

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260954
Site Address:	94 Hartsbourne Road, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 5SJ
Expiry Date:	13 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	26 May 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use from Residential Dwelling to Care Home.	

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 CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements 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 CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB08 – Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards TB09 – Residential Accommodation for Vulnerable Groups TB21 – Landscape Character
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no relevant planning history for this site

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objections
WBC Drainage – No objections
WBC Highways – No objections subject to condition(s)
WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy) – No comments received
WBC Health and Wellbeing – No comments received
WBC Community Safety – No comments received
WBC CIL – Development is not CIL liable
WBC Education (School Place Planning) – No comments received
WBC Ecology Newts – No objections
WBC Waste Services – No comments received
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received
External
Thames Water Utilities Ltd

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council raise no objections to the proposed development.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	Two neighbour representations received raising the following concerns: - Previous history of the site involves evidence of drug consumption on or near the premises, poor waste management and anti-social behaviour (Officer comment: Historic incidents and assumptions about future occupants attract limited planning weight. However, potential amenity impacts arising from the proposed C2 use, including noise, activity, waste and neighbour disturbance, are material considerations and are assessed in the relevant sections below. Matters relating to individual behaviour, safeguarding and regulatory compliance are principally controlled through separate statutory regimes.) - Change in character of the site. - Assurance that safeguarding protocols will be followed (Officer comment: This is not a material planning consideration). - Over-reliance on public transport - Clarify the use they intend to change to (Officer comment: A care home falls under Use Class C2.) - Unsure how all four children, and staff, will accommodate the site overnight given the number of bedrooms. (Officer comment: There are four bedrooms and four children. Internal alterations would not require planning permission to create an additional bedroom for a carer, for example.)

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site consists of a two-storey detached dwellinghouse located on Hartsbourne Road, Wokingham.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the proposed change of use of the property from a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a Care Home (Use Class C2).

Specifically, the property would be utilised as a children's residential care home accommodating up to four young people aged 5 to 18 years with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

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.

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that 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:

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

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy which states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

- Do not lead to a net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation or land;

Section 5 of the NPPF states that in order to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing including the needs of different groups in the community. This is reinforced in Policy TB09 of the MDD Local Plan – “Residential Accommodation for Vulnerable Groups” – which states that the Council will in principle support proposals which provide for a number of different types of accommodation to provide for people’s needs over a lifetime. This includes the provision of extra care homes, dementia units, enhanced sheltered schemes and

proposals that allow the elderly and those with disabilities to remain in their own home. Although the examples within Policy TB09 are not exhaustive, the proposal would provide residential accommodation for a vulnerable group with specific care needs and is therefore consistent with the policy's broader objective of supporting specialist accommodation to meet a range of community needs.

Despite the loss of a traditional family dwelling at a time when the Council cannot provide a five year housing land supply, the proposed change of use would help expand and improve an important community facility within the borough in accordance with TB09 and CP2 as it helps meet the needs of a group of people (i.e. children). It is also important to note that proposal retains the overarching residential nature of the property by providing living accommodation which is another type of residential accommodation.

Hence, whilst the proposal would result in the loss of one C3 dwelling, this attracts limited adverse weight in this case because the building would remain in a residential form of occupation and would provide specialist accommodation for children with identified care needs, which is supported by Policies CP2 and TB09 and the NPPF objective of meeting the needs of different groups in the community.

The Planning Authority affords significant weight to meeting the needs of children in care and on balance the principle of the proposal is acceptable.

Character of the Area:

As there are no external or internal changes proposed and the use of the dwelling would retain the residential nature of the site, there would be no harm to the visual amenities of the area. Any increases in vehicle movements to and from the site would be negligible and would not harm the wider residential character of the surrounding estate.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking, Loss of Light and Overbearing:

As there are no external changes proposed, there are no concerns on these grounds.

Noise:

The applicant sets out that the home will operate as a small, staff-supervised residential setting. It is acknowledged that, due to the specific needs of the young residents, there is potential for occasional noise or disturbance that may differ in character from that typically associated with a single private dwelling.

The submitted Noise and Anti-Social Behaviour Mitigation Plan provides a clear framework for managing these impacts. Measures include a defined quiet period after 9:00pm, cessation of external garden use during this time, and a commitment that no amplified sound or unusual noise sources will be introduced. Noise and behaviour management will be overseen by the Registered Manager, supported by trained staff always present. The continuous staffing model and use of proactive de-escalation techniques are significant mitigating factors, reducing both the likelihood and duration of disturbance, although occasional elevated noise events may still occur.

It is important to note that matters of noise complaints and anti-social behaviour are

not material planning matters that should influence the determination of this application since they are subject to separate legislation. Therefore, whilst the mitigation provided within the Noise and Anti-Social Behaviour Mitigation Plan is a welcomed supplementary document, its enforceability falls to the Council's Environmental Health and Anti-Social Behaviour teams outside of the planning process.

The application is further supported by a Good Neighbour and Community Engagement Plan, which sets out a structured approach to managing relationships with surrounding residents and addressing any concerns. This includes initial engagement with neighbours, the provision of a direct liaison contact, and a clear complaints response procedure. The use will remain visually indistinguishable from a private dwelling, and the operation will be subject to Ofsted regulation. Together, these measures provide a robust framework to manage potential anti-social behaviour and community impacts, which are considered to be low.

In terms of general activity, the use will generate some additional comings and goings associated with staff shifts and occasional visitors; however, these movements are distributed throughout the day and night, with sleep-in staff reducing late-night activity. Overall, the level of activity is not considered likely to give rise to significant additional disturbance.

Overall, WBC Environmental Health raise no objections on potential noise impacts arising from the change of use.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

General:

The covering letter appended to the application states that the property comprises a four-bedroom dwelling with off-street parking for three vehicles, cycle storage, and an internal ground floor office and sleep-in facility to support 24-hour staffing. The submitted documents do not specify how many staff will be on site but do state that a minimum staffing ratio of 1:1 will be maintained, implying that there will be four members of staff on site.

Accessibility:

The Sustainable Travel Policy document submitted by the applicant states that the site is within reasonable walking distance of local amenities, shops, and services, and is well served by Reading Buses routes connecting the area to Reading town centre and the wider conurbation.

Staff will be encouraged to travel via sustainable means, with information about local bus routes, cycle routes, and rail connections will be provided to all staff at the point of recruitment and will be displayed within the staff accommodation area of the home. Similarly, young people resident at the home will be supported and encouraged to use public transport, cycling, and walking as their primary means of travel within the local area.

The nearest bus stops with a service are the Beech Lane/Wilderness Road stops, located a 450m walk northeast of the site, which exceeds the 400m maximum walking distance requirement. In spite of the limited accessibility, it is reasonable to

consider some of the staff travel to work trips could be made by sustainable travel modes.

Traffic Impact:

The Planning Statement submitted with the application states that Staff will travel to and from the property at shift change times, which are distributed across the day and night and do not give rise to peak-hour traffic concentrations. It is acknowledged that the trip generation during peak periods would be similar to the existing dwelling.

Parking:

According to the WBC Parking Standards, Residential Care Homes will require one car parking space per full time equivalent staff member, plus one visitor space per three residents. Assuming there are four residents with a 1:1 staffing ratio, this equates to four staff parking spaces and one visitor space. Each parking space shall have minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m.

The driveway has capacity for three parking spaces, and the parking note and plan submitted by the applicant confirms this. These spaces are independent of each other and occupying one will not obstruct access to the adjacent bays. There is therefore the residual demand of one staff space and one visitor space which cannot be accommodated on the driveway.

The Sustainable Travel Policy document submitted by the applicant states that there will be a rolling shift pattern and that staff vehicles will arrive and depart at various times throughout the day and night, and that there will not typically be more than two or three staff vehicles on site simultaneously.

The parking plan submitted by the applicant states that the property also benefits from ample on-street parking availability along Hartsbourne Road and the surrounding area. It continues that any such use would typically be occasional and supplementary in nature, ensuring that the operational needs of the property can be comfortably accommodated without causing obstruction or inconvenience to nearby residents.

The applicant has confirmed that not all staff will be on site at the same time and that typically a maximum of 2 staff vehicles will be present on site; occasionally increasing to 3 staff cars during a shift changeover. The applicant has confirmed that professional visits for the site will be strictly managed and will take place offsite at relevant offices where possible, which will further avoid/remove the need for car parking at the property.

On this basis, although the development would not meet the maximum theoretical parking demand generated by the adopted standard, the operational evidence indicates that the peak parking demand would generally be capable of being accommodated within the three on-site spaces, with any limited overspill being occasional and not resulting in severe highway safety or residual cumulative impacts.

Dropped Kerb:

The existing dropped kerb is located at the east of the site. This will not adequately serve the proposed parking spaces. A centralised dropped kerb arrangement would

better serve the three car parking spaces.

The applicant has confirmed that they are happy to reposition the dropped kerb to provide a more centralised access arrangement, should the Highway Authority consider this beneficial. The applicant offers to progress this under a separate application with the Traffic Management team post-permission.

As the amended access arrangement is necessary to ensure safe and convenient use of the on-site parking spaces, its delivery should be secured before first occupation of the approved use.

Cycle Provision:

Cycle provision should be provided in accordance with WBC standards that require 1 cycle storage space per 5 members of staff.

The existing garage remains suitable for cycle storage, which is acceptable. The Sustainable Travel Policy indicates that there would be the provision of secure cycle storage for three bicycles at the property, which is in excess of the policy requirements.

Refuse Collection:

The applicant has specified the location of the bin store, and Highways are of the opinion that this will not impede parking provision or vehicle access/egress manoeuvres. It is considered that the waste will be of a domestic nature and the existing kerbside collection will remain suitable.

Amenity Space:

The site's existing rear garden would remain sufficient to serve the occupiers of the property.

Flooding and Drainage:

Due to the nature of the proposals, there are no concerns on these grounds.

Landscape and Trees:

Due to the nature of the proposals, there are no concerns on these grounds.

Ecology:

Due to the nature of the proposals, there are no concerns on these grounds.

Biodiversity Net Gain:

The proposed development falls under the 'de minimis' definition and is therefore exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gains.

Conclusion:

The proposal would result in the loss of one C3 dwelling; however, the property would remain in residential occupation and would provide specialist C2 accommodation for children with identified care needs. This attracts significant positive weight having regard to Policies CP2 and TB09 and the NPPF objective of supporting mixed and inclusive communities.

Overall, the benefits of providing specialist care accommodation outweigh the limited harm arising from the loss of one conventional dwelling, and the proposal is considered to accord with the development plan when read as a whole. Hence, the proposed development complies with the development plan. Subject to conditions, this application is recommended for approval.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

The Council's CIL Team has confirmed that the proposed change of use is not CIL liable. No CIL liability notice is therefore required on the basis of the development as assessed.

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. The proposal would provide specialist residential care accommodation for children with identified needs, and there is no evidence that the development would result in significant adverse equality impacts; any residual amenity, highway and operational impacts have been assessed separately in the relevant sections above.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	10 July 2026
Earliest date for decision:	16 June 2026

Recommendation agreed by:	
(Authorised Officer)	
Date:	10/07/26