

Supporting Planning Design and Access Statement

Change of use from a Single Family House to
a Residential Institution for 3 Children (C2)



186, Whitehill
Road,
Hitchin,
Hertfordshire
SG4 9HY

Optimumcare4u
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Executive Summary

Proposal for Residential Children's Home at 186 Whitehill

Purpose: This planning statement has been prepared to support a pre-application on behalf of Optimum Care4U seeking to change the use of 186 Whitehill, Hitchin, SG4 9HY from a Class C3(b) single-family dwelling house to a Class C2 children's residential care home for three (3) children (aged 5–17) with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD).

Location: The property is in a quiet residential area, featuring onsite parking for two vehicles and convenient access to public transport, which will help minimise disruption to the neighbourhood.

Operation

Carers: The home will have **three (3) carers** who will work in shifts to provide 24/7 care for the children. Shift patterns will be Days/Nights – 8:00 am-8:00 pm, and 8:00 pm-8:00 am.

Environment: The setting will be family-oriented, promoting a cohesive atmosphere with shared meals and activities.

Visitors: We expect minimal professional visits (approximately three to four per month), which can be accommodated with the available on-site parking.

Mitigation of Concerns

Noise: We will implement structured routines, curfews for outdoor activities, and manage behavioural incidents discreetly to minimise any disturbances.

Safety: Enhanced security measures will include fencing, monitoring systems, and careful assessments of residents to ensure a safe environment.

Community Relations: We plan to maintain open communication with the community, hold engagement sessions, and appoint a community liaison officer.

Regulatory Compliance: We will ensure compliance with OFSTED registration standards to uphold high levels of care.

Conclusion: This proposal aligns with Change of Use from Class C3(b) to Class 2 and aims to maintain neighbourhood harmony while addressing community concerns. It is designed to provide essential care services for children who need them.

Introduction

Scope

This planning statement has been prepared to support a pre-application seeking to change the use of **186 Whitehill, Hitchin, SG4 9HY** from a **Class C3(b)** single-family dwelling house to a **Class C2** children's residential care home for **three (3) children (aged 5–17)** with **emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD)**. The proposed home will be staffed 24/7 by trained carers (typically two on shift, including a waking-night carer and sleep-in), providing medium-to-long-term family-style care in line with **Ofsted-regulated standards**. The proposal will not involve external alterations that affect the property's character or appearance. The proposal prioritises both compliance with planning legislation and integration with the local community to provide essential care services.

The purpose of this Statement is to demonstrate that the proposal:

- is designed to offer stable, medium-to long-term care placements.
- will deliver significant social benefits by providing essential local placements in a secure and supportive environment.
- responds to means tested local needs for specialist children's accommodation.
- is an initiative that is robust, community-focused response to children's care needs.
- fully complies with relevant planning policy at national and local levels,
- will enhance the neighbouring area without compromising amenities or its character.

Overview

- **Applicant:** OptimumCare4u
- **Proposal:** Convert the existing C3(b) dwelling into a C2 residential children's home
- **Capacity:** Three (3) children with emotional, behavioural, or mild learning difficulties
- **Staffing:**
 - Up to three carers, with two overnight
 - Staff trained in child protection, behaviour management, therapeutic support, and education engagement
 - Oversight by a registered manager and a responsible individual
- **Daily Structure:** Shared meals, collaborative household activities, and a nurturing environment focused on emotional containment and resilience

Site and Surrounding Area



The application site 186 Whitehill Rd is a double-storey semi-detached located in a tranquil residential neighbourhood, surrounded by inviting family homes and friendly elderly residents. This property offers three bedrooms 2 no. ensuites), a kitchen/diner, lounge, bathroom, ground-floor WC **on-site parking for two vehicles**, ensuring that staff and visitors can access the premises easily without impacting local parking. Moreover, its accessibility via public transport routes enhances convenience, making it an excellent choice for visitors and staff alike.

Surrounding Area & Schools

Hitchin is well-served by educational institutions. Based on the location, these are some schools likely within reach:

School Name	Type	Approx. Distance from 186 Whitehill Rd
Whitehill Junior School	Primary	~0.2 miles
Highbury Infant School	Infant/Primary	~0.3 miles
Hitchin Girls' School	Secondary	~1 mile
Hitchin Boys' School	Secondary	~1.2 miles
The Priory School	Secondary	~1.5 miles

These schools could be relevant for educational engagement and planning support for the children residing at the proposed care home.

Proposed Use

Planning permission is sought to change the use class of the property at 186 Whitehill, Hitchin, SG4 9HY. The proposal is a change of use from Class C3 (residential dwelling house) to Class C2 (children's Residential home). The house will accommodate three (3) looked-after children (aged 5–17 with EBD).

There will be no additional alterations to the internal layout or external characteristics of the property.

Site Planning History

Recent Application

Reference: 22/01552/NMA

Date Received: 14 June 2022

Details: This was a non-material amendment to a previously approved application (**21/03242/FPH**). It involved:

- Changing the location of windows on the east wall (ground and loft floors).
- Installing slightly larger casement windows on the ground floor

Original Permission

Reference: 21/03242/FPH

Granted: 5 January 2022

Occupancy

Occupancy is capped at **three (3) children**, and no more than **three (3) staff** will be on-site at all times, which is comparable to a larger family household. The change of use, therefore, does not intensify the residential activity beyond normal levels. Children's education and most activities (school, sports, therapy) will take place off-site, further minimising on-site activity during the daytime. Any occasional home-schooling or small group activities will be quiet and supervised. Overall, the scheme maintains the property's residential character, scale and neighbourhood setting, while providing a supportive home environment for vulnerable local children.

Family Environment

Daily routines will include shared mealtimes, collaborative household activities, and a culture of emotional containment, responsibility, and mutual respect. The home provides a structured and nurturing setting designed to foster children's development and resilience, consistent with the guidance in the Quality Care Standards.

Professional Visitors

Visits by professionals such as **social workers, therapists, or education officers** are expected to occur approximately three to four times per month. These are managed respectfully and discreetly within the household and can be accommodated on-site, utilising existing parking without affecting on-street provision.

Education and Life Skills

Each child will be supported to access local education provision, develop independent living skills, and receive personal and emotional support tailored to their care plan. The home is not registered as a school, but staff liaise with local authorities, virtual schools, and education professionals to ensure continuity and progression in each child's education and development.

Staffing and Household Structure

The home will be staffed at all times, with the number of carers on duty varying in accordance with the assessed needs of the individual children. The staff team will consist of experienced residential care professionals who are trained in child protection, behaviour management, therapeutic support, and education engagement.

- A Registered Manager and a Responsible Individual will oversee the day-to-day and strategic management of the service, respectively.
- Staff operates on two 12-hour shifts typically 08:00–20:00 (day) and 20:00–08:00 (night, including a sleep-in element) or a similar 12-hour pattern agreed with the Local Authority.
 - The sleep-in carer remains on duty until the end of the night shift and then continues into the following day shift to preserve continuity.
 - Shift handovers are conducted entirely indoors at 08:00 and 20:00 to minimise any external noise or activity.
- This replicates a stable family routine, as encouraged by Ofsted, and supports consistency in care.

Internal Layout

- All existing habitable rooms exceed the minimum nationally prescribed room size standards, and the provision of internal child-friendly spaces is in accordance with guidance on residential care homes.
- Externally, there are no material alterations to the building's façade or extension of the curtilage.
- Fire safety (hard-wired smoke alarms, fire doors, extinguishers) is provided in compliance with regulations.

Planning Policy Context

The proposal is a change of use from Class C3 (dwellinghouse) to Class C2 (children's Residential home). The proposed change of use to a small-scale residential care home for children at 186 Whitehill Road is assessed against the following key planning policies:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024)

The NPPF promotes the creation of **healthy, inclusive, and safe places** and supports housing provision for **all groups**, including **families with children** and **looked-after children**. It encourages developments that:

- Meet identified social needs
- Integrate vulnerable populations into communities
- Support the transition to **net-zero carbon** and address climate resilience

North Hertfordshire District Local Plan (2011–2031)

Adopted in November 2022, this plan sets the strategic framework for development in Hitchin and surrounding areas. Relevant policies include:

Policy	Summary
SP1: Sustainable Development	Supports development that meets social needs and promotes community well-being
SP8: Housing	Encourages a mix of housing types, including specialist accommodation
SP10: Healthy Communities	Promotes environments that support physical and mental health
HS5: Accessible and Adaptable Housing	Endorses housing that meets the needs of residents requiring care
D3: Protecting Living Conditions	Ensures developments do not harm residential amenity—relevant given the low occupancy and off-site activities proposed

These policies collectively support small-scale, well-managed care homes that integrate into the community and meet local needs without disrupting the residential character.

Key Provisions Relevant to Children's Homes

Strategic Principles

- **Managed Housing Mix:** The Policy emphasises delivering a balanced housing mix that addresses the needs of all housing types, including vulnerable groups.
- **Protection of Existing Facilities:** Specialist accommodations, such as those for vulnerable populations, are protected as community facilities, ensuring their continued operation and availability.
- **Local Need Focus:** New specialist accommodations should be developed in response to clearly demonstrated local needs, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively.

Spatial Strategy

- **Appropriate Location:** Specialist accommodations should be situated to promote mixed and balanced communities, with adequate access to transport and supporting facilities
- **Avoiding Clusters:** The policy seeks to prevent the concentration of specialist accommodations in specific areas to avoid overburdening local services and to promote community integration and cohesion.

Design and Technical Criteria

- **Neighbourhood Compatibility:** Developments must protect and enhance the unique characteristics of existing neighbourhoods.
- **Management Plans:** Proposals should include a detailed management plan that addresses safeguarding, promoting social networks, and ensure the development is neighbourly.
- **Quality Standards:** Facilities must meet relevant quality standards, such as those set by the Care Quality Commission for Class C2 uses.

There are no apparent development impacts which could be said to cause significant or demonstrable harm. On this basis, we ask that the change of use application is considered favourably.

Local Need and Strategic Justification

Introduction & Strategic Need

- There is a critical and urgent strategic need to provide local residential placements for the authority's most vulnerable children. This proposal is a direct response to the council's corporate parenting principles and its duty to safeguard children in its care.

Statutory Duty (The Legal Imperative)

- This proposal fulfils the council's **primary statutory duty under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014)** to take steps to secure, within its area, sufficient accommodation for children in its care that meets their needs and is appropriate for their welfare.
- The current over-reliance on distant, out-of-area placements demonstrates a failure in this statutory duty, exposing children to greater risk and the authority to significant financial pressure.

Alignment with Adopted Local Plan Policy

- The proposal **directly and positively aligns with Policy H3(c) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan**, which supports the development of community facilities, including those that **"reduce the need to travel out of the area for specialist services."**
- Children's residential care is a specialist service. Providing it within the borough directly reduces the need for children to travel out of the area (or indeed, to be permanently placed out of the area), thereby fully conforming with the intent of this policy.

Meeting Sufficiency Strategy Objectives

- The North Hertfordshire Sufficiency Strategy (or similar Children's Services strategic document) has the explicit objective of **reducing reliance on high-cost, out-of-area independent provision and developing in-house capacity**.
- This proposal is the operational execution of that objective. It will:
 - **Improve Sufficiency:** Increase the supply of local placements.
 - **Improve Quality:** Provide a higher standard of care with better oversight.
 - **Reduce Cost:** Deliver significant long-term savings to the public purse.

Addressing a Critical Safeguarding Need

- As established by empirical evidence (e.g., Ofsted, 2019), out-of-area placements significantly increase the risks of child exploitation (county lines, CSE), going missing, and educational disruption.
- An in-borough home is, therefore, not just accommodation but a **primary safeguarding intervention** that will directly protect North Hertfordshire's children.

Conclusion

- The provision of a children's home is **strongly justified by strategic, statutory, and safeguarding imperatives**. It represents a proactive and responsible step by the Local Authority to fulfil its duties as a corporate parent, adhere to its adopted Local Plan, and achieve the objectives of its Sufficiency Strategy, all while ensuring the best outcomes for its most vulnerable children.

Main Issues and Considerations

- Principle of Conversion into a residential institution for Children with special needs.
- Design, Character and Appearance.
- Amount and case for development
- Layout
- Impact on Living Conditions/ Residential Amenities.
- Highway Matters
- Impact on Local Economy
- Refuse and Recycling.

Principle of Conversion into a Residential Institution

Having regard to the relevant local and national planning policy as outlined earlier, the principle of specialist housing is acceptable by virtue of North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2018) Core Policies S1 and H3 if the following criteria are met.

- 1.The development will be achieved in partnership with the council and/or health partners.
- 2.Having nomination arrangements for Supported Housing and Extra Care Housing agreed with the Council to maximise the utilisation for local residents, and to ensure against the importation of need from outside the district and to limit non-North Hertfordshire County residents to 33%.
- 3.Be clear about how the provision will meet the needs of the district's residents.
- 4.Be of a size appropriate to the service user group and level of need.
- 5.Support the integration of vulnerable residents with specialist housing need into communities.

Design, Character and Appearance

- 1.The premises are currently a residential dwelling house and the surrounding area is also residential in character. Given that, the property is medium size in nature, the proposed change of use to a residential institution would not result in any intensification or material change of use to the extent of causing a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the street, locality and building.
- 2.In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed development as a whole accords with Local Plan Policies S1 and H3, North Plan and the NPPF.

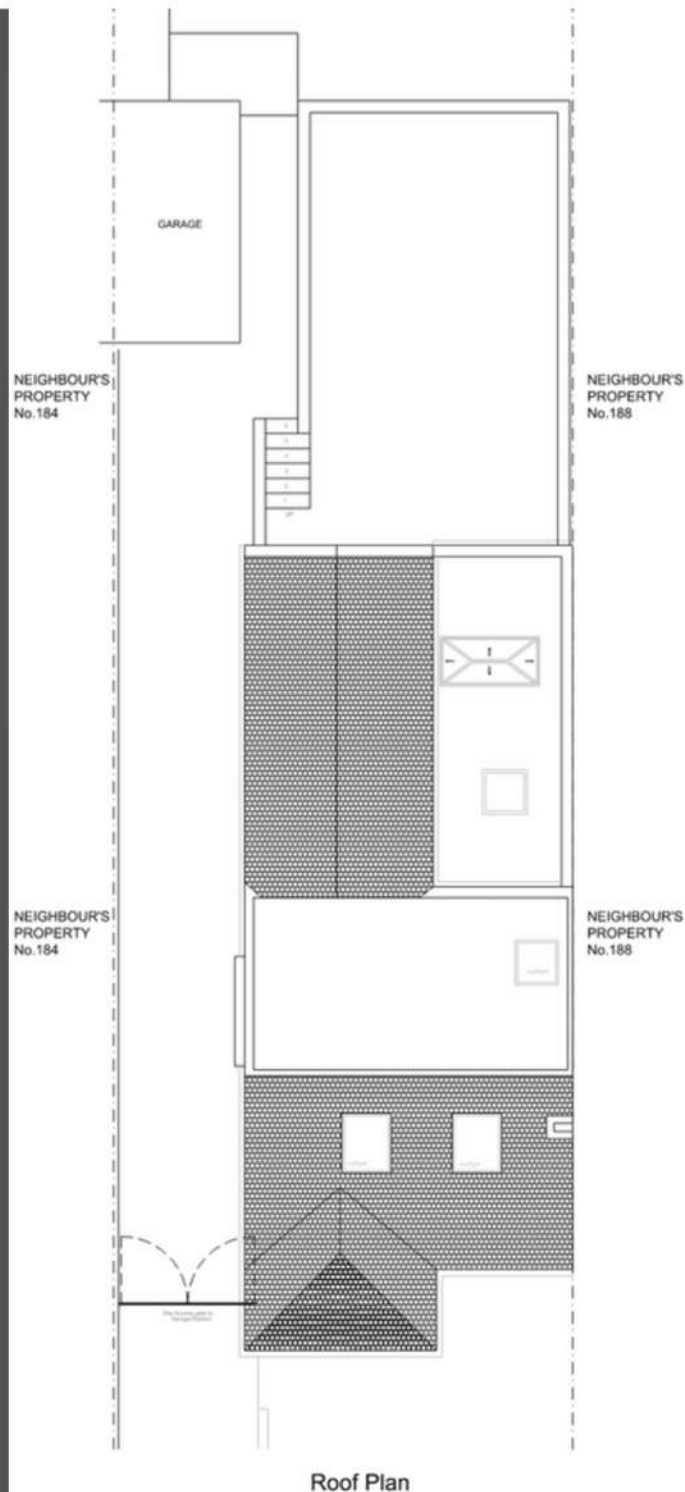
Amount and Case for Development

The proposal seeks to redesignate the premises as a residential care institution for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, Autism, ADHD, mild to moderate learning disabilities, and attachment issues. The goal is to help these children develop basic independent living skills through nurturing care, supporting the Local Council's need for accommodation for those with specialised needs.

Design Considerations

Site Plan and Use of Space

The External layout of 186 Whitehill has been carefully designed to create a family-oriented environment.



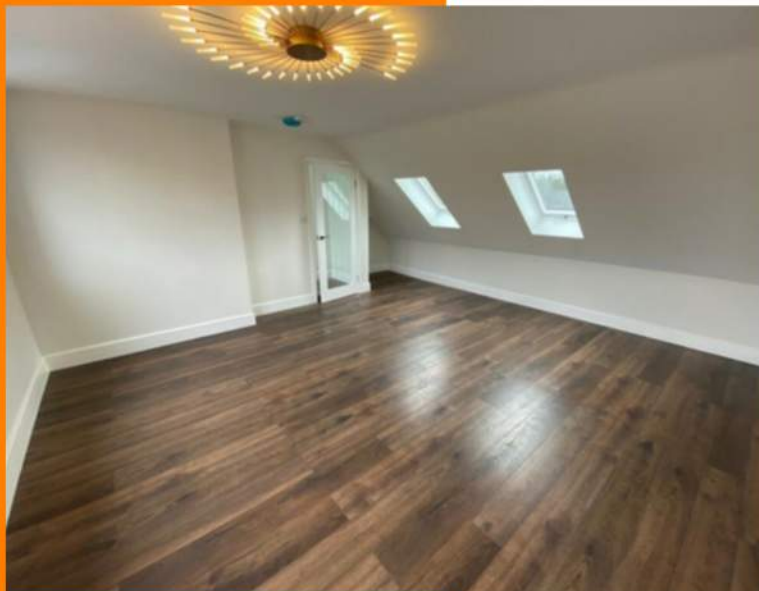
Boundary Treatment Details

- Fencing is domestic in character, consistent with residential area aesthetics, avoiding institutional appearance.
- Boundary treatments will be maintained in good condition.



Internal Layout and Use of Space

The layout of 186 Whitehill Road has been thoughtfully arranged to foster a warm, family-style atmosphere, with shared spaces promoting connection and routine. With a maximum of three children and up to three staff present at peak times, the household mirrors the scale of a typical family home. Most daily activities, including school and therapy, will occur off-site, keeping daytime activity low. Occasional quiet, supervised sessions at home will not disrupt the residential setting. Overall, the proposal preserves the property's domestic character while offering a stable and caring environment for vulnerable children in the community.



Obscure Glazing Specifications

Specify glazing type:

All side elevation windows at ground and first floor levels will be fitted with Level 4 obscure film (or equivalent) in accordance with the Pilkington scale.

Permanent installation:

Glazing will have permanently fixed retractors and non-openable, and where opening is required for ventilation, obscure gfilm will extend to the full window area including any opening sections

Planning condition compliance:

This measure aligns with standard North Hertfordshire planning conditions for residential institutions to protect neighbouring privacy

Living Room



Internal Layout and Use of Space

Facilities will be tailored to meet the needs of children with learning disabilities or mental health conditions. For example, sensory-friendly spaces and calming decor have been incorporated to foster a supportive and nurturing environment.

Kitchen



Sustainability measures will include the installation of energy-efficient lighting, appliances, and low-flow water fixtures throughout the property.

Comprehensive recycling programmes and waste minimisation strategies will also be implemented to further reduce the environmental footprint.



Patio

Private bedrooms ensure comfort and personal space for each child.

Bedroom 1



Bedroom 2



Bedroom 3



Neighbourhood Character and Amenity

- The site is on a quiet residential street with semi-detached houses.
- The proposed use as a three-person children's home is comparable in intensity to a large family household.
- Staff will always supervise the children, and no shift handovers will be visible to neighbours.
- The management plan will include a Noise and Behaviour Management strategy: outdoor activities will be limited to reasonable hours, and any visitors (professionals or family members) will be scheduled/escorted to minimise disturbance.

Safeguarding & Security

- Enhanced security measures, including perimeter fencing and secure entry points, ensure a safe living environment for the residents and the surrounding community. These measures comply with Secured by Design standards.
- CCTV provided will not intrude on neighbouring properties and will comply with GDPR and safeguarding regulations.
- The property's layout also incorporates fire safety features, such as fire doors and strategically placed smoke alarms, in alignment with relevant building control regulations.



Environmental Considerations

- The design includes landscaping improvements, such as the addition of greenery and a designated outdoor recreational area, which provides a safe and supervised space for residents to engage in outdoor activities.
- Energy-efficient appliances and lighting have been included to minimise the property's environmental impact while supporting a sustainable operation.



Integration with Neighbourhood Character

- The external appearance of the property will remain unchanged, ensuring it blends seamlessly with the surrounding residential homes.
- Soundproofing measures have been incorporated to maintain the quiet atmosphere of the neighbourhood, further minimising potential disturbances.



Adaptable Design

- The property layout boasts its versatile adaptability meaning it can be adjusted to accommodate future residents with diverse needs without significant alterations.
- Communal spaces can be multifunctional, catering to different activities such as group therapy sessions, meal preparation, and recreation.



Environmental Benefits

The setting of 186 Whitehill offers additional advantages:

Green Spaces: The garden, nearby parks and open areas provide opportunities for supervised outdoor activities, contributing to the well-being of the children while maintaining safe and orderly engagement with the community.

Residential Safety: The neighbourhood's low crime rate and stable environment enhance the suitability of the location for a vulnerable population requiring care and support.



In conclusion, the modest scale and controlled operation preserve local amenity and character. The impacts are minimal and can be managed by condition (e.g. requiring implementation of the submitted operational plan). These conditions of approval (Management Plan, noise control, etc.) will ensure the development remains neighbourly.

Operation and Compliance

The proposed use of 186 Whitehill is fully compliant with Class C2 criteria. It supports three children in need of care, living within a stable household setting with staff who share the premises and household functions. The domestic nature of the home, the low frequency of external visitors, and the commitment to quiet, routine-based living all support the classification as a residential dwelling with care.

This proposal not only complies with planning definitions but also contributes a vital and well-managed local resource to support children who cannot remain in their birth families. The use is modest, the impact is minimal, and the benefit to the local authority's care strategy is considerable.

Waste and Refuse Management

Waste generation will be equivalent to a small family household. No special clinical or bulky waste is anticipated. The existing front drive offers convenient bin storage (a refuse bin and a recyclable box), which matches neighbouring houses. All refuse and recycling will be presented on the pavement for collection on the scheduled day, following Newham's domestic waste service (a weekly collection). The existing garage can store additional bins or bulky recycling bins if needed, out of sight. The staff will manage waste according to North Hertfordshire District Council guidance – for example, litter will be cleared and not left in the garden.

Fire Safety and Building Compliance

Fire safety is paramount in a children's home. The property will be fitted with a hard-wired interlinked smoke alarm on each storey and in each sleeping area, in line with Approved Document B. Fire doors (FD30-rated) are installed where required (e.g. between bedrooms and corridors), and all escape routes will be kept clear. Portable fire extinguishers and fire blankets will be provided. A qualified assessor will conduct a full Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) before occupation, and an Evacuation Plan will be drawn up and practised with staff and residents.

These measures exceed basic regulations for dwellings, reflecting the C2 use. They are required by Ofsted and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Importantly, they do not involve any external works or structures; all equipment (alarms, lights) will match domestic standards. The FRA will remain on-site and can be submitted to the Council's Building Control if requested. In summary, the development will meet all fire safety obligations, and this can be secured by condition (FRA submission). There is no reason to suspect any fire-safety objection.

Safeguarding, Management and Staffing

A comprehensive operational management plan will govern the home's day-to-day running. Key features will include:

- **Staffing and Training:** All staff will hold enhanced DBS checks and be trained in safeguarding, behaviour management, and first aid. Staffing is organised into two 12-hour shifts, typically 08:00–20:00 (day) and 20:00–08:00 (night, including a sleep-in element) or a similar 12-hour pattern agreed with the Local Authority. A Senior Manager (designated Safeguarding Lead) will oversee compliance. The staff-to-child ratio (minimum 2:3) and continuous shift overlap ensure no child is ever unsupervised or without a trained adult.
- **Behaviours and Incidents:** Positive Behaviour Support techniques and de-escalation strategies will be used to manage any challenging behaviour. All incidents are reported via a safeguarding register and reviewed in weekly meetings.
- **Security:** Doors will be lockable but have internal release handles; windows will have restrictors to prevent accidents. An entry system or monitored buzzer will control visitors. CCTV (internal and external) will cover common areas and the property perimeter; recordings will be kept only to meet safeguarding obligations.
- **Liaison with Community:** The home will maintain open channels with neighbours, offering the manager's contact details and responding promptly to any concerns. The children will attend nearby schools and local youth clubs, supervised by staff, to support their social integration. Occasional home tuition (for school holidays or transition periods) will be limited to safe, quiet indoor or garden activities.
- **Policies and Procedures:** The home will be registered with Ofsted and follow the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF). All staff will be trained in child protection protocols. The submitted Operational Management Plan appendix details these procedures and expressly states that staff shift handovers are conducted inside the building at 08:00 and 20:00 to minimise external disturbance.
- **Regular community engagement** will be integral, with meetings organised for immediate neighbours to discuss operational updates and address any local concerns proactively. A direct communication channel to the Registered Manager will be provided to neighbours to facilitate ongoing dialogue.

These measures ensure that the home is safe, responsible and a “good neighbour”. They address any safeguarding concerns upfront and will be enforced by condition or S106 (e.g. requiring operation in accordance with the submitted plan). This detail demonstrates full compliance with Local Plan H3(d) (management plan) and the specialist housing requirements outlined by the Council, ensuring that mixing of children, staff and community is properly overseen.

Transport Assessment (TA)

Site Context & Description

- **Address:** 186 Whitehill Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire.
- **Proposal:** Change of use from a single dwelling (Use Class C3) to a children's home (Use Class C2) for up to 4 children.
- **Surroundings:** The site is a detached dwelling on Whitehill Road (B656), a primary distributor road with a 30mph speed limit. The surrounding area is primarily residential. Key local amenities are within walking distance.

Trip Generation & Characteristics

A children's home has a fundamentally different travel profile from a standard dwelling. Trip generation is very low, and patterns are predictable and managed.

- **Staff Trips (Primary Vehicle Trips):**
 - *Shift Pattern:* 2 staff on day shift, 2 on night shift. 2 primary vehicle trip generation periods per day (approx. 08:00 & 20:00 for shift changes).
 - *Estimate:* 4-6 vehicle trips per day (2 in, 2 out, plus potential for a minor staff visit).
- **Visitor Trips:**
 - *Social Workers/Therapists:* Pre-booked, low-frequency visits (approx. 2-3 visits per week).
 - *Family Visits:* Managed and often facilitated by staff; not all visitors will arrive by car.
- **Service Trips:**
 - *Deliveries:* Standard residential-level (e.g., Amazon, food). No HGVs required.
 - *Waste Collection:* Utilises existing domestic refuse collection service.
- **Resident Trips:**
 - *School/College:* Typically arranged via dedicated taxi or minibus service (a single trip, not multiple car trips).
 - *Activities:* Encouraged to be walking-based (e.g., to Hitchin town centre, 1.2 miles away) or via organised transport. No expectation of resident car ownership or use.

Conclusion: The development will generate a negligible increase in vehicular traffic on Whitehill Road, significantly less than the previous use as a single family dwelling which could generate 8-10+ car trips per day.

Mode Split & Sustainable Transport

- **Walking/Cycling:** The site is within a 20-minute walk of Hitchin town centre, offering extensive amenities. Pavements are continuous along Whitehill Road.
- **Public Transport:** Bus stops are located on Whitehill Road (Routes 90, 91, 99 to Luton, Stevenage, and Hitchin Town Centre) within 50 metres of the site, providing excellent connectivity.
- **Predicted Mode Split (Staff):** 60% Car, 30% Public Transport, 10% Walk/Cycle.
 - Car use is high for staff due to anti-social shift hours; the Travel Plan will target this.

Parking Provision & Access

- **Existing:** The property has an existing dropped kerb and driveway providing off-street parking for 2-3 vehicles.
- **Requirement:** This is entirely sufficient for the operational needs of the home:
 - 1 space per staff member on the largest shift (2).
 - 1 space for a visitor.
- **Highway Safety:** The existing vehicular access has good visibility splays. No alterations are proposed. The development will not result in any on-street parking stress, as staff parking will be accommodated on-site.

Conclusion

The change of use to a children's home will result in a material reduction in vehicle trip generation compared to its previous lawful use as a single dwelling. The proposal provides safe and suitable access, sufficient on-site parking, and excellent access to sustainable transport modes. The impact on the local highway network will be negligible, and the proposal therefore fully complies with local planning policy (e.g., Local Plan Policy TRANS 1, 2, 3).

In policy terms, the development is acceptable: it is not a “major” scheme requiring complete transport assessment, but a short Transport Statement can be provided if requested.

Incorporated Solutions and Mitigations

Staffing and Operational Plan

- A clear staffing rota will outline carers' shift patterns, contingency plans for holidays, and coverage for absences, ensuring uninterrupted care.
- A designated lead carer will oversee daily operations and maintain consistency in household management.

Community Risk Assessment and Safety Measures

- Conduct a risk assessment to evaluate potential impacts and implement proactive safety protocols, such as perimeter fencing to secure the property and mitigate risks of unsupervised exits.
- Engage a Crime Prevention Design Advisor to incorporate recommendations aligning with Secured by Design (SBD) standards.

Engagement and Communication Strategy

- Host informational sessions and distribute materials to residents, clarifying the purpose and operation of the home.
- Appoint a **community liaison officer** to handle neighbour concerns and foster positive relations.

OFSTED Registration

- Pursue registration with OFSTED prior to opening to ensure compliance with national care standards and address concerns over unregulated care.
- Share evidence of registration steps in application materials to demonstrate transparency and accountability.

Visitor Management and Accessibility

- Limit visitor frequency to essential professionals (e.g., social workers, therapists), averaging three to four visits per month.
- Ensure all visitor parking needs are met through onsite provisions, avoiding any reliance on street parking.

Neighbourhood Safety

- Establish comprehensive monitoring protocols to ensure safety for both residents of the home and the surrounding community.
- Engage in collaboration with local law enforcement and community service organisations to synchronise efforts aimed at safeguarding all stakeholders involved.

Transport Assessment and Travel Plan

- Prepared and incorporated within the Design and Access Statement to demonstrate a negligible highway impact and a commitment to sustainable travel management.
- Contingency measures for managing potential parking demand or local traffic disruptions include arrangements for active coordination with local transport authorities to minimise traffic impact during peak times.

Addressing Concerns About Increased Noise or Disruptions

Residents may worry about disruptions associated with the children's home, especially when caring for individuals with learning disabilities or mental health conditions. To reassure them:

- **Structured Routine and Supervision:** The children's daily routines will be carefully managed with constant supervision by experienced carers, ensuring stability and minimising any disruptive behaviour.
- **Small Number of Residents:** With only three children living in the home alongside carers, this setup mirrors a traditional family household. The scale of the operation is deliberately low impact to maintain the quiet residential character.
- **Community Engagement:** Open lines of communication will be established to address any concerns from neighbours swiftly, fostering transparency and trust.
- **Environmental Measures:** Measures such as soundproofing the property and scheduling outdoor activities during non-sensitive hours will be implemented to mitigate any potential noise.



Responding to Arguments About Property Values or Neighbourhood Character

Concerns regarding property values or perceived changes in neighbourhood character often stem from misconceptions. To address this:

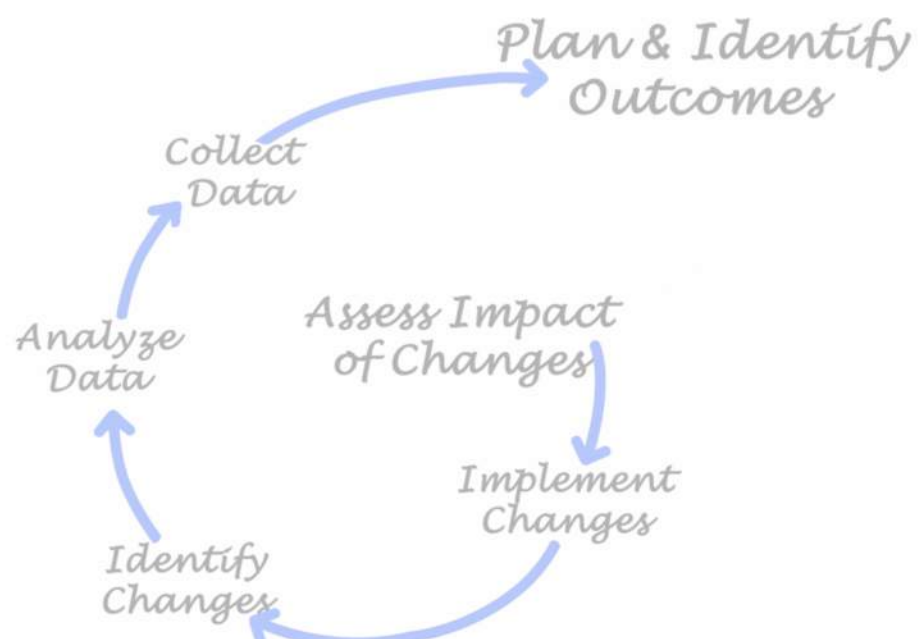
- **Positive Community Contribution:** The home is designed to integrate seamlessly into the neighbourhood, maintaining its residential nature. Children's homes like this provide vital services while contributing positively to community diversity and inclusion.
- **Expert Management:** The home will be professionally run and adhere to OFSTED standards, ensuring that operations are conducted responsibly and with accountability.
- **No Alteration to Local Landscape:** The external appearance of the property will remain unchanged, avoiding any visual impact that might raise concerns about the neighbourhood's aesthetic or character.
- **Studies Disproving Value Impact:** Research often shows that well-managed care homes do not adversely affect property values; these findings will be shared with residents to dispel fears.



Considering Apprehensions About Safety

Safety concerns regarding children in care with specific needs can be sensitive. Addressing these worries compassionately:

- **Strict Supervision Protocols:** Carers will follow rigorous supervision and monitoring procedures, ensuring children's behaviour aligns with the neighbourhood's expectations and safety standards.
- **Risk Mitigation Measures:** Enhanced security measures, such as perimeter fencing, monitoring systems, and secure doors, will protect both the residents and the community.
- **Community Liaison Role:** A dedicated liaison officer will act as the bridge between the home and neighbours, addressing any safety-related concerns promptly.
- **Careful Resident Selection:** Vulnerable children placed in the home are assessed carefully to ensure their placement aligns with a family-oriented, non-disruptive environment.
- **Focus on Rehabilitation:** Rather than posing risks, the goal is to help children integrate positively into society, improving their chances for success and reducing the likelihood of any disruptive incidents.



Planning Assessment

Key Issues Addressed

Compliance with Class C2

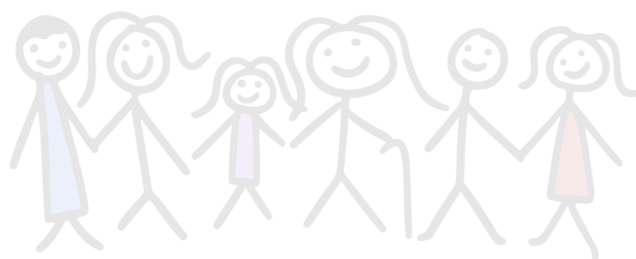
- The home will accommodate three children and three carers, meeting regulations and living together in a shared and structured environment.
- The shared facilities, communal dining, and cohesive routines emulate a traditional household, meeting Class C2 requirements.

Parking and Visitor Provision

- Existing driveway space remains available for parking. The property's two onsite parking spaces are adequate for daily operations and visitor needs.
- Professional visitor traffic will remain minimal, further reducing the impact on local infrastructure.

Community Impact

- Proactive integration measures and engagement with neighbours will ensure harmony within the residential setting.
- Structured routines and effective supervision will maintain a quiet and orderly environment, preserving the neighbourhood's character.



Conclusion and Planning Balance

The proposed use of 186 Whitehill complies with the development plan and national policy for Class C2 criteria. Evidence from the North Hertfordshire District Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Sufficiency Strategy indicates a local need for homes for vulnerable children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). This scheme offers a safe, well-managed in-borough alternative for three children in need of care, providing a stable household environment with staff living on-site.

The home's domestic nature, low frequency of external visitors, and commitment to a quiet, routine-based lifestyle support its classification as a residential dwelling with care. It meets Local Plan Policy H3 for specialist supported housing and promotes the objectives of the Equality Act.

The size and operation of the home will resemble that of a larger family house, resulting in minimal impacts on traffic, noise, or the neighbourhood's character. In fact, responsible management is likely to enhance local tranquillity. Any concerns regarding noise, parking, or safety can be effectively managed.

The public benefits, such as caring for vulnerable children, promoting community cohesion, and utilising an existing dwelling, significantly outweigh any minimal disadvantages. Therefore, the development is sustainable and necessary and serves the public interest, aligning with the North Hertfordshire Plan and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) goals.

In conclusion, the change of use to a children's residential home is acceptable from a planning perspective, providing urgent social value and preserving neighbourhood amenity. We respectfully request approval for full planning permission.

References include relevant policies and evidence sources from the North Hertfordshire JSNA, Hertfordshire's Supported Accommodation Strategy 2017 - 2027, and NPPF (2024), all supporting the scheme's benefits. Additional appendices, such as the floor plans, further bolster the proposals.

Appendices

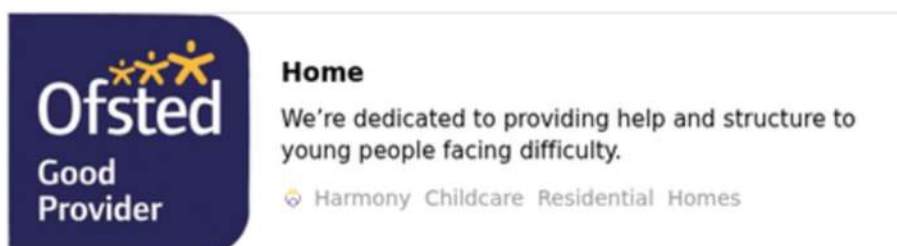
Case Study 1:

Residential Children's Home - Harmony Integration

Location: A quiet residential neighbourhood in Bristol, UK

Objective: Establish a small-scale residential children's home for children with learning disabilities.

Outcome: Through structured routines, soundproofing, and strict operational procedures, the home operated seamlessly in the community. Proactive efforts, such as appointing a community liaison officer and hosting informational sessions, built trust among neighbours. A survey conducted six months post-establishment revealed a positive perception of the home, citing its contribution to inclusivity and community enrichment.



Make a referral

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Careers

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Downloads

Building Bright Futures, Through Exceptional Care

We're dedicated to providing help and structure to young people facing difficulty.

Find out more



Case Study 2:

Property Values and Community Impact Study - Well-Managed Homes

Research: A study by the Local Planning Authority in West Midlands, UK (2019)

Objective: Examine whether care homes affect property values in residential areas.

Findings: The study concluded that care homes, when managed professionally and adhering to high standards, do not negatively impact property values. In some cases, properties closer to well-managed facilities even appreciated slightly, attributed to improved local services and safety measures.

Case Study 3:

OFSTED Registered Children's Home - Promoting Accountability

Location: Oxford, UK

Details: A children's home accommodating five residents with professional OFSTED registration.

Outcome: The home maintained an “Outstanding” rating due to its adherence to strict care standards. Feedback from local stakeholders showed reassurance from OFSTED oversight, mitigating initial concerns about operations and safety.

Fire Strategy Statement

Property Address: 186 Whitehill Road, Hitchin, SG4 9HY

Proposal: Change of use from Class C3(b) to Class C2 – Children’s Residential Care Home

Occupancy: 3 children (ages 5–17) with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD)

Staffing: Up to 3 carers on a rota, with 2 present overnight.

Purpose

To ensure the safety of vulnerable residents and staff through robust fire prevention, detection, and evacuation protocols, in compliance with:

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- GOV.UK Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Residential Care Premises

Fire Risk Assessment

A full Fire Risk Assessment will be conducted prior to occupation, covering:

- Identification of fire hazards (e.g. electrical faults, kitchen risks)
- Assessment of resident vulnerabilities (mobility, behavioural challenges)
- Evaluation of escape routes and fire protection systems
- Staff roles and emergency response procedure

Detection and Alarm Systems

- Grade A fire detection and alarm system installed
- Smoke and heat detectors in all bedrooms, communal areas, and kitchen
- Manual call points at exits
- Central control panel with remote monitoring
- Monthly testing and maintenance schedule

Means of Escape

- Clearly marked, unobstructed escape routes
- Emergency lighting throughout corridors and exits
- Fire-rated doors with self-closing mechanisms
- Evacuation plans tailored to individual needs, including assisted escape

Fire Strategy Statement cont.

Firefighting Equipment

- Portable extinguishers (CO₂, foam, water mist) in key areas
- Fire blankets in kitchen
- Equipment inspected and maintained regularly

Staff Training and Drills

- All staff trained in fire prevention, evacuation, and equipment use
- Fire drills conducted quarterly
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for each child
- Induction and refresher training every 6 months

Emergency Planning

- Coordination with local fire services for site familiarisation
- Evacuation maps and emergency contacts displayed
- Behavioural support protocols during evacuation

Maintenance and Review

- Monthly inspections of fire safety systems
- Annual review of Fire Risk Assessment
- Documentation kept on-site and available for inspection

Care Management Plan

Property Address: 186 Whitehill Road, Hitchin, SG4 9HY

Proposal: Children's Residential Care Home for 3 children with EBD

Use Class: C2 – Residential Institution

Care Philosophy

To provide a safe, nurturing, and structured environment for children aged 5–17 with emotional and behavioural difficulties, promoting stability, personal development, and wellbeing.

Staffing Model

- Up to 3 carers employed on a rotational basis
- Minimum of 2 carers present overnight
- Staff trained in safeguarding, trauma-informed care, and behavioural support
- On-call management available 24/7

Resident Profile

- Children referred via local authority or care agency
- Each child will have an individual care plan
- Emotional and behavioural needs supported through structured routines and therapeutic engagement

Daily Operations

- Structured daily schedule including meals, education, recreation, and therapy
- Supervised outings and activities
- Medication administered by trained staff
- Regular reviews of care plans and progress

Safeguarding

- Compliance with Children's Homes Regulations and Ofsted standards
- Secure access controls and visitor protocols
- Staff DBS-checked and trained in child protection
- Incident reporting and escalation procedures in place

Care Management Plan cont.

Community Integration

- Children encouraged to attend local schools and participate in community activities
- Positive relationships with neighbours and local services fostered
- Behavioural expectations and boundaries clearly communicated

Monitoring and Review

- Monthly internal audits of care provision
- Annual review of policies and procedures
- Feedback from residents, staff, and external professionals integrated into service improvement

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the underlying mechanisms of the observed phenomena. This section highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates both theoretical and empirical perspectives. The authors argue that a deep understanding of the system's dynamics is essential for developing effective interventions.

2. The second part of the paper focuses on the methodological aspects of the study. It details the experimental design, data collection procedures, and the statistical models used to analyze the results. The authors emphasize the importance of rigorous data analysis and the use of appropriate statistical tests to ensure the validity of the findings.

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