



Planning

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Client:

Vinay and Poonam Parihar

17 Vastern Road,

Reading, RG1 8DJ

Change of use of C4 HMO to C2 Children's Home.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Brighter Futures for Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy published in 2024

Appendix 2 - APP/G3110/W/24/3338347 Appeal Decision

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the change of use from a C4 HMO to a C2 Children's Home at 17 Vastern Road, Reading, RG1 8DJ.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents prepared by Design Extension:
- 1:1250 Site Location Plan
 - 1:500 Block Plan
 - 1:100 Existing Floor Plans and Elevations
 - 1:100 Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations
- 1.4 The relevant application fee of will be submitted by the applicant separately.
- 1.5 The proposal is for four children under the ward of the Local Authority to live at the property. In addition, there would be a maximum of two staff members at the property at any given time except for in certain circumstances where additional staff may be required such as therapists, tutors etc.

- 1.6 They would not permanently reside at the property and would only be there to undertake their tasks, before leaving. The application is being sought after by Vinay and Poonam Parihar - Amicus Aspiring Care Ltd, a children's residential care provider, providing 24 hour care to 'looked after children' commissioned by local authorities.
- 1.7 The company provides specialist care to vulnerable children who have experienced trauma.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site comprises a two storey, end of terrace, white rendered brick property to the northern side of Vastern Road. The property has a pitched roof, a two storey rear gable with a mono-pitched roof attached to a gable at the neighbouring property, a mono-pitched front dormer attached to a dormer at the neighbouring property and has been extended to the rear over time.
- 2.2 Dwellings to the northern side of Vastern Road comprise traditional Victorian terraces. The site is located within close proximity to Reading Train Station, providing onwards connections to London, and also falls within 200m of a bus stop offering connections within Reading and to Oxford as well as Manchester and London Heathrow Airport.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Application Ref: 152220/CLP for the demolition of existing single storey lean-to to the rear of the property and replacement with larger single storey rear extension. Approved 3rd February 2016.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The National Design Guide (2019) identifies that “well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them. They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as the ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time” (para 120-121).
- 4.2 Regarding the requirements of NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:
- 4.3 **Use and Amount:** The proposed use is for a C2 Children’s Home for four children under the care of the Local Authority to live at the property, as well as two staff members. Whilst the duration of the stay for children will vary dependent on the needs of the child.
- 4.4 The applicant’s operation model envisions that the minimum length of a placement would be around 7 months but that the aspirational target would for 1 year or beyond as dictated by the child's needs. The property would be the children’s primary living accommodation for the duration of their stay.
- 4.5 Rotas are to be planned to ensure minimal changes for children and a consistent ‘parenting’ group, with staff change over patterns typically be 7am - 3pm, 3pm - 10pm and 10pm – 7am. This rota pattern is typical of this scenario to ensure the most consistent grouping of staff and limited change for the children, as per the average family setting.

- 4.6 The property will provide a much needed family-style home for vulnerable children who are unable to live with their families, further providing very much needed places for local children.
- 4.7 The proposal is, to all intents and purposes, a family home whereby children will live in the house under the care of surrogate parents, eat meals together, share the living rooms, bathrooms and sleep under the same roof.
- 4.8 **Layout and Scale:** The proposal will comprise a living room, bathroom and kitchen to the ground floor, 4 bedrooms for children and 2 for staff.
- 4.9 **Landscaping:** The proposal will not amount to any impacts to the existing landscaping on site.
- 4.10 **Appearance:** The proposal will not amount to any external alterations and as such the appearance will remain unchanged.
- 4.11 **Access & Parking:** An existing parking area is available to the front of the property.

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that "Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way" and "at every level should seek to approve applications

for sustainable development where possible". Paragraph 123 of the NPPF comments that planning should "make effective use of land" in "meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions".

- 5.3 Paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.
- 5.4 Paragraph 131 identifies that "Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities", whilst paragraph 139 states that significant weight should be given to "outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."
- 5.5 The National Design Guide builds on the above, and clarifies that "well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use" (para 109).
- 5.6 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the Development Plan comprises the following document:
 - Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

- 5.7 Paragraph 4.4.50 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that Reading is facing a range of housing needs over the coming years, and it is vital to recognise some of the more complex needs that should be taken account of specifically in future provision. Whilst some of these derive from an ageing population, they also emerge from the fact that many people with existing needs are in poor or unsuitable accommodation. Groups covered by this section include children.
- 5.8 Furthermore, the Brighter Futures for Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy published in 2024 (Appendix 1) shows that the number of looked after children in Reading has increased from 64 to 68 from March 2022 to March 2023, and the number of children is higher than its statistical neighbours. In addition, over the period from March 2019 to March 2023, Reading has had a higher number of looked after children for four out of five years, highlighting an identified need for children's homes within the Borough.
- 5.9 The proposal seeks for a home for children who have had a difficult start in life and are unable to live with their families through no fault of their own. Despite their difficult start in life, this should not deprive them of the opportunity to live in a caring family home, which for all intents and purposes this dwelling would operate as.
- 5.10 Recent appeal decision ref: APP/G3110/W/24/3338347 (Appendix 2) for the change of use from a HMO to a children's home for a maximum of four children under the age of 18 was allowed in Oxford. The Inspector's report states that:

'Staff would be on site throughout the day and night to care for and manage the behaviour of the small number of children who reside at the property. Furthermore, in common with that which would ordinarily be expected within a typical family, children would only be

permitted to be unsupervised when their carers deem that they are ready. For these reasons, the development would not result in levels of noise or activity that would be materially different from some other residential properties in the area that are occupied by families. Nor, for the same reasons, would it cause harm to the living conditions of the occupiers nearby properties in respect of these matters. Furthermore, no compelling evidence has been put before me from which to conclude that the use of the property as proposed would cause harm to the welfare of other children in the area.'

- 5.11 It is proposed that the application at hand would function in the same way as the dwelling in appeal ref: APP/G31110/W/24/3338347 creating what can be described as a typical family home presenting no material increase in levels of noise or activity over and above surrounding residential properties.
- 5.12 Reading Local Plan policy H7 – Protecting the existing housing stock states that planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation or land unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as accommodation for vulnerable groups.
- 5.13 Given this, the proposal is demonstrated to provide a family home for looked after children, addressing a short fall of this type of dwelling across the Borough. The proposal is found to be acceptable in principle.
- 5.14 **Character and Appearance of the Area:** LP Policy CC7 states that all development must be of high design quality, which maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The policy goes on to state that this is in regard to a number of measures, including layout, density, scale and architectural detail. Developments will be assessed to ensure that they respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and

distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm.

- 5.15 Vastern Road comprises a mixed character area, whereby 17 Vastern Road presents an end of terrace to a row of Victorian terraced dwellings to the north western end of Vastern Road. With the dwelling currently in use as a C4 HMO, it should be considered that the proposal continues to assimilate with neighbouring dwellings falling within a residential use and is therefore in accordance with LP Policy CC7.
- 5.16 **Residential Amenity:** The proposal will result in a 6-bedroom dwelling including 4 bedrooms for children, and two staff bedrooms.
- 5.17 Each of the children’s bedrooms have been afforded space for a desk and wardrobe as demonstrated by the submitted plans. The dwelling also benefits from a private rear garden.
- 5.18 Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity of the Local Plan states that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties in terms of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight and noise etc.
- 5.19 Whereby no external works are proposed as part of this application, there would be no overbearing, overlooking or overshadowing concerns. As the proposal has been demonstrated to function in the same way as a traditional family dwelling, it is also considered that there will be no impacts on noise and disturbance as a result of the development, as such the proposal is shown to be in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Local Plan.
- 5.20 **Trees and Landscaping:** The proposal will not amount in any changes to the existing landscaping on site.

- 5.21 **Transport and Parking:** The proposal has a parking area to the front of the property which is typical of the area as demonstrated by this arrangement at neighbouring dwelling 19 Vastern Road.
- 5.22 The site benefits from an existing dropped kerb.
- 5.23 **Cycle Provision:** The proposal will not amount to any changes over the existing situation on site.
- 5.24 **Refuse Provision:** The proposal will not amount to any changes over the existing situation on site.
- 5.25 **Drainage and SuDS:** The site lies within Flood Zone 1, at the lowest risk of fluvial flooding. As such, a flood risk assessment is not required and the proposed development is acceptable in drainage terms.
- 5.26 **Contamination:** The site is not known to be contaminated, if concerns are raised during the course of the application, these can be dealt with via condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.27 **Air Quality:** An Air Quality Assessment by Redmore Environmental is submitted in support of this application due to the site's location within an Air Quality Management Area.
- 5.28 A number of mitigation measures are proposed within the report which can be controlled via condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.29 The report concludes stating that air quality factors are not considered to prejudice a grant of planning permission. For these reasons, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy EN15.
- 5.30 **Acoustics:** An Acoustic Assessment by ACA Acoustics has been submitted in support of this application. The sound level survey was been carried out in the vicinity between the 8th to 10th October 2024.

- 5.31 Whilst on site ACA Acoustics' consultant considered the dominant sound source to be traffic from the nearby roundabout and Vastern Road.
- 5.32 Sound levels measured to the front façade, overlooking Vastern Road, are LAeq 16-hour 72dB during the daytime and LAeq 8-hour 66dB overnight. Short-term individual noise events overnight do not regularly exceed a level of LAfmax 81dB. Sound levels to the rear façade are LAeq 16-hour 62dB during the daytime and LAeq 8-hour 57dB overnight. Short-term individual noise events overnight do not regularly exceed a level of LAfmax 69dB.
- 5.33 A Stage 1 Initial Site Noise Risk Assessment, in accordance with ProPG Planning & Noise, identifies the site as being in an area with a high noise risk and therefore an Acoustic Design Statement has been prepared.
- 5.34 A Stage 2 detailed acoustic design process has been followed, in accordance with ProPG. Details of the Acoustic Design Statement are included in this report. A scheme for sound insulation of the building envelope has been developed such that internal sound levels meet the guideline limits for a good standard of amenity to living rooms and bedrooms set out in ProPG and BS 8233:2014.
- 5.35 Details of the sound insulation and mitigation scheme are provided within the report.
- 5.36 In conclusion, it is recommended that the site is suitable for the proposed development, subject to implementation of the mitigation set out in the Acoustic Design Statement. These measures can be controlled by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.37 **Archaeology:** The site is not known to be in an area of archaeological importance, if concerns are raised during the course of the

application, these can be dealt with via condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.

5.38 **Ecology:** The proposal will not amount to any external alterations, and as such there will be no ecological impacts.

5.39 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The proposal will not amount to any new build floor space and as such is not CIL liable.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.

6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would provide a much needed Children's Home to accommodate children under the care of the Local Authority without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents.

6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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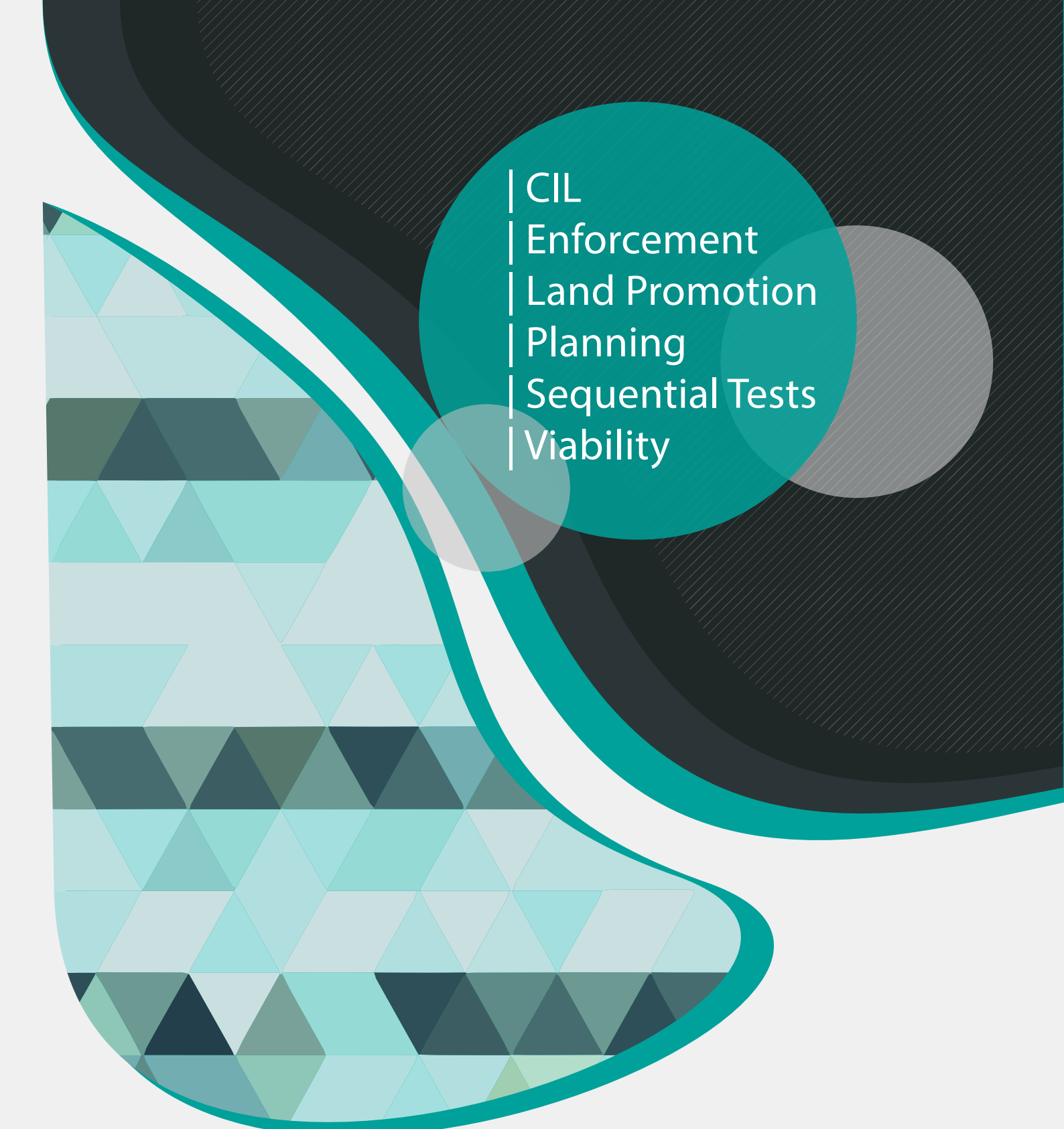
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