



PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

95 Rutland Drive, Bury BL9 9DR

Proposed Change of Use to Childrens' Residential Care Home

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Design and Access statement accompanies a planning application for a proposed Childrens' Residential Care Home at the above address and has been written to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. Description of the Proposal

- 2.1 The proposal would provide medium to long term accommodation for just one child aged between 8-17 years of age. Children being placed at the address will have an assessment of their needs and risk factors made prior to placement. The applicant would typically take children that have been removed from the care of their parents due to them being abused/neglected and the applicant provides therapeutic services to help them get over the traumas of their earlier childhood. This longer-term arrangement provides stability to the resident and enables them to integrate properly into the community and build strong relationships with their carers. The resident child would be one who has been removed from care from their families.
- 2.2 The running of this care home would be undertaken as close as possible to that of a normal dwellinghouse. Any staff training or meetings would generally take place off-site and the children would also visit healthcare professionals off-site as per a normal family operation (i.e. doctors, dentists, etc.). As well as the children being placed in the local schools in the catchment area, they would also utilise services and facilities in the surrounding area.

- 2.3 The application address is located in an area which is ideal for the positive development of a child in care, the quiet suburban location creates a calming environment conducive to recovery from childhood traumas and the reduction of anxiety.
- 2.4 It is important to note that the suitability of the property must be fully assessed in order to match the types of residents that could reside there, and this is heavily monitored by Ofsted. Factors would include nature of the surrounding community, skills and experience of the manager and staff team, proximity to other residential care homes etc.
- 2.5 No increase in the physical size of the property is proposed. The property contains three bedrooms at present. One of these would be used to accommodate children, one would be utilised as a staff office and the third would serve as a staff sleep-in room.
- 2.6 With a home to accommodate just one child, staffing levels are expected to consist at any one time of **two full time staff members**, with additional staff only present at changeovers for around 30 minutes (which could be staggered). A part-time home manager would also be expected to spend some time at the property. Parking on the surrounding streets is largely unrestricted.
- 3.7 Visitors delivering therapeutic services or undertaking statutory inspections would also occasionally come to the property (social workers, Ofsted inspectors etc), but the frequency and duration of these visitors would be no different (and in fact probably less frequent) to those received at a normal dwelling.

3 Relevant Planning Policy

- 3.1 The provision of residential childcare for children is largely delivered in the UK through homes of six or less children. Indeed, Ofsted (the regulator) who identified in their report entitled 'Children's Social Care in England 2019' that the demand for care homes has not kept pace with demand and that children's homes providing care for between 3 - 4 children were the most common form of children's home in England as of March 2019 however care homes for between 1 – 2 children are the third most common type of care home (behind care homes for 5 – 6 children) and therefore provide a substantial contribution to the overall care home provision.
- 3.2 On this basis, the proposal complies with paragraph 92 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that ***"planning ... decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction ... are safe and accessible ... [and] enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs"***.

3.3 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF would also appear to be relevant, with the aim being **“to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being...”**

3.4 It should be noted that in many other local authorities in England and Wales, **use as a Childrens’ residential care home is deemed as a ‘lawful use’ as determined under a certificate of lawfulness, and not a ‘change of use’ requiring a planning approval.** This illustrates just how immaterial the difference in the way a care home operates is compared to a dwelling. The key difference is often the presence of at least 1 non-residential ‘waking-night’ staff who would be awake on shift during the evening to give 24 hour care.

3.5 In terms of local planning policy, the Bury Unitary Development Plan states within Objective H4/2:

“sites should be conveniently located for local shops, public transport and community facilities;

- **the location of health care facilities;**
- **the gradient of the site;**
- **the gradient between the site and the public transport network;**
- **the necessary car parking and amenity space (including gardens) should be provided;**
- **the development should be of a high standard in terms of design, layout and landscaping so that a satisfactory environment is achieved.”**

Further to this, the justification states:

“Since many of the people requiring specialist accommodation are the most vulnerable members of society, and may require a high degree of care and supervision, it is essential that accommodation is situated close to local amenities, and that the nature of the site offers its residents a pleasant living environment.”

Looked after children are indeed some of the most vulnerable members of society, yet need to be cared for in an environment which is as close as possible to a ‘normal’ residential setting. In terms of transport links the proposal is less than a hundred yards from a bus stop on Cornwall Road where routes directly into the Town Centre are served by the No. 3 bus. For older children this will allow them to work toward greater independence and life skills. The town centre is alternatively easily walkable and further enabled by flat topography along the roof.

3.6 The property is relatively new, having been constructed in the 1990s and is therefore of suitably high quality in terms of its resistance to damp and thermal performance. The amenity space to the rear garden is well sized and the principal entrance door has a Part M compliant level threshold. There is also a WC on the principal entrance storey for use by guests.

3.8 Car parking standards are included within Bury Council’s Development Control Policy Guidance Note 11. For class C2 (Residential Institutions) this specifies a maximum of 1 space per 4 bed spaces, however it is noted that this guidance is probably geared toward larger residential institutions such as elderly care homes.

- 3.9 Further parking could potentially be included within the curtilage of the property by extension of the driveway to the side of the house, without any significant detrimental effect on the amenity space.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 Overall the proposal represents policy-compliant development, and **would provide a positive step by the Local Authority to meet its own aims and responsibilities** with regard to providing inclusive and good quality provision for looked after children within the area. The function of the property would outwardly remain the same as a standard domestic dwelling and would provide looked-after children with the best possible chance to integrate into the community.