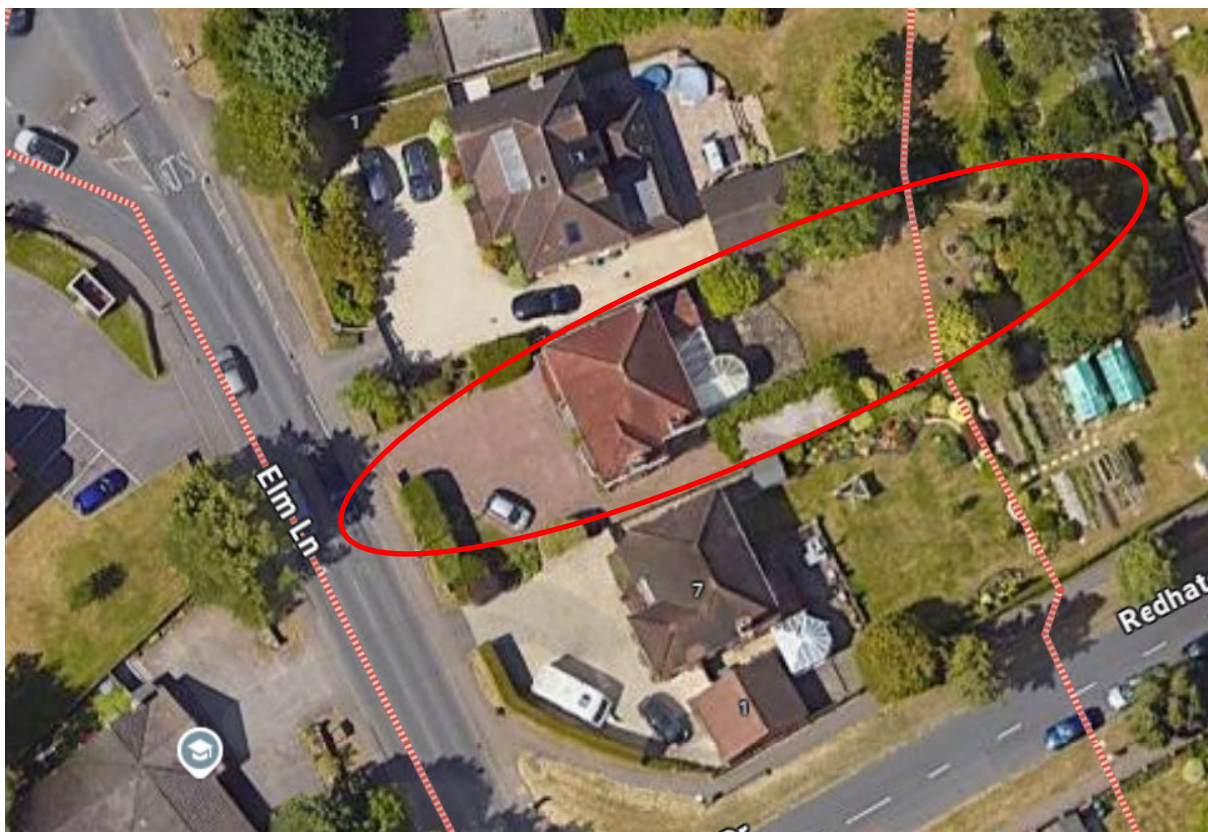


Figure 1 - Aerial image of the site and the surrounding area

1.2 Accompanying this planning statement are the following:

- Transport Technical Note – 2025/8819/TN01
- Plans
 - EL05:500 – Block & Location Plans
 - EL05: 501 – Existing & As Built Floor Plans



- EL05: 502 – Proposed Floor Plans
- EL05: 503 – Elevations Existing and Built
- EL05:510 – Garage conversion and extension



2 SITE AND PLANNING HISTORY

SITE AND SURROUNDING

- 2.1 The application site is located in the settlement boundary of Earley. The site comprises of an existing house located in an existing line of houses. Access is taken off Elm Lane. The property is a two-storey house. The site is set back from the road with parking to the front. There is a good-sized rear garden with a depth of about 35m.
- 2.2 The character of the local area is that of a residential area with typically detached houses surrounding it within reasonable sized plots.
- 2.3 The lawful use of the house is a residential (C3) dwellinghouse.
- 2.4 The building is not listed, and it is not within a Conservation Area. It is not within or adjacent to any ecological or landscape designations. The site is within Flood Zone 1.

PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.5 The online planning register shows the following planning history for the site:
- 242600 – Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed hip to gable 2no loft extensions to facilitate loft conversion and installation of roof lights – approved 2 December 2024
 - 251058 – Householder application for the proposed erection of a two-storey rear extension, following demolition of the existing conservatory – approved 3 July 2025

PROPOSAL

- 2.6 Planning permission is sought for:

Change of use of the existing residential dwelling (Use Class C3) to a children's residential care home (Use Class C2) and side extension to rear outbuilding at 5 Elm Lane, Lower Earley, Reading, RG6 5UE.



- 2.7 The works approved by 242600 and 251058 have been implemented and the external works completed. The internal alterations are currently under way.
- 2.8 The only physical works proposed with this application are a side extension to the rear outbuilding that is currently used as a garage. As demonstrated by plan EL05:510 the proposed extension is on the side internal to the site. No changes are proposed to the side nearest the neighbours. It is proposed that this outbuilding be used as a training room and store.
- 2.9 No external changes are proposed to the house.
- 2.10 Parking for 6 cars is shown within the Transport Technical Note. There is space within the site to accommodate cycle parking should this be required.
- 2.11 Bin storage would be to the rear.
- 2.12 The proposed use is for a children's home for young people [REDACTED] [REDACTED] providing full-time care with children living on site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The site will have capacity for 4 children aged between 5-17 years, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] The length of stay would differ for each child, with some living at the site for several months, whilst others may remain for years. The facility would also provide overnight accommodation for up to two members of staff.
- 2.13 It is the operator's intention that the children and young people would live together in the traditional sense – in a family style setting. The home will serve as a safe, nurturing environment helping the children and young people to thrive and integrate into the local community. Members of staff shop, cook and clean as per a typical family household. No large deliveries are received.
- 2.14 Children are educated off-site through the use of mainstream schools or alternative provision. They could be taken to/from school by house car or through using public transport or by taxi.



- 2.15 The site would employ approximately 10 staff working within three key shift periods. The first shift runs between 0700-1500 and would require between 2 and 6 staff members to be on duty. The second shift is between 1400-2200, with approximately 2 staff members on duty over this period. The final shift (known as the sleep-in shift) lasts from 2100-0700, where one staff member from a waking night team remains awake throughout the shift, and another is on-site sleeping but is available for emergencies.
- 2.16 The training room would be used for Kennet Care staff training; it would only be for use by members of staff. Training sessions would be for 4-8 staff only. The building would be used for approximately 11 training sessions per year (i.e. x 4 CPI training sessions per year, x 4 safeguarding training cycles per year, x 2 fire training cycles and x 1 PACE training per year) and this would include staff of the proposed facility as well as staff from other operator specific facilities. Any staff travelling from other facilities would travel in one vehicle in order to allow staff to return back to the care facilities for scheduled shifts, for example.
- 2.17 It is a legal requirement for all staff working with children in care to achieve a Level 3 qualification in Health and Social Care within two years of starting employment. The staff team for the company comprises 40 members of staff, 95% are already qualified at Level 3. All of the management team are trained to Level 5 or are currently working towards the qualification. In addition, many of the staff also hold further relevant qualifications such as psychology, social work, psychopathology, and physical education.
- 2.18 New employees complete 37 training courses during their first three weeks of employment, covering essential areas such as first aid, fire safety and health and safety, among many others. Several of these courses are refreshed on an annual basis.
- 2.19 Each site is managed by a Registered Manager, supported by an Assistant Manager and two Team Leaders. Oversight is provided by the Responsible individual who visits the home regularly and remains available on call.



- 2.20 The home would be Ofsted registered. Kennet Care operate three other homes in the Reading area; Hazel Brook, Westlyn and Langham. The company are therefore very experienced in running homes of this nature. They all have Ofsted ratings of Good.

PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS

- 2.21 Letters were sent to the surrounding residents. The letters made the neighbours aware of the proposed planning application and the nature of the proposed use.
- 2.22 Neighbours were invited to contact those named in the letter with any questions etc.
- 2.23 A responsible individual from the business received a couple of interests following sending the letters. Not all neighbours written to have been in touch. When in the area the responsible individual has visited the properties, but no one was in to speak with.
- 2.24 The responsible individual met with the neighbours who made contact. In response to the meetings between the residents and the responsible individual feedback is that the meetings were appreciated in advance of submitting the planning application. It was acknowledged that there are concerns around the perception of children's homes. Understanding that Kennet Care are experienced providers alleviated some fears and hearing about how the sites are managed to prevent unneighbourly behaviour was useful. Ongoing communication between the responsible individual and neighbours will continue. It was agreed that everyone wants to be able to provide children with the best start in life.
- 2.25 One change was requested and this has been addressed. There was a request that the current 1m high wooden fence between the site and No.3 Elm Lane be increased in height to 1.8m to afford the neighbours improved privacy to the front of their property.



3 PLANNING POLICY AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 The property is located within the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council.
- 3.3 The relevant development documents for consideration are:
- Core Strategy (adopted 2010)
 - Managing Development Document (Local Plan) (adopted 2014)
- 3.4 The Council has submitted a Local Plan Update to the Planning Inspectorate. Hearings in relation to the examination are to commence mid-November 2025.

NEED

- 3.5 It is estimated that in 2025 across the country there will be 95,000 children in care. There has been a significant increase in the number of children in care over the last ten years. It is suggested that in the first quarter of 2025 6,070 care applications were made.
- 3.6 Paragraph 2.26 of the Core Strategy recognises that Wokingham Borough Council needs to consider 'other facilities for children and young people including child care, children's youth centre, play, recreational and sports space and foster/care homes'.
- 3.7 Paragraph 2.33 of the Core Strategy goes on to recognise that 'for a variety of reasons, some children come into the care of the Borough Council. As far as possible, these children will be placed within their wider family and friends network, or with foster carers. Where such arrangements cannot be made favourably, children will live in a small group home. The Council is opening one small group homes in 2008 and may need one or more other similar homes in the future'.



PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 3.8 Policy CC02 (Development Limits) of the Managing Development Delivery Document generally supports development proposals that are within defined settlement policy boundaries as the priority for locating and addressing development needs. The scheme is within a residential area in the settlement of Earley so meets this planning policy.
- 3.9 Policy CP2 (Inclusive Communities) of the Core Strategy looks to ensure that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities. It goes on to confirm that 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. The schemes provides a home for children and young people in need of support. The scheme would not be brought forward if there was not a need for it. As demonstrated above, there is a growing need for facilities such as this.
- 3.10 Policy CP3 (General Principles for development) of the Core Strategy at (h) looks to protect the existing housing stock and so requires that there is no net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation or land. Whilst this proposal will result in the loss of a private dwellinghouse, the change of use will not remove a residential use from the land. The house will be a home for four children under a C2 use. Should the C2 use no longer be required there would be no physical changes required to enable the house to be returned to a C3 use class.

DESIGN

- 3.11 Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) of the Core Strategy requires developments to achieve a high-quality design. With the external changes being limited to only a single storey side extension to the garage at the rear of the house there will be no visual change to the appearance of the plot when viewed from the public realm.
- 3.12 The side extension is internal to the site and would not be visible from the neighbouring dwellings.



- 3.13 The external works would not impact on the visual amenity of the area. The scheme complies with Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy.

AMENITY

- 3.14 Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) of the Core Strategy requires developments to maintain the high quality of the environment. Developments should avoid harm to drainage, water quality, creation of pollution and harm to the amenity of future occupiers.
- 3.15 The proposed change of use does not significantly change the way the house is used compared to the lawful C3 use. It will remain a house lived in in a manner as close to as possible a typical family way.
- 3.16 The noise generated by the proposed development will remain that as expected by a family. The development shouldn't have an impact on neighbouring residents.

TRAFFIC GENERATION AND PARKING

- 3.17 Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) of the Core Strategy requires developments to provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes and demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need for travel, particularly by private car.
- 3.18 CP6 (Managing Travel Demand) of the Core Strategy requires sustainable travel options to be available. The site is in a sustainable location and so this is achievable.
- 3.19 Policy CC07 (Parking) of the Managing Development Delivery Document.
- 3.20 The application is accompanied by a Transport Technical Note. This demonstrates that considers the acceptability of the proposed change of use from a highway and transportation perspective, including accessibility credentials of the site, consideration of the access, parking and servicing arrangements, and the impact of the proposed development on the local highway network.



- 3.21 It is demonstrated that an excellent level of visibility is achievable in both directions along Elm Lane from the site in accordance with visibility requirements, including to the roundabout junction to the north of the site and in excess of 43m to the south of the site.
- 3.22 There are no underlying road safety issues relating to the condition or layout of the highway around the site access.
- 3.23 The site is well served by pedestrian footways which are typically lit. The local highway network is considered to be conducive to cycling, given its residential nature. The site is in a good location to access local bus infrastructure.
- 3.24 There would be up to 6 members of staff save for the one hour change over time between 2-3pm where there could be up to 8 members of staff. Not all staff need to travel individually or be reliant on the private car. It is anticipated that some staff would reside within the local area and are therefore likely to travel to / from the site by the wide range of sustainable modes of transport available in the vicinity of the site. The location of the site within a residential area is also likely to lend itself to active travel by any staff residing locally. This is consistent with the business model of many other operational Kennet Care facilities.
- 3.25 Furthermore, there is also likely to be an element of car sharing between staff residing within close proximity of one another. Kennet Care also operate a system whereby staff can drive company vehicles to / from the site for work.
- 3.26 The site is anticipated to generate a parking demand for up to 5 staff cars on the site during the busiest period (i.e. between 2-3pm when staff handover shifts) and to reflect an element of car sharing, sustainable travel and company vehicle use.
- 3.27 There is sufficient space within the site to provide at least 2 cycle parking spaces, in accordance with WBC's parking standards.
- 3.28 Existing vs proposed trip generation is considered, and it is concluded that the proposed development would not likely generate any material traffic during either of



the traditional morning or evening peak hour periods (i.e. 8-9am or 5-6pm), rather it could offer a reduction to peak travel. Most traffic will occur sporadically throughout the daytime and evening periods to reflect the scheduled shift patterns.

3.29 The proposed development is considered acceptable from a transport perspective.



4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Policy CC01 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) of the Managing Development Delivery Document. This policy states that where planning applications accord with the policies in the Development Plan they will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 Whilst it is acknowledged that due to the change of use there would technically be a loss of one residential dwelling, the change is such that the use would remain within a residential use and provide a home to four children and therefore not in conflict with policy CP3(i). The residential use is not lost entirely. Furthermore, should the proposed C2 use not be required any longer, then the change of use back to residential would be straightforward as no physical changes are proposed to the house.
- 4.3 There would not be any visual impact, the house would continue to appear as a house and there is only a small-scale extension proposed to the rear of the property to the inside edge of the existing outbuilding.
- 4.4 There would not be any amenity impact from the proposal, the property would nature of the proposed use remains a residential one with the intention that it would be run as close to a traditional family household as possible.
- 4.5 The Transport Note confirms there will not be any harm to the highway network, the access is safe and there is appropriate parking provision within the front car parking area to accommodate staff parking.
- 4.6 The proposal should be supported by the Council as it meets a recognised need for a use that is increasing in demand.