

PLANNING REF : 260954
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 92 Hartsbourne Road
: Reading
: RG65SJ
SUBMITTED BY : Mr N Hume
DATE SUBMITTED : 16/06/2026

COMMENTS:

I write to place on record a number of concerns which I believe warrant careful scrutiny, and which I wish to be available for reference should this permission be granted and issues subsequently arise.

I note the Written Ministerial Statement of May 2023 (HCWS795) which encourages local planning authorities to be supportive of accommodation for looked-after children. I do not dispute the genuine need for high-quality placements, nor the policy intent behind that statement. However, the WMS itself emphasises that placements must be the right homes, in the right places, and that applicants should demonstrate that the service is needed in that locality. It is on the question of suitability and deliverability that my concerns rest.

History of the Property

This property has previously been used for purposes of a similar nature. That prior use gave rise to a number of documented concerns within the local community, including:

- Persistent noise and anti-social behaviour affecting neighbouring residents
 - Evidence of drug consumption on or near the premises
 - Poor waste management practices, including the accumulation of significant quantities of refuse in the garage, which constituted an environmental health concern
- These are not hypothetical risks they are matters that have already occurred at this address. Any assessment of this application should take that history seriously.

Operational Character of the Proposed Use

A children's home is materially different in character from a standard family dwelling, and it would be misleading to treat it otherwise. Unlike a private household, a children's home involves:

- A rotating population of residents, with children frequently arriving and departing.
- Staff present and moving to and from the property at all hours, including nights and weekends.
- A level of activity and footfall that is continuous and institutional in nature, rather than domestic.
- Use is specific to people between the ages of 15 to 18 who present with Social, emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

This distinction is relevant to the impact on the surrounding area, which it should be noted is a quiet suburban location with a large proportion of elderly residents, and should be weighed accordingly. The adjoining and surrounding properties have no young people. The use being specific to young people with SEMH needs makes the property materially different in character from a standard family living. Your proposal says it will not be materially different to a standard family dwelling but the above and rotating staff show otherwise.

Adherence to Policies and Procedures

The application may reference policies and procedures intended to govern the operation of the home, including safeguarding protocols, behaviour management, and community integration commitments. I would urge the local planning authority to consider what assurance exists that these will be consistently followed in practice. The history of this property suggests that stated intentions have not always translated into compliant operation.

It should also be noted that there are some inconsistencies in the planning application, for example the waste management policy is contradictory as to where the bins will be stored; citing that they will be stored at the rear or side-access when the plan shows the bin storage will be at the front of the property.

Transport and Community Integration

The application references use of public transport as part of its community integration approach. In the context of this property and its location, I would characterise this as aspirational rather than substantiated. Reliance on public transport by looked-after children potentially including those with complex needs requires active management, staffing support, and consistent implementation. No evidence has been provided that this is realistic or that it has been achieved in previous operations at comparable settings. Furthermore, recent activity at the property, whether or not connected with this application, has seen a number of private vehicles, parked not on the driveway as in the planning application, but instead parked on the highway and in some cases parked partially on the pavement restricting pedestrian access.

In summary

I make these comments in good faith and with awareness of the policy context. I am not suggesting that looked-after children should not be housed in appropriate residential settings. I am asking that the local planning authority satisfy itself and place on record that the specific history of this property has been considered, that the operational realities of the proposed use are properly understood, and that any permission granted includes conditions sufficient to address the concerns raised above.

Should problems arise after any permission is granted, I would wish these comments to be available as evidence that concerns were raised, in good time, before the event. To date all we have is this application. No other notifications or contacts have been made with the local residents, despite the planning applications making reference in the planning statement to a registered manager, deputy manager and a team of residential support workers.