

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252863
Site Address:	1 Palmerstone Road, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 1HL
Expiry Date:	26 January 2026
Site Visit Date:	12 December 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use of the building to residential institution (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
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 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

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
31381	Two storey side extension to provide garage, kitchen, shower room and two bedrooms	Approved 19/08/88
240236	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed use of dwelling as residential care home for up to 3 children.	Refused 27/03/24

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health: No comments received

WBC Drainage: No objection

WBC Highways: No objection subject to conditions

WBC Waste Services: No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council: No objection to this application but wishes to raise its concerns about the problems with existing on-street parking in the vicinity. Officer response: See highways section of report.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description: The existing site comprises a two-storey 5 bedroomed semi-detached family home, with hardstanding parking area to the front and typical residential private amenity space to the rear. The property sits on a road of similar residential properties in a predominantly residential area.

Proposal Description: This application seeks approval for or the proposed change of use of the existing dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a residential institution (Use Class C2).

The existing lawful use of the property is as a Class C3 dwellinghouse. It is currently used as a residential unit for three people over the age of 16, supported by one member of staff.

The proposal seeks to enable Pola Well Care Services Ltd to operate the property as a residential home for up to four young people aged 10–17 (mixed sex) with special, emotional trauma and learning disabilities.

The home will provide a stable, nurturing, and family-style environment where young people can receive 24-hour care and support while attending school or college locally.

The operation details are as follows:

- Staffing: Maximum of two carers on-site at any one time, providing 24-hour care on a 12-hour shift pattern (typically 8am–8pm and 8pm–8am).
- Handovers: Staff handovers will last between 5–30 minutes, typically twice daily.
- Overnight Supervision: One staff member will remain on-site overnight (sleep-in), not as their principal residence.
- Visits: Infrequent and managed visits from managers (weekly), social workers (monthly–6 weekly), and biannual LAC reviews.
- External Professionals: Visits by NHS or Local Authority staff generally take place at schools or community settings, not at the property.

There are no external or internal changes proposed to the property, as shown on the submitted elevations and floor plans. The property will retain its residential character and appearance, ensuring full compatibility with the surrounding built environment. The parking arrangements and access are not altered (3 parking spaces on site).

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.

With regard to the proposed C2 use, 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. Paragraph 63 of the NPPF makes reference for

authorities to establish the housing need for different groups; one group is looked after children.

Policy CP9 sets out 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.

Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy states that to ensure 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:

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

c) People with special needs, including those with a physical, sensory or learning disability or problems accessing services

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

- i) 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.

Assessment: The site is within a major development location, and the proposed C2 use would host 4 children with no increase in habitable rooms on site, which is commensurate with a large family dwelling; these would respond to the existing level of facilities as set out in policy CP9, therefore the proposal would be acceptable in principle.

Moreover, the proposed change of use would facilitate 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. young people with special, emotional trauma and learning disabilities). Based on the above, there is justification for this type of accommodation within the borough.

The proposed change of use to Class C2 would result in the loss of a single

residential dwelling. Part i) of the CP3 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted on schemes that 'do not lead to a net loss in dwellings and other residential accommodation or land'. The proposal retains the overarching residential nature of the property by providing living accommodation which is another type of residential accommodation albeit not a single dwellinghouse. As such, whilst there is some conflict with these aforementioned policies in that a single residential dwelling would be lost, the proposal would not ultimately reduce the amount of residential accommodation and therefore does not pose a full conflict with the general thrust and aim of the policies.

Nevertheless, in light of the boroughs 5YHLS position (as of March 2024) at 2.5 years, the loss of the property as family housing is regrettable. The NPPF, in section 5, also places great focus on boosting the supply of homes (including family homes).

However, the dwelling would not be physically altered in a way which would prevent its conversion back into a single dwelling at a point in the future. Furthermore, whilst the proposal would result in a loss of C3 accommodation, the property would still be a form of residential accommodation (in a 'C' use class).

The Planning Authority affords great weight to meeting the needs of vulnerable residents in care and on balance the principle of the proposal is acceptable. There is national and local level policy support for both accommodation for vulnerable individuals, including children, but also for family housing. On balance, given the identified need for care home accommodation, the principle of the change of use is on fine balance, acceptable, given that the proposal would still be a form of residential accommodation and because the proposal would not result in changes to the building that would prevent it being used for C3 purposes in the future.

Character of the Area: Given there are no external changes to the dwelling, the proposals would not adversely impact the visual amenities of the area. There would be a slight change in the way the property is used, however as described above, the proposal would continue to be used for large residential purposes, and both internal and external areas would be used in the same way as a family dwelling and therefore would be acceptable in the context of the surrounding area. The proposal would therefore accord with the NPPF, policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and the principles contained within the Borough Design Guide.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The proposed change of use would not involve any changes to the external appearance nor to the internal layout of the existing property, with the exception of converting the basement playroom to a bedroom. 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.

Noise and Disturbance: The level of occupation would remain of a comparable level to a large family in terms of numbers of children on site. Whilst there a level of additional noise as a result of potentially greater vehicle numbers during staff turnover

times, this is not considered to be so harmful to warrant refusal of the application and likewise additional vehicle movements could start to occur at any time as part of the existing residential use. The external amenity areas would be used in the same way.

Amenity Space: There are no concerns on these grounds, given no change to such space.

Highway Access and Parking Provision

General

The application seeks for a change of use from Use Class C3 (existing dwelling) to Use Class C2 (residential institute). The proposed works consist of zero net change in the number of habitable rooms (with no physical alterations).

Staffing Arrangements

Daytime staffing (08:00–20:00) will comprise a maximum of two staff members. Night-time staffing (20:00–08:00) will be one non-resident staff member for the entire shift. During shift handover, there may be a temporary overlap of up to three staff members for approximately 10 minutes only. The proposed staffing arrangements are acceptable.

Traffic & Trips

The proposed level of trip generation is acceptable. By considering the proposed staff and visitor arrangements, the site will have sufficient off-site parking within the red line to accommodate all the parking demands from staff and visitor.

The applicant confirms that there will be routine school attendance from the site (during peak hours). However, given the scale of the proposal, the traffic impact will not be significant.

Given the age of the residents (aged 10-17), the utilisation of the on-street parking is not needed, the site can limit driving activities from the residents. The applicant has confirmed the young people who will reside in the service will not be expected to own any cars.

Access and Parking

Access will remain via the existing dropped kerbs from Palmerstone Road. Three on-site parking spaces are provided in accordance with WBC standards. One parking space will be occupied by staff per shift. During the brief handover period, a temporary maximum demand of three spaces can be accommodated. Visitors will be managed and will not attend during staff changeover periods. The proposed access and parking arrangements are acceptable.

Cycle Parking

The converted garage at the front of the property is currently used for storage, including secure bicycle storage, and will continue to be used for this purpose, providing appropriate cycle parking in accordance with local standards. The proposed cycle parking provision is acceptable.

Waste Management

The refuse storage area will be confirmed with the Council's Cleaner & Greener team to prevent overspill. The proposed waste management arrangements are acceptable.

Flooding and Drainage: The site is located in Flood Zone 1 with very low surface water risk. The proposal does not involve any increase in building footprint or hardstanding and therefore does not increase flood risk on or off site.

As the change of use to a C2 residential institution introduces a higher vulnerability class, the LLFA notes that safe access/egress is maintained, and no additional mitigation is required. Existing drainage arrangements are expected to remain sufficient.

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.

Other Matters: A planning condition would be required to limit the use of the care home as being for a children's care home and no other purpose within use class C2. This is to accord with the development that has been applied for and another purpose for the care home may warrant a different assessment against the material considerations discussed in this report.

Planning balance and conclusion: In assessing the proposal, the Local Planning Authority has had regard to the development plan, material considerations and the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposal seeks permission for the change of use of an existing dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a residential institution (Use Class C2) to provide a children's care home for up to four young people with special, emotional trauma and learning disabilities. The site is located within the defined settlement limits and within a major development location, where such development is acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with other relevant policies.

The proposal would deliver an important form of specialist residential accommodation which contributes positively towards meeting an identified need for care provision for vulnerable children within the borough. Significant weight is afforded to this benefit, having regard to the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework to promote healthy, inclusive and safe communities, and the support within local policy for accommodation for vulnerable groups.

The proposal would result in the loss of a single dwellinghouse from the borough's housing stock, which is acknowledged as a disbenefit, particularly in the context of the Council's current housing land supply position. This weighs moderately against the proposal. However, the use would remain residential in nature, the scale and intensity of occupation would be comparable to that of a large family dwelling, and the building would not be altered in a way that would prevent its reversion to Use Class C3 in the future. As such, the proposal would not result in a material reduction in the overall amount of residential accommodation within the borough.

No harm has been identified in respect of the character and appearance of the area, neighbouring residential amenity, highway safety, parking provision, flood risk or drainage. Subject to appropriate conditions, including restricting the use to a children's care home only, the proposal would not give rise to unacceptable impacts that would justify refusal.

When balancing the modest harm arising from the loss of a single C3 dwelling against the significant social and community benefits associated with the provision of specialist accommodation for vulnerable young people, it is considered that the benefits of the proposal outweigh the identified harm. The development is therefore considered to represent sustainable development in accordance with the development plan when read as a whole and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposed development is considered acceptable in planning terms. Therefore, the application is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

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 Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The proposed development is for use as a residential home for up to four young people aged 10–17 years, of mixed sex, with special, emotional trauma and learning disabilities. The proposal therefore engages the protected characteristics of age, disability and sex.

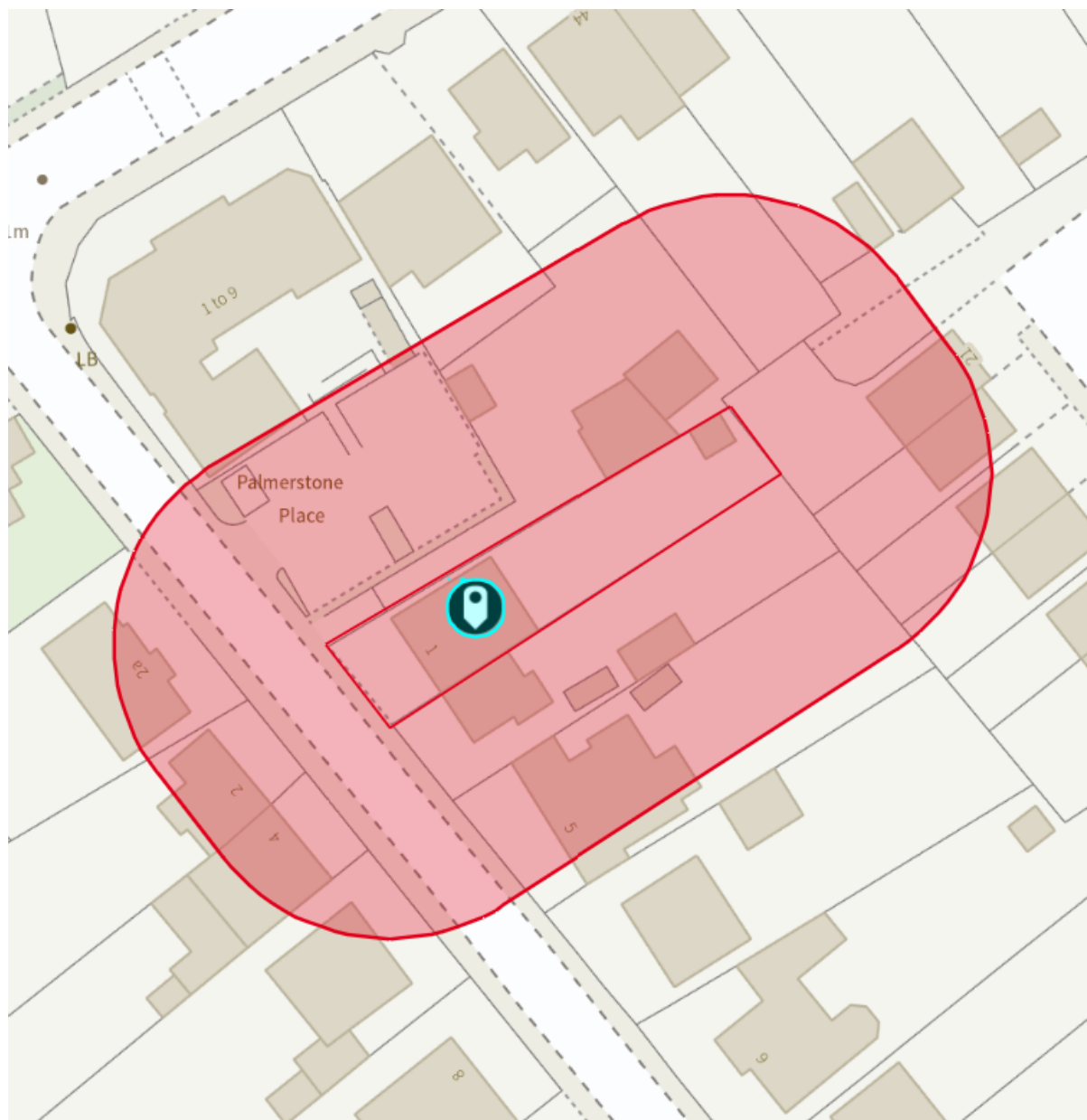
Having had due regard to these matters, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation responses) that the proposal would result in adverse impacts on persons with protected characteristics, or that such persons would have materially different needs, experiences, issues or priorities in relation to this planning application that are not adequately addressed through the nature of the proposed use. The development is not considered to give rise to any adverse equality impacts.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approved
Date:	22 January 2026
Earliest date for decision:	22 December 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>HMM</i>
Date:	26 January 2026

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Near Me Report



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No legend

Affordable Housing Thresholds | Total count: 3

#	NAME
1	Within Major Development Locations
2	Within Major Development Locations
3	Within All Development Locations

Scale and Location of Development Proposals | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	NAME
1	Major Development Locations	Earley

Mineral Safeguarding Areas | Total count: 2

#	Type	SubType
1	Soft Sand	Construction sand: Palaeogene: Thanet Sand Formation, Lambeth Group, Harwich Formation, London Clay Formation
2	Soft Sand	Construction sand: Palaeogene: Thanet Sand Formation, Lambeth Group, Harwich Formation, London Clay Formation

Major Nuclear Sites Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	PLANNING_NOTE
1	Consultation Zone - Major Nuclear Site	AWE: 12km Zone	This is the 12km Zone. A circular zone of 12km radius around all nuclear sites, for certain types of significant development due to the potential for such developments to pose an external hazard to sites.

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Heathrow Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	Height Band	Wind Turbine	Aviation
1	All works exceeding 150 metres (492.1 feet)	NO	YES

Risk of Flooding from Surface Water | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME
1	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk extent

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Green	Consult NatureSpace for Major developments only

SSSI Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	IRZURL
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1	https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0300000530000-res=&location=473915,172259%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre)
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Potentially Contaminated Land Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	OBJECTID
1	Potentially Contaminated Land Consultation Zone	1

Water Utility Consultation Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT_WHEN
1	Water Utility Consultation Zone	Thames Water Earley Consultation Zone	Any development

Landscape Character Assessment 2019 | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	Name
1	Landscape Character Assessment 2019	Woodley-Earley Settled and Farmed Clay

Wards | Total count: 1

#	Name of area	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Maiden Erlegh & Whitegates Ward	0 m

Parishes | Total count: 1

#	Name of area	Closest Approximate Distance
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1	Earley CP	0 m
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