



Planning Statement

Parkwood, Horse Close Lane, Trimdon
Village, Trimdon Station, TS29 6LS



London



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this Planning Statement is to demonstrate that the conversion of a garage in to two flats (C2) at Parkwood, Horse Close Lane, Trimdon Village, TS29 6LS to enable the Cambian Group to expand its existing facility on site is acceptable.
- 1.2. In 2015, The Cambian Group secured planning permission to change the use of the former dwelling on site in to care home (C2) for 4 children. This proposal seeks to convert the existing double garage on site in to two independent living flats, both of which will accommodate 1 child aged 16 to 17 years. The two flats will be registered with OFSTED.
- 1.3. The Cambian Group have successful ran and operated from Parkwood since 2015, and this proposal will enable them to expand their offer on an established site.
- 1.4. The two flats would accommodate one child each, ages 16-17 supported by one staff member. Further information on the staffing arrangements and operational details of the home is contained at Section 4 of this statement. It is important to highlight that the operation of the existing care home on site will not be affected by these proposals.
- 1.5. A suite of documents have been submitted alongside this Planning Statement. This includes a Statement of Purpose, which provides an overview of the provider, including the management of its properties.
- 1.6. There is an identified need for C2 accommodation of this nature, and the application site will provide a safe, secure and caring environment for children aged 16-17 years old transitioning from living in care to living independently.
- 1.7. This statement comprises description of the site, surrounding area and planning history at section 3; details of the proposed development and it will operate at section 4; an overview of the relevant planning policy context and other material considerations at section 5; a detailed planning assessment and justification at section 6 and concluding comments at section 7.

2. The Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1. The application site is located north and west of Horse Close Lane to the north-east of Trimdon Village. The site is located in the open countryside and the site immediately abuts fields to the north and west. The existing C2 home, Parkwood, is located immediately to the south of the garages to be converted. Two semi-detached houses are located on the opposite side of Horse Close Lane to the east, and a track south of these homes leads to a farm.
- 2.2. The wider site comprises of the existing detached care home and a large garden that fronts the house is located south of the garages. To the rear and directly adjoining the garage is a linear row of outbuildings, that served as a former cattery. Vehicular access to the application site and the existing home is via Horse Close Lane to the east. There are 10 allocated car parking spaces on site. A mature boundary hedge is located between the application site and the road.
- 2.3. The garage and existing home on site is not statutorily listed or local listed nor is it listed within a Conservation Area.

Figure 2.1 – Existing garage



Source: Planning Potential site visit

Figure 2.2 – Existing garage



Source: Planning Potential site visit

3. Planning History

3.1. The planning application previously submitted on site relate to applications submitted by Planning Potential on behalf of our client (the applicant) and applications relating to the site's previous uses, these include:

- DM/15/02628/FPA – Change of use of dwelling to care home for 4 children (use class C2). Approved 19.10.2015.
- DM/15/01124/COL – Certificate of Lawfulness application for the 'proposed use of Parkwood as a care facility use class C3' Withdrawn 21.08.2021.
- 7/2004/0437/DM – Erection of boarding cattery and isolation unit. Approved 15.09.2004.
- 7/1999/0195/DM – Erection of conservatory and garage extension. Approved 14.07.1999
- 7/1983/1083/DM – Change of use from former school to residential and erection of kennel block. Approved 1983.

4. Application Proposals

- 4.1. The Cambian Group are seeking to convert the existing garage on site in to two C2 (Residential Institution) independence flats. Externally, a 1m high fence will be erected around the front elevation and the size of the windows in each flat will be increased, with some removed. The roof covering will be replaced with a slate look finish and the walls will remain as painted render.
- 4.2. The two flats will provide two children (one in each flat) aged 16-17 years with a step down flat. The flats will each compromise of a bedroom space, living space and bathroom.
- 4.3. The two children will be cared for by one member of staff.
- 4.4. The staff member would work a day shift of 10am to 10pm 7 days a week, they would not sleep over. The one staff member a day would likely use their own car to access the site and would not undertake additional journeys apart from the one commute per day.
- 4.5. There would be a six weekly statutory visit from social workers for both residents and the occasional visit from visitors who may work with the children in the flats. This would typically not exceed more than 1 visit per child per week.
- 4.6. There is ample parking to accommodate the extra members of staff on site and the low numbers of visitor expected.
- 4.7. The proposed external alterations are minimal but will improve the aesthetic appearance of the current garage building.

Figure 4.1 – Existing garage



Figure 4.2 – Existing garage



Source: Planning Potential site visit

Source: Planning Potential site visit

5. Planning Policy Context and Other Material Considerations

- 5.1. The planning system is plan-led. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, (when taken as a whole) unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2. The content of the NPPF (February 2019) is a material consideration.
- 5.3. Paragraph 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable development, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.
- 5.4. Paragraph 11 states that planning decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where the development plan is absent, silent or out of date planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.
- 5.5. The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. The NPPF adds that developments should be safe and accessible.
- 5.6. Paragraph 61 of the NPPF focuses on the sufficient supply of homes, highlighting the importance of a range of using need for 'different groups in the community'. This includes looked-after children and is echoed in Policy 15 'Address Housing Need' of the County Durham Local Plan.

Development Plan Policies

- 5.7. The local development plan comprises of the following
 - County Durham Local Plan (adopted October 2020)
- 5.8. The policies relevant to the determination of the application include:
 - Policy 10 'Development in the Countryside'
 - Policy 15 'Addressing Housing Need'
 - Policy 18 'Children's Homes'
 - Policy 21 'Delivering Sustainable Transport'
 - Policy 29 'Sustainable Design'

6. Planning Justification

6.1. The main considerations in assessing this planning application are:

- Principle of development.
- Impact on residential amenity.
- Impact on the highway network.
- Sustainable Design

6.2. These matters will be assessed against the relevant national and local policies and will demonstrate that the proposals are entirely acceptable.

6.3. It is worth noting from the outset that there are no policies within the County Durham Local Plan that seeks to prevent care homes of this nature, and the principle of a care home on site was secured in 2015 following the approval of planning application ref: DM/15/02628/FPA.

Principle of Development

6.4. Policy 10 criteria h) confirms that the change of use of existing buildings and structures in the countryside is acceptable subject to meeting a number of conditions. None of the conditions are directly relevant given the proposals and the lawful use of the existing facility on site, but the proposal will enhance the physical appearance of the existing garage and in doing so its immediate setting. It will also enhance the existing care home facility, through being able to serve the wider Durham area, with this type of specialist transitional accommodation.

6.5. Policy 18 'Children's Homes' focuses specifically on applications of this nature. It outlines a series of requirements that need to be met in order for proposals for a children's home to progress. A number are also mirrored in Policy 15 'Addressing Housing Need'. Whilst these are all noted as relevant, it should be highlighted that the proposed conversion of the garages will effectively extend the existing C2 services on site – the principle of C2 use on site was fully supported in 2015.

6.6. The applicant is able to demonstrate that the development will address any gaps in service provision to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority

The two flats will enable the transition of children from the existing care home on site into independent living. The flats may also serve other children aged 16, from other homes in the region, giving them the same opportunity to develop independence as children on the current site. If the children are from other homes, a Durham first approach will be adopted. Cambian have a number of existing homes across Durham that adopt this approach, with great success.

6.7. The site offers a positive and safe environment for the occupants of the premises ensuring that there is appropriate access to local services and community facilities.

The two flats will provide a safe and nurturing environment for two young adults who depend on the care provided by Cambian but are also seeking independence. A key transitional phase in the development of children under the care of The Cambian Group.

The proposed flats can be accessed directly from a private driveway. The site benefits from large private gardens providing a good level of outside amenity. Large boundary hedging forms the properties boundary providing sufficient screening. It is safe and secure as demonstrated by the operation of the existing home.

A C2 use also conforms with Paragraph 91 of the NPPF which encourages local planning authorities to create inclusive places that promote social interaction.

Cambian has a Regulatory Record that is recognised by Ofsted (our regulator) and the Local Authorities who use our services. Currently across all our services, 80% of these are rated by our regulators as either Good or Outstanding, this is above the national average.

6.8. The occupants would not be placed at risk having regard to the latest crime and safety statistics in the area and that this has been agreed in advance with Durham Constabulary, the council's Children and Young People's Services and other appropriate agencies

The approval of two recent planning applications for C2 homes in Durham (app ref: DM/21/01842/FPA and app ref: DM/20/01596/FPA) also considered crime, with the case officer stating:

'Demand on police resources differs from case to case and it is not possible to state that all children's homes generate significant demand.'

We agree with this statement and the applicant has prepared and submitted a Safe Area Report, which details how Cambian already seeks to minimise the likelihood of anti-social behaviour being a problem to the detriment of the character of the area. This confirms that the Local Authority Designated Officer will be informed of the two new independence flats.

A Police Liaison & Involvement Protocol has also been submitted, which has been designed to reduce the number of young people entering the criminal justice system and to reduce the number of calls made to the Police that would cause the Police to attend the children's homes.

The home is already set up with the Philomena Protocol, a local initiative that encourages carers, staff, families and friends to compile useful information that could be used in the event of a young person going missing from care.

The staff do operate on a shift basis, but there is a clear continuity of care allowing the children to build close relationships and trust with their carers. They effectively become their surrogate parents and the two independence flats will help the children through the transition of care in to independent living.

6.9. It is unlikely to cause unacceptable individual or cumulative impact on residential amenity, fear of crime or community cohesion

One of the Core Principles of the NPPF is to ensure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

The application site is located on the site of an existing C2 home operated and managed by the applicant. The site benefits from a large private garden that is well screened from neighbouring properties and has a large parking area on site. This application will not have a detrimental impact on amenity of future residents / users. Noise levels will not be materially greater than the existing care home facility on site.

Proposals for care homes are not uncommon nationally and planning appeal decisions relating to similar proposals have concluded that it cannot be assumed that children living in care would be more likely to behave antisocially or create levels of noise over and above children living in a 'traditional' family unit. Inspectors seem to take note that in a care home, children would be cared for by specialist supervising staff and care workers who are able to deal with any situations that might arise.

6.10. Appropriate measures will be in place to ensure access for emergency vehicles and safety measures such as fire escapes

Evidenced in more detail within the Statement of Purpose, the flats will be adapted to ensure it meets Fire Regulations and Health & Safety Law.

On a wider note, the proposed conversion of the garage would not impact on the existing accessibility of the site to emergency services or safety of the access point which is currently experienced by the existing occupants.

6.11. Satisfactory outside space, highway access, parking and servicing can be achieved

The garage is located on the site of an existing C2 property in a sustainable location with sufficient onsite parking.

The access point is established, and this application does not seek to amend or alter this point of access, which have safely served the home for the duration of its lifetime. The staff will park on site in the area shown on the proposed site plan.

The above assessment concludes that there are enough car parking spaces on site to accommodate the staffing and general function of the home at all points during the day, even when staff are arriving and leaving the property.

It has been demonstrated that the two flats would provide a safe and stable environment for two children aged 16-17 years, without compromising residential amenity or traffic movement. The proposals therefore accord with Policy 29.

Sustainable Design

6.12. Policy 29 'Sustainable Design' seeks to ensure that all development proposals are well designed and contribute positively to the site and area's character. As stated within Section 4 of this Statement, the proposal will result in the complete conversion of the existing garages into two independent C2 flats, resulting in the:

- Erection of a 1m high timber fence and decking around the front elevation
- Increase the size of the windows in each flat, with some removed. The new windows will be white uPVC to match the existing windows.
- The garage door will be fully removed, and the gap made good to match the existing external white rendered finish.
- The roof covering will be replaced with a slate look finish and the walls will remain as painted render.

6.13. The proposed external works fully adhere with local policy and will complement the existing care home and area's character.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The proposal seeks to convert an existing garage into two independence C2 flats on the site of an existing care home. The two flats will provide a transitional accommodation for children aged 16 moving from full residential care into independent living. The proposals also seek a number of minor elevational changes.
- 7.2. This planning statement demonstrates that the principal issues associated with conversion are acceptable.
- 7.3. Granting this permission will enable the Cambian Group to expand their current onsite services by offering children aged 16-17 with transitional accommodation, to help them with living independently.
- 7.4. The size of the building and its grounds provides suitable accommodation for the two children and the on-site staff. There is sufficient on-site parking for staff and visitors and the site is located within a sustainable location.
- 7.5. This Planning Statement demonstrated that there is nothing in the NPPF to identify this type of development as being unsustainable or which precludes in principle, development of this type within this location.
- 7.6. Policy 18 of the County Durham Local Plan is comprehensive, and the proposals are fully compliant with the requirements outlined in adopted policy. Through the provision of detailed information relating to the current and proposed operational requirements of the home, it is clear that the proposed change of use will not have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area or highway safety. In line with national and local policy, there is a requirement for councils to provide all types of housing for particular groups, including vulnerable children.
- 7.7. It has been demonstrated throughout this Statement that the proposals comply with the NPPF and all relevant local policies, and planning permission for the proposed works should be forthcoming.