

PLANNING STATEMENT

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF
RESIDENTIAL DWELLING (C3b) TO
CARE HOME (C2) AT
MAEDOWSTILES FARM, TOWER HILL
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by Aida McManus on behalf of Esland Care (“the Applicants”). I hold an Honours degree in law, a Master’s degree in Town Planning, an Enforcement Certificate from Cambridge University, and am a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (MRTPI) and National Association of Planning Enforcement (NAPE). I am the Managing Director of AM Planning Consultants Limited, and have over 20 years’ experience in planning, within both local authorities and in private practice.
- 1.2. The planning application is for the change of use of the 4 bedroomed residential dwelling (Use Class C3b) to a care home for three children (Use Class C2).

2. Background

- 2.1. Esland Group operate care homes for children throughout the Midlands and wider UK and wish to increasing the number of children being care for at the property from 2 with three staff plus a manager, of which one of the members of staff would sleep at the home overnight to 3 children with a total of 10 staff plus a Manger who would be on-site during office hours.
- 2.2. Meadowstile Farm is a registered childrens home under Section 60 of the Children Act 1998 to provide specialist residential care for up to 2 young people, of either gender, usually between 8 and 18 years old (8-17 years on admission). Young people are usually placed on a 52- week care basis but in some cases 39-week placements may be considered if appropriate. Emergency and same day referrals may be considered subject to a satisfactory risk assessment: all decisions are based on individual needs and take into consideration the needs of the other young people living in the home, and they are accompanied at all times by at least one of our carers.
- 2.3. The use was registered with OFSTED on 30th May 2006 and has been operating from the site ever since that date (copy of certificate attached). Esland is a leading UK provider of residential childcare, education and therapeutic services for children who have experienced trauma and significant unrest in their lives. Esland provides a place of safety and stability which the child can utilise to build meaningful connections and positive relationships. With a bespoke “child-centred” approach, Esland shapes its services around the needs of each individual, enabling the child to progress into a positive and stable future. These difficulties may be:

Sexual abuse

Moderate learning difficulties (Asperger’s Autism)

Mental health (self-harm, anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress,
oppositional disorder)
Physical regression
At risk of being criminalised
Running away

- 2.4. The home is not intended to provide accommodation for children or young people with a physical disability but they may be considered if it is assessed that all their needs can be met in the placement. Children and young people with severe learning disabilities and serious mental health problems including those at risk of life threatening self-harm would not be suitably placed at Meadowstiles Farm.
- 2.5. Over the last 15 years, Esland has pioneered a child-focused approach with needs-led pathways that nurture, build connections and strengthen the child's resilience. With a unique combination of senior expertise and a best-practice approach based on leading evidence from around the world, Esland delivers adaptive care and support that has a positive and lasting impact.
- 2.6. The management of the home provides a secure and stable family care environment (with the intention of providing an environment akin to a typical residential home) for young people, in order to ensure the child retains a positive perspective in relation to family life, enhancing their own future lives in the process and altering any alternative patterns of behaviour which they have experienced in their childhood to date.
- 2.7. In keeping with the running of the home in the same way as a typical residential home would be run, the staff act as competent parents by being consistent and offering appropriate structures and boundaries, in order to help the children to accept and respect themselves and others.
- 2.8. Esland's ethos and values centre around ensuring that all children in care have a continuing and enduring sense of permanence, through which their social, emotional, health, and educational needs are being met.
- 2.9. Key aims and objectives of the home are as follows:
- To offer care of the highest quality to young people based on their individual care needs.
 - To provide security and stability for young people in Esland's care.
 - To provide age-appropriate routines and activities to encourage young people to develop their social skills, and to maintain existing practical skills, whilst learning new ones.

- To devise a comprehensive and individualized placement plan to meet the young person's physical, personal, social, psychological/emotional, behavioral, cultural, spiritual, communication and health care needs.
- To promote the active and positive presence of young people within their local community.
- To empower young people to exercise choice.

2.10. In order to achieve these aims, the home will deliver:

- A safe and 'homely' environment.
- A child-centered approach with their wishes, views and feelings taken into account regarding all aspects of their care.
- The development of a multi-skilled and highly trained staff team, following rigorous and stringent recruitment procedures.
- The effective management and supervision of the staff team.
- The provision of an effective key worker system.
- The use of effective placement planning and risk assessment.
- Consistent approach to rules and boundaries, through appropriate and reflective rewards and consequences.
- The encouragement of positive relationships and investment in the home, from all people involved in the welfare of the young person.

2.11. The management team work closely with the staff team, ensuring the appropriate training, supervision and support to work closely with the young people in order to ensure the best outcomes for them.

2.12. Community relations are extremely important to the company, and managers maintain regular contact with the local community in order to ensure the home is an asset within the community.

2.13. Esland invests in the property through utilisation of its central Estates team in order to ensure a high-quality living provision is achieved, while also ensuring the provision is visually attractive and sympathetic to the character and history of the location.

2.14. I have also submitted details of a typical day along with Eslands Community FAQ's document to help understand how the use would operate.

3. Planning History

3.1. There is no available planning history for this property. However, the change from C3 dwelling house to C3b was permitted under the Town and Country Use

Classes Order 1998 (as Amended) i.e., a C3 Dwelling houses (whether or not as a sole or main residence) by—

- (a) a single person or by people to be regarded as forming a single household;
 - (b) *not more than six residents living together as a single household where care is provided for residents;*
- Or
- (c) *not more than six residents living together as a single household where no care is provided to residents (other than a use within Class C4).*

To expand on this, the care home has been operating lawfully under Class C3 (b) since May 2006 which *covers up to six people living together as a single household and receiving care e.g. supported housing schemes such as those for people with learning disabilities or mental health problems.*

4. The Site and Surrounding Area

- 4.1. Meadowstile Farm is accessed of the south western side off Tower Hill Road, along a driveway. The site lies just outside the settlement boundary in the green belt located around Biddulph, north Staffordshire Moorlands.
- 4.2. There are residential properties along the opposite side of Tower Hill Road, with a bungalow to the north and barn conversions to the west. The site is within walking distances of basic retail and primary health care services, other facilities include a post office/shops, library and other amenities.
- 4.3. There are good public transport links, and the home has a company car to enable young people to engage in a wide range of health, education, recreation and leisure opportunities both locally and regionally.
- 4.4. The site comprises of a detached two storey farmhouse set back from the road with access to parking at the front of the building, with a front garden and a paddock and long driveway.
- 4.5. On the ground floor there is a lounge, second lounge space, large kitchen/dinning room for cooking and baking activities, office and toilet. One room with an en-suite is also located downstairs
- 4.6. On the first floor there is a main bathroom and 3 bedrooms one of which is for carers to sleep in.

5. The Proposal

- 5.1. The planning application seeks to change of the use of the four bedroomed residential dwelling (C3b) to a children's home for three children (C2). No external or internal alterations are proposed.
- 5.2. The age of the child who would be provided care in the home would be between 8-18 years old, with two sleep-in carers supporting the children at any one time. A manager will be on the site during office hours Monday-Friday; whilst communication between the manager and staff teams is also achieved through the use of Microsoft Teams and other remote communication technologies.
- 5.3. The overall number of staff would increase to 10 operating a 24 - 48 hours shift rota, plus the Manager. Two of the staff would sleep in overnight.

6 Planning Policy Framework

- 6.1. In preparing this Planning Statement reference is made to the following national and local planning policies and guidance documents:
 - The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Feb 2019)
 - Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan adopted September 2020
 - Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan February 2020

7. National Planning Policy Framework

- 7.1. The National Planning Policy Framework was revised and published in February 2019 (NPPF) and replaces the original version of the NPPF and came into effect immediately and it is a material consideration when determining planning applications. The following paragraphs are considered to be relevant to the consideration of this application and the approach authorities should take in respect to decision taking.
- 7.2. Paragraph 11. advises that at the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposal that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; and where there is no relevant development plan or the policies are out-of-date planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts in doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the framework are taken as a whole.

- 7.3. Paragraph 47 requires that planning application be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material consideration indicates otherwise within statutory timescale unless a longer period has been agreed.
- 7.4. Paragraph 91 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 by achieving safe and accessible places, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion. Furthermore, to enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs.
- 7.5. Paragraph 109 requires that applications should provide safe and suitable access to sites and that any significant impacts are mitigated. Whilst paragraph 110 expands on this context.
- 7.6. Paragraph 118 states that planning policies and decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing; and support opportunities to use the airspace above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes.
- 7.7. Chapter 12 sets out the importance of well-designed places. Specifically, para. 124 encourages the creation of high-quality buildings which creates better places in which to live and work. Whilst para. 127 requires that decisions should ensure that development functions well and adds to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, are sympathetic to the local character and history, are sympathetic to the local character and materials, along with optimising the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain appropriate development.
- 7.8. Chapter 13 provides protection against harm to the Green Belt through the control of inappropriate development within such an area.
- 7.9. In terms of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability, this proposal offers a number of significant benefits for the area:
- The provision of specialist care to be provided within a family environment for a child is a significant social benefit, which will help them to grow into well-adjusted adults and thus contribute positively to the community in the future.
 - The proposal will contribute to meeting the Council's specialist housing requirements through this facility.

- The proposed change of use will secure the reuse of this family home whilst ensuring the children are cared for in a safe environment.
- The proposed use is an employment opportunity that will help to support the future growth of the area and to contribute positively to the local economy.
- Operation of a shift pattern, car sharing, and the use of progressive remote communication technologies will minimise unnecessary traffic movements to and from the property by reducing the need to travel and will be more sustainable whilst reducing the carbon footprint of the business.
- The proximity to local services and facilities will ensure that the occupiers enhance and contribute to maintain the vitality of the local community and economy by supporting local facilities.
- The proposed use will provide much needed care facility for children who require specialist care.
- This proposal accords with the NPPF when considered as a whole and does not have any significant adverse impact which would demonstrably outweigh the benefits of granting planning permission.

8. Local Plan Policies

- 8.1. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 8.2. In September 2020 the Council adopted the Local Plan and I will address the relevant policies in this section of the Planning Statement.
- 8.3. **Policy SS1 Development Principles** - This policy is satisfied due to the fact that the application site is an existing dwelling house used to provide care for two children and the increase to three children would provide a much needed residential care facilities in a sustainable location through the reuse of an existing resource to provide a safe environment for these children.
- 8.4. The proposed use would increase the employment offered and economic prosperity within the area without altering the appearance of the property which would retain its farmhouse character.
- 8.5. **Policy SS2 Settlement Hierarchy** - Although the site is outside of the settlement boundary it lies within a cluster of residential properties and

existence of the open countryside or the Green Belt. The proposal would merely change of the use of the farm house and would not result in an adverse impact of the amenity of existing and future residents in the area. Whilst no external alterations are being proposed.

- 8.6. **Policy SS 3 – Future Provision and Distribution of Development** - this policy is satisfied due to the fact that there is an increasing need to care provision for children and the proposal will provide a small specialist C2 residential care facility for three children adjacent to the settlement boundary contributing to the Council's housing requirements to ensure that they can contribute to a successful, safe and strong, cohesive society.
- 8.7. **Policy SS 6 Biddulph Area Strategy** – although the site is outside the settlement boundary this policy is satisfied due to the fact that the proposal is for extra care facility through the reuse of an existing dwelling in this sustainable area, whilst offering local employment.
- 8.8. **Policy SS 10 Other Rural Areas strategy** – this rural location is important to the children due to the fact that it provides a tranquil environment to support their recovering through the conversion of this existing C3b use to a C2 care institution through the increase from 2 children to 3 children being cared for at the property, which is in close proximity to existing facilities.
- 8.9. The staff act as responsible parents to ensure that there is no greater noise or disturbance than a normal family house.
- 8.10. There would be no impact of the character of the residential property due to the fact that no external alterations are proposed. Neither would there be an unacceptable level of parking required as the property already has sufficient parking for 7 cars.
- 8.11. There would be limited visitors to the site as most professional meetings are held in a neutral environment off-site. Whilst the traffic movements to and from the site would be no greater than an average 4 bedroomed dwellinghouse.
- 8.12. The proposal would not harm the openness of the green belt as the proposal is merely a change of use of an existing building, whilst bird feeders would be installed to enhance the local wildlife and provide biodiversity gain on the site.
- 8.13. **Policy SD1 Sustainable Use of Resources** – this policy is satisfied as the proposal reuses an existing dwelling.

- 8.14. **Policy SD 5 Flood Risk** – the application site lies within Flood Zone 1 which has a low probability of flooding. No alteration to the existing drainage is being proposed.
- 8.15. **Policy E 1 New Employment** -although this is not strictly a new employment proposal it will result in an increase in staff employed locally and provide appropriate training, when necessary, thereby enhancing the local economy.
- 8.16. **Policy H1 New Housing Development** – the proposal is for a change of use of a dwelling which has been operated as a dwelling providing care for 2 children since 2006 (C3b) the proposal is for specialist care housing without resulting in a detrimental impact on existing and future neighbours. The proposal accords with the National Policy on Green Belts and will assist in meeting the Council's housing need for this type of housing.
- 8.17. **Policy DC1 Design Considerations** – the proposal will not alter the appearance of the dwelling which will retain its farm house character
- 8.18. The application site is located in a sustainable location that will offer employment opportunities to local people which in turn will enhance the local economy. Staff will be encouraged to car share, walk, cycle or use the local bus service to go to and from the application site. In addition to this, supplies and services will be sourced locally to minimise the businesses carbon footprint.
- 8.19. The proposed change of use will offer an employment opportunity for 10 full-time staff operating a 24 – 48 hr shift pattern, whilst offering continuous training to staff. Two staff will be on-site at any given time, with a manager present between 9 am- 5 pm Monday to Friday inclusive.
- 8.20. There is sufficient parking on the site for 7 cars.
- 8.21. The proposal will not result in a detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbours due to the fact that any noise or disturbance generated would be less than an average 4-bedroom dwelling.
- 8.22. In relation to security, both the front and back doors will be fitted with an alarm to increase the security to the property. Two members of staff will be present when the children are on-site to ensure that they are closely monitored and safe.
- 8.23. No alteration to the existing drainage is proposed and bird feeders will be installed to encourage the local wildlife and provide biodiversity gain.
- 8.24. **Policy NE1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity** – this proposal does not require the removal of any of the hedgerow or landscape features. As stated above the

applicants will install bird feeders to encourage the local wildlife and provide biodiversity gain.

- 8.25. **Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport** – this policy is satisfied through the information above.

9. Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan

- 9.1. The relevant policies in this document will be addressed in this section of the Planning Statement.
- 9.2. **Policy INF 2 Sustainable Drainage** - no alterations to the existing drainage system are being proposed and the application lies within Flood Zone 1 which has a low probability of flooding.
- 9.3. **Policy DES 1: Design** – no external alterations are being proposed. Therefore, the site will retain its farm house appearance.
- 9.4. **Policy DES 2: Public Realm, Car Parking and Movement** – the application site lies within close proximity to sustainable transport and staff will be encouraged to walk, cycle, use the local bus service or car share to reduce the businesses carbon footprint. Supplies will also be sourced locally.
- 9.5. There are already 7 car park spaces available on the site which is more than sufficient for the proposed use.
- 9.6. The proposal accords with the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan.

10. Material Considerations

- 10.1. The **principle of development** through the reuse of the existing dwelling which has been operating under C3b use to provide care for 2 children since 2006 in this location. The only operational difference to the existing dwelling is that it would provide care for one extra child to meet their individual needs to ensure their safety.
- 10.2. **Character and Appearance** – no internal or external alterations are being proposed to the dwelling. To all intent and purpose, it will retain its farm house appearance with the only difference being that the children will be cared for by professional care staff rather than their parents. The proposed use would generate no greater level of noise, or traffic movements than an average 4-bedroom dwelling.

- 10.3. The only alteration to the residential activity on the site will be the fact that staff will be required to be present at all times on a rota basis. To clarify the level of traffic movement a table of traffic movements is set out below. Due to the size of the property the number of children who can be cared for is limited. Therefore, the effect of the traffic generated from this use is also limited, and is no greater than an average 4 bedroomed detached dwelling with children going to and from school, receiving visitor, and adults going to and from work, along with deliveries etc.

Activity	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
24-hour care worker arriving and leaving for 2-day shift (residential care workers)	2	0	2	0	2	0	2
Manager		1	0	1	0	1	
School run		2	2	2	2	2	
Total Movements (in and out)	2	3	4	3	4	3	2

Table 1. Traffic movements.

- 10.4. **Parking & Highway Safety** – the application site has 7 parking spaces at the site which is more than required for a C2 use. The shift patterns will be arranged to enable staff to car share, walk, cycle or use the local bus service to come and go from the site. This will minimise the businesses carbon footprint and encourage the use of sustainable transport.
- 10.5. On the basis of the above, the number of existing spaces is more than adequate for the proposed use.
- 10.6. **Crime and Security** -this application should not automatically be considered to bring additional issues into the area due to the fact the children are very closely monitored and assessed before being placed in any of the homes to ensure that they themselves are placed in a safe homely environment. Such allegations are pre determining the children's behaviour and should be treated as scare mongering.
- 10.7. In addition to this, the company has never received any complaints in relation to the increase in crime caused by the home's location or from the children within their care due to the fact that this is a very well managed service which is monitored and registered by OFSTED and complies with the requirements of the Care Quality Commission.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1. The proposed change of use from a dwelling (C3b) to a care home for three children will not alter the character or appearance of the dwelling and will not result in significant or substantial increase in traffic movements to and from the property, nor will it harm the openness of the Green Belt.
- 11.2. The proposal will offer employment to local people and provide a safe, discrete and quiet location where children can be provided with a robust plan for their road to resilience to becoming valued members of society.
- 11.3. Based on the above information, the proposed change of use is not material.
- 11.4. The proposal will help to support and enhance the vitality of the local economy and accords with the provisions of National, Local Planning Policy and the Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan.