



# Planning Statement

**3 Stanley Road, South Benfleet,  
Essex SS7 3EL**

Compass Children's Homes Limited  
April 2024

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## **Planning Statement**

### **3 Stanley Road, South Benfleet, Essex**

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## Contents

1.0	Introduction .....	1
2.0	Application Site & Surroundings .....	2
3.0	Planning History.....	4
4.0	Application Proposal .....	5
5.0	Planning Policy Context.....	6
6.0	Planning Assessment .....	8
7.0	Conclusions .....	12



## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Alder King Planning Consultants on behalf of Compass Children's Homes Limited in connection with an application seeking planning permission for the change of use of 3 Stanley Road, South Benfleet to a small care home for up to four looked after young persons with learning difficulties (Class C2). Planning permission is also sought for the creation of two small windows on the side elevation at ground floor level.
- 1.2 This statement describes the application proposals, relevant planning history and planning policy, and assesses the proposals against the provisions of the development plan and other material considerations.
- 1.3 The planning application comprises the following documents and drawings, in addition to this statement:
- Covering letter
  - Completed application form
  - CIL form
  - Site Location Plan & Site Plan
  - Topographic Survey drawing
  - Existing Floor Plans and Elevations
  - Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations

## 2.0 Application Site & Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is located on the western side of Stanley Road, South Benfleet at its junction with London Road (see Figure 1 below – site identified by red dot).
- 2.2 The property comprises a large detached dwellinghouse with associated garden and driveway for several cars. The property currently comprises a four-bed dwelling with an adjoining one bed annexe/flat above the garage.
- 2.3 In terms of the surrounding context, the application site is located in the town of South Benfleet. Residential properties are located to the north, south, east and west. There is also an Indian restaurant to the south east along London Road. The site is located approximately 900m to the east of Tarpots town centre and 1.5km to the north of South Benfleet town centre.



**Figure 1: Site Location Plan**

- 2.4 There are bus stops approximately 150m to the west of the site at the junction of London Road and Kents Hill Road, which provide regular connections into Southend-on-Sea and Basildon. Benfleet Railway Station

is located approximately 2.5km to the south of the site, and provides regular services to Southend, Grays and London.

- 2.5 The large property has a lawful planning use as a dwellinghouse (Class C3) and, given its location, size and layout, could be expected to provide for occupation by a large family.

## 3.0 Planning History

3.1 The planning history found for the property on the online Castle Point Borough Council planning database is summarised below:

- CPT/614/94 – Single storey pitched roofed side extension – Approved November 1994
- CPT/54/02/FUL – Two storey pitched roofed side extension as separate flat unit with double garage and convert existing garage – Approved April 2002

3.2 It is understood that these extensions have been implemented.



## 4.0 Application Proposal

- 4.1 The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of the application site to a care home for up to four looked after young persons with learning difficulties (Class C2). The only external works to the building comprise the installation of two windows on the side (south) elevation at ground floor level.
- 4.2 Compass Children's Homes has numerous existing children's homes around England and is vastly experienced in providing such services. The applicant has excellent teams of staff who provide substitute parenting for young people who require a range of support and therapies. They pride themselves on the high-quality of their homes, as well as the high-quality support, care and education they provide.
- 4.3 The proposal is for a small home (Class C2) which will provide for up to four young people between the ages of 7 and 17 with learning difficulties. The home will enable them to develop family living, independence and other social skills. They will be educated at either local authority schools or one of the applicant's own schools, which ever provides the most suitable education for the respective young persons. Therefore, the character of this proposed use will remain very much residential and akin to occupation by a large family.
- 4.4 The application property will be registered with Ofsted, the regulatory body, for up to four young people.
- 4.5 The property will provide a 'family home' to the young persons, rather than an institutional setting. This approach is favoured by the statutory regulator, Ofsted, which has been encouraging providers to move away from the more traditional institutional model, having recognised that 'institutionalised' persons can then have difficulty transitioning effectively to independent living and the workplace.
- 4.6 At least three members of care staff will be on site at all times when young people are present during the day. However, there will also be times when the property will be unoccupied – e.g. when the young persons are at school. There could be other staff on site at various times during the day only. These additional staff will be present to support day to day activities such as cooking, transporting children to school, cleaning and planning activities. Two staff will be present overnight.
- 4.7 The daily routine for the young persons residing at the property will be similar to that of any child living in a family home. On weekdays they will attend full time education, complete homework, help clean or cook, attend after school clubs etc. At weekends they will engage in activities both at home and away from home (e.g. sports and shopping), with the objective of creating a stable and shared family living environment.
- 4.8 In effect, the daily operation of the home will be indiscernible to that of a large dwellinghouse with the young person's coming and going for education purposes and the adults coming and going for work purposes.

## 5.0 Planning Policy Context

5.1 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.

5.2 The development plan consists of:

- Castle Point Local Plan (Adopted 1998, Saved Policies in 2007).

5.3 Other material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Given the adopted Local Plan was adopted some 26 years ago, the Council recognises that due weight should be given to the 1998 Local Plan in accordance with the degree of consistency it has with the NPPF.

### Castle Point Local Plan

5.4 The following saved policies are relevant considerations for this planning application.

- Policy EC2 Design – Requires a high standard of design in relation to, inter alia, alterations to existing buildings.
- Policy EC3 Residential Amenity – Recognises that development proposals that would have a significant adverse effect upon the residential amenity of the surrounding area will be refused.
- Policy H2 Residential Land – States that land allocated for residential purposes shall be retained primarily for that purpose.
- Policy H13 Location of Development – Relates to proposals for flats and sheltered accommodation, nursing and rest homes and notes that such uses will be permitted within areas allocated for residential development subject to meeting identified criteria.
- Policy T8 Car Parking Standards – Recognises that the council will apply the revised standards for car parking in Essex published by Essex County Council.

### Material Considerations

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.5 The NPPF was most recently updated in December 2023 and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The relevant paragraphs within the NPPF are set out below.

- 5.6 At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 confirms that there are three overarching objectives which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, the objectives are economic, social and environmental. Sustainable development is a consistent theme running through both plan-making and decision-taking. The NPPF advises that development proposals should be approved without delay where they accord with an up-to-date development plan (Paragraph 11c).
- 5.7 Paragraph 47 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible.
- 5.8 Paragraph 97 states that planning decisions should take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community.
- 5.9 Paragraph 127 of the NPPF confirms that local planning authorities should take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is developed but not allocated for specific purposes to help meet identified needs.

## 6.0 Planning Assessment

### Introduction

6.1 This section of the statement assesses the principle of the use of 3 Stanley Road, South Benfleet as a small care home for up to four young people (Class C2). Consideration is also given to residential amenity and design, and parking and highways.

### Principle of Use

6.2 The proposed use of the building is as a small care home for up to four looked after young persons (Class C2). The residents of the care home will be young people with learning difficulties who require a range of specialist care and support.

6.3 Policy H2 of the Local Plan requires sites that are allocated for residential purposes to be primarily retained in such use. The site is not allocated for residential purposes but is in residential use.

6.4 However, home has been purposefully located in a residential area so that the residents experience a domestic environment. The proposed use is still residential as it would provide somewhere for the children in care to live, even though there will be an on-site staffing presence. It should be noted that Class C3 of the Use Class Order within which a dwellinghouse falls makes provision for up to six unrelated people to live together as a single household where care is provided for residents.

6.5 On this basis while the use class of the property will be changing from a dwelling to a residential institution, the property will still be providing residential accommodation and, therefore, the principle of the development is acceptable in relation to Policy H2.

6.6 In terms of maintaining housing supply, the proposal would result in the loss of one dwellinghouse. However, there would be no loss of a residential use contrary to Policy H2, and it would still provide housing and accommodation. As such, the proposal would supplant one residential use with another which is clearly acceptable in principle.

6.7 There are no policies in the adopted development plan which directly relate to the provision of care homes of the nature proposed. However, Local Plan Policy H13 relates to proposals of a similar nature which are for sheltered accommodation, nursing and rest homes. The supporting text to Policy H13 recognises that the council encourages the provision of flats and sheltered accommodation, which may be achieved through the conversion of existing dwellings, to contribute to housing needs.

6.8 The application site is located within the residential area of South Benfleet and so the principle of a residential care home in this location is acceptable. Moreover, the small scale of the care home proposed is reflective of the size of the settlement. The proposal would in providing supervised specialist care

accommodation for up to four young people in an appropriately sized settlement be in accord with the aspirations of Policy H13.

- 6.9 It is also relevant to note that both the proposed and existing uses are residential, both in their character and in planning classification terms. Care homes are residential uses by definition and, therefore, compatible in planning terms with other forms of residential use. As such, the principle of the proposed use is appropriate in this location and clearly compatible with surrounding uses.
- 6.10 A residential area is, by definition, entirely suitable for a use of the nature being proposed here. Indeed, it would be unlikely to be suitable in other non-residential locations for planning policy land use considerations and/or amenity considerations.
- 6.11 The application site is located in a sustainable location where residents and staff can access sustainable transport methods efficiently and reduce their reliance on the private car. Bus stops are located close to the site and Benfleet is served by a railway station. The town is also served by two Town Centres (Tarpots and South Benfleet), which provide a range of services and facilities capable of meeting the needs of local residents.
- 6.12 The change of use of 3 Stanley Road, South Benfleet, as proposed will result in a use which would be similar in nature to that of a dwellinghouse occupied by a large family. As a large, detached property, it would be reasonable to anticipate occupation by a large and/or extended family.
- 6.13 Planning policies at all levels support residential care uses in such locations. Furthermore, there is support in Policy H13 for ensuring that all housing needs are met.
- 6.14 In light of the above, the principle of the residential care home (Class C2) use at the application site is acceptable. It is policy compliant, according with the adopted local plan in so far as it is relevant, as well as NPPF provisions.

### **Residential Amenity and Design**

- 6.15 Policy EC3 recognises that development proposals which would have a significant adverse effect upon the residential amenity of the surrounding area will be refused.
- 6.16 The property is a substantial detached dwelling located in a generous plot, with off road parking for several vehicles and private gardens. As discussed above the proposed use is residential in character and is therefore compatible in planning terms with other forms of residential use.
- 6.17 The proposed use of the property as a care home for up to four looked after young persons will not result in a level or nature of activity that would be materially different to the current lawful use of the property. In this regard, it is important to note that use of the property as a six-person care home within Class C3 would not require planning permission.

- 6.18 The level of activity arising from the proposed use of the property as a small care home would be akin to that of occupation of the property by a family. During the week the resident young people will attend school/college and will be taken to and from school as required, as would occur in a traditional dwellinghouse. Therefore, on most days between 8am and 4pm activity levels at the site will be minimal. Out of school hours, the young persons will be taken to and from activities as required.
- 6.19 Whilst staff will be present on site, the level of movements will generally be associated with the arrival and departure of the young people resident on site. Again, this would not be materially different in terms of volume or nature to that of a family dwelling. Any change of staff on site would not occur during unsociable hours.
- 6.20 The staff will ensure that the site is suitably managed and Ofsted will have to register the site, and also be satisfied that its requirements relating to ongoing management and care of the young persons are complied with.
- 6.21 The only external changes proposed are the installation of two small windows on the side (south) elevation of the dwelling. This is the elevation facing onto London Road and so will not create any issues of overlooking to neighbouring residents as there are none on this side of the building.
- 6.22 In terms of visual impact, the windows are in keeping with the character and appearance of the existing dwelling to accord with Policy EC2 and in any case will be largely screened from view by existing trees along London Road.
- 6.23 Car parking is provided within the driveway in a manner that will have no greater effect on neighbouring residents than that which currently occurs.
- 6.24 In light of the above, the proposal will be compatible with existing uses, not harm the amenity of neighbouring residents and will provide adequate levels of amenity for the future occupants of the care home in full accordance with Local Plan Policies EC2 and EC3.

### **Parking & Highways**

- 6.25 Policy T8 relates to car parking standards and recognises that the council will apply the revised standards for car parking in Essex published by Essex County Council. The latest version of the Essex Vehicle Parking Standards was adopted in 2010. The parking standards identify that for C2 uses, the maximum car parking standards for residential care homes is 1 space per full time equivalent staff plus 1 visitor space per 3 beds. It is noted that this is a maximum requirement and not a minimum requirement.
- 6.26 The standards would therefore suggest provision of a maximum of five spaces, based on up to four members of staff on site and allowing for the provision of a space for visitors.

- 6.27 In this case four spaces are proposed on site, reflecting the anticipated need of the small care home and the sustainable location of the site to accord with the maximum parking standards as set out in the adopted Essex Vehicle Parking Standards.
- 6.28 The property is directly accessed from Stanley Road, with two access points, and no changes to the existing vehicular access arrangements are proposed.
- 6.29 The application site is located in a sustainable and accessible location for both the future residents and the small number of care workers who will be employed at the premises. South Benfleet benefits from local services and good access to public transport including a railway station and there are bus stops within 150m of the application site. Staff will have options to access the site without driving.
- 6.30 Furthermore, not all staff will necessarily be present at any one time and the nature of the use being proposed is that there will not be regular visitors to the site.
- 6.31 Given the location of the site and the small number of staff involved, the provision of parking for four cars is compliant with parking standards which, in any case, are expressed as a maximum.
- 6.32 The application proposal will not generate any material level of additional traffic or parking demand when compared with the existing lawful use. The small number of staff will come and go similarly to parents travelling to and from work daily and the resident young people will have daily routines just like children living in more traditional family settings.
- 6.33 As noted above, the property is located in a sustainable location with access to bus stops and within walking distance of local services and facilities in Tarpots Town Centre. Moreover, the town is served by a rail station providing regular services to other larger local settlements. The location provides a genuine choice for staff to access the site by means other than the private car. It is a location that national planning policy direct uses of this kind to.
- 6.34 In conclusion, the proposal will not give rise to any harmful transport or parking impacts. The level of parking and vehicular activity will not be materially different from that likely to be associated with the lawful use of the property as a dwelling. Accordingly, the proposal accords with Policy T8 of the Local Plan and the adopted Essex Vehicle Parking Standards.

### **Community Benefits**

- 6.35 The applicant prides themselves on their high-quality homes for young people with learning difficulties. The application proposal will provide much needed residential accommodation and a stable home for up to four young people with learning difficulties who require care and support.
- 6.36 As such, the proposal delivers social and community benefits in accordance with provisions in the NPPF.

## 7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of 3 Stanley Road, South Benfleet to a small care home for up to four looked after young persons with learning difficulties (Class C2).
- 7.2 When assessed against policies in the development plan and national guidance in the NPPF, it is clear that the application proposal is acceptable. In summary, this statement concludes that the application proposal:
- Is an acceptable use in land use terms and is compatible with surrounding uses;
  - Will not harm the amenities of adjacent residential occupiers;
  - Will not give rise to adverse highway or parking impacts; and
  - Will provide community benefits through providing a home for a vulnerable young person.
- 7.3 The proposals are in full accordance with the pertinent policies of the development plan, as well as guidance in the NPPF. As such, the application should be approved without delay in accordance with Paragraph 47 of the NPPF.
- 7.4 In light of the above, we trust that the Council will be readily able to grant planning permission for this policy compliant proposal.





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