



Planning Statement

**Application for Change of
Use from Dwelling House
(Class C3) to Class C2 (Children's Home)**

**182 Dragon Road
Hatfield
AL10 9NZ**

January 2024

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The statement has been prepared by ThreeOaks Care Limited to support a change of use planning application from a dwelling house (Class C3) to a children's home (Class C2) at 182 Dragon Road, Hatfield, AL10 9NZ.
- 1.2 The property would become a long-term home providing 24-hour care for up to 3 vulnerable children (ages 8 to 18).
- 1.3 The application site comprises a five-bed two-story town house dwelling in a residential area on Dragon Road adjacent to Mosquito Way in Hatfield.
- 1.4 The application site is in a sustainable location, benefiting from proximity to shops, services and public transportation access. The benefits of the site include the following:

The application site is located within a quiet residential estate. It includes an enclosed private garden at the rear of the building with allocated private parking at the courtyard. (see parking area pictures). The frontage of the property benefits from a pathway that leads towards many amenities and a green area adjacent to Mosquito way.

There are dedicated paths for cycling and walking to the Parkhouse Court and Hatfield Town Centre via Tamblin Way adjacent to the property on Dragon Road. And only 3 minutes cycle and 14 mins walk to The Galleria Hatfield, the public swimming centre, health clinics and town centre area.

There are many shops and services at close proximity to the property especially on Parkhouse crescent to include Travel Lodge, ALDI, fish and chips shops, Chicken shop, Dominos Pizza, Chinese take away and barbing salon. All these are about 0.4miles away from the property and 3minutes journey by cycle and 10-12 minutes by walking.

The neighbourhood boasts of 5 GP Surgeries which are within the vicinity of the property. Schools within close proximity to the property includes Howe Dell Primary School on The Runway off Dragon Road and Havilland Primary School (2.5miles). Bishop Hatfield Girls Secondary School and Nicholas Breakspear Secondary School are 1.7miles and 3miles away from the property respectively.

Eisai Bus Stop is 3minutes walk (476ft) from the property. Bus 614 The Comet and Bus 644 The Comet provides a 10mins ride to the Hatfield Railway Station. Bus 610 Dragonfly provides 8minutes ride to The Galleria from Eisai Bus Stop as well.

Albatross Way Bus Stop is 8minutes walk (0.3mile) from the property and Bus 602 provides a 15 minutes ride to the Hatfield Railway Station.

The Galleria Hatfield (Shopping Outlet) is 10minutes walk via Tamblin Way from the property.

- 1.5 The layout of the dwelling currently comprises an entry hall, WC, kitchen with lounge/diner and decent sized lounge/sitting room area. On the first floor, there are five bedrooms (including one en-suite room) and a family bath. We are proposing to use 3 of the large bedrooms for the children, a room to serve as a play/therapy room and the 5th room as staff sleeping room. The garage on the ground floor will be used as an office.

- 1.6 There is a patio garden at the rear of the property, a parking space for one car and ample space for the storage of waste and recycling bins. Bicycles can be stored within the rear garden. Within the rear courtyard, the property has allocated parking space for an additional car. (see parking area pictures).
- 1.7 The waste and recycling will be stored in separate bins kept in the rear patio garden area. The bins will be collected at the rear of the building as is the current process.
- 1.8 Use of the rear patio-garden and noise generation will be commensurate with a residential dwelling with a family residing therein. This will be very minimal and controlled. A lot of the play activity will be encouraged to happen in the therapy space.

2.0 THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application proposal is for the change of use of a dwelling house (class C3) to a children's home (Class C2) There will be no external changes to the property.
- 2.2 This is an application for FULL Planning permission as required by Welwyn Hatfield Planning Authority following an earlier refusal of an application for certificate of lawfulness (Planning Application: 6/2023/1889/LAWP). The response confirms that an application for a full planning permission is what is required to be submitted.
- 2.3 The purpose of the application is to enable the creation of a children's home for children that have been taken into care permanently. The property will become a long-term home for up to 3 vulnerable children. According to the OFSTED report, *children's social care data in England 2017 to 2018; main findings* "there is a growing demand for children social care services and it shows the decrease, nationwide, in the number of local authority homes and an increase in the number of privately run homes".
- 2.4 ThreeOaks Care Limited have been in contact with the children's services commissioning team at Hertfordshire County Council. Hertfordshire County Council is excited about the provision of homes similar to this home. Hertfordshire County Council's Children services sees partnership and initiatives such as this as the right opportunity to impact many young people while supporting them to excel and growing living within Hertfordshire. The commissioning team within Hertfordshire County Council can be contacted via cyp.cla@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- 2.5 The proposed home would help with the increased demand for children social care services and give the children a home and community where they can live, grow and flourish.
- 2.6 In a strategic planning documentation shared recently, Hertfordshire County Council's vision is to support Hertfordshire's children and young people to be happy, loved and thrive in their family and community. Children's home providers such as ThreeOaks provides the desired opportunity to support more children to live and grow within the county and not be placed in other county/borough with limited support services. ThreeOaks is excited about the potential partnership and equally committed to voices of children, young people and families.

- See attached Hertfordshire County Council's CYP Strategic Plan 2021 – 2026

2.7 The proposed home would house up to three children. The children would come to live in the home for various reasons, including family breakdown, some could have parents with learning difficulties and have nowhere to stay. The children are not going to be placed due to faults in their own behaviour, but those of their environment. They would attend local schools and community activities close to the house in line with many local provisions through Hertfordshire County Council. Even though the home aims to cater for children between 8 to 18 years old, the children will be adequately matched in conjunction with the council to ensure that they are all within similar age range and needs, to promote seamless co-habitation. The home will be a long-term accommodation for the children to stay until they are 18 years old and they will be supported to transition to adult residential services in line with the Hertfordshire County Council provisions.

The home will cater for vulnerable children who are placed in the home and expected to stay on a long-term basis until they are 18 years old.

2.8 The staffing structure will comprise of four full time staff and two part time staff. Circa two staff will be present at any one time. The home manager will be available between regular work hours of 9am - 5pm and the support staffs will run shifts to maintain 2 support staff availability during the day and two staff who stays overnight as waking night staff. We are maintaining the part time staffs to provide covers as may be required to cover shifts for the support staffs. Adequate staffing shall be maintained in-line with the identified needs of the children in the home in accordance to OFSTED regulatory standard and in partnership with the Hertfordshire County Council.

2.9 Staff recruitment – the recruitment focus would be on sourcing personnel and staff that live local in Hatfield and in Hertfordshire. Cycling to work and bus rides would be encouraged leveraging the property's proximity to the bus stop, network of buses and safe walking and cycle paths within Hatfield.

2.10 The proposal would not make any external physical changes to the building. The dwelling would function much like it's existing use.

Access /Parking/Traffic/Visitors/Deliveries

2.11 The access to the property would remain as existing. In addition to the allocated parking spaces for the property, there is provision for two visitors parking spaces in the courtyard. Off-street parking permit is available from the Welwyn Hatfield Council Parking authority.

2.12 The proposed children's home would in many ways be like a family home. Accordingly, there should be minimal visitors and package deliveries in scale and frequency, would be similar to a domestic property which could be an average of three deliveries per week.

2.13 Other vehicular activities which could include school drop-offs and pick-ups would be timed and a non-resident-based service. This would be similar to ordering a cab service but regulated under the local council's provision.

OFSTED Application and Submission

- 2.14 As planning permission on the property is a key requirement ahead of putting in an OFSTED application; ThreeOaks would be able to initiate the submission of the required application to become OFSTED regulated once granted full permission by the Welwyn Hatfield Planning Authority. Additional documentation to be provided to OFSTED includes detailed Business Plan (and financial plan), Statement of Purpose, Policy Documentation, Children's Guide and other assessment documentation in full compliance with the OFSTED regulation.

It is noteworthy that OFSTED inspectors would inspect the internal of the property, to ensure that the regulatory requirements for the children's home are all met by ThreeOaks in accordance to OFSTED standards.

3.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

- 3.1 It is therefore considered that the proposal would provide a suitable home to a group with specific housing requirements in a sustainable location, which is well served by existing facilities and services, and as such fully adheres to the provisions of the **Delivering Sustainable Development Policy SP 1**. The proposal would also contribute to a reduction in social inequalities in line with the same **Policy SP 1**. Thus, the proposal is compliant and supported by local policies as it is a proposal for special needs housing within a residential area close to community facilities and services, within a dwelling which meets all the needs of the specific proposed use.
- 3.2 The proposal is an example of sustainable development in that it is cited in a location close to shops, services, and public transportation options. Furthermore, it contributes to the sustainable development social objective by providing residential accommodation for a group with specific housing needs, which is in full accordance with the provisions of the NPPF.
- 3.3 The proposed use is commensurate with a residential use and will manifest as a stable and long-term home for up to three children. In addition, the provision of special-needs Housing within residential areas are supported and prioritised by policy. There is real need for children's homes in Hertfordshire as evidenced by Hertfordshire County Council. There are very few homes for vulnerable children needing specialist care, and integration within mainstream society is important.
- 3.4 There will be no external changes to the dwelling required as part of this proposal. Similarly, the proposed use is entirely commensurate with the surrounding residential use as it will operate akin to a private residential dwelling. Accordingly, the Council's policies relating to amenity and design are not applicable to this proposal.
- 3.5 The parking as it exists is considered suitable for family accommodation of possibly two adults and one to two driving children, therefore, the provision is acceptable for the proposed use which will have up to three children, most, if not all, without ownership of a car or of age to drive. A reduced need to travel would be encouraged in local staff recruitment and greater levels of walking, cycling and use of public transport encouraged towards more sustainable modes of travel in line with **Policy SADM 12**.

- 3.6 In summary, it has been demonstrated that the proposed development accords with national and local planning policies. In addition, the proposal would not give rise to any demonstrable impact on amenity or highway impact. Furthermore, although the proposal does not involve any external alterations or internal physical alterations that will need to be assessed against design policies, it complies with design standards for parking, and provide sufficient amenity space and waste storage for the use proposed. As such, and in line with NPPF advice (para 11), the council should approve the planning application, since there are no “adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development.
- 3.7 It is for all of the above reasons why it is considered that planning permission should be granted for the proposed change of use.