Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

HARPLOW FARM
CHEADLE

APRIL 2022

Site Address:
Harplow Farm, Harplow Lane, Cheadle, Staffordshire, ST10 1UD

Applicant:
Serenity Care Children's Homes

Proposal:
Change of use from dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to care home for children (Use Class C2)

Planning Statement:
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1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Miss. L. Fresson of Serenity Care Children's Homes to submit a full application for the change of use of an existing detached property at Harplow Farm, Harplow Lane, Cheadle, from its existing use as a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a care home for children (Use Class C2).

1.2 Serenity Care is a registered care provider whose aims and objectives are to find what works best for the individual, tailor the support they offer, and ensure that the young people they care for are well equipped and prepared for the real world after they leave care. The company also believes strongly in offering support post care to ensure that they support young people in their transition from residential care into mainstream society.

1.3 The submitted proposal will provide a care home facility for up to three children / young people (Use Class C2), with each child / young person living there as their permanent residence. The premises will be regulated by Ofsted. The children occupying the premises will range between 8 and 17 years of age and have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. There will be a minimum of two staff on site at any given time, operating in a shift pattern typically involving two days on and four days off. During daytime hours there may also be a deputy manager and manager on the site in addition to those two members of staff.

1.4 The application proposes only modest alterations to the existing dwelling encompassing the conversion and alteration of the existing integral garage, and a number of internal alterations to form additional bedrooms for members of staff. The resultant property will have a total of 5 bedrooms (of which 2 will be for staff).

2 Site Description

2.1 The application site lies within the rural area to the southwest of the settlement of Cheadle and comprises a detached two storey dwellinghouse that occupies an elevated position above the nearby highway to the north (Harplow Lane). The site is surrounded on all sides by fields and is served by an existing access track that connects with Harplow Lane to the northwest. Further to the north / northwest, beyond Harplow Lane lies the New Haden Industrial Estate. The site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and is currently occupied as a dwellinghouse.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services:

- a mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes, to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities

- quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers

- easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community; increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce

- a healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment

- development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings

- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas, including the Peak District National Park, both now and for future generations

- support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions

3.3 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. This will be achieved through a number of actions, including:

- Allowing the conversion or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with Policy H1

- Enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified

- Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape

- Exercising strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy

3.4 Policy H1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Housing Development' and states that new housing development should provide for a mix of housing sizes, types and tenure including a proportion of affordable housing as set out in Policy H3, and where appropriate housing for special groups, to meet the needs and aspirations of the current and future population having regard to the Area Strategies. It goes on to state that the housing for special groups, particularly for older people and others as identified in the SHMA or successor document should be of a scale and in a location which is appropriate to its needs.

3.5 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, new development should (amongst other requirements):

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area

- be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance

- protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight,

visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution

- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use

- ensure, where appropriate, equality of access and use for all sections of the community

3.6 Policy T1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development and Sustainable Transport' and states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved (amongst other requirements) by:

- Ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.

- Considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development, and sets out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of safeguarding the Green Belt, ensuring that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed, securing high quality design, and ensuring highway safety. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

SMDC Local Plan Car Parking Standards

4.2 The adopted parking standards for a C2 use such as the proposed development require that one parking space be provided per resident staff member, plus 1 space per non-resident present at peak working times. In addition, there should be one space per 3 bed spaces for visitors. An ambulance space should also be provided in a position which would not impede site access but located as close as possible to the main entrance of the establishment.

5 Planning Assessment

Green Belt

5.1 The application site is located within the Green Belt wherein new development is strictly controlled in accordance with policy SS10 of the Local Plan. The submitted proposal encompasses the change of use of an existing building from a dwellinghouse to a care home, along with associated external alterations.

5.2 Paragraph 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework confirms that the reuse of rural buildings that are of a permanent and substantial construction and changes of use of land are not inappropriate within the Green Belt, provided that the development does not give rise to harm to the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with the five purposes of including land within it.

5.3 The application proposes the change of use of an existing dwellinghouse that is evidently of a permanent and substantial construction, and its reuse as a care home will not give rise to any material harm to the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with the five purposes of including land within it, as there will be no requirement for any alterations or changes to the existing external layout of the site. The proposed change of use of the existing building therefore amounts to an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 150 of the NPPF and policy SS10 of the Local Plan.

5.4 The proposed external alterations to the existing building are also considered to be acceptable. Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework makes provision for the extension and alteration of a building, provided that the development does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling.

5.5 The alterations proposed in this case relate to changes to the front elevation of the existing integral garage, and do not involve any increase in the size of the existing building. Consequently, the proposed external alterations also amount to an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 149 of the NPPF and policy SS10 of the Local Plan.

Need For The Development

5.6 Paragraph 93 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that to provide the services that the community needs, planning decisions should take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community. The proposed change of use of the existing dwelling to a care home for children will meet a pressing need within the wider Staffordshire area for such facilities.

5.7 Children get placed in residential care for a variety of reasons. It could be a short term placement to work with the child therapeutically in attempts to either place them back into foster care or back with their families. Alternatively residential care might be better suited for a young person long term until adulthood due to the young person having emotional and behavioural difficulties, which require support from a larger staff team or more specialist skills. In some cases, residential care may be a preferred placement choice for a young person who does not want to live in a family environment as this can be a trigger point.

5.8 In England, just under 400,000 children (3% of the child population) are in the social care system at any one time, and more than 80,000 of these children are children in care (GOV.UK, 2022). This number is on track to hit almost 100,000 by 2025 – an increase of more than a third within just one decade. New research from the County Councils Network (CCN) shows that based on

the average increase rates for the past four years, the total will reach 95,000 by the middle of the decade, up from 69,000 in 2015. A staggering 63% of looked after children were looked after due to abuse or neglect in 2018/19 (NSPCC, 2021). This continuing increase in children requiring full time care means there is a growing demand for more children's care homes to support and protect these children in need. Staffordshire County Council itself acknowledges that there is a shortage of quality care places for children, noting that it has got to the stage where Councils can be competing against one another to use the most suitable accommodation, which can result in children being placed many miles from Staffordshire.

5.9 The proposed change of use to provide a children's care home on this site is wholly consistent with the objectives of policy SS1 of the Local Plan which seeks to ensure that development contributes positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands, and will make a valuable contribution towards meeting the demand for such care within the Staffordshire Moorlands wider North Staffordshire area.

Design & Layout

5.10 The proposed external alterations to the building are limited to the changes to the existing integral garage to provide an additional lounge area. These works are not considered to be contentious. The building will otherwise remain unaltered from its existing appearance. There are furthermore no immediate neighbouring properties who may be affected by the proposed development. The submitted proposal is therefore in accordance with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety

5.11 The Local Authority's adopted car parking standards dictate that there should be one parking space provided per resident staff member, plus 1 space per

non-resident present at peak working times. In addition, there should be one space per 3 bed spaces for visitors. On top of that is a requirement to accommodate space for the parking of an ambulance.

5.12 The proposed development will have two members of staff present on site during the day and during the night, and there will be up to two additional members of staff on site during the daytime. The property will provide three bedrooms, giving rise to a total parking demand 5 spaces plus one ambulance space. The submitted plans demonstrate that parking for at least 6 vehicles can be readily accommodated on the site.

5.13 The site also occupies an appropriate location that balances the needs of the occupiers of the property, with the desire to secure sustainable development. The site lies approximately 1.5 miles for the centre of Cheadle where a full range of day-to-day services is on offer. The site is also ideally placed to facilitate access to numerous local schools and having those educational opportunities available will provide the young people with the best chance to attain a good education and support themselves throughout their lives. The proposed development is therefore consistent with the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Having regard to the considerations set out above, it is submitted that the proposed change of use of the existing dwellinghouse to a care home is acceptable in principle and will not detract from the character and openness of the Green Belt, or conflict with the five purposes of including land within it. The proposal therefore amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt and is also acceptable from a design and layout perspective and will not give rise to any adverse harm to highway safety.

6.2 The proposed development is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, H1, DC1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and guidance set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.