

Re: Application 26/01058/FP – Response to Objections/Comments

Site Address: 3 Larkin Place, Royston, Hertfordshire, SG8 5UR

We write further to the objections and comments submitted in response to the above application. We set out below our response to the specific points raised. We would ask that this response be read alongside the application documents already submitted.

1. Highway Authority Response

At the outset, we draw the Council's attention to a material matter that the objection does not address: Hertfordshire County Council, in its capacity as the Highway Authority, has reviewed this application and has raised no objection. The Highway Authority is the statutory consultee with specialist expertise in parking provision and traffic generation, and its assessment carries significant weight. It has confirmed that the proposed parking provision is sufficient. The objection's case on parking and highway safety is mounted directly against the conclusion that the Highway Authority itself has reached, and the Council is entitled to attach substantial weight to that professional assessment in preference to the objectors' representations.

2. Staffing Numbers

The objection identifies an apparent inconsistency between paragraph 7.5 of the planning statement, which refers to up to six members of staff, and paragraph 7.7, which states a maximum of four carers at any one time. We can confirm that the reference to six in paragraph 7.5 was a typographical error. The correct and binding operational figure is a maximum of four carers at any one time. All parking, traffic and amenity assessment should proceed on that basis. We would ask that this letter be treated as superseding paragraph 7.5 on this point and are content for a planning condition to be imposed confirming the four-carer maximum if the Council considers that appropriate.

3. Shift Changeovers

The objection characterises shift changeovers as a simultaneous arrival and departure of all staff, generating a concentrated burst of vehicle movements twice daily. This does not reflect how the home operates in practice. Shift changes are managed on a rolling, individual basis rather than all at once, and are deliberately timed to be as unobtrusive as possible for the children in residence. In practice, this means that at any given changeover, individual carers arrive and depart one at a time rather than as a group. The scenario of multiple vehicles simultaneously competing for the forecourt, which underpins the objection's highway safety case, does not arise.

4. Staff Travel Patterns and Public Transport Accessibility

The objection proceeds on the assumption that all staff travel to work by private car. This does not reflect the actual travel patterns of the care sector or of this home's staff team. More than half of the home's current workforce do not drive and rely on public transport to

travel to work. Care roles of this kind are not typically well remunerated, and a significant proportion of care workers across the sector travel by bus or on foot as a result.

The site is well placed to support sustainable travel. Bus stops on Burns Road, within easy walking distance of the property via Betjeman Road and Larkin Place, serve a circular route connecting to Royston railway station. There is also a pedestrian footpath link from the mini roundabout at the junction of Burns Road and Betjeman Road. The practical reality is that the number of staff vehicles attending the site at any one changeover will be materially lower than the objection assumes.

5. Pool Car

The objection characterises the pool car as an undisclosed fifth commuting vehicle that adds to peak parking demand. This misrepresents what was discussed at the resident meeting. The suggestion of a pool car was raised precisely as a measure to reduce private car use: because the majority of staff travel to the property by public transport, a single shared vehicle kept on site would allow carers to transport children to appointments and activities without each member of staff needing to use or bring a private car for work-related journeys. A pool car of this nature remains on site between shifts; it does not arrive or depart with staff and does not contribute to changeover parking demand. We are content for appropriate conditions to be attached to any permission to address the management of any such vehicle if the Council considers that necessary.

6. On-Site Parking and On-Street Provision

The objection states that the four-space forecourt is incapable of accommodating overlapping shifts. As set out above, the premise of simultaneous mass changeovers does not reflect the home's operational model. With individual, staggered changeovers and more than half of staff travelling by public transport, the realistic peak vehicle demand on site at any one time will be well within the forecourt's capacity.

In addition, the red line site boundary includes land linking the property to the head of the cul-de-sac, which may provide further on-site capacity subject to clarification of any rights of way benefiting No 2 Larkin Place. Should any on-street parking arise in connection with this use, there are existing parking bays on Larkin Place and in close proximity on Betjeman Road. There is no reasonable basis on which limited and incidental on-street use could be said to compromise the free and safe flow of traffic in this location. The Highway Authority, having considered precisely these matters, reached the same conclusion.

The objection also refers to traffic generation from professional visits. It should be noted that such professional visits – from social workers, reviewing officers, medical professionals and similar – would take place in connection with any lawful care use at the property, including the C3(a) residential use that currently subsists. These visits are not an impact specific to the C2 proposal. Furthermore, all professional visits with the exception of unannounced Ofsted inspections would be by appointment only, allowing their timing to be managed relative to operational requirements.

7. 'Anchor Road' Reference in the Objection

The Council's attention is drawn to the fact that the objection's highways section (page 4, second paragraph) refers to 'Anchor Road' as the street in question. There is no Anchor Road in the vicinity of 3 Larkin Place, Royston. It appears that this paragraph has been carried across from a different document relating to a different site. The highway safety analysis in that section cannot therefore be relied upon as site-specific evidence in respect of this application.

8. Bedroom Accommodation

The objection raises concern about the floor area of one of the rooms shown on the submitted floor plans. This concern proceeds on a false premise: the room in question is not intended to be used as a bedroom for children in care. It will function as a staff room, ancillary to the operation of the home. The Nationally Described Space Standards apply to rooms used as sleeping accommodation. They have no application to a staff room and are not engaged here.

The home will accommodate a maximum of three children. The property provides three double bedrooms for that purpose, with the following floor areas:

Bedroom 1: 11'10" x 11'9" (12.92 m²)

Bedroom 2: 10'7" x 9'0" (8.85 m²)

Bedroom 3: 11'10" x 8'0" (8.80 m²)

All three children's bedrooms comfortably exceed the primary NDSS minimum of 7.5 m² and are suitable for occupation by a child of any age. We would suggest that revised floor plans be submitted relabelling the fourth room as a staff room, to remove any ambiguity. Policy D1(e) is satisfied in full.

Conclusion

The objection's highway safety case rests on an assumed operational model, simultaneous shift changeovers, all staff arriving by car, and an additional pool vehicle, that does not reflect how this home operates. The Highway Authority, as the statutory expert consultee, has assessed the application and raised no objection, confirming the parking provision to be sufficient. The staffing inconsistency in the planning statement was a typographical error; the correct maximum is four carers at any one time. The room identified in the objection as undersized is not a children's bedroom; it is a staff room ancillary to the use, to which no NDSS minimum applies. The home's three children's bedrooms all comfortably meet the primary NDSS standard. The Council can be satisfied, on the information before it, that the proposal will not cause unacceptable harm to highway safety or to the living conditions of neighbouring residents.

We remain happy to provide any further information the case officer may require.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alvin Osei-Tutu'.

Alvin Osei-Tutu