

# Planning Statement

**Change of use from the provision of care to no more than 3 young people living together as a single household (Class C3b) to a Children's residential home (Use Class C2).**

3 Larkin Place, Royston, Hertfordshire, SG8 5UR

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1**

MAAJR Partners, trading as Lumen Home, respectfully submits this supporting statement in relation to the proposed change of use of the existing building at 3 Larkin Place, Royston, Hertfordshire, SG8 5UR. The application seeks permission to operate the property as a Children's Home for up to three children (aged 6 to 18 years), with care provided by non-resident carers working on a shift basis at any given time. The application also seeks permission to convert the existing garage into an office ancillary to the proposed use.

## **1.2**

This statement, which should be read in conjunction with the supplementary information submitted with the application, considers the planning issues and merits of the proposed development. It assesses those matters against relevant local and national planning policy, guidance, and other material planning considerations.

## **1.3**

The purpose of this document is to:

- Provide a comprehensive overview of the existing site and its context;
- Highlight the planning history relevant to the property; and
- Justify the proposed change of use within the framework of North Hertfordshire District Council's planning policies and objectives.

## **1.4**

This report is structured as follows in order to assist the Council in its determination of the application and to demonstrate compliance with the relevant Development Plan policies:

- Section 2: Site & Surroundings
- Section 3: Planning History
- Section 4: Use & Amount
- Section 5: Layout of the Property
- Section 6: The Need for the Proposed Use
- Section 7: The Occupiers & Day to Day Life in the Property
- Section 8: Planning Policy Framework
- Section 9: Scheme Assessment
- Section 10: Conclusion

# **2. SITE & SURROUNDINGS**

## **2.1**

The existing property is a two-storey detached dwelling dating from the 1990s, with an attached garage. The property benefits from a hardstanding area to the front providing multiple parking spaces, together with a private rear garden typical of residential properties in the area.

## 2.2

At present, the property is classified under Use Class C3(b) and provides care for up to three young people living together as a single household.

**Figure 1: Photograph of the property**



## 2.3

The property is located on a residential street made up of similar style homes within a predominantly residential neighbourhood.

## 2.4

According to the Government's flood risk maps, the property is not situated within an area at risk of flooding. In addition, the site is not located within a Conservation Area and is not subject to the type of restrictions generally associated with historic or architecturally sensitive locations.

## 2.5

The property lies within the settlement boundary and benefits from proximity to local services, amenities, and public transport, including a bus stop directly outside the property. This helps to reduce reliance on private car use by staff or visitors.

# 3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

## 3.1

A review of the planning history identifies the following relevant applications:

- **Use of existing house for the provision of care to no more than 3 young people living together as a single household (Class C3b).**

Ref. No: 26/00051/LDCP | Received: Tue 03 Feb 2026 | Validated: Tue 03 Feb 2026 | Status: Decided

- **Retention of single storey rear extension**

Ref. No: 01/01975/1HH | Received: Wed 19 Dec 2001 | Validated: Tue 22 Jan 2002 | Status: Decided

## **4. USE AND AMOUNT**

### **4.1**

This application seeks approval for the change of use of the existing property into a Children's residential home for up to three young people. It also seeks permission for the conversion of the existing garage into an office to support the day-to-day operation of the home.

### **4.2**

The primary aim of the proposal is to provide a homely environment in which residents can live safely and with appropriate support within the community. The property will retain a residential character while accommodating the facilities necessary to support the care needs of the children placed there.

### **4.3**

Given the nature of the building and its proposed use, no significant impacts are anticipated in terms of overbearing effect, overshadowing, overlooking, or visual intrusion.

### **4.4**

The proposed use would complement the character and diversity of the area and is not expected to have any adverse impact on the amenity, character, or viability of surrounding properties or the wider community.

## **5. LAYOUT OF THE PROPERTY**

### **5.1**

With the exception of the proposed garage conversion to an office, no structural modifications or extensions are proposed to the house. The property is already suitable for the intended use and is in good decorative and structural condition.

### **5.2**

The property currently comprises four bedrooms and two bathrooms at first-floor level, with general living accommodation arranged on the ground floor, including a kitchen, formal living room, dining room, and cloakroom.

### **5.3**

The property retains its traditional dwellinghouse layout, with bedrooms on the upper floor and communal living areas on the ground floor.

#### **5.4**

Each resident will have their own bedroom and will share communal spaces such as the kitchen and living room on the ground floor. Staff will actively participate in day-to-day life alongside the residents.

#### **5.5**

One of the bedrooms will be used by staff on a rotational basis, ensuring a 24-hour on-site presence to provide support and care.

#### **5.6**

The property benefits from a spacious and secure rear garden, as well as parking provision. It is also well located in relation to public transport, local shops, leisure facilities, schools, and other amenities.

## **6. THE NEED FOR THE PROPOSED USE**

### **6.1**

There is a substantial and well-documented need for Children's Homes across the UK. According to an Ofsted report published in January 2024, many children with complex needs wait years to be placed in a suitable home because local authorities frequently struggle to find stable placements. The report notes that this affects more than 9 out of 10 local authorities. It also highlights that some children are placed in unregistered homes or are living alone in homes with high numbers of staff, which can be isolating. Ofsted has called for better planning to ensure homes are developed in the right locations and are able to meet the needs of these children.

### **6.2**

A further report concerning residential settings for children also raises concern about the current shortage of suitable placements. This shortage has resulted in some local authorities turning to unregistered accommodation, which raises safety concerns and can disrupt children's lives by requiring them to live far away from their families and communities.

### **6.3**

The proposed development seeks to address this urgent need by providing a safe, secure, and appropriately designed living environment.

### **6.4**

Regulatory bodies favour community-based settings for children's residential care rather than institutional models, as these can better integrate children into ordinary neighbourhoods, reduce potential risks, and align with Ofsted's expectations in relation to location risk assessment.

## **6.5**

As a four-bed children's home, the proposal would provide a smaller, more person-centred environment that is integrated into the local community and more reflective of ordinary family life. This is likely to be more suitable for some children, whose needs, personalities, and preferences differ significantly. There is no universal model that will be right for every child requiring residential care.

## **6.6**

Hertfordshire County Council's most recent sufficiency statement identifies a clear need for additional accommodation options for children and young people in care within the county. The statement confirms the Council's ambition to place children within, or close to, Hertfordshire wherever possible. However, this objective is not currently being met, with around 100 children placed outside the county. This proposal would contribute directly to meeting that need by providing additional local provision and supporting a more sustainable and supportive care network for vulnerable young people.

# **7. THE OCCUPIERS & DAY TO DAY LIFE IN THE PROPERTY**

## **7.1**

The property will provide residential care for children aged 6 to 18 who are unable to live with their families due to abuse, neglect, or other adverse circumstances. Residents may previously have lived in foster care or other care settings.

## **7.2**

The home would provide a safe and supportive environment in which children can build positive relationships, recover from previous experiences, and progress positively towards adulthood. The needs of each child would be reflected in their individual Care Plan so that they receive the level of care and support needed to help them reach their full potential. While the home would function as a family-style household for three children, it would also provide the care required to respond to each child's individual needs.

## **7.3**

The home will accommodate children with mild physical disabilities and low to moderate mental health needs, such as ADHD or anxiety, but will not cater for children requiring forensic or intensive care.

## **7.4**

The focus will be on supporting children who may struggle to access foster care placements, providing them with stability, consistency, and a sense of belonging.

## **7.5**

As set out above, there will be up to three residents of mixed sex living together as a single household, supported by up to six members of staff depending on the complexity of the placement. Staff will work on a shift basis and provide 24-hour care in a family-oriented way, similar to parental support, with the level of care varying according to the age and needs of each child or young person. During the day, there will generally be between two and four staff members present depending on the individual needs of the residents, and one member of staff will sleep at the property overnight, although it will not be their main residence.

## **7.6**

Residents will share meals, communal spaces, and activities, creating a family-like environment while also encouraging independence and the development of life skills.

## **7.7**

There would be a maximum of four full-time carers based at the property at any one time, generally working 12-hour shifts. Staff handovers would likely take place at around 8am and 8pm each day and would usually last between a few minutes and 15 minutes, with a maximum of approximately 30 minutes where necessary. These handovers are simply to review notes and events from the preceding shift. There would not be frequent visits by external care staff or clinicians. Visits from Local Authority social workers or NHS professionals would generally take place at school, at an activity, at a doctor's surgery, or at hospital if required.

## **7.8**

No physical changes are required internally or externally to the property beyond those already identified. The purpose of the residential children's home is to reflect a traditional family home within a normal residential neighbourhood. The intention is that, from the outside, the property remains indistinguishable from any other family home on the street.

## **7.9**

In terms of residents' comings and goings, it is considered that there would be little difference when compared with the use of the property as a large family house, and no impact on the character of the area or neighbouring amenity is anticipated.

## **7.10**

The nature of the use will not result in a material increase or significant change in vehicle or pedestrian movements to and from the site, nor in the number of people coming and going. As a family home, the property could accommodate several adults, such as two parents and older children, all of whom could have independent travel patterns for work, education, hobbies, social visits, and visitors of their own.

### **7.11**

As a children's home, the young people living at the property would either be in school or NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). For those attending school, the nearby location of primary and secondary schools means that school transport demands would be very limited. Where a child is NEET, education or learning may be provided from the home, where appropriate. In these circumstances, the proposal could reasonably result in fewer comings and goings than an ordinary family dwelling, including one with school runs or nursery transport.

### **7.12**

The property will provide care and support to help residents live together as a single household, share meals, use communal lounge space, participate in activities, and engage in learning and social interaction, all of which will assist them in living more independent and fulfilling lives.

### **7.13**

The home includes a comfortably furnished living room with a television for children and young people, together with a separate kitchen. The kitchen is domestic in style and will be used for meal preparation. Where appropriate, young people will be encouraged to take part in preparing meals and drinks.

### **7.14**

The property also has a secure garden enclosed by fencing, and children and young people will be encouraged to make full use of that space.

## **8. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

### **8.1**

The relevant policy considerations for the proposed development are:

- North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011–2031 and Proposals Map
- Supplementary Planning Documents, including the North Herts Parking SPD
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

### **8.2**

The key local plan policies are considered to include:

- **HS3** – Housing Mix
- **HS4** – Supported, Sheltered and Older Persons Housing
- **D1** – Sustainable Design
- **D3** – Protecting Living Conditions
- **T2** – Parking

### **8.3**

The National Planning Policy Framework was first published in 2012 and has been revised on a number of occasions, most recently in December 2023. Its purpose is to ensure there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that positive

planning solutions are found so that development can come forward. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions, as recognised by paragraph 2 of the NPPF and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

## 8.4

Sustainable development is broadly defined at paragraph 8 of the NPPF as having three overarching objectives:

- **An economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity, and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- **A social objective** – 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 a well-designed and safe built environment with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural wellbeing; and
- **An environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including the transition to a low-carbon economy.

## 8.5

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how those policies are expected to be applied. Paragraph 11 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and confirms that a presumption in favour of sustainable development sits at the heart of the Framework. For decision-taking, this means:

- Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- Where the development plan is absent, silent, or relevant policies are out of date, granting planning permission unless:
  - any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or
  - specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

## 8.6

Paragraph 20 states that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and make sufficient provision for community facilities, including health, education and cultural infrastructure.

### **8.7**

Paragraph 38 advises that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and should work proactively with applicants to secure development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

### **8.8**

Paragraph 47 states that planning law requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **8.9**

Paragraph 55 states that local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions.

### **8.10**

Paragraph 60 states that, in order to support the Government's objective of increasing the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that a variety of housing can be delivered, and that local needs can be met.

### **8.11**

Paragraph 63 states that planning policies should reflect the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community, including people with disabilities and others with specialist housing needs.

### **8.12**

Paragraph 126 states that planning authorities should take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where doing so would help to meet identified development needs.

### **8.13**

Promoting sustainable development is a central principle of the NPPF, and substantial weight is given to encouraging appropriate growth.

### **8.14**

As stated at paragraph 8 of the revised NPPF, achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives – economic, social, and environmental – which are interdependent and must be pursued in mutually supportive ways.

## **9. SCHEME ASSESSMENT**

### **9.1**

This section considers the compliance of the proposal with the Development Plan and other material considerations relevant to the proposed change of use. It addresses the key planning matters arising from the application and provides a policy-based assessment of the proposal.

### **PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT**

### **9.2**

At paragraph 7, the NPPF confirms that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It explains that, at a high level, sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### **9.3**

At paragraph 11, the NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and requires decision-makers to approve proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

### **9.4**

It is considered that the proposal would make a positive, albeit modest, contribution towards the provision of specialist residential accommodation, with both immediate and longer-term social and economic benefits.

### **9.5**

In social terms, the proposal would help provide a high-quality residential environment with good access to local services and facilities. It would contribute towards supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that an appropriate range of homes is available and by making use of a safe and accessible built environment.

### **9.6**

From an environmental perspective, the proposal makes effective and efficient use of an existing property and would preserve the character and appearance of the site and wider area. The proposed use remains compatible with the surrounding residential context.

### **9.7**

Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal delivers benefits across the three objectives of sustainable development and, on balance, satisfies the presumption in favour of sustainable development. There are no adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified benefits when assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole.

## **9.8**

Paragraphs 60 and 61 of the NPPF require local planning authorities to plan for a range of housing needs. Paragraph 63 further confirms that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be reflected in planning policies.

## **9.9**

As a specialist form of residential accommodation in close proximity to an existing settlement, local services and facilities, and with good access to public transport, the proposal is supported in principle by the NPPF and the Local Plan, including Policies HS3 and HS4.

## **9.10**

The principle of development is therefore considered acceptable in this location.

## **NEIGHBOURING AMENITY**

### **9.11**

As stated above, the proposal includes the conversion of the garage for use as an office. Aside from this, no other material changes are proposed to the existing building. The proposed use remains broadly residential in nature and is considered compatible with the surrounding area. It is therefore not expected to result in any unacceptable impact on neighbouring properties in terms of activity levels, comings and goings, noise and disturbance, visual intrusion, or any other amenity consideration.

### **9.12**

It is considered that the nature of the use will not result in a material increase or significant change in vehicle or pedestrian movements to and from the site, nor in the number of people coming and going, particularly when compared with the use of the property as a large five-bedroom family home. Even in ordinary residential use, the property could accommodate several adults, such as two parents and three older children, all with their own independent travel patterns for work, school, leisure, and social activity. Public transport serving 3 Larkin Place is generally good for a small market town, with Royston railway station approximately a 10-to-15-minute walk away.

### **9.13**

Furthermore, if the property were occupied by adults rather than children, up to six residents could lawfully be accommodated with a level of care and support without necessarily amounting to a material change of use or requiring planning permission. Use Class C3(b) allows for not more than six residents living together as a single household where care is provided for residents.

### **9.14**

In such a scenario, carers could be attending the site regularly, including full-time carers, and the presence of additional vehicles would not necessarily be unusual or

significant. In considering whether there is any intensification of use, regard should therefore be had not only to the use of the property as a conventional dwellinghouse occupied by one family, but also to its lawful fallback use for up to six residents living together as a single household and receiving care.

#### **9.15**

Within Use Class C3(b), there is no restriction on the degree of care provided or any concept of a fixed service intensity. As such, there is no clear basis for suggesting that the level of care proposed here would itself amount to a material change of use. There is no defined “normal” level of care against which the proposal should be judged.

#### **9.16**

It is therefore considered that the proposal would give rise to no material harm to neighbouring amenity when compared with the current situation and the maximum lawful residential use of the property.

#### **9.17**

The application is therefore considered to accord with the general objectives of Local Plan Policy D3.

### **ACCESS & PARKING**

#### **9.18**

The proposed works do not involve any alterations to the existing access arrangements, whether from the public highway or within the site itself. It is considered that the nature of the proposed change of use will not result in a material increase in vehicular or pedestrian movements, nor cause any unacceptable impact on the local highway network, particularly when compared with the site’s existing lawful use. In addition, it is proposed to remove the grass verge to the right of the property in order to create two additional off-street parking spaces, resulting in a total of four on-site parking spaces and further supporting the adequacy of parking provision.

#### **9.19**

The proposals include the removal of the grass verge to the right of the property to facilitate the creation of two additional off-street parking spaces. The site will therefore benefit from increased on-site parking provision, in addition to the existing driveway parking and available on-street parking nearby. The location as a whole is considered to provide safe and suitable access. Due to the age of the residents, it is not anticipated that the occupiers themselves will have use of a private car.

#### **9.20**

It is considered that the existing access arrangements and the layout of the site provide safe, efficient and convenient access, with adequate space for vehicle manoeuvring, parking and servicing, in accordance with relevant policy requirements.

#### **9.21**

The applicant will encourage staff to make use of public transport where possible. Visitor parking will also be managed proactively to ensure that the proposed use does not have a detrimental effect on local amenity or highway safety.

#### **9.22**

Servicing requirements will remain similar to those of the existing residential use, with refuse collection continuing on a domestic basis. It is therefore not expected that traffic associated with servicing the property will materially increase.

#### **9.23**

For residential care homes, excluding nursing homes, hospitals, schools, colleges and training centres, where staff are present on site 24 hours a day, the Parking SPD recommends one parking space for every five resident bed spaces plus one space for every two non-resident members of staff. There are no specific parking standards for Children's Care Homes.

#### **9.24**

Given the existing lawful use of the property as a home for no more than three young people and two carers living together as a single household under Class C3(b), together with the small number of residents proposed and the likelihood that they will not have access to a vehicle, the proposal is not expected to give rise to any adverse effect on highway safety or the surrounding road network. It is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policies D1 and T2 of the adopted Local Plan and the Parking SPD.

#### **9.25**

Cycle parking provision will remain as existing, and the proposed use is not considered to generate any greater requirement than that of a traditional residential property.

#### **9.26**

Access both internally and externally to the dwelling will remain unchanged. The general character of the site and surrounding area will therefore remain as existing.

#### **9.27**

When compared with the use of the property as a normal five-bedroom family home, which could involve multiple adults, visitors, and independent daily vehicle trips, the proposed use may reasonably be expected to have a lower environmental impact. Children placed in the home will either attend school or be NEET, and shared travel arrangements are likely to be commonplace. Children will not own motor vehicles. By contrast, a large family home could easily generate several separate daily journeys by car.

### **9.28**

The applicant is also committed to reducing carbon impact wherever reasonably possible, including through the use of shared electric vehicles, the employment of local staff and carers, and support for the use of public transport.

### **9.29**

For these reasons, it is considered that the proposed change of use accords with the relevant Local Plan policies and should be regarded as acceptable in this location.

## **ARBORICULTURAL & LANDSCAPING MATTERS**

### **9.30**

The site is presently landscaped as a traditional family dwelling, and no changes are proposed to the external landscaping as part of the development.

### **9.31**

The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the requirements of both local and national planning policy in this regard.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

### **10.1**

The proposed development seeks permission for the change of use of the existing dwellinghouse to a Children's residential home for up to three young people, with up to four non-resident carers working on a shift basis, together with the conversion of the existing garage into an office ancillary to that use.

### **10.2**

It is considered that the density, scale and amount of accommodation proposed are appropriate to the site, the character of the building, and the wider area. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with planning policy and relevant supplementary guidance.

### **10.3**

The proposal would meet a specific and identified need and would align with the Development Plan as a whole by providing an appropriate use within the area and delivering an important local benefit.

### **10.4**

More specifically, the proposal is compatible with neighbouring uses, is suitable for the site and the existing building, and reflects the established character and quality of the area. The site is in a sustainable location, accessible by a range of transport modes and close to local facilities. The development provides good access to services and amenities, is well served by public transport, and offers appropriate levels of amenity

space, landscaping and parking. It is therefore considered to accord with Policies HS3 and HS4 of the Local Plan.

### **10.5**

It is also considered that the proposed use would not be materially different, or of such an intensity, as to cause harm to neighbouring amenity or highway safety, particularly when compared with the maximum lawful use of the property, including under Use Class C3(b), as discussed above.

### **10.6**

The proposal would also accord with the relevant policies and requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and supports the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

### **10.7**

Planning permission is therefore respectfully requested. Should the Council reach a different view, the applicant would welcome the opportunity to engage positively with the authority in order to secure an acceptable solution in accordance with the NPPF.