

ET Planning

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Client:

Brighter Living

515 Reading
Road,

Winnersh, RG41 5EX

Use of the property as a children's home.

Holly Goulding **BSc (Hons)**

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CIL | Enforcement | Land Promotion | Planning | Sequential Tests | Viability

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - OFSTED Report: '*How local authorities plan for the sufficiency of accommodation that meets the needs of children in care and care leavers'*

Appendix 2 - Written Ministerial Statement on Children's Homes

Appendix 3 – Officer Report application ref: 250114

Appendix 4 - APP/D4635/W/25/3359517

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the use of the dwelling as a children's home at 515 Reading Road, Winnersh, RG41 5EX.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents prepared by Mr D Howlett and Windrush Ecology:
 - Site Location Plan
 - Block Plan
 - Floor Plans
 - Elevation Plans
 - Annexe Plans
 - Biodiversity Statement
- 1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site comprises an existing six bedrooned detached residential bungalow with an associated garden and outbuilding with a hardstanding driveway to the north side of Reading Road.
- 2.2 The site is located adjacent to the Bearwood Path bus stop which provides onwards connections to Bracknell Bus Station and Reading.
- 2.3 The site is also located 0.4 miles south east of the Winnersh Triangle bus stop.
- 2.4 The site is located within the defined settlement boundary.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Application Ref: 252236 Application for a certificate of lawfulness to demonstrate that no development is occurring in the change of use from dwelling to children's home. Refused November 2025 - Appealed – Pending decision
- 3.2 Application Ref: 251112 Application for a lawful development certificate for proposed use as home for a maximum of 4 children under the ward of the Local Authority. Refused July 2025.
- 3.3 Application Ref: 250222 Householder application for the proposed raising of the roof, the erection of a single storey side extension, plus the conversion of the loft into habitable accommodation, facilitated by the erection of a rear dormer, including the erection of one roof light and changes to fenestration, following the demolition of the existing conservatory, chimney and outbuilding. Approved April 2025.

- 3.4 Application Ref: 042038 Proposed single storey rear extension to dwelling to form conservatory and porch extension. Approved April 2004.
- 3.5 Application Ref: 031284 Proposed rear dormer extension to dwelling to form rooms in roof space. Approved August 2003.
- 3.6 This application seeks to address the refusal reasons outlined within application ref: 252236 which was refused for the following reason:

The proposed use of dwelling as a children's care home as described constitutes development requiring planning permission as it would result in material change of use from Use Class C3 to C2. The description provided in the supporting Planning Statement falls within a C2 Use Class. The use as described would not form a single household and therefore would be a C2 Use Class. The proposed use would result in a material change to the character of the use of the site. C2 and C3 uses draw upon different planning policies; strategic assessments and can attract different material weight; they are materially different uses with different material planning consequences. The certificate is therefore recommended for refusal.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The National Design Guide (2019) identifies that "well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them. They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as the ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time" (para 120-121).

- 4.2 Regarding the requirements of NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:
- 4.3 **Use and Amount:** The proposed use is for the dwelling to be used as a children's home for a maximum of 4 children under the ward of the Local Authority. Whilst the duration of the stay for children will very dependent on the specific needs of the child, it is anticipated that the property would be the long-term home for the children with a minimum stay of one year. The property would be the children's primary living accommodation for the duration of their stay. The children will be aged between 11-17.
- 4.4 **Staffing Arrangements:** The staffing changeover times would be 7am, 2:30pm and 9:30pm with typically one carer carrying out a nightshift from 9:30pm to 7am. The shift pattern identified meets OFSTED regulations for the care sector. The rota pattern is very common across children's homes to ensure a consistent group of staff and limited changes as per the average family setting.
- 4.5 **Landscaping:** The proposals will not result in any changes to existing landscaping across the site.
- 4.6 **Appearance:** The proposed development will utilise the existing built form on site with no external alterations proposed.
- 4.7 **Access & Parking:** The proposal site comprises ample space for off-road car parking, with 5 spaces being provided on site, one of which is to be used by the house vehicle.
- 4.8 Furthermore, by virtue of the site's location in close proximity to sustainable transport modes, staff will be encouraged to utilise public transport or car share wherever possible.

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that "Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way" and "at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible". Paragraph 124 of the NPPF comments that planning should "promote an effective use of land" in "meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions".
- 5.3 Paragraph 61 confirms the Government's objective to boost the supply of housing, and paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.
- 5.4 Paragraph 131 identifies that "Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities", whilst paragraph 139 states that significant weight should be given to "outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."
- 5.5 The National Design Guide builds on the above, and clarifies that "well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market

demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use" (para 109).

5.6 **Preliminary Matters:** This application is submitted without prejudice to the on-going appeal following the refusal of application ref. 252236. It remains the Applicant's view that the use of the property as a children's home can be granted under the certificate of lawfulness approach. However, due to the need for more children's homes within Wokingham Borough, this application has been submitted to put forward a planning case as to why the application is acceptable in relation to local planning policies.

5.7 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the Development Plan comprises the following documents:

- Managing Development Delivery adopted 2014 ('MDD')
- Core Strategy adopted 2010 ('CS')

5.8 MDD 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.

5.9 Paragraph 63 of the NPPF states that LPAs should establish the housing need for different groups in the community; one group is looked after children.

5.10 CS Policy CP2 states that to ensure new development contributes to the provision is sustainable and inclusive communities (including the

provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs, planning permissions will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of (inter alia) *b) children, young people and families, including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs.*

- 5.11 Paragraph 96 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other, are safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles.
- 5.12 CS Policy CP9 states that development proposals located within development limits will be acceptable in principle, having regard to the service provisions associated with the major, modest and limited categories. The site falls within Winnersh and as such is identified as a major development location with the highest provision of facilities and services across the Borough.
- 5.13 The proposed C2 use would host up to four children, and would not result in an increase in bedrooms over and above what has already been approved on site, as such the proposal is demonstrated to be commensurate to a large family dwelling and is found to respond to the existing level of facilities as set out in Policy CP9.
- 5.14 Policy TB09 of the MDD supports the need for proposals which provide accommodation for people's needs over a lifetime, including vulnerable adults, children and young adults leaving care. Whereby the proposal seeks to provide a home to children who require either short or long term care, dependent on the needs of each individual, the proposal accords with Policy TB09 and allows for the provision of a supported accommodation unit with specialist staff to care for vulnerable children.

5.15 Figure 1 shows that within Wokingham, the Council had 149 Looked After Children under the ward of the Local Authority in 2024, and 137 in 2025.

5.16 Data obtained from the Department for Education further demonstrates that in 2025 69% of Looked After Children under the ward of the Local Authority were placed outside of the local authority boundary, up from 65% of Looked After Children in 2024 as demonstrated by Figure 1 below.

		2025	2024
Place providers	Own provision (by the LA)	78	70
	Other LA provision	c	c
Distance between home and placement	Total	149	137
	Placed 20 miles or less from home	86	74
	Placed more than 20 miles from home	26	27
	Distance not known or not recorded	37	36
Distance between home and placement and locality of placement	Total	149	137
	1. Placed inside the LA boundary, 20 miles or less from home	46	41
	2. Placed outside the LA boundary, 20 miles or less from home	40	33
	3. Placed inside the LA boundary, more than 20 miles from home	c	c
	4. Placed outside the LA boundary, more than 20 miles from home	25	27
	5. Placed inside the LA boundary, distance not known or not recorded	c	c
	6. Placed outside the LA boundary, distance not known or not recorded	33	35
Locality of placement	Total	149	137
	Placed inside the local authority boundary	51	42
	Placed outside the local authority boundary	98	95

Figure 1 – Data table produced from the Department for Education showing data surrounding Looked After Children in Wokingham Borough (created 11/12/2025)

5.17 Research from Become demonstrates that being moved far away can disrupt a child's education, their relationships – including with brothers and sisters who might live tens of miles away, and impact their mental health.

- 5.18 With 1 in 5 children being moved away from their home area, this application seeks to reduce this number within the Wokingham area, providing children with a home within the same Council area to where they are being looked after.
- 5.19 The research from Become also identifies that where children in care are moved more than 20 miles from home away from friends, family and schools they can have significantly lower wellbeing than those who are placed closer to home.
- 5.20 Lack of supply for this type of development is a national issue. OFSTED Report: '*How local authorities plan for the sufficiency of accommodation that meets the needs of children in care and care leavers*' (**Appendix 1**) has shown that local planning authorities have a number of difficulties in meeting their sufficiency needs.
- 5.21 The lack of secure provision for children nationally means that alternative places need to be found for those with complex needs.
- 5.22 The proposal would help to increase the availability of places for children and allow them to remain within the Council and not have to be re-located.
- 5.23 Based on this data, there is an identified need for this type of accommodation across the Borough. In accordance with Policies CC01, CP2, CP9, TB09 and NPPF Paragraphs 63 and 96, the proposal is therefore demonstrated to be acceptable in principle.
- 5.24 It is acknowledged that concerns may arise with regard to the loss of a residential dwelling in conflict with CS Policy CP3. However, the use of the site would remain in use as a unit of residential accommodation by virtue of its retention within the wider Use Class C and the host dwelling is not to be altered in such a way that would render it difficult

to convert back to a single dwelling in the future should the use of the property as a children's home cease.

- 5.25 A further material consideration when looking at the principle of development is the Written Ministerial Statement on Children's Homes (**Appendix 2**). This states that the planning system should not be a barrier to providing homes to the most vulnerable children in society and that councils should be supportive of new children homes in their area that allow children to live in close proximity to where they are from.
- 5.26 NPPF Paragraph 8 outlines the three interdependent aims of the planning system. NPPF Paragraph 8.a) outlines the economic objectives of the planning system. As part of this, it states that proposals should ensure the right type of land is available at the right time and in the right places. As detailed above, there is a defined need for children's homes across the UK. Alongside this, ensuring children can remain close to places that they call home is a key goal of local, regional and national policy which this proposal helps to address.
- 5.27 NPPF Paragraph 8.b) outlines the social objectives of the planning system. The contribution of the home to addressing the overall need for children's homes is considered to comply with this objective.
- 5.28 NPPF Paragraph 8.c) outlines the environmental objectives of the planning system. The site is located within the defined settlement boundary and is in close proximity to a number of public transport nodes provide sustainable transport options to the site.
- 5.29 Furthermore, is important to consider application ref: 250114 (Appendix 3) which was approved for the change of use from dwelling house (C3) to Children's Home (C2) in March 2025. The Officer's Report for the application states that '*while the proposal would result*

in the loss of a residential dwelling, a shortcoming in light of the Council's 5YHLS position, the proposal would make a positive contribution to providing essential community facilities for vulnerable children within the borough. In light of the identified need for this type of supported accommodation within the borough, the policy support for care homes at national and local level, the benefits of the scheme outweigh the loss of a single residential dwelling in policy terms.'

- 5.30 Owing to the similarities which can be drawn between application ref: 250114 and this application, coupled with an identified growing need for children's homes at the local level, the proposal is therefore demonstrated to be acceptable in principle.
- 5.31 **Character and Appearance of the Area:** Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission should be granted if development is 'of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area along with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life'.
- 5.32 Similarly, Policy R1 of the Borough Design Guide highlights that development should contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the area.
- 5.33 Throughout the Officer Report for application ref: 250222 for extensions and a loft conversion the Officer stated that '*the development would not fundamentally alter the character and appearance of the host dwelling. As such, the proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact from a visual perspective, complying with policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy.*' The application does not seek for any alterations to the external appearance of the

dwelling and as such it is considered that this position remains unchanged.

- 5.34 As discussed throughout this statement, the proposal seeks for the retention of a residential unit of accommodation and as such it is not considered that there would be significant alterations regarding any change in the character of the use of the property (given it will utilise existing built form), in the same manner that the dwelling could be used by a family with four children.
- 5.35 By virtue of its siting within a wider established residential area, the proposal is considered to be appropriate for its setting and the intensity of the proposed use is found to be acceptable in this regard. As such, the proposal is demonstrated to accord with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy.
- 5.36 **Residential Amenity:** CS Policy CP3 aims to protect the amenity of existing neighbouring properties. The proposed change of use would not involve any changes to the external appearance nor to the internal layout of the existing property, which already benefits from a rear extension, rear dormers as well as an outbuilding.
- 5.37 Any views from these windows would not be different to the existing situation and existing bedrooms would continue to function as such. Therefore, it is not considered there would be any detrimental impact upon neighbouring residential amenities by way of loss of light, overlooking or overbearing.
- 5.38 Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protects noise sensitive receptors from noise impact and Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that new development should prevent unacceptable levels of noise pollution.

5.39 The children living at the care home would require on-site staff who would be present at the home 24 hours, 7 days a week, this is found to be akin to how a typical family dwellinghouse would operate and is unlikely to be harmful by this regard. Should complaints arise then a management plan for how these can be dealt with could be controlled via condition.

5.40 It is also important to note that complaints such as noise etc are also dealt with via other legislation such statutory noise nuisance legislation. In any event, the proposal is unlikely to generate noise impacts over and above those from a typical family dwelling.

5.41 It is also important to consider the points raised as part of appeal ref. APP/D4635/W/25/3359517 in relation to amenity (Appendix 4). The Inspector noted that '*when considering the size of the property and the number of people who can already live in it, there is little substantive evidence that the movements associated with the proposed use, even taking into consideration visits from social workers and other visitors, would result in a materially greater level of noise and disturbance above and beyond the existing use to such a level that would cause seriously harmful disruption to neighbouring residents. Additionally, the appeal property is located in a residential area where similar noise disturbances are likely to commonly occur.*'

5.42 The Inspector goes further at paragraph 12 to state that '*a building in C2 use is still classed as residential, and the day-to-day use of the building would be very similar to a dwelling with the care home providing a home for the children. This is not substantially different to a Use Class C3 dwelling where children with specialist needs can live. The type of noise and disturbance from this use would not be materially different from that which can occur in a dwelling.*'

5.43 With regards to the children living at the home, the proposed development would facilitate the operation of a high-quality home that would mirror as much as possible the operations of a typical family dwelling, providing the children with routine and stability.

5.44 Given the difficult start to life a lot of children who would occupy the home have had, this is considered a key amenity consideration of the scheme.

5.45 **Trees and Landscaping:** The proposal intends to utilise the existing landscaping features across the site, additional landscaping can be secured by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission if the Council deem it necessary.

5.46 **Transport and Parking:** In terms of staffing, there will be a rota system with no more than three members of staff at the property at any one time. The rotas are planned to ensure minimal changes for children and a consistent 'parenting' group.

5.47 The staff will work 12-hour shifts, with change over at 07:00 and 19:00 daily. There would be a temporary increase in staff numbers during handover but this would only be temporary.

5.48 The shift pattern identified meets Ofsted regulations for children's homes and working time regulations for the care sector. The rota pattern is very common across children's homes to ensure a consistent group of staff and limited changes as per the average family setting.

5.49 The site benefits from an existing vehicular access from Reading Road with a hardstanding area for vehicle parking which can accommodate 5 parking spaces. The WBC Parking Standards state that 1no. parking space is required per full time equivalent staff member and 1no. visitor space per 3no. residents. Whereby all staff members would

work in shift patterns, there would only be 2 staff members on site at any one time aside from temporary change over periods where it is considered that vehicles can be swapped where necessary.

- 5.50 External visits from required professionals would be carried out on an ad hoc basis and cannot be considered as part of a typical routine, in a similar manner to a relative visiting a C3 dwelling and as such it is considered that this can be accommodated on site when required. The level of onsite parking is therefore demonstrated to be acceptable.
- 5.51 For the reasons outlined above, the proposed development is considered to accord with Policies CP6, CP9 and CC07.
- 5.52 **Cycle Provision:** Cycle stores can be secured via condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.53 **Refuse Provision:** Refuse and recycling stores can be secured by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.54 **Ecology:** The proposal does not involve alterations to the roof and as such, is unlikely to have an ecological impact. The application is submitted alongside a Biodiversity Net Gain Statement prepared by Windrush Ecology. The Statement confirms that the proposal accords with the de minimis exemption. Biodiversity enhancements can be secured via condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.55 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The relevant forms have been submitted in support of this application.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would constitute a high-quality children's home that directly contributes to addressing a defined need for this type of property in the area, without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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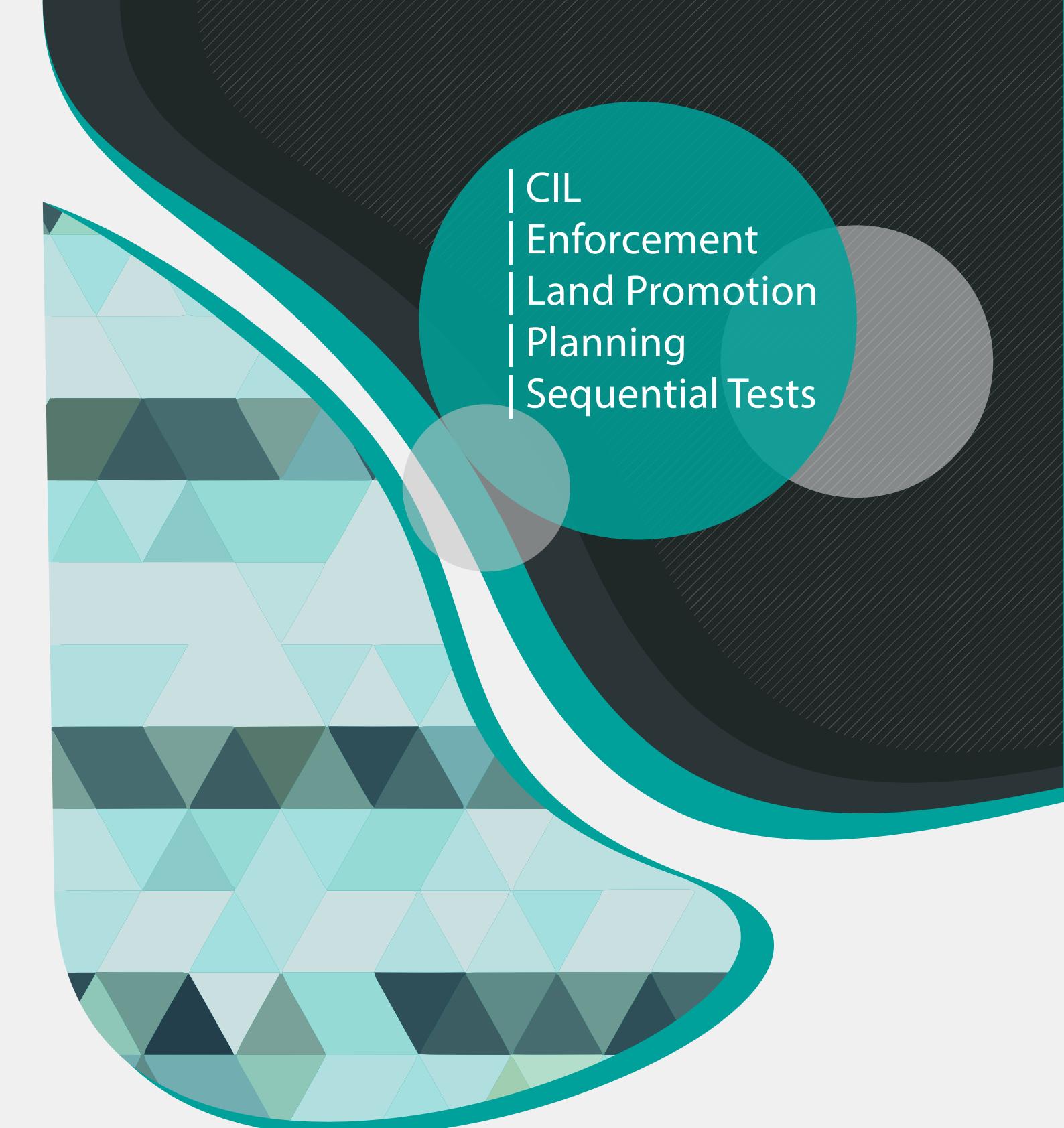
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