

Local and National Need Statement

Prepared on behalf of: Ellies Place Ltd

Site Address: 94 Hartsbourne Road, Reading, RG6 5SJ

Proposal: Change of use from C3 Residential Dwellinghouse to C2 Residential Institution (Children's Residential Care Home) — Residential Children's Home

Application Type: Full Planning Permission

Local Planning Authority: Wokingham Borough Council

Prepared by: Inhaus Planning, Suite Ra01, 195–197 Wood Street, London, E17 3NU

1.0 Introduction

This Local and National Need Statement has been prepared by Inhaus Planning on behalf of Ellies Place Ltd to accompany the Full Planning Permission application for the change of use of 94 Hartsbourne Road, Reading, RG6 5SJ from C3 residential dwellinghouse to a C2 children's residential care home. It sets out the national and local context for the proposed development, demonstrating that there is a clear and acute need for the type of provision proposed.

2.0 National Context and Policy Pressures

There are currently more than 80,000 children in the care of local authorities in England, a figure that has grown consistently over the past decade. Of these, a significant and growing proportion require specialist residential care placements due to the complexity of their needs, including those presenting with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties, neurodevelopmental conditions, or histories of complex trauma that cannot be safely managed within a foster family setting.

The national supply of children's residential care placements has failed to keep pace with this rising demand. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care (MacAlister, 2022) identified a systemic undersupply of high-quality, community-integrated residential care provision as one of the most pressing challenges facing the children's social care system. The Review documented widespread reliance upon out-of-area placements, which separate children from their families, communities, schools, and support networks, with significant adverse consequences for outcomes and wellbeing.

In May 2023, the Government issued a Written Ministerial Statement explicitly endorsing the provision of small-scale, community-integrated children's homes as a national policy priority. The Statement recognised that such homes should be considered positively by local planning authorities, and that the planning process should not present an unnecessary barrier to this essential form of community infrastructure. This application falls directly within the category of provision the Ministerial Statement was designed to encourage.

3.0 Regional and Local Context

Wokingham Borough Council, in common with local authorities across the South East of England, faces significant challenges in securing sufficient, suitable, and locally-based residential care placements for children in its care. The shortage of provision within the Borough means that many children who might otherwise benefit from a local placement are instead placed at distance from their home communities, with consequent disruption to their education, health, and family contact arrangements.

The Berkshire area has a limited supply of registered children's residential care homes relative to the demand generated by the local authority populations within it. The establishment of a new, high-quality home at 94 Hartsbourne Road would directly address this localised shortage, providing up to four placements that can be used by Wokingham Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Reading Borough Council, and other neighbouring authorities to reduce reliance upon distant

out-of-area placements.

4.0 Benefits of Small-Scale Provision

Research evidence consistently demonstrates that small, community-integrated residential care homes produce better outcomes for young people than larger, more institutional settings. The placement of up to four young people in a domestic-scale property within an established residential neighbourhood provides the stability, normalisation, and community integration that are recognised as key protective factors for children with SEMH needs. Young people placed at 94 Hartsbourne Road will be able to attend local schools, access community facilities, and develop social connections within the neighbourhood in a manner that supports their long-term wellbeing and development.

The small scale of the home also facilitates the development of meaningful, consistent relationships between young people and their key workers, which is a primary therapeutic factor for children who have experienced disrupted attachment and relational trauma. The intimate, family-like environment of a four-bed home is fundamentally different from, and therapeutically superior to, the environment of a larger residential unit.

5.0 Alignment with National and Local Policy Objectives

The proposed home is directly aligned with the national policy objectives set out in the Children Act 1989, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government's Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy (2023), and the Written Ministerial Statement of May 2023. All of these instruments emphasise the importance of providing local, community-integrated placements for looked-after children, reducing reliance upon out-of-area placements, and ensuring that the residential care sector delivers high-quality, therapeutic provision that supports positive outcomes.

At a local level, Wokingham Borough Council's corporate parenting responsibilities require it to act as a good parent to children in its care. The availability of a high-quality, locally-based residential placement within the Borough directly assists the Council in fulfilling these statutory duties and in meeting the objectives of its Children's Services sufficiency strategy.

6.0 Conclusion

This statement has demonstrated that there is a clear, substantial, and growing national and local need for the type of provision proposed at 94 Hartsbourne Road. The proposal responds directly to a documented shortage of high-quality, small-scale, community-integrated residential care placements in the Wokingham Borough and wider Berkshire area. The Local Planning Authority is invited to give substantial weight to the significant public benefit represented by the proposed development in its determination of this application.