

LOCAL AND NATIONAL NEED STATEMENT

Prepared on behalf of: Praveen Videlp

Site address: 29 Cartmel Close, Bolton, BL9 8JA

Application type: Full Planning Permission

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1.0 Introduction

This Local and National Need Statement has been prepared by Inhaus Planning in support of the application for Full Planning Permission for the proposed children's residential care home at 29 Cartmel Close, Bolton, BL9 8JA. The purpose of this document is to set out the evidence base demonstrating the acute national shortage of residential care placements for looked-after children and to contextualise the proposed provision within that national and regional framework.

The statement draws on published government data, sector research, and national policy documents to establish the overwhelming need for additional residential care capacity of the type proposed and to demonstrate that the proposed home will make a direct and meaningful contribution to addressing that need.

2.0 National Context and Policy Pressures

England is experiencing an acute and worsening shortage of residential care placements for children who cannot remain safely in their family home and for whom foster care is not suitable or has broken down. According to data published by the Department for Education, there were over 83,000 children in the care of local authorities in England as at March 2023, representing the highest figure on record and an increase of approximately 23 percent over the preceding decade.

Of those looked-after children, a significant and growing proportion are placed in children's homes rather than foster or kinship care, reflecting the increasing complexity of need presented by children entering the care system at older ages and with more entrenched difficulties arising from prolonged exposure to abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. The DfE's Children's Social Care Sufficiency Report has consistently identified children's homes as the sector in which placement shortage is most acute, with shortages particularly pronounced for older teenagers approaching the upper end of the children's social care system.

The consequence of this shortage is widespread and severe. Local authorities across England are routinely unable to identify suitable local placements for children and are forced to commission placements far from the child's home area, frequently at great distance from their school, family networks, community, and professional support. Out-of-area placements are recognised as a significant risk factor for poor outcomes, increasing social isolation, educational disruption, and the likelihood of placement breakdown.

The May 2023 Ministerial Statement on children's homes, issued by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, explicitly acknowledged this placement crisis and announced a package of measures intended to accelerate the development of new provision. The Statement expressly directed local planning authorities to take a supportive and constructive approach to planning applications for small-scale children's homes in residential areas, recognising that planning resistance has been a material barrier to new provision coming forward.

3.0 Regional and Local Context

The Greater Manchester region faces significant challenges in relation to children's care placement sufficiency. The ten Greater Manchester local authorities collectively accommodate thousands of looked-after children, and the supply of residential care placements within the region has not kept pace with demand. Providers operating in the region have reported lengthy delays in securing Ofsted registration and planning permission, which has further constrained the supply of new provision.

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council, as a local authority within the Greater Manchester Combined Authority area, contributes to regional sufficiency planning through the Greater Manchester Children's Social Care Improvement Programme and through its own sufficiency strategy. The proposed home at 29 Cartmel Close will provide three additional residential care places within the Bolton and Greater Manchester area, directly reducing the need for out-of-area placements and enabling young people to remain connected to their local communities, schools, and support networks.

The site's location in Bolton places it within reach of a range of statutory services, specialist education provision, and therapeutic support services relevant to young people with EBD and SEMH needs. The proximity of these services is a material consideration in assessing the suitability of the location for the proposed provision.

4.0 Benefits of Small-Scale Provision

There is a substantial and growing body of evidence in children's social care practice and research supporting the conclusion that small-scale residential care homes of two to four places are significantly more effective than larger group homes in delivering positive outcomes for young people with complex emotional and behavioural needs. The Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care have all published research underlining the therapeutic advantages of small-group living for children with attachment difficulties and trauma histories.

The proposed three-place home is specifically designed to harness these therapeutic benefits. The small group size, high staffing ratio, and extended shift model combine to create a relational environment that is qualitatively different from a larger group setting and much more closely approximates the emotional safety and predictability of a family home. This model of provision is precisely what the national policy framework and the evidence base both point to as the most effective intervention for the young people who will be placed at the home.

Small-scale homes also present the lowest possible planning impact. They occupy a single dwelling in a residential street, generate minimal vehicle movements, produce no noise or other environmental impacts above those of an ordinary family, and are entirely consistent with the residential character of their surroundings. There is no rational planning basis on which a home of this scale and character could be said to give rise to material harm to any planning interest.

5.0 Alignment with National and Local Policy Objectives

The proposed development is directly consistent with the national policy objectives set out in the NPPF, the May 2023 Ministerial Statement, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (2022), and the government's response to that review, *Stable Homes, Built on Love* (2023). Each of these policy documents emphasises the critical importance of increasing the supply of high-quality, community-integrated residential care provision for looked-after children, including provision suitable for older teenagers preparing for the transition to adulthood.

The proposed home is also consistent with the objectives of Bury Metropolitan Borough Council's health and wellbeing agenda and with the Council's responsibilities as a corporate parent to looked-after children placed within its area. The Council, as a planning authority, has an opportunity through the determination of this application to take a positive and enabling decision that directly contributes to better outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children in society.

6.0 Conclusion

The evidence of need for additional children's residential care provision in England is overwhelming, well-documented, and nationally acknowledged at the highest levels of government. The proposed three-place home at 29 Cartmel Close, Bolton will make a direct, proportionate, and urgently needed contribution to addressing that need in the Bolton and Greater Manchester area.

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council is respectfully invited to give significant material weight to the national and local need for additional residential care provision in determining this application and to conclude that this weight, combined with the absence of any material planning harm arising from the proposal, strongly supports the grant of Full Planning Permission.