

1.0 Introduction

This statement has been prepared following the public consultation process in response to the representations received from neighbouring residents. The applicant has carefully reviewed all comments submitted to Reading Borough Council and fully appreciates that local residents wish to be reassured that the proposed children's home will operate responsibly, professionally and with full regard for the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

Whilst the applicant is not in a position to comment on matters relating to any previous occupier or historical operation of the property, those representations have nevertheless informed this enhanced operational statement. The purpose of this document is therefore not to revisit historic matters, but to provide the Local Planning Authority with additional reassurance regarding how the proposed home will operate, the regulatory framework under which it will be governed, and the proactive measures that will be implemented to minimise any impact upon neighbouring residents.

2.0 A Highly Regulated Service

It is important to recognise that the granting of planning permission would not permit the home to begin operating. Before a single young person can be accommodated at the property, the provider must first successfully complete Ofsted's rigorous registration process under the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015. This is an entirely separate statutory process from planning and involves extensive scrutiny of every aspect of the proposed service. Registration will only be granted where Ofsted is satisfied that the home is capable of delivering safe, effective and high quality care.

As part of the registration process, Ofsted assesses the suitability and experience of the Registered Manager; the fitness and competence of the Responsible Individual; safeguarding procedures; staffing structures and qualifications; behaviour management policies; risk assessments; the suitability of the property; governance arrangements; quality assurance systems; and the provider's ability to consistently deliver positive outcomes for children. Should Ofsted not be satisfied that the required standards have been achieved, registration will not be granted and the home cannot lawfully operate. This rigorous regulatory process provides a significant level of independent oversight before the home is permitted to open.

3.0 Ongoing Regulatory Oversight

Ofsted's involvement does not end once registration has been granted. Children's homes remain subject to continuous monitoring throughout their operation. This ongoing oversight encompasses routine Ofsted inspections, unannounced inspection visits, independent monthly Regulation 44 visits, Responsible Individual monitoring, continual safeguarding review, statutory notifications of significant incidents, ongoing quality assurance audits, and enforcement powers where standards are not maintained. Accordingly, the operation of the home will remain subject to one of the most comprehensive regulatory frameworks within children's social care.

4.0 Community Engagement

The applicant recognises the importance of establishing positive relationships with neighbouring residents from the outset. Prior to the home becoming operational, the provider intends to host a community open day for immediate neighbours. This will provide an opportunity for local residents to meet the Registered Manager, the Responsible Individual and the Directors responsible for operating the home; to view the communal areas of the property; to understand how the home will operate; to ask questions directly; and to establish an open line of communication before the first placement is made.

The applicant considers that early engagement of this nature is the most effective way of building trust and ensuring neighbours know exactly who to contact should they ever have any concerns. Following opening, neighbours will continue to have direct access to the Registered Manager, who will remain the primary point of contact for any operational matters. Any concerns raised will be acknowledged promptly, investigated appropriately and, where necessary, used to inform future operational reviews.

5.0 Residential Amenity and Noise Management

The proposed home has been specifically designed to operate in a manner that closely resembles a typical family household. Unlike larger institutional settings, the home will accommodate a maximum of three young people living together in a stable domestic environment supported by professional care staff. Children residing within the home will follow structured daily routines appropriate to their individual needs and ages, encompassing education, mealtimes, homework, recreational activities, therapeutic support and appropriate evening wind-down periods.

Quiet periods will be actively managed each evening, with children encouraged to participate in calm indoor activities before bedtime. Outdoor activities will be limited to appropriate daytime hours and staff will supervise all external areas whenever they are in use. Staff receive specialist training in trauma-informed practice, behavioural support and de-escalation techniques. Where behaviour begins to escalate, intervention takes place at the earliest opportunity with the objective of restoring a calm environment for both the young people and neighbouring residents.

Should the Council consider additional internal acoustic insulation appropriate, the applicant is willing to incorporate reasonable acoustic improvements as recommended by the Council's Environmental Protection Officer.

6.0 Management and Accountability

The home will operate under the day-to-day leadership of an Ofsted Registered Manager, supported by an experienced Responsible Individual and Directors. Unlike many residential uses, children's homes operate within clearly defined lines of accountability. Operational performance is continually monitored through management supervision, safeguarding audits, incident reviews, staff supervision, independent monthly visits, Ofsted inspections and internal quality assurance procedures. Every significant incident is formally recorded, reviewed and used to improve practice where appropriate. This robust governance framework ensures the home remains accountable throughout its operation.

7.0 Staffing Arrangements

The proposed staffing model has been designed to prioritise both high quality care and minimal impact upon neighbouring residents. During the day there will be a minimum of three Residential Support Workers on duty, although this will typically be around four depending upon the assessed needs of the children residing at the home. The Registered Manager and Deputy Manager will generally attend during normal office hours, undertaking managerial, safeguarding, compliance and administrative responsibilities from the dedicated office accommodation. Their role is supervisory rather than providing routine direct care. Accordingly, there may occasionally be up to six members of staff present during office hours.

During the night, staffing levels reduce to between two and three Residential Support Workers, with management staff not ordinarily present. Importantly, this staffing structure should not be interpreted as generating equivalent vehicle movements. Residential Support Workers undertake extended shifts, typically between 24 and 48 hours, substantially reducing staff turnover at the property. Furthermore, staff handovers are carefully staggered, with changeovers taking place individually or in small numbers over a period of time rather than all staff arriving or departing simultaneously. This operational model significantly reduces traffic movements, avoids unnecessary congestion and minimises disturbance to neighbouring residents.

8.0 Commitment to the Local Community

The applicant is committed to operating a home that becomes a positive part of the local community. Children placed within the home will undergo comprehensive placement matching to ensure their needs are compatible with both the home and its residential setting. The focus of the home is to provide stability, routine, education and therapeutic support within a safe, family-style environment. The provider believes that successful children's homes are built not only upon high quality care but also upon positive relationships with neighbours and the wider community. This commitment extends beyond regulatory compliance and forms part of the ethos upon which the service will operate.

9.0 Conclusion

The applicant fully appreciates the importance of protecting the amenity of neighbouring residents and has carefully considered all consultation representations received. Whilst it would not be appropriate for the applicant to comment on matters relating to previous occupation or historic operation of the property, the concerns expressed have reinforced the applicant's commitment to delivering a well managed, professionally operated and highly accountable children's home.

The proposed home cannot begin operating until it has successfully completed Ofsted's stringent registration process. Thereafter, it will remain subject to continuous independent regulation, inspection and monitoring throughout its operation. Together with the commitments contained within this statement, the applicant considers that the proposal provides a robust operational framework that safeguards neighbouring amenity whilst delivering an essential service for some of the country's most vulnerable young people.