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Our Ref : 26/02088/HCC

Contact : Melissa Tyler
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Date : 16th September 2026

Dear Sir / Madam,

County Consultation : Change of use from Class C3 (residential) to Class C2 (Children's' Care Home), construction of single storey annexe, ground floor side extension, removal of 1no. tree, and associated works - application includes Screening Opinion
NORTH HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL : CONSULTEE ONLY
54 Station Road, Ashwell, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 5LS

Thank you for consulting North Hertfordshire Council on the above planning application. Planning permission is sought for the change of use of a residential dwelling (54 Station Road, Ashwell) to a residential care home for young people. Permission is sought for the change of use from class C3 to C2. I note that the applicant and owner is Hertfordshire County Council. It should be noted that if a third party company were to take on the proposed use on behalf of County then a planning application should be submitted to North Herts Planning Authority to determine.

In principle, North Hertfordshire Council raises no objection to the proposed built form of the annex. The site has an established planning history which includes previous consideration of proposals for a separate two-storey dwelling on the site. In this context, the principle of a two-storey building of broadly comparable scale and form has previously been accepted through the planning process.

Accordingly, the Council considers that the proposed annex, as a matter of built form and physical development, is broadly supported in principle, subject to detailed consideration of its design, scale, massing, relationship with neighbouring properties and compliance with the relevant policies of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

However, the current proposal differs materially from the previous residential proposals in that the building is now proposed to form part of a C2 children's home, alongside the change of use of the existing dwelling. The previous acceptance of a separate two-storey dwelling should therefore not be taken as establishing that the proposed C2 use would have the same planning impacts as a conventional C3 dwelling.

The Council's concerns set out below relate principally to the intensity and operational

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characteristics of the proposed C2 use, rather than the principle of the physical form of the annex itself. In particular, further information is required to establish how the proposed use would operate, including the number and needs of residents, staffing arrangements, shift patterns, external amenity arrangements and the resulting implications for neighbouring residential amenity.

The Council therefore considers that the built form of the annex can be supported in principle, having regard to the site's planning history, but that the acceptability of the proposed use and its relationship with neighbouring properties requires further assessment.

Having reviewed the submitted information, North Hertfordshire Council has concerns regarding the adequacy of the information submitted to enable the impact of the proposed change of use to be properly assessed, particularly in relation to the operational arrangements of the children's home and the potential impact upon the living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers.

The Council therefore requests that further information is provided by the applicant before the application is determined.

1. Care management and operational arrangements

The application proposes a change of use from a C3 dwelling to a C2 children's home. This represents a material change in the nature and intensity of the residential occupation of the property and it is therefore important that the proposed operational arrangements are clearly understood.

The application does not appear to provide sufficient detail regarding the proposed care management arrangements, including:

- * the nature and level of care and support that will be provided to the children;
- * whether the children will have any particular care, behavioural or support needs which could have implications for the operation of the home;
- * the extent to which children will be supervised within the property and external amenity areas;
- * the management arrangements for the home, including the role and presence of the registered manager;
- * arrangements for visitors, professionals and other third parties attending the property;
- * arrangements for managing incidents or situations which may result in increased activity or noise; and
- * how the proposed use will operate on a day-to-day basis within what is otherwise a residential neighbourhood.

The Council acknowledges that detailed care arrangements are principally matters for the relevant regulatory and safeguarding authorities. However, to the extent that the nature of the proposed use may affect the planning considerations arising from the development,

sufficient information is required to understand the likely intensity and characteristics of the use which includes how the annex will be used in relation to the main dwellinghouse.

2. Staff numbers and shift patterns

Further information is also required concerning the proposed staffing arrangements.

In particular, the applicant should clarify:

- * the number of staff members expected to be present at the property at any one time;
- * the number of staff working during daytime, evening and overnight periods;
- * whether staff will be resident or non-resident;
- * the proposed shift pattern and frequency of staff changes;
- * the anticipated number of staff arriving at and leaving the property during a typical day;
- * arrangements for staff handovers between shifts;
- * the number and frequency of staff vehicles associated with the use; and
- * whether agency, relief or additional staff may attend the property when required.

This information is particularly relevant given the proposed C2 use and the potential for the operational characteristics of a staffed children's home to differ from those associated with a conventional C3 dwelling.

3. Level of care and implications for neighbouring amenity

The Council considers that greater clarity is required regarding the level of care required by the proposed residents, insofar as this may have implications for the planning assessment. Clarification is required regarding the anticipated nature of the placement and whether the children are expected to require, for example, predominantly routine residential care and supervision or a higher level of support which may generate additional staff attendance, visitors, activity or external supervision.

This is relevant to assessing whether the proposed use would result in a materially different pattern of activity from that associated with the existing C3 dwelling.

4. Noise and impact on neighbouring properties

The Council has particular concerns regarding the potential noise implications of the proposed C2 use.

The site is located within an established residential area and the application involves a change from a conventional dwelling to a staffed children's home operating on a 24-hour basis. The potential noise-generating activities associated with the use therefore need to be properly assessed.

Consideration should be given to noise arising from:

- * children using the garden and external areas;

- * staff activity;
- * staff shift changes, including arrivals and departures during early morning, evening and overnight periods;
- * vehicle movements associated with staff and visitors;
- * deliveries and servicing;
- * visitors and professionals attending the property;
- * conversations and activity within external areas;
- * opening and closing of doors and gates; and
- * any activities associated with the management of incidents or increased support requirements.

The Council considers that the assessment should not simply compare the proposal with a conventional family dwelling. The relevant consideration is whether the proposed C2 use, having regard to its specific operational arrangements, would result in unacceptable harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

Policy D3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031 states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions. The Council's consideration of this policy includes potential impacts upon neighbouring residential occupiers.

The new NPPF similarly requires planning decisions to take account of the likely effects of pollution on health and living conditions and to mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development.

In the absence of sufficient information regarding the proposed staffing, supervision and care arrangements, it is difficult to establish whether the potential noise effects of the use have been adequately considered.

The Council therefore recommends that a Noise Impact Assessment or appropriate noise assessment is submitted, informed by the actual proposed operational arrangements. This should consider both internal and external noise and should specifically assess the relationship between the proposed use and the immediately adjoining residential properties.

Any mitigation measures identified should be clearly demonstrated on the plans or secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.

5. Separate garden areas

The submitted proposal appears to provide separate garden areas associated with the dwelling and the proposed annex.

The Council requests clarification as to the operational reason for providing separate external amenity areas.

In particular, the applicant should explain:

- * whether the three areas will be used by different residents;
 - * whether the separation is intended to manage different care or behavioural needs;
 - * whether residents will be permitted to use all areas;
 - * how supervision of the separate areas will operate;
 - * whether the areas will be used simultaneously;
 - * whether the separation is intended to provide privacy or safeguarding between residents;
- and
- * whether the separate areas could result in increased activity or noise being concentrated closer to particular neighbouring properties.

This is an important consideration because the subdivision of the garden may have implications for both the functionality of the proposed accommodation and the distribution of activity across the site.

The Council's Local Plan requires appropriate levels of amenity space for supported C2/C3 accommodation under Policy HS4, alongside consideration of access, landscaping and parking.

The applicant should therefore provide a clear explanation of the intended function and management of each garden area and demonstrate that the arrangement provides an appropriate level of amenity for the proposed residents whilst protecting neighbouring residential amenity.

6. Need for further information

North Hertfordshire Council considers that the above matters should be clarified before the application is determined.

In particular, the Council recommends that the following information is provided:

1. A detailed Care Management / Operational Management Plan, setting out the proposed nature and intensity of the use;
2. details of the number of children, anticipated age range and broad level of care/support required;
3. details of staff numbers and shift patterns, including overnight arrangements and staff handovers;
4. details of anticipated staff, visitor and service vehicle movements;
5. clarification of the intended use and management of the separate garden areas; and
6. a noise assessment, or other appropriately robust assessment, considering the likely noise generated by the proposed use and its effect upon neighbouring residential properties.

The Council considers that these matters are necessary to enable the determining authority to establish whether the proposal would comply with the requirements of Policy D3 of the

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031 and relevant national planning policy concerning living conditions and noise.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Greaves', written in a cursive style.

Shaun Greaves
Development and Conservation Manager

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