

Little Brook House Farm.

Change of use from a dwelling (C3) to a children's home (C2).

This document is to be read in conjunction with the others submitted in relation to ethos and workings of the proposed children's home.

The Site.

The application site is a detached dwelling and outbuildings in an established residential area. The property is situated within easy reach of local amenities, schools, commuter and transport networks. The accommodation comprises:-

- Ground floor, entrance, hallway, utility, dining room, lounge, family room, fitted breakfast kitchen, study.
- First Floor, 4 bedrooms, one with en-suite and a bathroom.
- Driveway providing ample parking for several vehicles and enclosed garden to the rear with separate outbuilding/garage.
- Outbuilding with rooms including toilet facilities.

The area has a mixture of detached and semi-detached dwellings fronting onto the road. There are primary and secondary schools locally within the vicinity of the site.

The Proposal.

The application seeks planning permission to establish a children's home for up to five young people, aged 4-12 at admission. Halliwell Homes currently operates two homes in the Stoke region and four in the Manchester region.

They believe this property offers a suitable location to support children and young people who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in the care of the Local Authority. The home will be subject to Ofsted registration, ensuring the stringent quality standards required to operate a Children's Home. The property will be inspected by Ofsted up to twice a year to ensure compliance, and we will also have an independent visitor conduct monthly checks to ensure the standards are met. The goal is to exceed these standards.

A representative from the Staffordshire Commissioning and Compliance Team has identified a need for local children to be cared for by high-quality providers in their local area. While we aim to support children and young people from the local community, it is important to consider the national context. Currently, there are over 83,000 Looked After Children in the UK, with 12% of them residing in Children's Homes.

Halliwell Homes operates the Restorative Parenting® Recovery Programme, an attachment-based, peer reviewed, time-limited program for children aged 4-12 at admission. The sole aim of the programme is to enable children to sustain a long-term family environment. It lasts for 18-24 months, after which the children transition to a long-term foster home.

Our homes are meticulously designed and decorated with the children's needs as the fundamental consideration. From a sensory perspective, we create an optimum environment for children to recover from the trauma they may have experienced.

The home will be managed by a Registered Manager, supported by a deputy and five Therapeutic Parents. In the evenings, there will be a waking night staff member, and one staff member will sleep in the house.

All the children will initially be taught on site and eventually attend the local schools each day. This will help with the integration within the local community. The children will be taken to the schools by the residential care team.

Our service will benefit the local community by creating a local supply chain, shopping locally for food, provisions, and vehicles, and employing and training local people. We will also collaborate with local businesses for support services such as outdoor education and activity centres. Our children will participate in local clubs and attend local schools, where we have confirmed there is capacity.

The proposed change of use from C3 to C2 will have limited, if any, impact on the physical aspects of the property.

The usual occupancy will be for a maximum of 5 young people plus a manager and support workers. The number of children may vary though the number of bedrooms available will obviously limit the upper number. There are currently 5 bedrooms plus spare room in the dwelling, therefore providing for the 5 children and the overnight support person. Ofsted inspection regimes will ensure that the quality of the accommodation and management are up to the appropriate standards.

The proposed use will have all the characteristics of a family home. Given that some of the occupants will have experienced trauma the house will meet the needs of these occupants in terms of privacy.

The use will have all the characteristics of a family group and will behave in the manner of a single family house. Care staff will accompany the group on a rota basis. The staff rota is a 24 hour one, to minimise staff changes during a normal day. There will also be a home office to assist with the administration of the home.

In addition to the care of the children other benefits include the employment of dedicated teachers and assistants, vocational instructors and care staff plus ground maintenance workers.

There are to be no external physical changes to the property proposed.

Staff will arrive/leave and the children taken to local schools, however, the level of activity is commensurate with a single large family home. The nature of the program which children will undertake while resident in the premises would see children being supervised for outdoor activities. It is considered that as the children would be supervised for all outdoor activities this would limit the opportunity of the occupants engaging in or being subjected to anti-social behaviour, thus limiting any impact on the local residential amenity.

The proposal is fully in line with the provisions of the Sufficiency Agenda which is about

having local services to meet the needs of children and young people in the local area. Both Central Government and Local Authority treat these provisions as a “priority.”

The proposal, as outlined above, seeks to give children stability within a home environment, albeit that care would be provided by guardians and not parents. It is considered in this case that this location is acceptable for the proposed development. It would be considered appropriate to allow children to be brought up in a residential location.

Relevant Planning Policies.

National Planning Policy Framework. (NPPF)

The NPPF provides the strategic planning basis for planning policies for England. The following elements are related to the proposed development. For conciseness only the relative elements of the guidance is supplied in the text. Elements in bold have particular relevance to the proposal and planning policy.

Para 20. Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places (to ensure outcomes support beauty and placemaking), and make sufficient provision for:

- a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;
- b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
- c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure);**

Para 60. To support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, **it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. The overall aim should be to meet as much of an area’s identified housing need as possible, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community.**

Para 97. To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community

needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;**
- b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;**
- c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs;**
- d) ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and**

**modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and
e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic
uses and community facilities and services.**

The Stoke City Local Plan.

The local authority is currently undertaking the process of securing an up to date local plan. The Core Strategy is in place however, detailed policies are yet to be finalised and consulted upon. The site lies within the designated Green Belt in the extant Local Plan. Relevant considerations are detailed below.

Other relevant references.

Reference is made to the written statement published by Rachael Maclean the Minister of State for Housing and Planning 23rd May 2023, which indicates that "The planning system should not be a barrier to providing homes for the most vulnerable children in society"

Core Strategy

Community Strategies

2.13 A key test for the soundness of the Core Spatial Strategy is that it has regard to an authority's Community Strategy.

2.14 The Community Strategy for the City of Stoke-on-Trent was adopted in 2004 and identified six key priorities –

- A Healthier City
- A Safer City
- A Wealthier City
- A Greener City
- A Learning City
- A City with a Strong Sense of Community

Strategic Aims

4.5 The co-ordinated delivery of the strategic aims listed below will be an important means of realising the strategic and local visions.

People

4.6 Strategic Aim 1 (SA1) - To halt net outward migration from Stoke-on-Trent and retain and attract population to the conurbation

4.7 Strategic Aim 2 (SA2) – To facilitate delivery of the best of healthy urban living in the development of the conurbation and to ensure that new development makes adequate provision for all necessary community facilities including health care, education, sports and recreation and leisure and that the quality and accessibility of existing facilities are enhanced and retained where they provide for the justified community needs.

Discussion.

As can be seen from the above the proposed development is fully in keeping with the provisions of the NPPF and the extant local plan policies.

There are to be no changes to the external areas of the property and the use proposed will be the same as single family use.

The applicants are highly experienced operators who currently work within the sector in the locality.

The proposed children's home will be a benefit to the local community providing a much needed facility without creating any detriment to interests of acknowledged importance.

From a planning point of view the existing dwelling and outbuildings have operated in the past as a farm. The dwelling itself is a large family home that has other dwellings in proximity but not attached to the residential curtilage.

There is a large garden area and also hardstanding for up to ten vehicles which will utilise the vehicular access directly onto the main road. The submitted Rota of staff clearly indicates the amount of staff movements and it is considered that the traffic created by the development will be similar to that of a large family home.

The site does lie within the designated Green Belt where there are restrictions on development, especially those with impacts upon the openness of the Green Belt. In this particular development there are no external changes to the elevations of the dwelling or the outbuilding and the curtilage of the property will remain as a garden area.

There are proposed some minor changes to the internal configurations of the dwelling and the outbuilding itself will have minor changes to provide for 2 school classrooms for the children who will initially be educated there before entering local schools.

The children will be accompanied and supervised by staff whenever they leave the property either on foot or by car.

This type of application reflects a societal need to care for vulnerable people in communities, one of the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework. There is no permitted change from C3 to C2 most likely to protect residential amenity. However, this type of development would be considered sustainable development as it provides employment and reduces the need of institutional care for vulnerable people, particularly as in the case here.

Granting this permission would allow children placed in the care system some sort of normality and the chance to be brought up in a safe environment replicating the home environment, something all children deserve.

As the proposal is policy compliant it is contended that approval should be granted.