



34a Westridge Road, Portswood, Southampton – Childrens' Home

Planning Application

PLANNING STATEMENT

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1 INTRODUCTION

This planning statement is prepared to support proposals for the alterations to 34a Westridge Road, Portswood, Southampton - to form a small childrens' home to care for up to 4 children around the ages of 14-18 years – with the entire property being converted to this proposed use as a childrens' home.

The planning issues are the change of use from Use Class C3 (Dwellinghouses) to C2 (Residential institutions), modest alterations to one of the elevations of the property, and some internal alterations to the layout of the property (although these alterations, in themselves, are not a material planning consideration).

This planning statement should be read in conjunction with the following supporting information:

- 22-1234_SCC_XX_ZZ_DR_A_0500_P01_LOC PLAN - Location Plan
- 22-1234_SCC_XX_ZZ_DR_A_0503_P01_EXG FL PLANS - Existing Floor Plans
- 22-1234_SCC_XX_ZZ_DR_A_0505_P01_EXG ELEV – Existing Elevations
- 22-1234_SCC_XX_ZZ_DR_A_0525_P01_DEMO PLANS – Demolition Plans
- 22-1234_SCC_XX_ZZ_DR_A_0530_P01_PROP FL PLANS – Proposed Floor Plans
- 22-1234_SCC_XX_ZZ_DR_A_0540_P01_PROP ELEV – Proposed Elevations



Figure 1: Front (south-west) elevation of 34a Westridge Road.



Figure 2: Rear (north-east) elevation of 34a Westridge Road.

2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The site comprises a 2-storey 5no bedroom detached dwelling in a predominately residential area - with a paved front garden, a rear garden, and a separate out-building at the end of the garden.

Adjacent buildings comprise a blend of similar properties, larger properties, larger blocks (including some modern blocks) and commercial premises to the rear.

The area is generally residential in character and well served by public transport with good road and public transport links.

There is a good range of facilities and services within walking distance of the site - predominately on Portswood Road.

The site is within Flood Zone 1.

Although there is an area of archaeological potential adjacent to the plot, the plot itself is not within this area – and there are no works proposed as part of this application which would have an impact on any archaeology present.

3 THE PROPOSALS

This proposal is to provide a long-term home for up to 4 children who are likely to be between the ages of 14-18 years. The home will be managed and run by Southampton City Council and will provide a permanent family-style home for children in its care.

Care for the children will be provided by 2no live-in members of staff - giving a ratio of 1:2 (staff:children) for the 4no children. A typical daily shift (with sleep-in) will involve a handover between staff at the end of the school day (around 14:00-15:00 hrs). In addition to this, a manager will also be on site most days during the week. Therefore, at most, during the brief handover period, there will be 5no members of staff on site – but, ordinarily, 3no members of staff during the day and 2no members of staff overnight (both with the 4no children).

The works also include internal alterations to the property; however, these, in themselves, are not thought to be a material planning consideration.

The internal alterations do generate the proposed addition of a new window at first floor level on the north-west elevation. This proposed window [to a new bathroom] overlooks the adjacent property; however, the window is to be glazed with translucent glazing and the opening light a minimum of 1700mm above the floor level.

The existing driveway provides parking for 3no cars and it is not proposed that this, or the other external areas of the property, be substantially altered as part of this proposal – but the current [non-functioning] electric gate to the property, and an existing timber structure forming a storage area, are proposed to be removed.

The proposed use of 34a Westridge Road as a Class C2 children's home will not be materially different from that of a C3 dwelling occupied by a single family. The children will access local schools and health services and be part of the wider community.

There will be occasional visitors to the home from family and professionals service providers working with the children. It is not considered that the overall the comings and goings from this property as a Class C2 home will differ materially from that of its current use as a Class C3 family home.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

Historic maps show that the existing house at 34a Westridge Road dates to c.1933-1946. An earlier map dated 1909-1910 shows that 34a along with house numbers 34 and 32 were previously one large plot with one house - and it is assumed that, following WW1, this was demolished, and the three separate houses were built on the site.

More recent planning history, showing a gradual increase in size of the property, comprises:

- ERECTION OF A 2 STOREY REAR EXTENSION: Ref. No: 920293/W. Validated: Wed 18 Mar 1992
 - Status: Approved

- Erection of a two-storey front extension: Ref. No: 07/01272/FUL. Validated: Fri 10 Aug 2007
 - Status: Refused

- Erection of a single storey front extension: Ref. No: 07/02005/FUL. Validated: Fri 14 Dec 2007
 - Status: Approved

- Erection of single storey conservatory at rear: Ref. No: 08/00325/FUL. Validated: Wed 12 Mar 2008
 - Status: Approved

5 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Principle of development/Policy

The proposal seeks to change the use of 34a Westridge Road, a C3 dwelling, to a C2 children's home. The proposed children's home, which will be managed by Southampton City Council's Children's Services, forms part of a strategy for reducing the high demand for such accommodation for children in the city.

Under this proposal, the use of 34a Westridge Road will not change significantly from that of a C3 family home; however, a change of use is sought because, for the purposes of Use Classes Order, children cannot form a household in their own right and are reliant on the adult staff that care for them. These staff do not permanently reside at the house as it is more akin to a place of work for them – and two members of staff will stay overnight on a rota basis in this instance – so the occupants, collectively, do not form a 'household'. Therefore, with regard to the use classes of the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 as amended, the proposed use is not Class C3 (dwellinghouse) nor C4 (HMO) as the staff have other residences, but C2 as it is residential accommodation for people in need of care.

It is not uncommon for C2 use to be present in areas of predominately C3 [residential dwellinghouses] and there is no specific Southampton City Council planning policy which limits the distribution of C2 use within the city.

34a Westridge Road is a 5/6no (dependent on whether one of the downstairs rooms is used as bedroom) bedroom property which is capable of accommodating a large family. The level of activity associated with the use of the property by a family and that of the small childrens' home proposed will not be significantly different as the activities associated with the use of the property as a children's home will be directly comparable to that of a C3 dwelling.

Policy CS16 of the Southampton City Council Core Strategy aims to avoid the loss of existing family homes within the city. However, this policy provides that the criteria for the loss of family homes does not apply to older people's, supported accommodation and purpose-built student accommodation. As the property would be occupied under the C2 use, it is considered to be 'supported accommodation' so would not conflict with the objectives of Policy CS16 even if the property was not available to families – and it is also anticipated that the property would readily be able to revert to C3 use in future if/as required.

A Ministerial Statement on 23rd May 2023 recognised the need for, and the importance of, children's home across the country: *'The planning system should not be a barrier to providing homes for the most vulnerable children in society'* – indicating that planning policy is becoming increasingly supportive of the creation of children's homes.

The minor internal alterations proposed will not result in a material intensification of the use of the property, nor do they constitute development for the purposes of S55 of the T&CPA.

5.2 Character of the area and residential environment

The proposals do not include any extensions or alterations to the property which will impact on the character of the area.

The use of the property as a long-term care home for up to 4no children is directly comparable to that of any other family home. The activity associated with this use, the coming and goings from the domestic setting, will not be materially different from that of any typical family use of this property – and the property will also have 2no managers on site to manage the activities of the household to ensure appropriate behaviours are maintained.

5.3 Parking, transport and highways

The site lies in a high accessible area of Portwood – and the property itself is within walking distances of a range of shops, schools and other community facilities, and good links to local road/rail/bus networks.

The current driveway can accommodate up to 3no cars (and possibly 4no if access is sequenced). This level of provision is comparable with the maximum allowable in the residential parking standards for a property of this size in a ‘standard’ area but, as the property is within the Portswood ‘high accessibility area’, it is 1no more space than the 2no maximum allowable. However, the 3no spaces as existing are an appropriate provision for the use of the property as a children’s home where possibly 3no cars will be on site generally – although this could briefly rise to 5no cars at the time of staff hand-over periods.

It should be noted that secure and covered cycle storage will be available at the property (which the children will also be able to make use of) and members of staff will be encouraged to cycle, use public transport or car share where possible.

It should also be noted that this 5no bedroom family home could, under its current C3 use, be occupied by 5/6no people of driving age – each with a car – so it is thought that this proposal does not result in any significant intensification of use which would result in material impacts on the character of the area or the adjacent highway network.

5.4 Neighbour amenity

The application site is a detached property with a rear garden laid to lawn and paved.

As stated above, the use of the property as a long-term care home for up to 4no children is directly comparable to that of any other family home. The activity associated with this use, the coming and goings from the domestic setting, will not be materially different from that of any typical family use of this property.

Similarly, the use proposed as part of this application will not result in any material changes in the range of normally expected noise and disturbance usually associated with a residential use.

The proposed use of this large, detached residential property will not result in any harmful impacts on the amenities of the neighbour properties.

5.5 Waste/Environment/drainage

The existing refuse bins are located on the driveway against the boundary by the entrance gates. It is expected the refuse bins will remain in this position.

No works are proposed to the existing trees on the site.

The building, both internally and externally, has recently (Dec 2023) been inspected and assessed by an ecologist who holds a Natural England Level 2 Bat Licence. There was no evidence of bats roosting and, overall, the house was deemed to offer negligible suitability for roosting bats and no further inspections or surveys were deemed to be necessary.

No works are proposed which will impact on the storm water drainage of the site into the sewer network.

6 CONCLUSION

This proposal will provide a much-needed C2 children's home for 4no children enabling them to maintain their relationships with family, friends, school and community in the greater Southampton area. The property will be owned and managed by Southampton City Council. There will be no material change in the way the house functions and a change of use is required simply because children are not able to form a 'household' in their own right.

There will be no significant difference in the character of activities associated with the proposed change of use to C2 and the activities of the house will be directly comparable to that of its C3 use.

It is not anticipated that the change of use will result in any harmful impacts on the amenities of the neighbouring properties, the character of the area, or the highways/traffic/parking provisions of the vicinity/area.