

Planning Statement

**Change of use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C2, for use
as a 1-child Children's Home with no external alterations**

19 Copthorne Road, Kirkby, Liverpool L32 0RJ

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Ref: 24146
Rev: B

email@plande.uk

0333 444 3433

www.plande.uk

I. INTRODUCTION

- I.1 Plande has been appointed to submit a supporting statement for the Change of use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C2, for use as a 1-child Children's Home with no external alterations at 19 Copthorne Road, Kirkby, Liverpool L32 0RJ.



Figure 1: Location Plan

- I.2 This statement, which should be read in conjunction with the supporting information submitted with the planning application, aims to give an appraisal of the planning issues and merits in context with planning and other policies, guidance, and material considerations..
- I.3 This planning statement seeks to provide an overall summary of the existing site and surroundings; the relevant planning history of the site, and to provide justification for the proposed works, in the context of the local surroundings, in order to support Knowsley Council in the determination of this proposal and demonstrate that the proposed works comply with the policies of relevance within the Development Plan. The report is structured in the following format:
- Section 2: Site & Surroundings
 - Section 3: Planning History
 - Section 4: The Proposal
 - Section 5: Planning Policy Framework
 - Section 6: Scheme Assessment
 - Section 7: Conclusion
- I.4 This statement has been prepared for the exclusive use of the applicant as part of their planning application and in accordance with the agreed scope of the project. The document may not be reproduced in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of Plande. The copyright in this document (including its electronic form) shall remain vested in Plande. Plande will not be liable for the contents or use of this document by any person for any purpose.

2. SITE & SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The existing site comprises a two-storey terraced property with three bedrooms. At the front of the property is a paved garden. To the rear is a typical residential private amenity space.
- 2.2 The property sits on a road of similar styled residential properties in a predominantly residential area.



Figure 2: Google Street View

- 2.3 To the east of the site is Kirkby Westvale Primary School, which shares a boundary with the site.
- 2.4 The closest bus stop to the site is located on Whitefield Drive, approximately a 5min walk away from the property, with bus services to Liverpool John Lennon Airport and Huyton. Kirby railway station is located approximately a 10min walk away providing rail services to Liverpool and Headbolt Lane rail station.
- 2.5 Local shops and amenities including a convenience store, pharmacy, and hot food takeaway are located on Richard Hesketh Drive a 7min walk away, with a wider range of shops and facilities located within Kirkby Town Centre, approximately 1.1 miles away from the site.
- 2.6 The flood map illustrates that the application site is in Zone 1, an area with a low probability of flooding. The site is not within the Green Belt and is not within a Conservation Area. Additionally, the building is not a Listed Building nor in proximity to a Listed Building. The site is designated as a Primarily Residential Area in the local plan.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 A planning history search illustrates no relevant planning applications for the site.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 This planning application seeks permission for the Change of use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C2, for use as a 1-child Children's Home with no external alterations.
- 4.2 The overall ethos of the scheme is to provide, as near as possible, a homely environment for people to enable them to live in local communities. The property will provide a home-like environment but with the relevant facilities and adaption to ensure residents can live a safe and independent life, with the relevant support from staff as and when required.
- 4.3 The nature of the existing building and proposed change of use means that there are no material differences in relation to overbearing, overshadowing, overlooking or visual intrusion.
- 4.4 It is suggested that the use of the site will be in keeping with and complementary to the vitality and mix within the area and will not have a negative impact on the amenity of the surrounding properties, the vitality, character, viability of the area as a whole.
- 4.5 No material changes are proposed to be made to the house which needs no adaption to facilitate the proposed use. No extensions are proposed to the building as part of this change of use application. The existing building is currently in good decorative and structural order.
- 4.6 The existing property features 3no bedrooms located on the first floor, with general living accommodation on the ground floor. The property, therefore, continues to be used as a traditional "dwellinghouse".
- 4.7 The child resident will have their own bedroom and share the communal kitchen and dining area on the ground floor with the carers. Carers will participate in the domestic and living activities with the resident.

ABOUT THE APPLICANT

- 4.8 Opus Care operates three-bedroom homes designed to provide personalised and attentive support for each child. Each home is staffed with a 2:1 support ratio, meaning two staff members are available to support one child at a time. This ensures individualised care, supervision, and attention, meeting each child's unique needs effectively while maintaining a high level of support.
- 4.9 A 2:1 staffing ratio is crucial in care settings, especially for vulnerable individuals. With two caregivers present, the child receives more personalised attention throughout the day. This creates a structured and safe environment that promotes consistency and routine, essential for the child's well-being. Caregivers assist with regular activities such as eating, engaging in educational and recreational activities, and personal hygiene. This additional support helps maintain the child's independence, reduces the risk of accidents, and ensures both their physical and emotional needs are met.
- 4.10 Ultimately, the 2:1 staffing model provides the stability necessary for individuals who require extra care. It fosters a sense of security, helping children lead a life that's as normal, fulfilling, and independent as possible, within their individual circumstances.
- 4.11 The Applicant aims to establish a children's home where children can remain within their local communities, continue attending their current schools, and stay connected to their families and friends, ensuring they receive the stable and supportive environment they need to thrive.
- 4.12 The Applicant proposes a home specifically designed to cater to children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). This facility aims to provide a supportive environment where these children's unique needs can be addressed. In contrast to the negative portrayals often seen in the media, which highlight poor-quality care in some children's homes, the Applicant intends to create a warm, nurturing atmosphere that prioritizes the well-being of every child.

- 4.13 The Applicant believes these children deserve the same opportunities and care as any other child, in environments that foster stability, respect, and growth. The Applicant's approach will ensure that staff are dedicated and fully committed to placing the children at the heart of everything they do, offering not just care, but genuine support for their emotional and developmental needs. Ultimately, the goal is to provide a local home for local children, where they can remain within their community, surrounded by a caring, consistent team focused on their best interests.
- 4.14 The Applicant's staff bring over 30 years of experience in children's social care and are deeply passionate about making a positive impact on the lives of young people. They are highly motivated and driven by a strong sense of aspiration for each child, always striving to ensure that their individual needs are met with the utmost priority and dedication.

DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS

- 4.15 No physical changes are required outside of the property. The objective and remit of the residential children's home is to mirror a traditional family home in a 'normal' neighbourhood and community. The goal of a children's home is to, from the outside, be indistinguishable from any other family home on the street.
- 4.16 The home has comfortably furnished large living room and dining room with TV for children and young people. There is a kitchen and dining room. The kitchen is domestic in style and is used for preparation of meals. Where appropriate, young people are encouraged to be involved in the preparation of meals and drinks.
- 4.17 The property has a secure garden with fencing to the perimeter. Children and young people are encouraged to make full use of the garden.
- 4.18 To ensure smooth operations at the property, a single car is available for staff use. Staff will coordinate and schedule trips to attend to any necessary errands, appointments, or other tasks requiring transportation. The car will be used efficiently to meet the needs of the care provision.
- 4.19 Additionally, regular visits from a manager will be conducted to ensure everything is running smoothly. These visits are part of Opus Care's commitment to maintaining high standards of care, safety, and operational procedures. The manager will check on the well-being of the individuals in care, review staff practices, and ensure everything aligns with the care plan and safety protocols. These visits are essential in maintaining a high-quality environment and ensuring consistent care standards.
- 4.20 Each shift at the care facility is 24 hours long, with two staff members working together to provide continuous support. This ensures that each child receives the necessary care and supervision day and night. Since the shifts are long, each staff member will have their own bedroom to rest during off-hours. This arrangement allows staff to recharge, staying well-rested and alert for their caregiving responsibilities. Private bedrooms also maintain the privacy and comfort of both the staff and the child they care for, ensuring a balanced and supportive environment.
- 4.21 By providing each staff member with their own bedroom, Opus Care ensures that they can respond effectively to the child's needs and maintain high standards of care throughout the 24-hour shift.

THE NEED FOR THE PROPOSED USE

- 4.22 There is a substantial need for Children's Homes across the UK. According to a report by Ofsted, in January 2024, many children in the UK with complex needs wait for years to be placed in a suitable home. This is because local authorities are frequently struggling to find stable homes for these children. The report highlights that this is "more than 9 out of 10 local authorities". The report also found that some children are placed in unregistered homes or live alone in homes with high staff numbers, which can be isolating. Ofsted is calling for better planning to ensure homes are built in the right places and meet the needs of these children. Please see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/children-with-complex-needs-can-wait-years-for-a-stable-home> for more information.
- 4.23 A further report by Ofsted, the government agency responsible for inspecting children's services in England, raises concerns about the current state of residential care for children. The report highlights a critical shortage of suitable placements, forcing some local authorities to utilise unregistered accommodation. This not only raises safety concerns but also disrupts children's lives by placing them far away from their families and communities. Please see <https://www.nyas.net/about-us/news/ofsted-data-shows-concern-for-children-living-in-residential-settings/> for more information.
- 4.24 These findings underscore the urgent need for an increase in suitable accommodation options within the residential care system. The proposed development directly addresses this gap by providing a safe, secure environment meet the specific needs of the residents.
- 4.25 These proposals, as a 1 bed children's home offer a small, person centred approach that is integrated into the local community and more in keeping with normal family home and family life which would be suitable for some children. Children are diverse in their needs, personalities and preferences. Therefore, there isn't "a one home fits all" with children's residential placements.

5. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 In accordance with S.38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, this planning application should be determined in accordance with the relevant Development Plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the purposes of this determination, the Development Plan comprises:
- Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted January 2016)
 - Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan (adopted June 2006)
- 5.2 This section provides the background to the development plan and identifies the relevant policies below.

KNOWSLEY LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY

- 5.3 Policy SD1 - Sustainable development, promotes a positive approach to development proposals by adhering to the National Planning Policy Framework. It encourages collaboration with applicants to reach satisfactory solutions and aims to enhance the local area economically, socially, and environmentally. Applications consistent with local policies will be granted promptly unless significant adverse impacts outweigh the benefits or specific restrictions apply based on national guidance.
- 5.4 Policy CSI - Spatial Strategy for Knowsley, outlines Knowsley's spatial strategy, focusing development in urban areas, particularly those requiring regeneration. It maintains a settlement hierarchy and advocates sustainable land and infrastructure use, including the reclamation of previously developed sites. The policy seeks to balance housing provision and employment needs while protecting Green Belt areas from unnecessary encroachment.
- 5.5 Policy CS2 – Development Principles, sets out five principles that new development will be expected to meet. These are:
- to promote sustainable economic development, tackle the causes of deprivation and disadvantage and narrow the gap between the richest and poorest neighbourhoods,
 - to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change,
 - to reduce the need to travel and increase accessibility,
 - to recognise environmental limits, protect and enhance environmental assets, enhance local character and promote quality of place, and
 - to make the most efficient use of available resources and infrastructure by prioritising locations consistent with the spatial strategy.
- 5.6 Policy CS7 - Transport Networks, details the strategy for sustainable transport networks, aiming to facilitate the efficient movement of people and goods while enhancing accessibility and reducing carbon emissions. It requires that new developments are designed to prioritise sustainable transport modes and be strategically placed to enhance connectivity. Collaborations with multiple stakeholders aim to strengthen transport infrastructure, including provisions for buses, walking, and cycling.
- 5.7 Policy CS16 - Specialist and Supported Accommodation, addresses the need for specialist and supported accommodation by improving current housing stock and facilitating non-accommodation-based interventions. This policy strives to collaboratively develop holistic strategies that meet the changing needs of individuals requiring support, ensuring new residential facilities are well-located, accessible, and designed to cater to various demographics.
- 5.8 Policy CS19 - Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development, requires new developments in Knowsley to exhibit high design quality and accessibility, reflecting local characteristics. It emphasizes the integration of development with existing landscapes and communities, promoting biodiversity, public accessibility, and social interaction. It also mandates community engagement in design processes, aiming to maintain a high standard of amenity and address climate change challenges through sustainable practices.

KNOWSLEY REPLACEMENT UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 5.9 Policy H5 - Development within Primarily Residential Areas, mandates that development within Primarily Residential Areas must be compatible with residential use and must not cause unacceptable impacts on the amenity of residents or the character of the area. It supports windfall housing proposals, particularly for replacements of demolished units, ensuring careful consideration of the overall housing land supply in conjunction with Policy H1.
- 5.10 Policy H7 - Provision of flats, nursing and residential homes, hostels and houses in multiple occupation outlines provisions for the establishment of flats, nursing homes, hostels, and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). It requires that such developments do not increase noise or disturbance for neighbouring properties, ensure adequate parking, and maintain visual amenity. Specific limitations are placed on the density of healthcare and HMO conversions to protect community character and amenity.
- 5.11 Policy ENV2 - Noise and Vibration states that any development causing unacceptable increases in noise or vibration, or exposed to high levels from existing sources, will not be permitted. When approvals are granted, conditions may be imposed to ensure effective noise insulation and other necessary mitigation measures to protect surrounding inhabitants.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 5.12 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012 and last revised in December 2024. The aim of the NPPF is to ensure there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that positive planning solutions are found to ensure development is brought forward. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions as outlined in Paragraph 2 of the NPPF and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 5.13 Sustainable development is broadly defined in Paragraph 8 of the NPPF as having three overarching objectives which are independent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways:
- a) An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types 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;
 - b) 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 well-being; and
 - c) An environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 5.14 The NPPF sets out Government planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF. 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, grant planning permission unless:
 - Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the framework as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination; or
 - Specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

- 5.15 Paragraph 39 states 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. Furthermore, Decision-makers should seek to approve applications for sustainable developments where possible.
- 5.16 Paragraph 48 states that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.17 Paragraph 56 states that local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions.
- 5.18 Paragraph 61 states that to support the government's aim of increasing housing supply, there must be adequate and diverse land availability, addressing the needs of specific groups without delays in development. An overall objective is to fulfil as much of the area's identified housing requirements as possible, providing an appropriate mix of housing types.
- 5.19 Paragraph 63 emphasizes the importance of assessing and incorporating the size, type, and tenure of housing required for various community groups in planning policies. These groups include but are not limited to those needing affordable housing, families, older adults, individuals with disabilities and looked after children, ensuring that a diversity of housing needs is addressed.
- 5.20 Paragraph 128 states that local 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 this would help to meet identified development needs.
- 5.21 Paragraph 135 (f) states that developments should 'create places that are safe, inclusive, and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
- 5.22 Promoting sustainable development is a key component of the NPPF and a substantial weight is given to encouraging economic growth with planning authorities being required to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

6. SCHEME ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The following section will consider the compliance of the proposal with the Development Plan policies and material considerations for the application. It provides an analysis of the main planning matters related to the principle and a more detailed, policy-orientated assessment of planning considerations.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.2 Considering the NPPF as a whole, it is important to note that the main purpose of the NPPF is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 states that “*Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives)*”.
- 6.3 At Paragraph 7, the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 7 further states that, at a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 6.4 At Paragraph 11, the NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which requires decision makers to approve applications that accord with the Development Plan without delay.
- 6.5 The site is located within a Primary Residential Area as defined by the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy policies. The proposed change of use is deemed acceptable as it contributes positively to the established residential character of the area. This aligns with Policy EC3 of the Knowsley Replacement Unitary Development Plan, which supports uses that consolidate residential functions.
- 6.6 In addition, this change aligns with Policy CS16 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy, which encourages the provision of new specialist and supported residential accommodation to meet the needs of households requiring such care. The emphasis on integrating these facilities within existing residential areas helps support community integration.
- 6.7 The principle of development can therefore be considered acceptable in this location.

IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

- 6.8 As stated above, the proposals seek to make no material change to the existing building and it is suggested the proposed use is broadly similar to the existing use. As such it is suggested that the proposals are compatible to the area and would not cause a dis-amenity to neighbouring properties in activity levels, comings and goings and noise and/ or disturbance, visual intrusion or in any other way.
- 6.9 It is suggested that activities associated with the use of the property are similar to that of an average family dwelling, and as such the proposals would not cause any undue noise and disturbance to adjoining occupiers, over and above what would be expected from a residential dwelling.
- 6.10 With regards to the potential for noise and disturbance to neighbouring residential amenity, it is suggested that the proposed care of 1 child at the property would be significantly less intensive than the potential for a family who could accommodate 3 children at the property.
- 6.11 It is suggested that the nature of the use will not result in a material increase or change in vehicle or pedestrian movements to and from the site, or in the number of people coming and going especially when compared to potential maximum potential for the existing use as a 3-bedroom family home. The existing use could accommodate several adults, such as two parents and two over 17-year-old children who all have their own cars and travel independently to work, school, for hobbies, social visits, and to receive visitors.

- 6.12 While the proposed care home will cater for a diverse range of children, including those with physical disabilities, mental health issues, emotional or behavioural challenges, and sensory impairments, it is suggested that staff at the property are trained and experienced in working with children with various needs, and are well equipped to manage any challenging behaviour that may be presented.
- 6.13 It is suggested that the proposals are in accordance with Policy CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy which mandates that developments must not create unacceptable impacts on the amenity of existing residents. In addition, it is suggested that the proposals are in accordance with Policy ENV2 of the Knowsley Replacement UDP.

DESIGN & CHARACTER OF THE AREA

- 6.14 The application proposes no external alterations to the existing dwelling therefore there is no adverse impact on the local streetscape or the overall character of the area. It is suggested that the scheme adheres to Policy CS19 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy, which emphasises the importance of design quality and accessibility in new developments.

HIGHWAYS

- 6.15 The site is located within a sustainable area with access to excellent bus and rail links. It is suggested that family, staff and professionals could easily access the site on public transport.
- 6.16 The property has no parking provision within its curtilage, however there is on street parking outside of the property. Staff will have access to a car at the property to be used for running errands, appointments etc in a similar way to normal domestic use of a private vehicle, which will be parked on the street.
- 6.17 It is suggested that any visitors to the property will be by appointment only, and generally scheduled during the daytime when parking demand on the street is at its lowest. The existing residential parking arrangements will accommodate visitors and staff without compromising road safety or accessibility.
- 6.18 Overall, it is suggested that the proposal would not lead to unacceptable impacts on highway safety, and the application is consistent with policies CS7 of the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy and H7 of the Knowsley Replacement UDP.
- 6.19 It is therefore proposed that the Change of use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C2, for use as a 1-child Children's Home with no external alterations conforms to the relevant Local Plan Policies generally and should be considered acceptable given its location.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed development seeks planning permission for the Change of use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C2, for use as a 1-child Children's Home with no external alterations at 19 Copthorne Road, Kirkby, Liverpool L32 0RJ.
- 7.2 The proposed development is consistent with the planning policies set out in the Knowsley Local Plan. It aligns with the core principles of sustainable development, particularly within a designated Primarily Residential Area.
- 7.3 The proposal has been assessed and deemed to have no significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring properties, and the design will not alter the external appearance of the building, thus ensuring that the character of the street scene is preserved.
- 7.4 It is considered that the proposal would align with the Development Plan in that it provides for appropriate use and will be a significant benefit to the area.
- 7.5 It is considered that the proposals would represent sustainable development which is consistent with adopted planning policy, and which should be supported in order to deliver the wider social, environmental and economic benefits.
- 7.6 In summary, the proposal not only satisfies relevant local planning policies but also contributes positively to the strategic objectives of the borough by providing necessary specialist accommodation.
- 7.7 It is therefore respectfully requested that the planning application is approved. In the event that Knowsley Council do not agree with this view, the applicant would seek to engage with the authority to secure a solution, in line with the NPPF.