

MRPP

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PLANNING STATEMENT

**BUCKETS AND SPADES,
1 FAIRHOLME GARDENS,
LB BARNET, LONDON, N3 3ED**

**ON BEHALF OF,
NORWOOD SCHOOLS LIMITED**

FEBRUARY 2024

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- 1. NORWOOD STATEMENT**
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted on behalf of Norwood Schools Limited in support of an application for the change of use of Buckets and Spades, 1 Fairholme Gardens from a children's respite care home (Class C2) to a children's respite day centre (Class E(f)).
- 1.2 Norwood is the oldest Jewish charity in the UK, and provides support for children and families facing challenges, and people with learning disabilities and autism. Buckets and Spades was previously a respite care home for children and young people with learning disabilities, but ceased operation in November 2023. The proposed change of use is to create a new Bucket and Spades Children's Centre to continue to provide support for children and young people with learning disabilities and autism, without any element of overnight accommodation.
- 1.3 This change of use reflects shifting demand for Norwood's services within the community away from respite care and towards additional daytime support, particularly in the evenings and at weekends.
- 1.4 The following section provides further detail with respect of the site and planning history. Section 3 details the proposed development. Section 4 provides an overview of the decision making framework with Section 5 then undertaking an appraisal of the scheme against relevant policies. Conclusions are drawn together in Section 6.

2. SITE AND PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 The site comprises a single storey former residential respite facility for children and young people with learning disabilities, with an area of hardstanding to the front providing six car parking spaces, and a small garden to the rear. The building itself provides six bedrooms and three bathrooms, as well as kitchen and dining space, an activity room and an office.
- 2.2 The site lies on Fairholme Gardens at its junction with the A406 / North Circular Road. Fairholme Gardens runs north-south and is predominantly residential in character. The site is not within a Conservation Area and does not lie in proximity to any listed buildings.
- 2.3 The site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level of 2. The closest bus stops to the site are located on North Circular Road adjacent to Southbourne Crescent, approximately 5 minutes' walk away, with services towards Finchley and Ealing. There are several further bus stops within 10 minutes' walk on Finchley Road and Regents Park Road.
- 2.4 The previous relevant planning history on the site relates to its former use as a respite care home, with a change of use being granted in 1992 (ref. C01234E and C01234F). Permission was twice granted for identical applications in January 2018 and December 2020 for a single store side extension to provide one additional bedroom (ref. 17/7349/FUL and 20/4853/FUL). This current application seeks only change of use from children's care home to a children's centre, this being essentially a continuation of the previous operation by Norwood without the overnight care element.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The proposal comprises only change of use from children's respite care home (Use Class C2) to a children's respite day centre for children and young people with learning disabilities and autism (Use Class E(f)).
- 3.2 Buckets and Spades was previously a facility operated by Norwood, a Jewish charity focused on providing support for vulnerable children and their families, and people with learning disabilities and autism. When operating, Bucket and Spades was a respite care home for children and young people, allowing for short stays for a duration of between one and fourteen nights as a respite service. Buckets and Spades had capacity for up to six children/young people overnight and a license for up to nine children and associated staff during the day. Norwood also operate from the Kennedy Leigh Family Centre, also in Barnet, which provides a range of services and activities for children/young people and their families.
- 3.3 In response to increasing costs making overnight accommodation unviable to provide, and to changing demand for Norwood's services away from overnight respite, Buckets and Spades ceased operation in November 2023.
- 3.4 Norwood has therefore recognised a shift in the services that are under the most demand within the community, and has seen increasing infeasibility of providing overnight accommodation services. As a result this proposal is for a change of use from children's respite care home to a children's respite day centre for children and young people with learning disabilities and autism. Due to the size of the existing building, the number of children and staff the building will accommodate will be similar to the previous facility before it closed.
- 3.5 The new Bucket and Spades will work in conjunction with Norwood's existing facility in Barnet, the Kennedy Leigh Family Centre, allowing Norwood to expand its services for children at Bucket and Spades and for families at the Kennedy Leigh Family Centre.

- 3.6 Further detail on the charity's work and its vision for Bucket and Spades is set out within the Norwood Statement (Appendix 1).
- 3.7 As the proposal comprises only a change of use with an effective continuation of the previous operation, minus the residential element, the proposal does not include any construction, demolition, or external alterations. As shown on the submitted existing and proposed ground floor plans (drawing nos. 2320-L-011 and 2320-L-021), the proposal would repurpose the existing bedrooms as multi-function therapy rooms to accommodate the provision of a range of Norwood's services.
- 3.8 Access at the site would remain the same as existing, with pedestrian and vehicular access at the front of the building from Fairholme Gardens. The existing building is also fully accessible.
- 3.9 The existing parking arrangement would also be maintained, with 6 spaces at the front of the building as shown on the Site Plan (drawing no. 2320-L-005).

4. DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The Development Plan comprises the adopted Local Plan (September 2012), being composed of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, along with the London Plan (2021).
- 4.2 Barnet Council is currently in the process of preparing a new Local Plan, which was approved for submission to the Secretary of State in October 2021. The Examination Hearings have taken place, and the Council received a letter from the Inspector setting out his Interim Findings and Next Steps in August 2023. Consultation on the proposed Main Modifications is expected to take place in the first half of 2024. Given its reasonably advanced state of preparation, the draft Local Plan is a relevant material consideration for the Council's decision making on planning applications.
- 4.3 It is also relevant to consider Barnet's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, as well as national policy as set out within in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 4.4 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.
- 4.5 The following policies within the adopted Local Plan and draft Local Plan are of relevance to the development:
- Policy CS11 – Improving health and well-being in Barnet
 - Policy DM03 – Accessibility and inclusive design
 - Policy DM07 – Protecting housing in Barnet
 - Policy DM13 – Community and education uses
 - Policy DM17 – Travel impact and parking standards
 - Draft Policy HOU04 – Specialist Housing
 - Draft Policy HOU05 – Efficient Use of Barnet's Housing Stock
 - Draft Policy CHW01 – Community Infrastructure
- 4.6 The following section will undertake an appraisal of the proposal against these identified policies.

5. PLANNING POLICY APPRAISAL

- 5.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require decisions to be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 This section provides an appraisal of the principle of the change of use, followed by an appraisal of technical matters, which would be effectively unchanged given the similarity of the previous and proposed uses.

Principle of Development

- 5.3 The application comprises only a change of use from the previous children's respite care home (Use Class C2) to a children's respite day centre (Use Class E(f)). Consideration of the principle of development relates therefore to the replacement of the existing children's care home with a children's day centre carrying out the same functions except with no element of overnight care. Such changes of use are clearly supported in principle by adopted planning policy, and this approach is due to be maintained within the draft Local Plan.
- 5.4 The adopted Core Strategy establishes that "*Barnet has an oversupply of residential care homes*" (paragraph 16.4.3, supporting text to Policy CS11) and that there is a heavy financial burden of care provision on NHS Barnet and the Council's budget (16.4.4). The supporting text goes on to note the oversupply of 'mainstream' care home spaces and the continuing need for specialist forms of care.
- 5.5 This background has resulted in Policy CS11 itself stating that "*We will improve health and well-being in Barnet by: [...] supporting the remodelling of residential care homes to other forms of special accommodation in order to widen housing choice, support healthy and independent lives and to reduce over supply*". The remodelling of residential care homes is also supported under emerging Policy HOU04 (criterion f).

- 5.6 It is relevant to note that the previous use was not a traditional 'care home', but rather a specialist respite centre offering short breaks up to nine of children and young people (six overnight), and so the loss of the previous respite care home use should not be seen as impacting on Barnet's housing choice. Instead, the proposal would shift the provision of the charity's specialist services to meet the needs of the community, supporting "*healthy and independent lives*", rather than being a standard case of the remodelling of a traditional care home for older people, as envisaged by Policies CS11 and HOU04.
- 5.7 Thus while the proposed development would not provide 'accommodation' in the residential sense, it would provide a specialist form of care to continue Norwood's work in a way which meets the needs of the community and presents a viable way forward for the charity and Buckets and Spades, in accordance with the underlying objectives of the above Policies.
- 5.8 As is set out at Appendix 1, Norwood is the oldest Jewish charity in the UK and supports their families facing challenges, and anyone with a learning disability and autism. Norwood offers both day services and overnight accommodation across London and the south-east, with approximately 90 bedspaces across residential and supporting living services and a wide range of services for children and families including training, peer support, education, therapy and respite.
- 5.9 Within the London Borough of Barnet, Norwood now operate primarily from the Kennedy Leigh Family Centre in Hendon, providing services across two categories: children and families' wellbeing, and children's learning disabilities and autism.
- 5.10 As set out above, Buckets and Spades previously offered respite and short break services as a children's care home to up to nine children per day and six children per night. The Centre also offered some learning and recreational services for children and young people, and support for their families.
- 5.11 The Buckets and Spades children's care home has since ceased, due to the increasing cost of providing 24-hour care, and changes in the demand for

Norwood's services since the pandemic. Following engagement with its users, Norwood has seen a shift away from short break and respite services, and towards daytime support at evenings and weekends, and during school holidays.

- 5.12 This changing demand, alongside the increasing cost of care beyond that which the Council were able to financially support, resulted in the closure of Buckets and Spades and the cessation of its overnight care service, and endorses the change of use to which this application relates.
- 5.13 Norwood, as a community-focussed charity, naturally seeks to provide the services which best match the needs of its community. The vision for Buckets and Spades is therefore to provide a new Children's Centre, focussed on providing learning and support services to children and young people with learning disabilities and autism throughout the week, with no overnight element.
- 5.14 One way in which this change will be actioned will be the movement of the charity's existing 'Unity' service, which provides recreational support and experiences for children and young people with learning disabilities, into the new Buckets and Spades Children's Centre (BSCC). 'Unity' currently operates a Sunday service from the Kennedy Leigh Family Centre, but this service will provide greater support at BSCC on Sundays and in school holidays.
- 5.15 BSCC will also provide a wide range of after-school clubs and daytime activities for children with learning disabilities, with the removal of the overnight accommodation allowing the charity to extend this service to operation seven days a week.
- 5.16 The benefits to providing a children's centre at Buckets and Spades are two-fold. First, the change of use would allow Buckets and Spades to continue to provide their services in Barnet without delay, operating from their existing facility with minimal costs associated with the changing service.
- 5.17 Second, offering these daytime services would relieve pressure on the Kennedy Leigh and would allow each centre to specialise on one of the charity's core

areas of services: family services at the Kennedy Leigh, and children's learning services at Buckets and Spades. The change of use of the existing care home to provide a specialist care facility for children and young people with no element of overnight accommodation would therefore meet the objectives of adopted Policy CS11 and emerging Policy HOU04.

- 5.18 Whilst this is a specialist facility tailored for the provision of Norwood's services, the value of providing such specialist care and of providing a children's centre as a community facility is recognised by the adopted and emerging Local Plans.
- 5.19 Local Plan Policy DM13: Community and education uses supports the loss of an existing community use where "*...New community or education use of at least equivalent quality or quantity are provided on the site or at a suitable alternative location*". The new children's centre would be provided on site, at a greater quality owing to its operational viability and to its closer match to community demands for Norwood's services.
- 5.20 Also of note is that children's centres are included as one of a very limited number of exceptions to Barnet's loss of residential accommodation policy (DM07), the BSCC being an important local facility with a demonstrated local need, as required by the policy (criteria a-c). While this proposal would not result in the loss of C3 residential accommodation, this serves to indicate the high value placed on children's centres by development plan policy, alongside the value of specialist care provision set out elsewhere. It is also notable that this approach will be maintained within the new Local Plan under draft Policies HOU05 and CHW01.
- 5.21 The change of use of the care home in favour of a more viable, specialist care facility, and the provision of a children's centre as a community facility, are therefore supported by adopted and emerging plan policy. The principle of the change of use is thus established, allowing for the continued provision of Norwood's community facilities and specialist care in Barnet within a viable operation, and within its existing facility at Buckets and Spades.

Technical Matters

- 5.22 Given the close similarities between the existing and proposed uses, both in terms of their use types as community facilities, the number of children and staff that will occupy the building, and in terms of their small scale, there would be no adverse impact from the change of use on any relevant technical matters.
- 5.23 In terms of neighbouring residential amenity, the numbers of people visiting and working on the site will be low and remain similar to the previous use that operated without any issues, and thus the proposal would protect residential amenity in accordance with Policies DM07 and DM13
- 5.24 Similarly in terms of transport matters, it is anticipated the movements generated by the proposed use would be low and similar in quantity and frequency to the existing use, and thus there would be no adverse travel impacts in accordance with Policy DM17. The site would continue to be accessed by car and on foot from its entrance on Fairholme Gardens, and the proposal would continue to provide six parking spaces at the front of site, as shown on the Site Plan (drawing no. 2320-L-005).
- 5.25 The existing care facility is already wheelchair accessible and would remain so following the change of use, in accordance with Policy DM03: Accessibility and inclusive design.
- 5.26 There are very limited sustainability considerations associated given the nature of this application, but this application is supported by a Sustainability Statement which demonstrates compliance with the provisions of the Council's 'Sustainable Design and Construction' SPD, to the extent that they are relevant to the proposal.

Summary

- 5.27 The above identifies the acceptability of the proposal's principle of development against relevant Development Plan policy, and its acceptability against relevant technical matters given that the proposal would essentially be for a continuation of the previous use at the facility, excluding the overnight care element.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This Planning Statement is submitted in support of an application for change of use from children's respite care home (Use Class C2) to children's respite day centre (Use Class E(f)).
- 6.2 Given that the proposed development comprises only a change of use without any external alterations, the primary consideration is the principle of development.
- 6.3 The proposed change of use would comply with relevant adopted and emerging policy, given the support provided for the remodelling of existing care homes to specialist care facilities and the value placed upon children's centres as a local facility by policy.
- 6.4 In terms of other policy considerations, the proposed children's centre use would be very similar to the previous respite care home use both in terms of its type of use, the number of children and staff that will use the building, and its scale. The proposal would not result in any adverse impact on any technical considerations, and would therefore comply with these relevant Development Plan policies.
- 6.5 Overall, the proposal complies with all relevant policy considerations, and would therefore comply with the development plan as a whole. Section 38(6) requires that determination be made in accordance with the Development Plan, except where other material considerations would indicate otherwise.
- 6.6 In this case material considerations would only weigh further in favour of the granting of planning permission, with the change of use facilitating the continued, viable provision of Norwood's service to children with learning disabilities in Barnet. The proposal would also make effective re-use of Norwood's existing facility at Buckets and Spades, and would ease pressure on Norwood's Kennedy Leigh Family Centre, allowing enhanced services to be provided across both Centres to the benefit of the local community.
- 6.7 Planning permission should therefore be granted without delay.

Norwood – Background and Services

Norwood is the oldest Jewish charity in the UK, supporting vulnerable children and their families facing challenges, and anyone with a learning disability and autism. Norwood supports more than 2,500 people each year, giving them the tools they need to live the most fulfilling lives they can.

Norwood works with 56 local authorities, delivering wide-ranging services including residential and supported living accommodation and respite facilities, as well as a range of support groups aimed at the whole family, not just the individual.

Our offer comprises both day services and overnight accommodation. In London we have approximately 90 bedspaces across residential and supported living services for adults with learning disabilities and autism. We also have a children and families service that offers a range of training, peer support, education, therapy and respite to children and their families. These services are primarily aimed at supporting the Jewish community but are open to all who need our support.

Within LB Barnet, our main day services offer is based out of the Kennedy Leigh Family Centre in Hendon, which provides a range of services supporting children and families across North-West London and Hertfordshire. The services provided at the Kennedy Leigh fall broadly into two categories: children and families' wellbeing, and children's learning disabilities and autism.

Buckets and Spades – Respite and Short Break Services in Barnet

Buckets and Spades previously offered primarily respite and short break services, being registered for children's care and respite with Ofsted and supporting up to six children per night. This was provided in conjunction with learning and recreational services for children and young people, and support services for families.

This service worked through engagement and referral with Local Authorities, to support children and young people with a range of needs including learning disabilities, autism and Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD). The children and young people would range from 5-21 years of age, and their lengths of stay would range from one night to up to fourteen days, being offered 1:1 staff support. The service also benefited from on-site administrative and management personnel.

These services at Buckets and Spades have since ceased and the centre has closed, due to the unviability of providing overnight care. Norwood has seen a decline in the use of overnight services since the pandemic, with feedback from a family survey showing a preference for support at weekends and after school, and during the daytime during school holidays.

In addition Norwood has seen the costs of providing 24-hour support increase significantly, beyond the amount that the Council is able to financially support. This, when added to the changing demand for Norwood's services, means that the continuing operation of Buckets and Spades as a children's respite care home is no longer the most effective way of providing Norwood's services in Barnet.

The New Buckets and Spades Children's Centre

The vision for Buckets and Spades is to provide a new Children's Centre to respond to the changing demand for Norwood's services in North-West London and Hertfordshire, focussing on the children's learning disabilities and autism category of services currently offered at the Kennedy Leigh Centre.

We will move the existing 'Unity' service, which provides recreational support and experiences for children and young people with learning disabilities, into the new Buckets and Spades Children's Centre (BSCC). 'Unity' currently operates a Sunday service from the Kennedy Leigh Centre, but this service will provide greater support at BSCC on Sundays and in school holidays.

In addition, Norwood will extend our offer to various after school clubs and daytime support for children with learning disabilities and autism and their families. By removing the overnight element of care, we would be able to extend these services to a full range of activities across seven days a week, offering experiences of music, art, sensory stimulation, cooking, games etc.

The benefits provided by this change are two-fold: this would ensure that the services on offer respond to demand of the charity's users, as well as freeing up capacity at the Kennedy Leigh Centre. This would allow the Kennedy Leigh to focus on family support services, and Buckets and Spades will be a hub for children and young people with learning disabilities and autism.